

Introduction

The 5th grade parents have recently learned that no current OCS faculty will be teaching our children in 6th grade. We vigorously oppose any plan asking us to sacrifice a potential third consecutive year of sub-par education. When the 2007-08 school year begins, this class will have had a total of five teachers in contrast to all the continuing upper loop classes which will remain with their original teacher.

The past 2 years for our kids were not academically engaging nor in the Whole Child pedagogy which begs the question, just what methodology was being followed? The teachers hired reported they received little input or support from their colleagues and, like last year, their current teacher is not being asked back. This class deserves an experienced and committed OCS faculty person—in fact, they've earned it. We were denied keeping the 3rd grade teacher because this class happened to fall at the 3-year loop cycle transition grade and we were informed that our teacher must loop to the 1st grade to maintain the 3-year loop ideology. We are being asked to trust that a competent replacement will be hired, but given the hiring committee's track record we have little faith in a successful outcome.

Members of the administration and hiring committee maintain that all current OCS teachers qualified to teach 6th grade may not be assigned to our class partly because of language on *involuntary reassignment* in the Ocean Charter Teacher's Association 2006-07 contract. How is the assignment of a teacher who has completed a 3-year loop with a class considered involuntary? Why do OCS teachers believe they may extend the 3-year loop cycle? Is this fair to the entire OCS committee? Teachers are the greatest resource of our school and this resource should be made available to all students.

The Problem as We See It and Some Questions

- Our children have not had the benefits of the loop experience. OCS heavily promotes 3-year looping as a major tenet of the Whole Child pedagogy via a variety of communication methods including: on the school website, via teacher led loop presentations at ACG parent education meetings, at open houses for prospective parents, and is common knowledge among enrolled families. It is understandably an attractive thing to hear. For this class it was first the timing of moving from 3rd to 4th grades but since then we've had 3 teachers in the two years. Why aren't our children given access to the shared resource of teachers proven to understand the Ocean Charter pedagogy and are committed to working at the school?
- We accepted our school year 2005-06 4th grade experience as a failure but remained committed, many children returned who had dis-enrolled and we parents remained active throughout the school. Our children have few memorable 4th grade experiences; the family camping trip to the Missions was organized by the parents without any teacher support or involvement. For two years we have witnessed the limited amount of resources our children have received---the classroom is dreary, despite our numerous donations of books, furniture,

appliances and aesthetically pleasing items which have not followed our children to their new classrooms for two consecutive years.

- We are only just now ^{FOR THE PAST} 12 weeks, seeing a small amount of Math being taught. Early in the school, year the 5th grade apparently had a Botany block, but we have not received comprehensive evidence of Botany study in our kid's main lesson books nor was any journaling conducted as detailed on the OCS website description of 5th grade Botany study. Those two subjects are key elements to the Whole Child Curriculum, but also the foundation of traditional elementary education. What teaching method, pedagogical style, or curriculum is being followed where such critical work is left to the last 2 months of the academic year? Why is 5th grade still working on basic fractions and not the additional math skills promoted by OCS and set as California State standards?
- Aberrant behavior is partly due to the age of our children, but the acting out and ennui is also related to weak or ineffective leadership by the teachers over the last 2 years. By and large inexperience is the problem.

Recommendation/Goal

- Assign a qualified OCS Faculty member to this class and have them loop through to 8th grade.
- Obtain legal review of the Ocean Charter Teacher's Association contract to determine if a teacher transitioning between two classes upon completion of a 3-year period qualifies under *involuntary reassignment* or is merely a transition as expected by the OCS 3-year loop ideology.

Conclusion:

Our class has the highest level of parent participation for the pledge drive, biggest revenue maker at the winter faire (food for two years), most successful reef cafe fundraising group and a high number of active parent volunteers. We do this work happily for the betterment of OCS. We also think it benefits our kids, but we are losing confidence in our school.

We let so much slide in earlier years because our kids were still young and we want to support the school through its growing pains, high school and college seemed far off, and any gaps in education could be made up for later. We the undersigned are not seeing results either in any official performance reports or in what our child is producing to convince us this is working. Now is the time to make a change and yet another earnest teacher new to the OCS community will not do. It is our time to share in the resources and opportunities to explore and experience the vision of OCS.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

5th Grade Families

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