

What is the Open Classroom Charter School?

Some Quick Facts

The Open Classroom is:

- A teacher-directed, parent supported, child-centered school.
- A school for students in kindergarten through 8th grade.
- A parent-cooperative school where parents participate in the classroom every week, providing a better adult/student ratio and allowing small group learning.
- A thriving and successful program, now entering its 32nd year.
- A Charter School within the Salt Lake City School District.
- A school that has individual classrooms with a certified teacher for every classroom – but with an open attitude about learning!
- A school with multi-age classes where students deepen their understanding of subjects by teaching and learning from each other.
- A FREE public school.

The Open Classroom is dedicated to the inclusion of all students without regard to race, creed, color or national origin, economic status, language or cultural background.

More Information about the Open Classroom

Before you apply to the Open Classroom Charter School, we want to make sure you understand that this is a unique charter school!

The Open Classroom is a Co-operative School.

First and foremost, the Open Classroom is a co-operative school. Every person in the learning community – every teacher, parent, and child – plays a role in creating and maintaining a meaningful, purposeful learning environment.

Parents participate in the classroom for three hours each week for each student they enroll (up to a maximum of six hours). They are an essential and valued part of our learning community. Parents help create the learning environment by participating with the teacher and students to help develop curriculum, and by leading small group learning. New parents will find that our teachers and experienced parents are also terrific coaches and are happy to help new parents find their place in the classroom.

Parents are a valuable, constant and visible part of our community and are critical to making the Open Classroom work. Over 30 years of experience shows us that one of the main reasons our kids love school and love learning is because their parents participate in the classroom. It allows parents to see how their child interacts with the teacher and other adults and to develop a deep understanding about their child as a learner. A parent who is engaged in the curriculum can also support a child's learning at home. Research shows that parent participation in the classroom demonstrates to students the high value the parent places on education and, in turn, increases the value the students place on education.

Open Classroom graduates also frequently share with us that the strong relationships they maintain with their parents began with the parents' participation at the school. Knowing all about your child's school activities and friends helps form a solid foundation for that future relationship.

Parent participation in the classroom, membership on a committee, and attendance at parent meetings (see more below about committees and parent meetings) are normally required, but we also want to make sure that kids and their families are not turned away from the Open Classroom because their parents are genuinely unable to meet these requirements. **If any parent is unable to meet participation requirements due to serious economic or personal circumstances, a waiver may be granted by the principal.**

Students in the Open Classroom develop ownership and responsibility for their own learning

Students at the Open Classroom learn to assume responsibility for their own education by planning their activities for the week, balancing "must do" assignments with optional activities including independent exploration. During the course of the week, the student, parent and teacher will track work together so that, if necessary, the student can be guided toward making choices to support the completion of work. Our goal is that all students, with practice, will learn to make those choices independently.

It is important to consider whether this flexibility is the right approach to learning for your student. We have found there are some students who are more successful in an environment where they are given specific tasks to complete at specific times.

Every person in the community is treated as an equal and is treated with respect

In the Open Classroom community, every adult and child is valued as an equal and is treated with respect. Those values form the foundation of the ways we communicate with each other and solve problems that arise.

Each classroom works collaboratively to develop guidelines for learning expectations and behavior. When problems arise, they are addressed in problem-solving circles or in small group discussions. This helps children evaluate and become accountable for their behavior. (If a serious behavioral problem arose, it would be managed in accordance with the Salt Lake City School District's discipline procedures.)

Newcomers might be surprised to see that students call teachers and parent co-ops by their first names. We believe that this is a small but important indication of students' place in the community and that children who feel like valued, equal members of the learning community are more interested in learning. As one former student said "[b]ecause the adults and kids respected each other, I was excited about learning and felt appreciated in the OC." (Quoted at p. 106 in Learning Together, cited below.)

If you're looking for a school with strict discipline and a strong hierarchy, the Open Classroom is not the school for you.

The Open Classroom Values and Supports the Education of the Whole Child

The Open Classroom is committed to educating the whole child. We address the academic, emotional, social, physical, and creative growth and progress of every student as we provide developmentally appropriate curriculum and learning experiences. Our program honors children in all stages of their personal growth. **Again, if you're looking for a school that strictly emphasizes nothing but traditional academics and sacrifices these other areas of a child's growth, this is not the school for you.**

Other Ways that Parents are Involved at the Open Classroom

Parents are expected to serve on committees at the Open Classroom, and that service is a big part of what makes the Open Classroom work. We have committees that focus on curriculum, community support, co-oping, philosophy, parent education, fundraising, public relations, lunch, our website – and more. Committee work is also a great way for parents to connect with the community. (This fact sheet is an example; it was written by parent volunteers with teacher input.)

Finally, parents are expected to attend monthly parent meetings for each child's class. These meetings provide an opportunity to talk about the educational needs and curriculum for the classroom, co-oping, field trips, guest speakers and more. It also provides time for the teacher and parents to share information about the emotional, academic and social needs of children in the classroom. This supports the education of the whole child.

To Learn More About the Open Classroom...

- Read Learning Together: Children and Adults in a School Community, a book about learning and developing learning communities that focuses on our school with essays contributed by teachers (including three of our current teachers), parents who were participating at the time the book was written, and then-current and former students.
- Call us at 578-8144 and ask to speak to the Registrar.

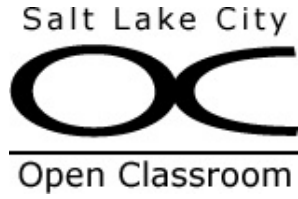
Now What Do I Do If I Want to Apply?

If you want to apply for the 2008-2009 school year, fill out the attached application and bring it in or mail it to us. If you want to apply for the 2009-2010 school year, call 578-8144 and ask to be informed about our tours and Open House for next year, or get on our email list at <http://ocslc.org/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/friends>.

Thank you for your interest in The Open Classroom!

Sincerely,

The Open Classroom Registrars



THE OPEN CLASSROOM CHARTER SCHOOL

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STATE OF UTAH UNIFORM CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION FORM

Date:

Student name:

Date of birth:

Current grade:

Mailing address:

Phone number:

Parent/guardian name:

Email address: