

inspired learning in "green" and healthy schools

Back to School Newsletter August 2022

Welcome

Welcome back to Odyssey. On behalf of our Board of Directors and all of our faculty and staff, we welcome you back to our schools! We hope you and your family had a great summer and are ready for your children to dig in and have a great year of learning. We look forward to partnering with you to help our students reach their full

potential and remain honored to serve

your children.



Ms. Constance Ortiz
GA Chief Executive Officer and
Founder of Odyssey Schools

Our Mission for Every Child

Odyssey's mission is to work in partnership families and our community with the aim of helping each child reach their own unique and wonderful potential--spiritually, academically, emotionally, socially, and physically. We accomplish our whole child/ whole school approach through multiple ways including our commitment to creating a positive school culture, by providing a rigorous academic program with a wide array of elective offerings, through providing buildings that are designed to enhance health, designing a campus that offers agricultural/gardening opportunities, serving a healthy school lunch program, and by providing athletics and physical fitness opportunities. Our child-centered programs are selected so that children have multiple opportunities to find and develop their passions.

Wellness

With a healthy school mission, this year we are recommitting to our Wellness Policy. Any help supporting our students eating healthy food and learning about healthy lifestyles will certainly benefit your child, as well as the school as a whole. Through our garden and farm programs, healthy café, and nutrition lessons are all important components of Odyssey's innovative "green" and healthy school model that has been recognized at the local, state, and national levels. Parents, please know that as a healthy school, junk food, soda, and candy are not allowed on our campuses. Teachers or administrators at the Jr/Sr High may confiscate items that do not belong in the school environment, and elementary teachers may send a written reminder home. Please remember, all families sign a wellness pledge during registration.

Academics

As a system of academic schools, our Odyssey team is pleased with our student performance results. Odyssey Preparatory Academy received the only 'A' in Palm Bay this last school year. Odyssey Charter Elementary School also earned an 'A' but received an overall 'B' grade due to the combined score with Odyssey Charter Jr/Sr High School. Nevertheless, Odyssey Jr/Sr High's 'B' grade remained as the top performing school among traditional Jr/Sr high schools serving Palm Bay last year, while all other traditional Palm Bay Jr/Sr high schools received 'C' grades.

Congratulations to our students and faculty for a job well done.

Odyssey Preparatory Academy

- · Only Elementary School in Palm Bay earning an 'A'
- 5th grade Science proficiency 69% Highest in Palm Bay, and above district and state
- Overall 3rd 5th grade ELA Learning Gains 74%
- Overall 3rd 5th grade ELA Lowest Quartile 72%

Odyssey Charter School

- 4th grade ELA proficiency 76% Highest in Palm Bay, and above district and state
- 4th grade Math proficiency 85% Highest in Palm Bay, and above district and state
- 7th grade Civics Proficiency 90% Highest in the county and above District and State (No Level 1 Students)
- 7th Grade ELA 62% Proficiency Highest in Palm Bay
- 97% Graduation Rate

We are proud of the performance of our exceptional students and dedicated faculty and staff, and we look forward to continuing our strong academic performance this school year.







The Year of the Teacher

Last year was a very challenging year at our schools, which had an impact upon all of our campuses. An April 14th edition of Education Week published research that stated that teachers view the teaching field as a low-paid, thankless career and that only 46% of teachers feel like the general public respects them, a drop from 77% in 2011. A July 2022 Survey published by District Administration stated that "student behavior is the leading cause for teachers leaving" the profession.

As a leadership team, we decided to dedicate this year as **The Year of the Teacher**. We are asking for your full partnership and support as we work closely together as a community to support our teachers - which will directly benefit your child(ren) as we strive to get back on track. And we will get back on track.

Our leadership team and principals have been preparing all summer with their administrative teams to set the right tone for this year and to create an engaged and thriving, positive culture for our students. We ask that you support our principals and administrative teams, but even more importantly, we ask that you support and respect our teachers, who strive to do their best with your child(ren) each day.

Our teachers have the dedication and heart to work with many children, day in and day out. You can help us get off on the right foot this year by sharing with your child(ren), your family's high behavioral and academic expectations and we will support those during the school day. We need and want our students to come to school ready to learn and ready to achieve their best, setting the stage for an exceptional year of learning and moving past the negative impact brought on by a tenacious pandemic.

Please note that students demonstrating chronic behaviors will be given appropriate consequences, including removal from class and/or school and parents will be asked to attend with their student upon their return to the school campus for a counseling session. We hope that this step will grow the partnership between the student, the parent, and the school staff so that students understand the high expectations of both the school and home and have the supports to meet those expectations.

If at the start of our school year, you have any concerns regarding your child(ren) either behaviorally or academically, please reach out to the principal of your child's campus to arrange a meeting as soon as possible: Dr. Ed Jackson, Odyssey Jr/Sr High, jacksone@odysseycharterschool.com; Ms. Shelly Miedona, Odyssey Preparatory Academy, miedonas@odysseyprepacademy.com; or Ms. Wendi Nolder, Odyssey Elementary, nolderw@odysseycharterschool.com.

Leadership Summit



On July 26th, I met with 38 wonderful leaders from Odyssey Elementary, Odyssey Charter Jr/Sr High, Odyssey Prep, and Green Apple School Management for our annual Odyssey Summer Leadership Summit at The Melby in downtown Melbourne. During the event, we deepened our understanding of Odyssey's unique and innovative mission for children, discussed how to lead meaningful work, sharpened our skills with Positive Discipline in the Classroom and school-wide and classroom-wide procedures, and strategized action steps to implement "The Year of the Teacher." We are all looking forward to another successful year in partnership with our students, parents, and community to help every Odyssey child reach his/her full potential in all areas of life.

Positive Discipline in the Classroom (by Jane Nelson)

Positive Discipline in the Classroom and School is the social/emotional philosophy of our schools and has been since the first charter application was written for Odyssey Charter School in 1999. This year, all members of our leadership team have decided to recommit to developing the culture of our school using this philosophical framework. Nelson's research shows that a well-developed and positive culture will lead to increased student learning and by employing strategies within the Positive Discipline in the Classroom framework, we can help develop classroom communities focused on mutual respect. Through activities and class meetings, students develop a sense of belonging and are brought into an active role in the school or classroom problem-solving process. With a renewed focus on creating and maintaining respectful relationships through Positive Discipline, our hallways will be calm, settled, and focused on learning and our classrooms will be filled with focused and excited students, staff, and faculty ready to work together to help every student meet or exceed the rigorous state standards. Positive Discipline has many solid parenting strategies also. Parents can check out these resources from their schools or visit https://www.positivediscipline.com/. For more information on this program, please contact Mike Davis, Assistant Principal at OCS Elementary and Odyssey Preparatory, at davism@odysseyprepacademy.com.

De-implementation

This year, we will also have a laser-focus on "de-implementation" - a concept that will help us evaluate our current processes and programs and keep those that are working and eliminate those that are not working. A deep look will be taken at paperwork redundancies, simplification of the lesson planning process in some of our core curricula, and in the implementation of our English/Language Arts curricula, including the Core Knowledge Sequence (CKLA) at the elementary level and Springboard by College Board at the secondary levels. We are providing more support and training to our teachers for these rigorous curricular resources that provide rich literature for all students in grades VPK-12, and we will be working to strengthen the overall English-Language Arts programs at all grade levels and all schools.

Math Curriculum Adoption

After a several months review by our curriculum committee, the Odyssey Charter School Board adopted a new math curriculum for this school year for grades K-12 called enVision Math. This state-approved curriculum is the first math series that combines problem-based learning with visual learning. Students' math understanding increases by solving rich, reality-based problems. They gain a deeper, clearer understanding of math concepts with visual models and scaffolds in every lesson. For any questions or concerns with our math curriculum, please reach out to Ms. Laura Lane, Director of Curriculum and Assessment, at lane@greenappleschools.com.

Covid

The Omicron variant has peaked in Brevard and numbers are beginning to decrease. Transmission is still high, and it may take another 4-6 weeks for numbers to really diminish. Our efforts this year will be focusing on stabilizing our campuses with increased student and staff attendance and increased student and staff engagement. We will continue mitigating strategies with additional cleaning and we ask that if your child is ill, to please keep them home. Masks remain optional. If your child has a special need and you need additional accommodations, please reach out to your school's covid contact provided below.

Students exposed to COVID-19 can remain in school as long as they are asymptomatic. Parents may also choose to quarantine students up to five (5) days after a COVID-19 exposure. Students who test positive for Covid may return after five (5) days after their first symptom or positive test result and when their symptoms have resolved, and they have been fever free for a minimum of 24 hours.

During these days of the pandemic, it is particularly important that if your child is ill, that you do not bring them to school and you consider testing for covid. If your child needs to quarantine, please notify your child's teacher(s) and/or your school's Covid Contact for support. Additional guidance has been provided by the FLDOH: https://floridahealthcovid19.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/20220224-general-guidance.pdf. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please call or email your school's Covid Contact:

Ms. Wendi Nolder, Elementary Principal at (321) 733-0442, nolderw@odysseycharterschool.com

Mr. Mike Fredenburg, Jr/Sr High Assistant Principal, (321) 345-4117, fredenburgm@odysseycharterschool.com

Ms. Doreen Coryell, Assistant Principal, Odyssey Preparatory Academy, (321) 321-372-7263, <u>coryelld@odysseyprepacademy.com</u>.

As a healthy school, please partner with us as we continue to focus our efforts on maintaining exceptional health. Please continue to discuss with your children the importance of eating healthy, getting moderate amounts of exercise and sunshine, drinking lots of water, and receiving a good night's sleep. Maintaining a positive mental attitude can help us all as we learn to navigate and master the bumpy covid waters of our time.

Volunteer Hours

We cannot do it alone and so invite you to take part in some exciting volunteer opportunities. Every family is requested to give 18 volunteer hours per student or 25 for a family with 2 or more students per school year. There are numerous ways to give at Odyssey that will create a wonderful, educational experience for your child. Here are just a few:

Read Aloud Club (by Jim Trelease): Yes, you can earn school volunteer hours by reading to your children in the comfort of your own homes. This action benefits both you and our schools in the quest to give your children the best education possible. Located on our schools' websites, the Read Aloud Club is primarily for K-5th grades but can extend well beyond into high school. It is simply reading aloud exciting and engaging literature to your child 10-15 minutes a night, several nights a week. (Tip: Quit reading for the night when your child is really engaged or at an exciting spot within the story. He/she will look forward to the next night of reading.) Find a book that you enjoyed as a child and read enthusiastically to your child. Their listening comprehension will grow, and we can guarantee you, they will never forget the bond and memories that occur with a great novel or read aloud. A list of recommended books and a log that can be filled out and turned into your homeroom teachers to input your volunteer hours are on the schools' website. Also, you can make arrangements with our media coordinators to visit our school libraries, if you are looking for special books to read aloud. Come join us in this sacred quest!

Extra-Curricular Activities: We are looking to find qualified parents and community members to broaden our ability to reach even more students with interesting clubs after school. Clubs at our elementary schools, generally last 9 weeks and teach a particular skill--anything from gardening, chess, yoga, healthy cuisine, basketball skill-building, crochet - all talents are wanted. At the Jr/Sr High, we have the same expectations, except clubs can last longer, often times for the entire year. Last spring, students filled out an interest form to help us begin formulating clubs that they would be interested in joining this year. Ms. Nina Brent, our new Activities Coordinator, will organize these clubs and extracurricular activities at all three campuses, alongside of our school teams. If you would like to reach out to her, please contact Ms. Brent at <u>brentn@odysseycharterschool.com</u>. Fingerprints, background checks, and training with extra-curricular guidelines and behavioral expectations are required before teaching an extra-curricular activity to our students. Please note that we are determined to protect our teachers this year from burnout, and although some have agreed to teaching an extra-curricular club, others may be tutoring, so we are seeking additional parental volunteer support to give our students the extracurricular experiences they need and deserve. Can we count on your talent this year?

Veterans' Day Ceremony, Fathers' Take your Child to School Breakfast, Muffins with Mom, Parents as Partners Meetings, Field Trips and Annual 5k: All ways to grow those memories with your children and support our schools. Why not plan some volunteer hours by attending some of these annual events with your children? More information will come out in the future for each event.

2023 Graduating Class Committee: If you would like to join a Senior Graduating Class parent committee, please contact Ms. Brent, Activities Coordinator, at brentn@odysseycharter-school.com. Attending committee meetings will count toward your volunteer hours.

Staff Spotlight



Doreen Coryell, Assistant Principal, Odyssey Preparatory Academy

Mrs. Coryell is joining the Odyssey Preparatory Academy family with seven years' experience as an Assistant Principal. Throughout her varied career, she was a Literacy Coach, Middle School Reading teacher, Title 1 Specialist and 2nd grade

bilingual teacher. She has worked in many Florida districts including Brevard, Martin, and Broward counties. Originally from New York, Mrs. Coryell is happy that she and her family live here on the Space Coast. Her husband works for Disney, so in their free time, they can be found cruising or visiting the parks along with their daughter who is in high school. Mrs. Coryell is very excited to get to know our OPA families this school year and we are excited to have her join our team.



Mr. Shields, 3rd Grade Teacher and Team Lead, Odyssey Elementary

Mr. Shields is excited to join the Odyssey Titans and comes to us from Chicago, Illinois, with 17 years of teaching experience in both public and charter schools, all in kindergarten through 3rd grade. He has a Bachelor's degree in early childhood edu-

cation and a Master's degree as a Reading Specialist and joins our 3rd grade teaching team as its Lead Teacher. He enjoys spending the day with his scholars and learning from them determination, perseverance, compassion, and grit.



Krystal Anderson, Middle School Guidance, Odyssey Charter Jr/Sr High School

Welcome to Krystal Anderson, one of our four new guidance team members at Odyssey Charter Jr/Sr High School this year. Ms. Anderson comes to us from Utah with 7 years of school counseling experience where she was the High School Vice Pres-

ident Elect of the Utah School Counseling Association. While in Utah, Ms. Anderson worked at what was considered the #1 charter high school in the state. In addition to supporting our middle school students and leading the guidance office as the Department Chair, Ms. Anderson is a life coach and owns her own virtual online mental health clinic. Ms. Anderson says her true passion is to help students find their purpose in life while exploring their college and career paths. She truly believes that you can accomplish anything if you are willing to put in the work. Welcome, Ms. Anderson.

School Resource and Safety Officers



Officer Albert

We are pleased to introduce at Eldron Elementary our School Safety Officer (SSO) Officer Albert Melise. Officer Albert, as he likes to be called, proudly served in the U.S. Army for over 18 years. Following that, he was a police officer in Boston for 7 years, during which time he served as

a mentor for inner city Boston kids. He relocated to Florida to retire but decided to serve schools through the position of safety officer, where he feels he can use his past training to ensure our students and staff are safe while at school. We welcome Officer Albert to our Odyssey family!



Officer Ellis

Officer Ellis has been with the Palm Bay Police Department for 16 years. During that time, I he worked both day and night shifts, 4-1/2 years as a K9 handler, and 4 years as a School Resource Office at Bayside High School prior to coming to Odyssey in January 2022. He completed 20

years with the United States Air Force as a Security Specialist, and during that time, was a K9 handler/trainer for 8 years. Officer Ellis enjoys aviation and is a licensed private pilot and builds/flies remote control aircraft. He has 2 daughters and 2 grandchildren with a third on the way. He joined us last year and we are excited about having him return this year to our Odyssey family.

Board Spotlight



Ms. Leslie Maloney, Odyssey Charter School, Inc. Board President

Ms. Leslie Maloney is our Board President and has been on the Odyssey Charter Board of Directors since 2015. She was also one of the Founding Board Members in 1999. Ms. Leslie and her husband, Dan, were residents of Palm Bay for

many years before moving to Melbourne Beach. They have two children that attended Brevard Public Schools, where at one point Ms. Leslie was also a high school teacher. Ms. Leslie is a professor, an author, a life coach, and sits on several boards within our community, some that aim to protect and nourish the Indian River Lagoon. She is a fountain of support for our schools, and we are very happy to have her serving with us.

Odyssey Charter School, Inc., Board of Directors

Our nonprofit is governed by the Odyssey Charter School Board of Directors, who volunteer their time to support the corporate development of our schools. These wonderful leaders play an essential role in contributing to the quality of our schools and are committed to meeting 6-8 times annually to provide required oversight. They agree to maintain the mission for our schools, become trained in charter school governance, provide financial oversight, policy development, guidance, and hire leaders to run our schools and hold those leaders accountable for academic success. Meetings are open to the public and are located at Green Apple School Management in the historic 1900 Building, 1900 S Harbor City Blvd, Melbourne, FL 32901, Suite 120. Our next meeting is August 25, at 4:30 pm. Our current Board of Directors include Ms. Leslie Maloney, President, Mr. Andy Ziegler, Vice President, Mr. Conrado Martinez, Treasurer, and Ms. Amber Miller, Secretary.

Balance instead of politics

As you may be aware, politics has greatly entered the arena of education, from both directions. At Odyssey, we strive for balance – we do not lean to the right or to the left, but instead, we aim to provide exceptional selections in programs and curriculum for all children to graduate with a well-rounded, comprehensive education. Our goal is to develop the whole child and we are here to partner with you to support every member of our community.

The Odyssey Charter School, Inc. Board of Directors adopted a Neutrality in Education policy two years ago, to help us navigate through these areas. This policy ensures the neutrality of our faculty and administration.

Our Odyssey community is made up of a beautiful kaleidoscope of many different cultures, religions, and political persuasions. We care for every child entrusted to our care and have agreed as an academic community to continue to focus on what unifies us, rather than what separates us. After all, and we think you would agree, there is nothing more important in the world than your children.

Our highest aim is to build trust with our parents and community. Maria Montessori, who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three times, whose work is at the core of our schools' philosophy, did not only tolerate differences but wholeheartedly celebrated them. She viewed her school community's different cultures as a way to bring understanding, caring, and peace to our world.

Help us make sure that our schools continue celebrating our unified community with a goal of helping to raise productive citizens. By doing this, Odyssey will continue to rank at the top of all local schools in academic performance and continue to feel like a home away from home for our students and staff.

Substitutes Needed

Looking for substitutes for all school locations and programs to support our lovely children and community. We welcome your involvement! Substitutes will be provided with paid training and ongoing support. If interested in becoming a sub and participating in substitute training, please contact Dr. Monica Knight, Director of Special Projects, at 321-446-6659 or mknight@greenappleschools.com.

The Farm at Odyssey

The Farm at Odyssey will be in limited operations for the first 9 weeks of school due to the building of the Outdoor Learning Pavilion. Once complete, the new outdoor pavilion will be equipped with Wi-Fi, fans, seating, and white boards to be available for STEAM class-



es to apply their understanding of science, technology, engineering, agriculture, and mathematics standards in real-life, hands-on lessons.

COGNIA Accreditation

This past spring, Green Apple School Management (GA), completed a rigorous review process with our schools and was reaccredited by COGNIA, one of the world's leading education accrediting agencies for K-12 schools. Under the umbrella of GA, each one of our schools are COGNIA accredited. COG-NIA offers a continuous system of improvement through research-based performance standards aimed at achieving measurable and meaningful improvement. COGNIA performance standards link improvement, assessment, and school quality to student and school performance. This multi-year process helps us to see the big picture and set priorities to make meaningful changes to our schools and programs, with your child as the benefactor. GA and our schools performed exceptionally well in the accreditation process this past year and scored 50 points higher than the average accredited school. Hats off to the partnership of a very caring team comprised of Odyssey board members, faculty, and staff; students, parents and community members; and our Green Apple educators and business professionals for a job well done.

AdvancED and Measured Progress are now



Communication Support

I will be working with the Jr/Sr High this year to improve communication. We apologize for some of the startup problems from the campus. Dr. Jackson, Principal, has already been reviewing a document he plans to use to be able to communicate to parents in multiple modalities.

As he works on improving communication from the campus, we ask our parents and families to work on the same. One positive during this time of increased communication ability through social media, is that it gives all of us a voice and ability to help bring about positive change. When errors are made in the school, a parent response on Facebook, allows us to very quickly investigate it to find a solution.

Our aim is to build a partnership with our families, and it is never to upset parents or students. And we get it. Startup can be frustrating, and the school has made some startup errors causing some confusion, but it has also done many things right. Our faculty are feeling very positive about the new school year based upon all the work achieved this summer, and, hopefully, you too will see the benefits as we work through some of the startup challenges.

If you have a concern, please reach out to the school principal directly: Dr. Ed Jackson, Jr/Sr High, jacksone@odysseycharterschool.com; Ms. Shelly Miedona, OPA, miedonas@odysseyprepacademy.com; and Ms. Wendi Nolder, Odyssey Eldron Elementary Campus, nolderw@odysseycharterschools.com.

If that does not solve the issue, I would love to help solve your problem. Please call Ms. Constance (Ortiz), School Founder, at (321) 720-4682 or cortiz@greenappleschools.com. Thank you for your consideration!

Green Apple School Management (GA) and History

I rarely share our behind-the-scenes support for our schools but thought I would today with this beginning of the year communication, for those of you that are interested. Green Apple School Management, is a fully accredited, full-service educational service provider, founded by "yours truly" in 2013. We contracted with the Odyssey Board of Directors to provide our schools "district roots" and many services to support its unique mission for children.

When I founded Odyssey in 1999 in a small church building, it was always our intent to keep the school small, but in a short amount of time, Odyssey became a popular educational choice in our community and historically carried a strong waiting list of potential students. (We carry similar waitlists today.) We then began to consider expansion. I started our first capital campaign to build a larger facility. Having never raised a penny in my life, I was miraculously able to raise millions, which included helping a new law to pass financially benefitting our schools and acquiring a million-dollar land donation from Mr. Cole Goately, Bayside Lakes Development, to build the first "green" building for a school in the State of Florida, which is the Eldron Campus. Later, I was able to guide our nonprofit toward the purchase of the Wyoming Campus offering \$8.4 million for a building that originally cost \$21 million, paving the way for Odyssey Preparatory Academy and the expansion of the Jr/Sr high, which also led to being able to afford and add the new gymnasium and performing arts center.

Having written the original charter school application for Odyssey Charter School, I spent the first half of Odyssey's history as its Founding Executive Director. It was a wonderful experience developing our mission and putting the foundation in place for educational programs and the culture for a unique model. After 10 years, I began to realize that the work was too large and too great for the principals and staff inside the schools. The amount of work impacted our ability to keep our focus on the needs of the child. Because of that need, Green Apple School Management was born.

As an education service provider we are very mission focused upon the development of "green" and healthy, holistic schools. We are very proud of our collaborative leadership and partnership with our school board and schools and the success we have brought to our wonderful community children. The essential elements of our unique and innovative school model include the Green and Healthy School framework (based on the Green Print from the National Green Schools Network), curriculum and instruction on Wellness, Health, and Nutrition and our award-winning healthy cafes, the Montessori Philosophy and the development of a Growth Mindset, creating a culture for learning through Positive Discipline in the Classroom and School, Collaborative Leadership and Professional Learning Communities, and most importantly, Academic Rigor and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture, Mathematics).

Some, but not all, of Green Apple's comprehensive offerings and services include fiscal management of all school and corporate programs; budgeting and forecasting; governance support and compliance; contract management; human resources support; charter school application and contract renewal; accreditation; support with Bus Transportation; support with the National School Lunch Program and development of our healthy cafes; facility development and support; technology guidance; website development; grant solicitation; curriculum and assessment; policy development; safety; academic supports, including new teacher induction; professional development; coaching collaboratives; pre-school/enrichment/before and aftercare/summer camp programming; school leadership training and support; principal development and evaluation; school expansion; risk management; and last but not least, the full and passionate support of the development of Odyssey's unique mission for children within our schools.

Odyssey's 6 Essential Elements - Our Commitment to Shared Beliefs



