



inspired learning in "green" and healthy schools

Summer Newsletter

July 2023

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."
— Margaret Mead

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. Our child-centered programs are selected so that children have multiple opportunities to find and develop their passions.

Message from our Founder

Dear Odyssey Families,

Welcome to the 2023-2024 school year. We thank you for your continued trust and for choosing our schools for your children. If you have not yet received news of registration, please look for your principal's summer newsletter with registration info or contact your school campus for dates and times. Registration begins next week: 7/11 and 7/12 for OCS Jr/Sr; 7/13 OCS Elementary, and 7/18 Odyssey Preparatory Academy.

As Odyssey begins its 25th year of operations, our Silver Jubilee year, we look forward to the great accomplishments and achievements of our students and staff. We are continuing to grow to serve our community as plans for a new Palm Bay campus are underway.

We believe that as parents, selecting a school for your child is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. Choosing a school focused on high academic achievement and strong family values is important. Thank you for choosing Odyssey schools to meet your child's unique needs. We aim to foster our school's mission: We are committed to academic excellence and the education of the whole child.

We look forward to partnering with you to help your children reach their own full and unique potential. In closing, we believe we truly have the most important and rewarding profession in the world and remain honored to serve and educate your children. Thank you for choosing us.

Ms. Constance Ortiz

GA Chief Executive Officer and
Founder of Odyssey Schools

Highlights of Outstanding Academic Achievement at Our Schools

We are pleased to share highlights of our schools' student performance results on the spring 2023 state assessments. This past school year was considered a baseline year for the Florida Department of Education's new standardized tests, and the results for our schools look quite promising. School grades are not expected to be released by the state until the fall and we will send you the information as soon as it is released.

Congratulations to our students, faculty, and staff for their hard work. Below are just a few of the many academic areas in which our schools "shined" that we wanted to share with you. We are very proud of our achievements in academics but are also equally proud of our electives, art, and athletic/sports educators that strive to give our children exceptional educational experiences every day.

Odyssey Charter School Elementary

- ◆ More than 70% of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students at Odyssey Elementary scored a level 3 or above on the Math state assessment which was more than 10% percentile points higher than the district and state averages.
- ◆ 66% of 3rd grade students and more than 70% of the 4th and 5th grade students at Odyssey Elementary scored a level 3 or above on the English Language Arts (ELA) state assessment which was more than 10% percentile points higher than the district and state averages.
- ◆ 75% of the 5th grade students at Odyssey Elementary achieved a level 3 or higher on the Science state assessment.

Odyssey Preparatory Academy

- ◆ Students grades 3, 4, and 5 at Odyssey Preparatory Academy surpassed the district and state averages on the Math state assessment.
 - 65% of the 3rd grade students at Odyssey Preparatory Academy scored a level 3 or above on the Math state assessment which was more than 10% percentile points higher than the district and state averages.
 - 67% of the 4th grade students at Odyssey Preparatory scored a level 3 or above on the Math state assessment which was higher than the district (60) and state (61) averages.
 - 58% of the 5th grade students at Odyssey Preparatory scored a level 3 or above on the Math state assessment which was higher than the district (55) and state (55) averages.
- ◆ 65% of the 4th grade students at Odyssey Preparatory scored a level 3 or above on the ELA state assessment which was higher than the district and state averages.

Odyssey Charter Jr/Sr High School

- ◆ 62% of the 8th grade students at Odyssey Jr/Sr High scored a level 3 or above on the Math state assessment which was more than 10% percentile points higher than the district and state averages.
- ◆ 69% of the Odyssey Jr/Sr High students taking Algebra and 67% of the students taking Geometry scored a level 3 or above which was more than 15% percentile points higher than the district and state averages.
- ◆ 67% of the students taking Geometry state assessments scored a level 3 or above which was more than 15% percentile points higher than the district and state averages.
- ◆ 82% of the Odyssey Jr/Sr High students taking Civics scored a level 3 or above which was more than 15% percentile points higher than the district and state averages.

The Odyssey Way – Five Key Differences

Odyssey schools...

1. Offer a **HOLISTIC** education program.

- ◆ Odyssey schools provide healthy and holistic learning environments designed for children to learn, grow, design, master, explore, practice, and discover the world around them.
- ◆ Odyssey creates natural opportunities for independence, citizenship, accountability, collaboration, and problem-solving for students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 through our educational philosophy which is rooted in the Montessori model.
- ◆ Our teachers are highly trained and supported by Instructional Coaches that work with teachers to develop multi-sensory and developmental learning experiences that engage students through multi-dimensional learning methods.
- ◆ Our students are encouraged to express curiosity and learn through an inquiry approach that lets them learn at their own pace, take time to fully understand each concept, and then demonstrate their learning in multiple ways through application of concepts and skills.
- ◆ Odyssey is not a one-size fits all school. We are constantly evolving and improving our services to meet the ever-changing needs of our society and uniquely talented students.

2. Build **CONFIDENCE** in our students and staff!

- ◆ Odyssey schools recognize that every student learns in a different way and at a different pace. We value, love, and respect each other's ways of being and learning and celebrate the differences and diversity in our students and staff.
- ◆ At Odyssey, each of our students learns how to value themselves, their own abilities, and the abilities of others. They learn healthy ways of developing family and social relationships and how to face difficulties in life and how to overcome them. Our goal is to increase their self-confidence and agency over their own learning.

3. Focus on **HEALTH, WELLNESS, and NUTRITION!**

- ◆ Odyssey's focus on health, wellness and nutrition is designed to help our students reach their full potential through the growth of healthy bodies, minds, and spirit, believing that this will enhance their focus and achievement in academics.
- ◆ Our gardening and farming learning opportunities, healthy café that provide nutritious meals, nutrition lessons, and numerous athletic and physical fitness programs are all important components of Odyssey's innovative "green" and healthy school model that has been recognized at the local, state, and national levels.

4. Provide **ACADEMIC ACCELERATION** for all students!

- ◆ Each Odyssey school provides academic acceleration to students at all grade levels using different acceleration models. In grades K-5, students have acceleration blocks set aside during the day that allow the teachers time to differentiate to meet the needs of all learners, accelerating them from where they are, giving them some freedom and choices in their learning, and encouraging them to question and probe deeply into the content to extend their learning.
- ◆ As early as Kindergarten, children can be recognized as being "gifted or talented" at Odyssey in a program called GATEway (Gifted And Talented Education) program. This unique program supports both students who qualify for the gifted program through specific testing, as well as students who are extremely talented in specific areas. Students selected for the GATEway program are served in a multitude of ways depending on their grade level and unique needs and talents.
- ◆ At the junior high level (grades 6-8), we offer Honors courses in all core areas (Science, Social Studies, English, and Mathematics), as well as in Honors courses in elective areas that focus on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture, the Arts, and Mathematics).
- ◆ At the high school level (grades 9-12), we offer Honors courses in all core areas, Dual Enrollment courses, Advanced Placement courses, that provide early college opportunities through College Board, EFSC, and Florida Tech.

5. Offer a Wide Range of **EXTRA-CURRICULAR OFFERINGS!**

- ◆ Odyssey was able to provide many extra clubs and summer camps this school year and summer due to special federal funding (ESSER). We are elated that we will be provided with those funds again this coming year. Therefore, we will continue to offer free clubs during the school year and summer specialty camps this coming school year. Please note that the funds are more limited this year so seats will be limited. Please make sure to sign up when the information becomes available.
- ◆ This year, Odyssey schools were able to offer Summer Specialty Camps that ranged from science themes to athletic training to fine and performing arts, serving well over 1000 students in grades 1-12. The elementary camps included exciting themes such as Natural Art, Space, Lego Robotics, Cheerleading, STEAM, Wilderness Camp, Photography, and Culinary. The Jr/Sr High camps included areas that helped students succeed in Middle School: 6th Grade Boot Camp, Drama, Orchestra, Athletic Conditioning, Mural Painting, Ceramics, Environmental Science, and Robotics.

Positive Discipline in the Classroom

Positive Discipline in the Classroom (an approach developed by Jane Nelson) has been a cornerstone of our school model since the first Odyssey school was opened in 1999. Our school leaders and staff are deeply committed to developing a positive culture at our schools using this philosophical framework. Nelson's research shows that a well-developed and positive culture leads to increased student learning. By using strategies within the Positive Discipline framework, classroom communities develop mutual respect. Through focused activities and daily class meetings, students develop a sense of belonging and are brought into an active role in the school or classroom problem-solving process. Parents can check out these resources from their schools or visit <https://www.positivediscipline.com/>. For more information on this program, please contact Ms. Charlotte Chase, cchase@greenappleschools.com.



Starting the Year Off Strong!

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. Let's start the year off strong!

Mr. Mike Davis, OCS Jr/Sr High

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Ms. Shelly Miedona, Odyssey Preparatory Academy

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Ms. Wendi Nolder, OCS Elementary

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New Science and Social Studies Curriculum

Odyssey schools are piloting a new science program this year - *elevateScience*® published by Savvas. This hands-on curriculum takes students on science journeys called quests. During each quest, students engage in phenomena-based, real-world storylines. They investigate by participating in highly engaging labs that take them through the steps of scientific exploration.

In addition to the new science curriculum, the Jr/Sr students will also have a new curriculum in social studies. Using *myWorld* published by Savvas, students have access to strong ELA/literacy connections. The lessons promote critical thinking, problem solving, evidence-based reasoning, and communications skills.

elevatescience



Odyssey Charter School Board Votes to Become its own Local Educational Agency (LEA)

The Odyssey Charter School Board of Directors during their most recent board meeting voted to move forward to designate Odyssey Charter School, Inc., as its own Local Educational Agency (LEA). As an LEA, Odyssey Charter School, Inc. is responsible for administering all federal programs for the schools, rather than the local school district. When charter schools become their own LEA, they begin to receive funding that more closely reflects what is received by public schools of their size. Odyssey's increased funding for federal programs will help us to continue to provide Instructional Coaches to support teachers and Instructional Interventionists to support the academic needs of our students. Becoming our own LEA will allow us additional funding and flexibility in academic programming. We look forward to this new journey!

Parent Volunteer Opportunities

We invite you to take part in some exciting parent volunteer opportunities. Every family is expected to give 18 volunteer hours per student or 25 hours for a family with two or more students per school year. There are numerous ways to volunteer that will create a wonderful, educational experience for you and your child. Here are just a few opportunities:

Read Aloud Club (by Jim Trelease):

The Read Aloud Club is primarily for K-5th grades but can extend into high school. It is simple. You read aloud exciting and engaging literature to your child for 10-15 minutes a night in the comfort of your own home, several nights a week. Find a book that you enjoyed as a child and read enthusiastically to your child. Listening comprehension will grow, and we are confident that they will never forget the memories that occur through this activity. To earn volunteer hours, a list of recommended books and a log can be found on the school's website and can be turned into your child's homeroom teacher. You can also choose to make arrangements with our media coordinators to visit our school libraries, if you are looking for special books to read aloud.

Extra-Curricular Activities:

We are looking for qualified parents and community members to broaden our ability to reach even more students with engaging clubs after school. Clubs at our elementary schools generally last nine weeks and cover a particular skill such as gardening, chess, yoga, healthy cuisine, basketball skill-building, crochet, and more - all talents are invited. At the Jr/Sr High School, we have the same expectations, except clubs can last longer. Clubs typically last for a semester or for the entire year. Please reach out to the Activities Coordinator on each campus for information on Extra-curricular Activities. Finger printing, a background check, and a one-hour training on guidelines for extracurricular activities and behavioral expectations are required before being selected to teach any extra-curricular offerings.

Odyssey Charter Elementary and Odyssey Preparatory Academy

Nina A. Lucchini-Memoli, MVG Assistant Director

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Phone: 321-733-0442 ext. 215

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Odyssey Charter Jr/Sr High School

Amanda Encarnacion, Jr/Sr High Activities Coordinator

Email: EncarnacionA@odysseycharterschool.com

Phone: 321-345-4117

• Veterans' Day Ceremony, Fathers' Tea, Parents as Partners Meetings, Field Trips and Annual 5k:

Plan some volunteer hours by attending some of these annual events with your children. More information about these events and how you can support the school will be provided in the future.

• 2023 Graduating Class Committee:

If you would like to join a Senior Graduating Class parent committee, please contact Amanda Encarnacion, Jr/Sr High Activities Coordinator, at EncarnacionA@odysseycharterschool.com. Attending committee meetings will count toward your volunteer hours.

Welcome, Ms. Suzette Jewell-Ventura



We are excited to welcome Ms. Suzette Jewell-Ventura as the Coordinator of Literacy and Gifted and Talented Education Services for Green Apple School Management. Ms. Jewell-Ventura has her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, master's degree in Reading, and specialist degree in Educational Leadership. In 2016, Ms. Jewell-Ventura was named a Florida High Impact Teacher, a title designated for exceptional educators that make a positive and significant impact on student achievement.

Ms. Jewell-Ventura has been a member of the Odyssey family for more than eight years serving as teacher, teacher mentor, instructional coach, lead teacher, and most recently, as the Gifted and Talented Education (GATEway) teacher and coordinator. Ms. Jewell-Ventura has grown the GATEway program by assisting in the development of a system-wide curriculum that provides integrated learning experiences to students. She is excited about expanding this work as a member of the Green Apple team, as well as supporting the development of high-quality literacy programs at all levels.

Ms. Jewell-Ventura was born and raised in Miami and is the youngest of three children. She treasures her family, and lives with her husband, who is fire fighter, and her "fur baby" Sophie. She believes in "working together, giving our very best, and having fun learning from one another to achieve greatness." We are happy to have her!

Charter School Study

Stanford University Finds That Students in Charter Schools, On Average, Perform Better Academically Than Those Attending Traditional Public Schools

On June 6, 2023, The Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University published, *As A Matter of Fact, National Charter School Study III*, a study that released findings related to charter schools that included the following:

- ◆ 36% of charter schools now have stronger annual gains than their local traditional public school in both reading and math, while weaker gains than traditional public-school alternatives have shrunk to 17% in reading and 25% in math.
- ◆ The improvement in student learning in charter schools comes primarily from existing schools improving over time; positive learning gains from newly opened charter schools are a smaller influence.
- ◆ Charter Management Organizations open new network schools that are stronger in reading and math than the typical charter school in our study, demonstrating their ability to scale academically successful schools.

Cyber Bullying

We have had several experiences with cyberbullying impacting our schools and students during the last school year. Cyberbullying includes posting or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior. We all want cyberbullying to stop, which is one of the reasons reporting cyberbullying is so important. If your child feels like they are being cyberbullied by another student at our schools, or they are witnessing another student being cyberbullied, please encourage them to, first and foremost, let you know and then to report to their counselor. Working together, we can discipline, educate, counsel, and protect our students from this type of behavior.

As a special note, we wanted to relay to our community that we rarely respond when our schools or employees of our schools or management team are personally attacked or cyber-bullied. Our governing board and leadership teams believe that our focus should be on remaining positive, professional, and dedicated to our goal of educating your children. We do not feel it is a productive use of our time to respond to posts that are intentionally created to mislead, deceive, or harm our schools or personnel. As stated in our schools' mission, we aim to work in partnership with our families and our community to help each child reach their full potential.

Odyssey schools are committed to establishing trust amongst all stakeholders and developing a positive learning environment for our children. Please know we are always available to answer any questions or address any concerns regarding our schools and our management company. For questions or concerns, we invite you to reach out to Dr. Monica Knight, Director of Special Projects at mknight@greenappleschools.com.

Green Apple School Management

Green Apple School Management (Green Apple) is a charter school support and service organization, fully accredited by Cognia, the world's largest academic accrediting agency for K-12 schools, colleges, and universities. Green Apple schools improve the lives of students through a Whole Child/Whole School approach to education, thereby providing programs and environments that encourage students to develop their full and unique potential to realize the highest levels of academic excellence and achievement.

Green Apple provides a wide array of services that cover three primary domains: Mission/Academics, Business/Finance, and New Growth and Development. The Green Apple team is made up of over twenty management professionals providing multiple support functions in many areas including mission, human resource coordination, governmental and board compliance, technology support, marketing, grant writing and management, finance, bookkeeping, budget development, financial forecasting and reporting, education, coaching, curriculum support, new teacher support, professional learning and staff development, student services, leadership development, data analysis, facilities development, and new growth and expansion. For more information on Green Apple, please contact Dr. Monica Knight, Director of Special Projects at mknight@greenappleschools.com.



Odyssey Summer Camp Highlights

