



PALO ALTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

25 Churchill Avenue • Palo Alto, California 94306

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

GINNI DAVIS - Associate Superintendent

650/329-3709

Fax 650/326-7463

February 2011

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Middle School General Information Meetings for parents and guardians of current 5th graders will be held at each middle school on February 23, 2010 at 7:00 PM. All three of the middle schools in Palo Alto offer a high quality, comprehensive program for students in grades 6, 7, and 8.

*In addition to the comprehensive middle school program, Palo Alto Unified School District offers the following **OPTIONAL** three-year **Choice Programs** for which a student may apply. *This letter and enclosed information are for those parents who are interested in having their student apply for a Choice Program. **If you are not interested in enrolling your child in an optional Choice Program please disregard this information.****

Students placed in a three-year Choice Program will be assigned for grades 6-8 at the middle school where the program is located. Students will remain assigned to their neighborhood high school regardless of where they attend middle school. In all instances if the number of applicants exceeds the available space in any choice program, students will be randomly selected, except for sibling priority for students who will have a concurrent sibling in the program next year. If there are insufficient applications, the program may not be offered.

- Connections** for grades 6-8 (program located at **J.L. Stanford Middle School**)
- Spanish Immersion** . . for grades 6-8 (program located at **Jordan Middle School**)
- Direct Instruction** . . . for grades 6-8 (program located at **Terman Middle School**)

If you are interested in enrolling your student in one of the choice programs, please plan to attend the relevant information meeting listed below. Middle school principals and teachers from Connections, Direct Instruction, and Spanish Immersion will describe their programs and respond to your questions. Information on each program, including important notes, is included in this packet (Attachment A).

Information meetings are scheduled as follows:

March 1, 7:00 p.m.	Connections	J. L. Stanford MS Cafetorium
March 2, 7:00 p.m.	Spanish Immersion	Jordan MS Library
March 2, 7:00 p.m.	Direct Instruction	Terman MS Cafetorium

After hearing about the programs, if you wish to enroll your student in one of the choice programs, please complete the application included in this packet (Attachment B) and return it to the PAUSD District Office **no later than Friday, March 18, 4:45 p.m.** All applications returned by the deadline will receive the same priority status.

Letters regarding program status and lottery results (placement or wait list) will be mailed from this office by **April 8, 2011**. You must accept or decline the placement no later than **April 22, 2011**.

Sincerely,

Ginni Davis

MIDDLE SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAMS

Additional and more specific information about each program will be provided at the Middle School Choice meetings.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION PROGRAM

The Direct Instruction Program emphasizes basic academic skills and the acquisition of knowledge, where teachers:

- *Provide the majority of instruction in the core academic subjects* in the discrete, single-subject areas of English, mathematics, social studies and science (as distinguished from an “interdisciplinary” approach, where multiple subjects may be taught in combination).
- *Give systematic, sequential instruction in the core academic subjects.* Teachers have a commitment to spend the majority of class time on direct-instruction and explicit teaching in which the teacher guides the lesson and responds directly to questions (as distinguished from “coaching” or “facilitating”).
- *Emphasize the accountability of individual students* (as distinguished from “groups of students”) for scholastic achievement.

SPANISH IMMERSION PROGRAM

The Spanish Immersion Program is based on a two-way bilingual model in which English speaking students and native Spanish speakers are taught together using Spanish and English instruction to develop bilingual academic fluency. The goals of the District’s Middle School Spanish Immersion Program are:

- *To enhance development toward bilingual proficiency and literacy in Spanish and English.*
- *Academic achievement at or above grade level in both languages.*
- *To enhance positive cross-cultural attitudes.*

NOTE: Students are eligible to enroll in the Spanish Immersion Middle School program if they have successfully completed the elementary Spanish Immersion program at Escondido or if they can demonstrate grade level bilingual fluency in Spanish and English.

CONNECTIONS (INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING) PROGRAM

The Connections Program focuses on project-based learning and mirrors the models developed for the GATE community stressing choice and responsibility. Through challenging, innovative and relevant teaching practices students become well prepared life-long learners.

Teaching for Thinking: Connecting Hearts and Minds. Through project-based learning, students gain and practice the higher order and critical thinking skills necessary for analyzing, creating and problem-solving.

- *Teachers as Coaches/Mentors: Connecting Students and Teachers.* Experienced teachers act as coaches or facilitators and provide personalized feedback and written evaluations. Students take responsibility for their own work and progress.

- *Meaningful, Challenging Curriculum: Connecting the Curriculum.* Using differentiated curriculum following state standards and District guidelines, students solve problems using real world applications. Topics of study are enhanced with relevant field trips, guest speakers and current events.

- *Collaboration and Cooperation: Connecting the Learning Community.* Students work in self-directed groups fostering collaborative learning and positive social interactions. Students develop their skills as leaders, facilitators and collaborators.

- *Parent/Teacher/Child Community: Connecting Home and School.* Parents are encouraged to participate in the classroom. Teachers are open and accessible to parents. The parents, teacher and child are all involved as active educators.

In the Connections Program homework will be given relevant to class assignments. Long-term projects will frequently need to be worked on at home. For more information, please visit www.jlsconnections.org.

PALO ALTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
MIDDLE SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAM APPLICATION

DEADLINE: MARCH 18, 2011

Complete this form ONLY if you want your student in an optional choice program.

This application must be received at the Palo Alto Unified School District Office, 25 Churchill Avenue, by or before 4:45 p.m., on Friday, March 18, 2011. The application may be mailed (Middle School Choice Program, 25 Churchill Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94306), emailed <dillon@pausd.org>, faxed (650-326-7463), or hand-delivered to the Receptionist at the PAUSD Office.

All applications returned by the deadline will receive the same priority status. Middle School random selection lotteries are open to the public and will be held on Thursday, March 31, at 1:00 p.m., in at the District office at 25 Churchill Avenue.

Student Name (if missing or incorrect above)

Parent/Guardian Name

Address (if missing or incorrect above)

Phone Number Day Evening

Email (optional)

THREE-YEAR Program Options (See Attachment A for program descriptions.) Check only one.

J. L. Stanford

Jordan

Terman

Connections

Spanish Immersion Students must qualify and space must be available.

Direct Instruction

Please check if your student will have a sibling in the choice program next year, in 2011-12. Sibling's name

Parent/Guardian Signature Date Student Signature Date