

Information for Prospective Parents at Joaquin Miller School

Thank you for your interest in Joaquin Miller School. Enrolling in kindergarten can be a confusing process. This page is intended to give you general information about the registration process, as well as information specifically about Joaquin Miller.

FAQ's About Joaquin Miller School

Question: What makes Joaquin Miller an exceptional school?

Answer: Walk onto the Joaquin Miller campus, and you'll notice a few things right off the bat. A wide variety of student work lines every hallway. Parents are always on their way to or from volunteering in the classroom or simply working together on school improvement projects. The school is beautifully maintained—from the parent-created garden in the front of the school to the Ecology Club's garden in the back, built with the help of the community-based Hillside Gardeners. Go into the classrooms, and you'll find students stimulated by a curriculum that focuses on the basics while integrating visual and performing arts, social science, and computer skills. Students thrive, thanks to the behind-the-scenes work of a dedicated principal and teaching staff that works collaboratively to ensure that every student is given an equal opportunity to learn and succeed.

Question: How does Joaquin Miller handle students with different needs?

Answer: The Joaquin Miller philosophy about special needs and gifted students stresses inclusion and flexibility of teacher curriculum that lends itself to tailoring for students' specific needs. Parent volunteers and aides are indispensable in providing one-on-one help for students as well as working with above-level students, freeing teachers to work with kids who need more attention.

Question: What type of sports or physical education are offered during the school day?

Answer: Students' gross-motor development is achieved through a well-balanced physical education program through a contract with Rhythm and Moves. This learning extends beyond the official "P.E." period into recess, where kids learn a variety of playground games while honing their conflict-resolution skills.

Question: How is art incorporated into the school day?

Answer: Art is an important part of the curriculum at Joaquin Miller. We have on

our staff teachers trained specifically to teach art, and we also feature “on-site” field trips with the Junior Center of Art and Science, which teaches children how to paint “in the style” of famous artists. We also incorporate Monart techniques in the classroom, and all teachers strive to incorporate art into the rest of the classroom curriculum. For example, children doing a unit on mammals will not only read, write and talk about mammals, but they will create posters as well.

Question: What kind of music education is offered during the school day?

Answer: All Joaquin Miller students participate in Khadra dance and this year, African Dance is a new addition to the music curriculum. The PTA funds recorder classes for all 3rd graders. Additional music education is offered through the after-school enrichment program (see below).

Question: How diverse is the school, and is diversity reflected in the curriculum?

Answer: A great source of pride at Joaquin Miller is our dedication to multicultural education, as evidenced by our adopted mission to promote understanding and respect for each person's self-worth, human rights, ethnic and cultural heritage and to eliminate all forms of discrimination through multicultural activities and instructional assistance. Over the years, teachers and parents have developed multicultural curricula and instructional activities designed to cultivate and maintain high academic standards:

- 1st Grade holds “Asian-American Day” to celebrate the contributions of Asian-Americans from various lands through music, food, arts and crafts.
- 2nd Grade has “The Feast,” in which students re-enact the First Thanksgiving between Native Americans and Pilgrims in full period costume at a local park. Kids participate in large-scale food preparation as well as arts and games.
- 3rd Grade observes “Early Oakland,” including the Rancho Period, Spanish/Mexican influences and city of Oakland history.
- 4th Grade celebrates “African – American Day,” studying the African-American immigration to California in the 1930s as well as the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.
- 5th Grade’s “Colonial America Day” incorporates video production and computer graphics into a study of the founding of our country, with students taking on the role of actual colonists.

Question: Does Joaquin Miller offer any foreign-language instruction?

Answer: Foreign-language instruction is not offered as part of the regular

curriculum, but Spanish is regularly offered through the school's enrichment program (below).

Question: Does Joaquin Miller offer any enrichment activities?

Answer: Enrichment classes are offered, for a fee, to supplement and enrich the education of our children. The classes in this program enhance the learning experiences of those students who choose to participate. Classes are presented in several sessions. Some classes are repeated, while others are only offered once a year. Registration fees vary and are individually set for each class. Class offerings change each session and may include, but not be limited to foreign languages, drama, visual arts, sewing, carpentry, music, cooking, science, photography, and chess. The PTA Music Program is coordinated by the Chairperson of the PTA Music Committee, assisted by other volunteers. Students in grades 3-5 learn to play musical instruments, some of which may be provided by the school district, upon availability. Students present and perform in musical concerts, twice during the school year. After-school fee-based sports classes give students an opportunity to practice their skills at playground games as well as other sports, while building teamwork and self-esteem.

Question: How active is the PTA?

Answer: The Joaquin Miller PTA is an extremely active parent organization that works closely with the principal and teachers at the school to ensure the highest quality education experience for our children. At Joaquin Miller we have traditionally enjoyed a membership rate of about 95% of our families. Membership is obtained through paying District PTA dues. PTA meetings are held at 7 p.m., on the third Thursday of each month of the school year, and all members of the community are invited to attend.

The PTA funds a number of important programs for the school, including:

- Our computer lab
- Our library
- Rhythm and Moves (physical education)
- Third Grade Recorder class
- Cultural enrichment and assemblies
- Teachers' assistants and supplies in the classrooms

Some of the notable recent accomplishments of the PTA have been:

Purchase of 20 Macs for the Computer Lab

- Installation of mini blinds in all classrooms
- Purchase of a digital kiln for the school
- Purchase of playground equipment and matting for the play yards

- Design and planting of the garden in the front of the school

The PTA raises funds through a variety of sources, including donations, eScrip and memberships. The single most important fund-raiser is the Annual Fall Auction, which last year was responsible for 77% of the PTA's income. Our budget for the school year is generally in the \$110-120,000 range.

The work of the PTA is carried out through its Executive Board and through numerous program committees and chairs.

Question: Are there any other parent groups?

Answer: The Dad's Club, as its name indicates, is composed of fathers of Joaquin Miller Students. Although it is an informally organized group, it has a prevailing presence in the Joaquin Miller Family and community. Members of the Dad's Club contribute their time, effort and resources to Joaquin Miller in many ways. Traditionally, the Dad's Club sells hot dogs, polish sausages, soft drinks, and water at the Walkathon and the Yard Sale. Funds raised through these sales are spent on improvements to the school facilities. Dad's Club members have built and repaired such things as playground equipment, installed matting for the playground as well as building shelves and bookcases in the classrooms. They also assist in setting up, tearing down and storing booths and stands for events such as Walk-A-Thon and Yard Sale.

Question: Does Joaquin Miller offer any opportunities for kids to learn about community service?

Answer: One of the most visible community outreach efforts is the Books for the Barrios program at the school, in which kids are actively involved in collecting books for children from lower income communities. We also participate in food drives and usually adopt a school from a low-income community around the holidays. In past years, Safeway scrip has been distributed to families in need. Students occasionally take on other community activities, such as creek restoration projects. We also have an active environmental club for upper grade students.

Question: What kind of before and after school childcare is provided at Joaquin Miller?

Answer: Adventure Time (AT) provides activities for children before and after school in the areas of arts, crafts, sports, games, music, dance, drama, cooking, and help with homework as well as high quality extended day care in a safe, nurturing environment. Activities are centered around bi-weekly themes. Children also have the opportunity for relaxation and quiet activities after being in school all day. AT has a daily schedule that allows for spontaneity and the varying

individual needs of the children. Hours are 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., with a minimum of 5 hours per week. Costs vary depending on the number of hours a child attends. For more information, go to the AT website at <http://adventure-time.com/>.

FAQ's About Kindergarten Registration

Question: How old must my child be to enroll in kindergarten?

Answer: California law does not require parents to enroll their children in school until age six. However, schools must admit children into kindergarten that have attained legal age. Legal age is defined as being five years of age on or before December 2nd, or four years and nine months of age on or before September 1st of the school year. Admission must occur at the beginning of the school year or whenever they move into the school district.

Question: How do I know which school is my neighborhood school?

Answer: Go to <http://mapstacker.ousd.k12.ca.us/> and enter your address to determine your attendance area.

Question: How do I register my child?

Answer: The OUSD "Options" enrollment window for all entering students is December 10, 2008 – January 15, 2009. You may list up to *six school choices in order of preference*. "Options" enrollment materials will be available in all OUSD schools by the end in November.

Below is enrollment information from the OUSD website:

Turn in your Elementary School Options form along with address verification, age verification and proof of immunizations.

The Options application window occurs between December 10th – January 15th. Applications submitted any time during that window will be considered for the initial assignment lottery. There is NO priority given for applications submitted earlier than others within the window.

You will be able to submit your form **in person** (1) at the Student Assignment and Bilingual Testing Office, or (2) at any OUSD elementary school.

Incomplete applications will not be processed.

Applications received after the window cannot be processed in the lottery, and will be considered after the lottery in the order received.

Submit the following documentation at the time of application.

You will need to bring three pieces of documentation verifying your address and one piece of documentation verifying your child's age (and grade if necessary) when you submit your form. **All documents must be original.** No photocopies will be accepted. Required documentation is:

- Age verification documentation (all new students): Families may either provide a Birth Certificate, a passport, an I-94, a transcript or a report card from a California school as verification of their child's age.
- Grade level verification: Families need to provide a transcript, promotion certificate, or the child's most recent report card to verify grade level.
- Verification of residence: Students must have three of the following documents with their parent's, guardian's or caregiver's name and address:

- ◊ A utility bill dated within 45 days: PG &E, EBMUD

- ◊ In combination only, automobile registration and automobile insurance.

These documents must be provided together.

- ◊ Homeowner's/renter's insurance policy

- ◊ Lease agreement with owner's documentation

- ◊ Property tax statement. – Current property tax bill from Alameda County Tax Collectors' Office.

- ◊ Official letter from a social services/government agency within 45 days.

- ◊ Transitional families only: Transitional families reside at a non-permanent address such as a motel/hotel, shelter, car, or are doubled up with relatives or friends. Transitional families who are unable to establish a permanent residence can go to the Transitional Students and Families Program in Portable 15 at 1025 2nd avenue for residency verification and assistance.

- Verification of custody: parent's, guardian's or caregiver's California driver's license or official California ID Card from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) in conjunction with documents in form of Birth Certificate, guardianship papers or court documents must be used for verification of custody.

Does it matter when I turn in my application during the Options window?

No. All applications turned in between December 10, 2007 and January 15, 2008 are processed at the same time and there is no priority given to applications submitted early. In fact, parents should spend some time researching their Options before submitting the application, to ensure that their top choices are schools that they would be happy to attend and are able to easily transport their student(s) to. Parents/guardians are encouraged to turn in applications prior to the final deadline of January 15, 2008 to make sure that their application is complete with all the appropriate documentation and is ready for on-time submission.

Question: Is any additional paperwork required?

Answer: After you register during the OUSD Options window, you will receive a packet with a variety of forms, including emergency information that you will need to fill out and return before your child can start school. The packet will contain complete instructions.

Question: What kind of shots does my child need before enrolling in kindergarten?

Answer: The California School Immunization Law requires that children be up-to-date on their immunizations (shots) to attend school or childcare. Diseases like chickenpox, measles, and whooping cough spread quickly, so children need to be protected before they enter. Most children need booster shots before starting kindergarten. A varicella (chickenpox) requirement for kindergarten entry and child care attendance went into effect July 1, 2001. You will need your child's Immunization Record for your child's registration packet. It must show the date your child was given each required shot. If you do not have an Immunization Record or your child has not received all required shots, call your doctor or local health department now for an appointment.

Question: Will my child need to be assessed or interviewed?

Answer: Joaquin Miller's kindergarten teachers conduct short (10-minute) assessments. The school designates several days in April and/or May for kindergarten screening. It provides an opportunity for you and your child to visit and to give the school information about your child. During the screening, your child will participate in informal activities allowing the staff to compare your child's progress with the normal range of development in his or her age group. Information from the assessment will be shared with you by your child's kindergarten teacher so that the most appropriate activities can be planned for your child. You can ask questions and get information about preparing your child for school. Appointments for assessments can be made starting in the spring by calling the school at 510-879-1420.

Question: I don't want my child to go to my neighborhood school. How can I register for another school?

Answer: The OUSD "Options" enrollment window for all entering students is December 10, 2008 – January 15, 2009. You may list up to *six school choices in order of preference*. "Options" enrollment materials will be available in all OUSD schools by the end in November. Submit all completed paperwork to any Oakland Public elementary school during the Options enrollment window.

Still Have Questions?

We encourage you to explore the rest of Joaquin Miller's website to learn more about the school.

- Review past copies of the *Walkie Talkie*, the biweekly school newsletter.
- Download the Parent Involvement Handbook for more detailed information about the school.
- The OUSD website: <http://webportal.ousd.k12.ca.us/> has an *Executive Summary School Accountability Report Card* including STAR tests results and much more information.

If you still have questions, email newparents@joaquinmiller.org.