2014 PARENT COMMENTS

2013-2014 School Year - Signed Parent Comments:

I just want to tell you that I've been a teacher for 35 years and when I say your kindergarten and first grade are the best I've ever seen, that's saying something. I volunteer every week, alternating between my two grandchildren's classrooms, and I love what I see. Carol Bleakley, OTA Grandparent-Volunteer
Dear Tom and Caren, As educational professionals saddled with the incredible task of opening and running an elementary school responsible for the education and safety of two hundred small children, I realize how much you have on your plate. Not the least of which is hearing from parents, both positive and negative feedback. I realize as a parent I may at one point be on the other end of this feedback, in one way or the other. And as "teacher, I have at many times fielded both types of feedback myself. This why I think it is so' important to take time out to let you both what an incredible asset you have with Miss Pitcher as a first grade teacher. I know I'm not the first to sing her praises and I certainly won't be the last. And you know better than anyone how good she is, but, man, is she good! From creating a challenging academic curriculum to bonding a fairly squirmy class into a listening machine, she is on top of everything she does. Shana is hands down one of the best teachers I have ever seen in action. Her positive approach to teaching is premeditated, consistent and educated. She is challenging with the perfect amount of friendly. I respect, admire and completely trust her with the charge of my son's educational and personal well being. Not even half way through the year, she has done more for those 28 kids than I have seen many people do in years! There are few things I have loved more in my life than to witness true learning. Not just sitting still and following directions, but truly inspired make-you-a-better-person, I-will-remember-that-class-for the- rest-of-my-life, kind of learning. TO be a part of a moment like this is incredible, and something I had always hoped my son would experience. Thanks to Miss Pitcher he now has. We have talked in the past, and I so appreciate your honesty and

willingness to work together to solve any issue that may arise. I promise you, if there is ever an issue I will always be a part of the solution as you have always been.
However, this letter is simply to commend you on an amazing hire and show
appreciation for all that Miss Pitcher is doing. I tell her often enough how great she is, but I think it's important to tell you both too, because, well, it's nice to hear good things!

Thank you for all that you are doing at OTA.
Sincerely, Tricia Ornelas

I just visited my 1st grade grandchildren and was amazed at what they are studying, from fossils to Mayan history and early civilization.The projects my 4th grade grandson has done are mind boggling. He is doing things we did in high school in the 50's. B.D. Vogelzang

I am writing to express my gratitude for all you have done for our daughter Zoe and to express my positive impression of OTA and both Ms. Christensen and Mr. Major.

As you are aware I was fortunate enough to have attended the Yosemite trip as a parent chaperone. Prior to the trip I was always informed by Zoe that Ms. Christensen was a great and nurturing instructor but I had no idea until I went on this trip.

Both Ms. Christensen and Mr. Major went well beyond what was expected of them to make every child feel comfortable, safe and truly cared for. They both were up first every morning cooking breakfast and the last ones in bed each night because they made sure each and every child had everything they needed to sleep well. They both sacrificed their own comfort for the benefit of the kids. Their positive tone and knowledge throughout the trip made everyone feel comfortable, cared for and helped developed an appreciation of nature that even I had never considered.

I have never experienced a classroom that had so much cohesion, concern for others, especially their classmates, desire to learn and contribute to the discussion at hand and as a result I am encouraged to know that these kids are well prepared for the next chapter in their

lives, both from an academic standpoint and the development of good people.

I have experienced many instructors in my life time, both during my schooling and I have been actively involved in all three of my kids academics. It is apparent to me that both Ms. Christensen and Mr. Major love what they do for a living. They are role models for the kids, they put their hearts into their jobs and they will sacrifice themselves unselfishly for the benefit of their students. I have only encountered instructors like Ms. Christensen and Mr. Major, twice in my 20 years of schooling.

Zoe and I are truly thankful for such a positive experience. Zoe and I will remember this trip for the rest of our lives.

As a result of Mr. Major, Ms. Christensen, Ms. Curry, Mr. Cohick and everyone else Zoe encountered at OTA, including yourself, she is prepared for whatever challenges she may face both at OLP next year and in her lifetime.

The formula that you have created at this school works. Zoe has expressed to me in the past that “school here is easy because it is fun.” and I have yet to encounter anything better in my lifetime from any public school or private school.

Thank you and please keep it going.

Sincerely yours, Larry J. Sidiropoulos, Esq.

2013-2014 School Year - Anonymous Parent Comments:

Our neighborhood school was unacceptable, and not a good fit for our kids. We were going to stretch our budget almost to a breaking point to have them attend private school. Thankfully, we "won the lottery" and were chosen for this wonderful public charter school. The Core Knowledge curriculum is thorough and does a great job of building on knowledge gained in prior grades. The "extracurricular" things like art, music, and character building have been incorporated

into the regular curriculum. Kids are inspired and challenged. The parents have a say but don't run the show. The teachers are dedicated and resourceful. Overall, it is a happy, creative learning environment. Every staff person knows my kids' names. My smart-but-shy daughter has come out of her shell and is proud to present her projects in front of her class. I would grade this school as an A+.
We have been at the school from the its start and it has been terrific for our son. The small size of the school and the caring administration have been wonderful. Our son gets overwhelmed by too many people and this was a perfect match. The administration and teachers all know and greet him every day. He feels welcome at the school and is comfortable speaking his mind because he knows everyone's contributions are welcome at the school. He is doing well academically, better than at other schools because he can stay on task in the smaller class room. The science lab is great, much better than his old school where the science class was so big they never got to do any experiments or interesting projects. The teachers are on point and do a super job both teaching and providing support for the kids. Having one class per grade and one teacher per grade makes all the difference. We will miss OTA next year when our son transitions to high school.
Old Town Academy (OTA) offers an intimate, safe, and nurturing environment for students. My child was being bullied at his previous middle school. At OTA, there is zero tolerance for this type of behavior and the staff/teachers know each child. Teaching is tailored as much as possible to the students' learning style and level of understanding.
OTA may not the school for everyone. But I almost laughed out loud when I read that the teachers don t care about students that is the very thing that makes OTA so special, the do care. To prove it both years I have been here I have had at least three teachers stay after school on their own time to do work with me. However I do agree that OTA will accept low quality work. I could get away with turning in the same quality work in 5th grade as now in 8th. That led me to be frustrated when I first came to OTA. The fact that they seem to care more about the quantity than the quality. But really if you kid is willing to put in the effort than the results are unbelievable. In short if your child is not self-driven and does not push them self, then you child does not belong at OTA.
We've been at this school for 3 years, and experienced grades K-4.

It's not perfect - what school is? There are improvements to be made. However, the last two years have each had wonderful, surprising levels of growth in educational offerings. Wonderful to see a school that is nimble and adapts. A school that identifies faults, moves to solutions on improving those faults. There are times when I have a concern, comment or suggestion and I have a friendly, open and honest conversation - with a teacher or a staff person. Some of my suggestions have been immediately implemented! Some teachers teach closer to Core Knowledge than others. It would be nice as the school moves forward to see some teacher development. While I do see a core group of "super parent volunteers", I haven't felt a "clique". Also, for those families that didn't find what they wanted at OTA, find out which grade their child was in, and whether your child is going into that same grade. Overall, I'm very happy with my children's school. I frequently wonder at how happy every member of my family is - my husband, both of our kids and finally, me.
Two years in and my kids are doing great. This school may not be for everyone as I have seen some disgruntled reviews. Hopefully those parents have found a better fit for them and their kids. As for our family, this school has been a great experience for our kids. This year OTA is implementing character coaching based on researched traits for success and happiness in life. They are learning that good grades are nice but that being the best you can personally be is even better. Another addition this year is orchestra for all kids from 5th grade up. The programs this school has integrated with the basic California educational requirements is to be applauded. We are so proud this school does not "teach to the state test" and still scored a 901. It's a challenging workload for the kids but, at least for mine, it's paying off. To people who have commented the school is run like a business. I don't have a problem with that. The administration gets grants and much needed funding to keep moving forward. In just two years it's astounding what they have done along with a lot of dedicated parent volunteers. The school isn't perfect but it's really delivering for my kids.
ota is an out of the box learning environment. when i evaluate schools, i not only look at reviews and testing scores, i tour and listen to my instincts on the type of fit for my kids. this school is an amazing fit for my girls. i feel so lucky to have found it. —Submitted by a parent
In need of documented processes that incorporates checks and

balances, run by the parents, and not the Director's Crew for [OTA Parent Foundation] Board Members.
I love OTA! I am more than satisfied with the quality of my children's education, the dedication of the faculty and staff, the hands on learning approach and core knowledge curriculum. ALL of the families and kids that I have met and worked with are also as dedicated to the school and love it as much as I. Therefore, I was very surprised to see, a few reviews were so rancorous and petty. No single entity is "perfect" and for everyone. It would be foolish to believe that, however, the OTA faculty and staff are constantly striving to find the best and most effective teaching and learning atmosphere- if something doesn't work they discard it, but if it does, they strive to perfect it! I know that they "bend over backwards" to help kids that are struggling. I certainly hope this disgruntled parent, if so unhappy with the school, has with drawn her child because there are MANY kids and families that are wishing a spot would open up for them! . During the school year, OTA usually runs a tour once a week- call, make an appointment and see for yourself. OTA is a phenomenal place! I sincerely hope your child is lucky enough to attend!