

# **Paradise Charter Middle School**

## **Model Programs and Practices**

### **District Information**

- CD (County District) Code: 0461536112999
- County: Butte
- District (Local Educational Agency): Paradise Charter Middle

### **Demographics**

- Enrollment: 144
- Location Description: Suburban

### **Overview**

The motto of Paradise Charter Middle School (PCMS) sums up what makes this school unique in three simple words: Small but Mighty. Established in 1995, PCMS was the 79th school to receive charter-status in the state. Since opening in 1995, PCMS has maintained its small size, growing from 96 to 156 students by 2011, yet has retained the original vision of its founders.

Virtues and character development are key focuses across the curriculum at PCMS. All stakeholders work together to create a school culture that supports development of vital non-cognitive skills such as integrity, perseverance, and kindness. PCMS also provides students with a rigorous curriculum that meets California's Common Core State Standards.

PCMS supports learning through rigorous coursework and diverse instructional methods. Teachers work to build positive relationships with students in order to apply effective teaching methods for each student. High academic achievement is the expectation, and teachers provide clear feedback throughout the learning process. Students are explicitly taught how to communicate with partners and in small groups, making student-to-student collaboration a powerful practice. Teachers design projects to reach multiple learning styles to inspire a passion for learning. A variety of assessments across the curriculum ensure that learning goals are attainable.

Although small, PCMS is a place where extraordinary growth takes place. Through exploration and collaboration, students develop into proficient thinkers who can discern the relevance of historical events, scientific principles, and mathematical concepts, and apply them to their own lives. Students learn the value of virtuous behavior and seek experiences that will help them grow in character. Staff works together to create an

environment in which every student who completes the three year program has the opportunity for personal and academic growth and leave well-prepared for their future. This is what we refer to as the “three year project” when we speak to incoming families. Success hinges on a dedicated staff with a shared teaching philosophy: to create an environment that allows students to pursue intellectual and social success within a culture that emphasizes character development. Staff strives to make personal connections with students that will inspire passion for learning.

A spirit of freedom and trust among all parties at PCMS allows for this philosophy to flourish. PCMS administration and board of directors create an environment in which teachers and students can thrive. This level of trust extends from families as well, giving staff the freedom to engage students in innovative and challenging lessons. The high level of trust among families and staff supports this process as well. The relationship between teacher and student is also built on trust. This environment of trust and freedom is what allows all members of the academic family at PCMS to grow and thrive.

### **Name of the Model Programs and Practices**

- Three-Year Plan: Fostering Thinking and Character Development

### **Strategies are used to implement the Model Programs and Practices**

- School Climate
- Small Learning Communities
- Parent Engagement
- Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support
- Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

### **Target Areas**

- Closing the Achievement Gap
- Education Supports
- Parent, Family, and Community Involvement
- Use of Technology

### **Description**

Virtues and character development are key focuses across the curriculum at PCMS. All stakeholders work together to create a school culture that supports development of vital non-cognitive skills such as integrity, perseverance, and kindness.

PCMS also provides students with a rigorous curriculum that meets California's Common Core State Standards. Mathematics courses focus on depth of understanding of concepts. In history classes, the focus is on guiding students to be active thinkers who are able to clearly express their ideas through writing. English and history teachers collaborate regularly developing 6-8 grade span reading and writing units. Science teachers at PCMS collaborate to create a broad scientific experience.

### **Implementation and Monitoring**

In mathematics courses, students work individually, in partnerships, and in small groups to collaboratively solve complex problems. Lesson plans are designed to offer a low floor and high ceiling. This provides an opportunity to challenge students at all levels and for each student to show growth in their mathematical thinking. PCMS adopted Illustrative Mathematics through Open Up Resources and supplement our curriculum with Khan Academy. The math department implements the standards for math practice into every lesson.

In history courses, the goal is for our students to be able to think about what they are learning, write about what they are thinking, and apply it all to their lives. Students learn to read expository text, to write in response to new information, to discuss a variety of historical perspectives are all building blocks to success in middle and high school.

In both English and history classes, students receive individualized descriptive feedback on mastery of content and literacy standards throughout each lesson to guide their learning. Academic writing is well-addressed in history classes and in other curricular areas, so English classes at PCMS focus on reading and exploring novels as well as the mechanics, craft, and structure of writing.

The sixth-grade science curriculum, as defined by the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) discipline-specific model, emphasizes the study of the Earth. Students at this age are increasing their awareness of the environment and are ready to learn more. The standards in grade six present many of the foundations of geology and geophysics, including Earth's place in the Universe, geologic time, Earth's systems, the impact of human activity, and an emphasis on engineering design. The seventh-grade class follows the NGSS for seventh-grade discipline-specific life science. Eighth graders focus on NGSS physical science standards. Assessments are based on the NGSS standards. An investigative approach into these standards offers many opportunities for hands-on work. Investigations incorporate reading and writing along with dissections, microscope work, and experimentation.

Extra academic supports are made available to students, including both before and after school tutorials provided by the teaching staff. Academic Lab is an elective class that allows students to work individually with a teacher. A staff member directs Academic Lab, an elective class that allows students to focus on individual needs and receive one-on-one help.

## **Results and Outcomes**

Our “Three-Year Plan” is dramatically highlighted in the data reported below. Paradise Charter Middle School’s methods of instructions have made a significant impact on student learning, especially in our low socioeconomic students, as indicated by our overall growth on the SBAC tests in ELA and Math.

The data below shows growth of a single cadre of students over a three year period at PCMS. Upon entering PCMS - as evidenced by their SBAC results from 5th grade - 48% of these students met or exceeded California Standards in English/Language Arts, while 32% met or exceeded California Standards in Math. As evidenced by the data, these students continued to grow throughout their time at PCMS. At the end of their “Three-Year Program”, 78% met or exceeded the standards in English/Language Arts, while 63% met or exceeded the standards in Math.

Percentage of students who met or exceeded state standards:

5th ELA 48%	5th Math 32%
6th ELA 52%	6th Math 52%
7th ELA 62%	7th Math 62%
8th ELA 78%	8th Math 63%