



# Abbott Middle School

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Joe Hadley, Principal  
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Hello parents,

I hope that you had a relaxing Thanksgiving, and that you had some time to spend as a family over the break. Thank you to all of our parents and students for their patience in dealing with the recent string of unhealthy air days. Needless to say, it is challenging to have a campus of 11-14 year-olds who aren't able to go outside for more than a week. It is a relief to finally have some rain and to have our air quality back to healthy levels, and for our students to be able to get some physical activity during PE and lunch.

In this latest edition of the principal's newsletter, you can read about some of the work we are doing to support students at Abbott.

As you can imagine, serving the individual needs of each of our 850 students is a complex undertaking. Our students need support in a variety of areas, some need additional help with academics, while others need help navigating the complex landscape of early adolescence. Sometimes it feels like our culture stigmatizes the need for support, but it is entirely normal for each student to need additional support in some areas at some times.

At the office level, we see that many of our students need support, and we have a number of staff members who work to support our students. Below are the members of our student support team and the services they provide at school:

- Our two school counselors, Ms. Hunt and Ms. Tran, provide support to all students and their families with respect to academic, emotional, social and behavioral concerns. Ms. Hunt works with students in grades 6-8 whose last names begin with (A-La), and Ms. Tran works with students with last names (Le-Z). Abbott also has a part-time counselor, Ms. Leonard, whose position is funded through a Youth Service Bureau grant, and Ms. Leonard provides individual student counseling and runs groups for students.
- Ms. Ujcic is our part-time Academic Dean. This is the first year that Abbott has a part-time Academic Dean and she is providing targeted academic supports for students who are struggling to maintain academic progress, and is also providing support for students whose behavior is interfering with their success in school.
- Our Community Outreach coordinator, Ms. Flores, helps our many Spanish-speaking families navigate the school and find appropriate supports for their students.
- Ms. Silva is our school psychologist, and she brings her expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior to help our students

Photos courtesy of Abbott Yearbook Students



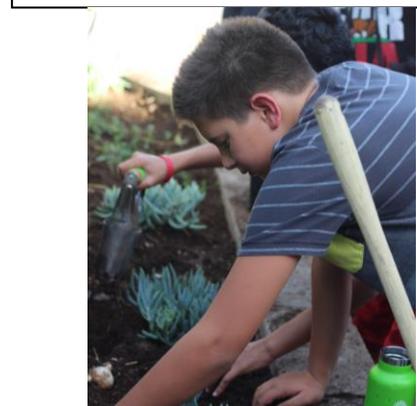
6<sup>th</sup> Grade students got up close and personal with wildlife at Outdoor Education



Students explored the coastal mountains while learning about land formation



6<sup>th</sup> graders back at Abbott got a visit from the San Francisco ZooMobile



Ms. Kahn's Environmental Club replanted the Peace Garden at the school entrance

succeed. Additionally, she provides specific supports to students who receive services identified in their individualized education program (IEP).

- Our Assistant Principal, Mr. Campbell, is our staff member who is typically the go-to person when student behavior or student conflicts have escalated to a level that could require a disciplinary intervention.

Each week, these seven people and I meet in what we call our CARE team to discuss students whose academic progress and/or behavior is signaling the need for a greater level of support. We discuss each student, the specific needs of that student, and we work on an action plan to meet that student's needs.

In some areas, we are seeing a need for a particular type of support across a wide number of students. To give one example of the need for a broad academic support, about two-thirds of our incoming 6<sup>th</sup> graders need additional support in meeting grade level standards for math. This year, we are providing a math foundations class for many of our 6<sup>th</sup> graders so that they have an additional period of math each day to work on these foundational skills. Our long-time math teacher, Ms. Marcone, teaches these classes, and she seeks to make this math class a fun and engaging class that builds students' confidence in math while also developing their ability to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.

In the social-emotional realm, we are also seeing a broad need for support for students who are experiencing depression and/or anxiety. Last year, all of our 7<sup>th</sup> graders took the California Healthy Schools Survey. One of the eye-opening results from this survey is that twenty-six percent of our 7<sup>th</sup> graders reported having chronic sad or hopeless feelings over the past year. At the office level, we see students manifest these feelings in a variety of ways, and sometimes with unhealthy coping strategies. At our weekly CARE team meetings, we try to find the best approach for working with each student and his or her particular needs, and we document these interventions and track the progress of those interventions over time.

This year, Abbott teachers are also meeting each month in grade level teams to discuss students who need support, to triage the level of support needed, and to work on a plan for providing that support. Each grade level keeps a spreadsheet with the action plan for supporting each of the students who have surfaced in these grade-level discussions. This is the first year that our staff has met in grade level teams to do this work, but teachers are invested in the work and this meeting time is helping them develop collaborative, coordinated plans for supporting all of their students.

Given both the range and the depth of student needs we see in some areas, the work of supporting all students can feel overwhelming at times. Having acknowledged that, our staff is moving in a direction of trying to gain a better understanding of what is going on with our students who are experiencing academic and/or social-emotional challenges, and our staff is working together to develop plans to provide timely and effective interventions for these students. As we increase the amount of time we spend working to support each student, and as we develop more expertise in this area, our goal is that we will provide a campus culture that feels more supportive and positive to our students and their families and that we will build a culture that helps each student develop his or her full potential during their three years at Abbott.

As noted above, all students need additional support in some areas at some times. If you feel that your student needs additional support, please feel free to reach out to our staff. If the request is for academic support, the best place to start is by communicating with his or her classroom teacher(s) or with our Academic Dean, Ms. Ujcic. If you have concerns about a social-emotional issue, the best place to start is by communicating with his or her counselor.

We look forward to working with you in supporting your student. I hope that you and your family enjoy a happy holiday season.

Sincerely,

Joe Hadley, Abbott Principal