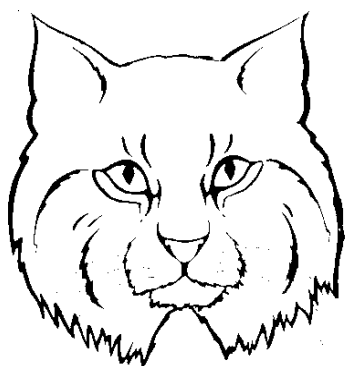


PALO ALTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

*Report
to the
Community
2007-2008*



**Juana Briones
Elementary
School**

**School Description
& Mission Statement**

School Description

Juana Briones Elementary School is a neighborhood school of considerable economic and cultural diversity. Families sending children to our school come from all walks of life, including Silicon Valley and Stanford University. The school also reflects the international flavor evident in greater Palo Alto. The mix of nationalities, traditions, and languages enhances our global awareness and cultural sensitivity.

During the 2006-2007 school year, the ethnic makeup of Juana Briones was:

<i>White</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Other</i>
50%	12%	29%	4%	5%

Juana Briones is home to students who face orthopedic and visual challenges. These students are mainstreamed or included in general education classes during the academic year. These students teach us important lessons about patience, perseverance, and diversity.

Kindergarten-third grade classroom enrollment is set at 20:1. The grade 4-5 student-teacher ratio does not exceed 22:1.

Mission Statement

At Juana Briones, teachers, parents, staff, and students are dedicated to academic excellence. We are a community that builds on the gifts of all students in developing active, lifelong learners.

We want Juana Briones students to:

- Work with determination to stretch their minds.
- Acquire a solid academic foundation.
- Solve problems and make decisions.
- Communicate effectively.
- Develop confidence in their own abilities.
- Care about other human beings and respect individual differences.

All of us share in the decisions, the responsibility, and the commitment to a vision of excellence. We are confident each one of us has something significant to contribute to the school and the world.

Student demographics, testing and accountability data, class size, staffing and financial information are available in the state-mandated School Accountability Report Cards. These may be found on the PAUSD Web site: <http://www.pausd.org/community/about/sar.shtml> or obtained at your school. Similar information, current and historical, about individual schools and school districts is also available on the California Department of Education Web site: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/>.

Opportunities for Parental Involvement

A strong home/school partnership is the basis for the collaborative atmosphere at Juana Briones. Parents are involved in the PTA, the School Site Council, Palo Alto Unified School District committees, and day-to-day campus and classroom activities.

Volunteerism is encouraged. Parents are welcome on campus and in classrooms and routinely volunteer to support the instructional program. Parents serve as tutors, library assistants, drivers on field trips, teachers of special projects, literature study leaders, publishers of student work, and as clerical assistants. Numerous simulations, field trips, science lab activities, and overnight excursions simply would not be possible without parent support.

The Juana Briones **PTA** is very active and sponsors social events, parent education, and fundraising activities. Annual events and gatherings include the First Day Coffee, the New Parents Potluck, the Harvest Festival & Silent Auction, the Ice Cream Social, and the International

Potluck. During the 2006-2007 school year, PTA funds augmented funding for instructional materials, assemblies, and various classroom amenities.

The PTA also publishes and distributes ***The Banner***, the school's main newsletter and provides **Enews**, an electronic news service to the community. Parents also maintain the school's Web site.

The Juana Briones **School Site Council** is comprised of staff and parents who meet monthly during the school year to oversee the school site plan and other issues of mutual concern. The council monitors and reviews plans, allocates supplemental resources, and ensures the success and annual yearly progress of all students.

Parents seeking information about how to become more involved in school life should call Maria Eichler, the school secretary, (650) 856-0877.

School Instruction & Leadership

Curriculum – what we teach – is based on PAUSD content standards aligned with State and District standards and assessments.

- The core curriculum ensures a sound educational foundation for each student.
- Teachers integrate multiple disciplines and the real world into daily lessons to foster more profound understanding of the subject matter.

Instruction – how we teach – reflects our efforts to meet student needs and accommodate learning styles. Instructional decisions are also based on what we know about child development and individual students. Instructional settings include:

- Direct instruction
- Small group instruction
- Peer tutoring
- Individual instruction
- Self-paced learning

A **Gifted and Talented Education (GATE)** program for 4th and 5th grade students consists of differentiated instructional practices for qualified students. However, the Juana Briones staff believes that every child brings unique and special gifts and talents that must be acknowledged, nurtured, and enhanced. Teachers strive to provide stimulating subject matter and learning vehicles to capture the imaginations of all children on a daily basis in all areas of the curriculum. Examples of differentiated instruction are generally embedded in the following areas of the curriculum.

In **mathematics**, all students learn number and operations, geometry and measurement, statistics, probability, patterns and functions, algebra, logic, and discrete math. In addition to pencil and paper computation, we teach problem solving using hands-on supplies and materials, calculators, and computers. We integrate and connect math to science, history, writing, literature, and the real world. We encourage multiple problem solving strategies to foster the broadest possible understanding and to acknowledge and accommodate different learning styles. The journey – the process – is as important to us as a correct answer.

Our **language arts** program is balanced, emphasizing reading, speaking, listening, and writing. We use high quality children's literature to stimulate interest in reading, writing, and thinking. We teach important strategies at all grade levels that enable students to decode text and draw meaning from the printed page.

Often, the literature we use is integrated with other subjects, especially social studies. We help students move deeply into text, learning to read fiction and nonfiction passages critically. They learn to make important connections with text, to question what they read, and to respond verbally and in writing.

Students at Juana Briones see themselves as authors. **Writer's workshops** emphasize the notion that students' lives are rich sources for all kinds of writing topics. Students learn to web and pre-write, draft, revise, edit, and publish. Students are exposed to a variety writing genre, both prose and poetry. Writing activity also extends across the curriculum.

Our **social studies** program emphasizes connections to the real world and to the past. Exemplary literature helps students develop a keen sense of what life was like in different times and places. Participatory activities, such as simulations (Rancho Days, Colonial Williamsburg, the famous composer and artist studies, etc.), highlight aspects of history, cultural diversity, civil rights, positive values, and social responsibility.

Science education occurs in the classroom, our Science Lab, and in our gardens. Life, earth, and physical sciences form a balanced curriculum. We emphasize hands-on science via FOSS (Full Option Science System) science kits. Topics include, but are not limited to geology, machines, ecology, the food chain, chemistry, marine science, and flora and fauna of the Bay Area. Fourth graders dissect squid, and fifth graders dissect a sheep's heart.

Students visit our **library** regularly to select books and learn skills from a certified librarian. Students use a variety of media to research, take notes, and write reports. Computers are also clustered in classrooms and used to support writing, research activities and other areas of the curriculum.

Assessment of students is routine and ongoing. Teachers use multiple measures to assess student performance, including State tests and District assessment instruments. We value assessments because they guide our instruction and enable us to monitor progress over time.

Important State-mandated assessments (STAR) include the California Standards Tests (CST) and the California Achievement Test 6 (CAT6). Both instruments assess student performance in reading, language, writing, spelling and math.

The State's accountability measure, the **Academic Performance Index (API)**, uses results from the State-mandated STAR testing program to rank all California public schools. The Briones routinely tops 800, the State's goal for all public schools in California.

Special needs among students are varied.

- Emerging young readers in grades K-3 who are experiencing difficulty with reading and writing receive help from our Reading Teacher. The goal of the program is to help students acquire important decoding and comprehension strategies and experience success early in their reading lives.
- **English Learners (EL)** receive the support of a specially trained English teacher. Some of these students also receive classroom support from native-language tutors who help make classroom work and activities understandable. Languages frequently represented at Juana Briones include Spanish, Mandarin, Korean, Japanese, Hebrew, Russian, French, Tongan, German, Farsi, Vietnamese, Swedish, Taiwanese, and Cantonese.
- A **Student Study Team (SST)** comprised of teachers, parents, the principal, and specialized support staff work cooperatively to identify strategies for students who might be experiencing difficulty in school. The SST might also conclude that special assessment is necessary to help identify additional support services.
- An **Individual Education Plan Team (IEPT)** meets to identify specific services special needs students might need, including such special education services as Resource Specialist, Speech & Language, or Special Day Class, among others.
- **Booster Tutors** and **Retired Senior Volunteers** visit the school weekly to spend time with individual students whom teachers have identified as needing special attention. Students improve thanks to volunteer support.
- The Palo Alto Unified School District's **Academy Program** is an after-school intervention for second, third, fourth, and fifth grade students. Students are assigned to Academy classes based on need as indicated by State and District assessments.

Gary Dalton has been a principal for ten years, serving seven years as site administrator at Juana Briones. He has spent more than 33 years in public education in all. His teaching experiences include general and special education classrooms and service as a technology resource teacher. Mr. Dalton welcomes the input of staff, parents, and the greater community toward achieving the school's mission.