



## SANTA ANA'S OCEAA: NURTURING HIGH-PERFORMING PreK-8 LEARNERS IN DOWNTOWN SANTA ANA

▶▶ ONE IN A SUNDAY SERIES

BY CATHI DOUGLAS



Santa Ana's busy downtown hub is home to a successful public charter school that relatively few Orange County residents are even aware of. Yet the school is in demand among parents interested in smaller class sizes for their PreK-8th grade children, with other draws including foreign-language immersion, academic excellence and emphasis on both the arts and technology.

The Orange County Educational Arts Academy opened at 825 N. Broadway with a full K-8 grade program a decade ago, and this fall close to 600 students will be in attendance, according to Interim Principal Kristin Collins. In addition, the former Mexican Consulate building across the street from the existing campus is being renovated over the summer to accommodate pre-K and transitional kindergarten classes, Collins added.

Founded in 2005 by a group of educators, parents and community partners who wanted to provide a well-rounded education to Orange County students, the academy's program emphasizes family involvement and promotes the ideal of parent-teacher partner-



PHOTOS COURTESY DAVID MOYLE

Perhaps the most unique aspect of the academy is its Two-Way Bilingual Immersion Program, in which Spanish is spoken for at least 50 percent of the elementary school instruction day for classrooms balanced between English-only and English language learners. Collins says OCEAA students achieve bilingualism, bi-literacy and achieve at or above grade level on multicultural competence as well as required academic achievement tests.



■ (top) Santa Ana's OCEAA students perform at the End of Year Extravaganza on June 6th.  
 ■ (middle) Santa Ana's Orange County Educational Arts Academy or OCEAA kids help Bill Campbell cut the ribbon on the Discovery Science Center's Eco Challenge Exhibit.  
 ■ (bottom) Santa Ana's OCEAA students participate at The Garden Grill.

**SANTA ANA:** Santa Ana's OCEAA is a world class leader in two-way bilingual Spanish-English immersion program in which Spanish is spoken at least 50% of the day.

ships in the educational process.

Marking its 10th anniversary this year, the academy aims to prepare students to be global citizens and future society leaders through appreciation and mastery of the arts, technology and world languages and cultures. It promotes a safe, positive learning environment in which students participate in enriching experiences designed to help them grow academically, socially and emotionally.

"We believe the Santa Ana's OCEAA community is strengthened by diversity," wrote Principal Linda Hardman Greene in her welcome letter last school year. "Our families come from a variety of heritage groups that tie their lineage to countries throughout the world. As such we value the many languages spoken in our homes and our experience with cultures is an invaluable asset."

Nicole Kubasek, sixth-grade teacher at Santa Ana's OCEAA, believes that the academy's focus on the arts is one thing that sets it apart from other public schools. "I have the ability to make curriculum decisions and have a voice in my teaching," Kubasek says. "I feel supported by the administration."

As a public school, Santa Ana's OCEAA is funded by the state based on student attendance and is subject to the same accountability measures as other public schools. Santa Ana's OCEAA, in fact, has demonstrated significant achievement gains and has surpassed Academic Performance Index targets every year since 2009. The academy is refining its curriculum and instruction to ensure that students become proficient in Common Core Standards.

Parents who are interested in enrolling their children in OCEAA in the coming school

year attend campus tours between September and February, Collins said. The Orange County Educational Arts Academy can be reached at 714-558-ARTS (2787); visit [oceaa.org](http://oceaa.org) for more information. ■

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