



Helpful Hints

For Families New to Jefferson School (updated Summer 2013)

The First Day

What does my child need on the first day?

Your child should have a **backpack** to carry school announcements and classroom materials home from school. Your child should bring a **lunch** or **money for lunch** (more information about school lunch is provided below). Also, consider **labeling** your child's sweaters and jackets as these items tend to get lost and end up in the lost and found. Your child does **not need** pencils, pens, or paper, and in most cases, children are asked not to bring items from home.

Can I attend class on the first day?

Since Jefferson does not allow families into the classrooms for the first two weeks of school while the teachers establish their routines, it will help ease the transition for you and your kindergartner if you go to the Welcome Reception hosted by the PTA (coffee & bagels provided!) when your child walks into the building with the teacher. Remember that your child's teacher is quite experienced at first day of school emotions and will make sure that your child has the best possible transition to the classroom. Later on, parents are welcome in the classroom--make arrangements with your child's teacher, and be sure to sign in at the office when you arrive. Most teachers welcome parent volunteers; sign up for volunteer positions, including serving as one of the Room Partners for your classroom, during Back to School Night in September.

What do the various bells that ring when school is starting mean?

The first bell rings at 8:12 and children are to line up with their class at that time. You will see your child's teacher in the yard by the school building. Kindergarten classrooms line up near the "baseball cage." At 8:15 the second bell rings, and the teacher leads the class inside.

Lunch and Recess

What are the options for lunch?

Students may bring a lunch or eat lunch cooked by district nutrition services staff. Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) has undertaken a major effort to provide food that supports students' health. Much of the food is cooked from scratch in the MLK middle school kitchen, which serves all elementary schools in the district. Organic or pesticide-free ingredients are used whenever economically feasible. Salt, fat, and sugar content is monitored closely and kept to a minimum. You will receive a "lunch calendar" that lists the foods served each day.

Please fill out the application for reduced or free school lunch, even if you're not planning to participate in the school lunch program!

At the start of school, all families receive applications for free or reduced-price lunch, and **all families are requested to complete and return these forms**. Your child may qualify for lunch even if you don't expect to, and children who qualify are not obligated to eat school lunch, but the information about family income (which is kept strictly confidential by the nutrition services department under federal law) can help the school receive additional federal funding for instructional programs. Even if one of your children has been eligible for or received free or reduced-price lunch in the past, the application forms **must be completed by September 30** each school year to continue participation in the program.

If your child does not qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, you can pre-pay for lunches ahead of time (by the week or month) or pay for that specific day. You can go to the cafeteria in the morning and pay the cashier for one or multiple lunches, or send the money with your child.

What are lunch cards and how do they work?

The district uses a computer-based system to do the accounting for the cost of lunch. Each child receives an electronic card on a lanyard. The teachers keep the cards, distribute them at lunch time, and collect them after lunch. The cards are used like debit cards to notify the system when a child spends money in his account for lunch or receives a free lunch through the free lunch program.

What is supervision like at lunch time?

The playground is supervised by four to five adults during the noon recess. The PE program staff and a hired noon supervisor organize activities for the kids to participate in during the lunch recess.

Can I visit Jefferson during lunch time?

Yes. Parents are very welcome to visit during lunch, and you can even purchase a school lunch if you wish! Please be sure to sign in at the office when you arrive.

Before- and After-school Childcare and PTA After-school Classes

Unless enrolled in a before-school program (see below), students should not arrive for school earlier than 8:00 am and should leave school promptly at 1:30 on Wednesdays (early close days) and 2:30 pm on other school days. While the school yard is inviting, there is not adequate supervision available for students before 8:00 am or after school ends each day, unless your child is enrolled in JAZ, BEARS, or PTA classes (see below). Students who are not enrolled in these programs must leave the school grounds so our after school programs can effectively supervise enrolled students. If you need morning or after school care, please enroll your child in BEARS or JAZ programs described below.

BEARS (Berkeley's Excellent Academic Road to Success), a district program based on financial need offers both before and after-school care for eligible families. Eligibility for the program is based on need and income, with a sliding scale for fees. BEARS operates year-round for students in grades K-5. Activities in the BEARS Program include: homework assistance, reading for recreation, arts & crafts, nutrition education, computer instruction, theater and visual arts, field trips, music, seasonal sports, etc. At Jefferson, the program is available at 7:10 in the morning, and escorts children to their classes when school begins. It also operates from the end of the school day (1:25 for Kindergartners) to 5:45 in the evening. Contact the school office for information on registration for BEARS.

The **JAZ (Jefferson Afterschool Zone)** operates an after-school program open to all Jefferson students and provides care until 6:00 pm, with a wide variety of activities as well as Homework Club. Both BEARS and JAZ will be operational starting the first day of school should you need after-school childcare. You will receive registration information in the mail right before the beginning of school. Fees for this program are also on a sliding scale, and scholarships are available. The program runs from the end of the school day (1:25 for Kindergartners) to 6:00 pm. For more information, contact Rochelle Arucan (644-6299).

What are the PTA after-school classes and how are they related to JAZ or EDC?

The **PTA organizes an array of after-school classes** including Chess, Art, Photography, Mandarin, Mad Science, and more which are available for a fee. Students can go to and from JAZ or EDC to PTA classes, and the youngest kids are chaperoned back and forth. You will receive information about signing up for the PTA-sponsored classes right before school starts, and registration for the classes takes place in the first couple of weeks of school. The PTA-sponsored after-school classes do not begin until mid-September.

Scholarships are available. Parents or guardians indicate whether they need scholarships on the registration form, which they should receive in the mail just prior to the start of school. Forms will also be available through the PTA website (<http://jefferson.berkeleypta.org/>), or in the school office.

Connecting with Kids and Parents

How do I get phone numbers for other families?

The PTA puts out a school directory in the fall. A contact information form will be sent home with every child shortly after school begins to collect information for the directory. Many teachers also distribute classroom contact lists.

How do I find out what is going on at school?

- 1) Go to PTA meetings. To make it easier for parents and guardians to attend, childcare is provided during the meetings. All community members are encouraged to join the PTA and attend meetings. These are usually held on the 2nd Thursday of each month, with some exceptions for holidays and vacations. See the school calendar on the website or in the PTA newsletter for meeting dates.
- 2) Sign up for the PTA etree, which delivers weekly PTA announcements about school activities by email. To sign up, go to <http://transpacific.net/mailman/listinfo/> and click Jefferson.
- 3) **Attend, enjoy, and volunteer at school events.** You can run games, sell books, serve ice cream, and lots more at school events. Volunteering is a great way to get to know the kids and the parents. For a list of this year's events, visit the PTA website at: <http://jefferson.berkeleypta.org/>.
- 4) **Tip:** Two events not to miss are **Back to School Night** on Thursday, September 6 and **Open House in the Spring**. On **Back to School Night** you will be able to meet with your child's teacher and ask questions about anything. You will also be able to sign up as a Room Partner as well as a classroom volunteer.
- 5) Go to Jefferson school assemblies. These regularly held Friday morning events are a great opportunity for the school community to get together, sing songs, share information and to enjoy numerous and varied guest cultural performances. They are very special and unique to the Jefferson school community.
- 6) The principal occasionally sends automated phone messages with announcements and reminders. Printed announcements from the school, the principal, and your child's teacher are sent home in your child's backpack. PTA newsletters and flyers are also sent home with your child.
- 7) Visit the PTA website at: <http://jefferson.berkeleypta.org/> or the PTA Bulletin Board by the school office.
- 8) Contact the Room Partner in your child's class. Room Partners are parents, guardians, or other family members who volunteer to help the teacher keep families informed of classroom/school events, serve as liaison between the PTA and parents/guardians in each class, recruit volunteers for classroom or school projects, organize classroom social events, etc. Room Partners' names for each class are published in the PTA school directory and on bulletin boards near your child's classroom.
- 9) Start a Google or yahoo group and phone tree with the parents in your child's class.

Volunteering at Jefferson

How can I contribute to my child's school?

Volunteer at school events, be a room partner, or volunteer in the classroom. Go to PTA events, check the PTA events bulletin board, or contact a PTA officer or committee chair to find out what jobs need to be done and what committees or groups would like more help. Talk to a PTA officer if you have ideas to share to improve things at the school, new events, etc. See below for contact names and numbers, or the website or newsletter for more information.

What fundraisers does Jefferson have?

Jefferson has a few annual fundraisers that students participate in, such as the Walk-a-thon and selling Mayfair Carnival raffle tickets. The PTA also sponsors a number of ongoing fundraisers such as the Giving Campaign and various scrip programs (see next question). The PTA raises this money to fund important programs like PE and the noon yard supervisor, and provide scholarships to students for after-school classes, fund field trips and teacher stipends (so teachers can buy supplies), etc. The fundraising the PTA does is instrumental to providing excellent programs for our kids and supporting the school.

Do all school fundraisers cost me money?

No, they do not. A number of fundraisers will not cost you or anyone else a dime. For example, collect "**Box Tops for Education**" from General Mills products, such as Gogurt and Cherrios. If you buy these products, just clip the coupons on the packages and turn them in to the box in the school office. Also, **escrip**, **schoolpop**, and **paper scrip** cost nothing. For example, sign up for escrip on the web, register your credit card, and a percentage of the purchases you make at participating stores goes to Jefferson. Information about these programs is offered at every school event and can be found on the PTA website (<http://jefferson.berkeleypta.org/>).

School Programs and Culture

The importance of building community at Jefferson.

A strong sense of community is fostered at Jefferson School in everything we do. Parent and guardian involvement in the school is strongly encouraged both to enhance academics and to build a strong school community for the betterment of our children and families. A great way to be actively involved in the community is to regularly attend and/or help at school events or in your child's classroom. There are many opportunities to get involved -- attending PTA meetings is another great way to know what's happening at the school and where help is most needed.

What are the school assemblies?

Jefferson school assemblies are held regularly throughout the school year in the cafeteria and are a great opportunity for the school community to get together, sing songs, share information and to enjoy cultural performances from Jefferson students and a wide variety of professional guest performers. From music and dance troupes to puppeteers, Jefferson assemblies are a very valued and special part of our school community. Parents, guardians, siblings and alumni are always invited and encouraged to attend.

Our School ROCKS!

The Jefferson school theme says it all and we sing it loud and proud at our school assemblies.

R is respect for everyone

O is open hearts and open minds

C is for courage

K is for kindness

S is success for all

What kinds of school and cultural events take place at Jefferson?

The Jefferson school and PTA organize a number of events throughout the school year for the Jefferson community to come together, have fun, and to get to know each other. Events such as Back to School Night, Family Culture Night, Halloween Fun Night, Family Art Night, the Black History Block Party and many others are great opportunities for our children to make friends and for parents and guardians to meet each other and their children's friends and classmates.

Where to Get More Information

Websites

Jefferson PTA website <http://jefferson.berkeleypta.org/>

Berkeley PTA Council website <http://www.berkeleypts.org>

California State PTA website <http://www.capta.org>

Berkeley Unified School District website <http://www.berkeley.k12.ca.us>

Contact Names and Phone Numbers

Jefferson PTA Co-Presidents: Valerie Kratzer (558-1043; vkratzer@yahoo.com) and

Andrea DeJarlais (206-3974:felony@waste.org)

Jefferson Elementary School Principal: Maggie Riddle (644-6298)

Berkeley Unified School District (644-6348)