

Akimel O’Otham Pee Posh Charter School (3-5)
3652 E. Blackwater School Road
Coolidge, AZ 85128
Jacquelyn Power, Superintendent/Principal
(520) 215-5859 ext. 803

Description of the School

Akimel O’Otham Pee Posh Charter School is the home of the Eagles and is located on the Gila River Indian Reservation southeast of Phoenix, AZ. The reservation is 583 square miles and consists of seven districts with a population of 11,257 (2000 Census). The student population is 99% Native American and 82% Free/Reduced lunch. The reservation has two distinct tribes the Akimel O’Otham (River People – Pima Indians and Pee Posh Maricopa Indians). More importantly, is the historical status of this tribe which traces its ancestry to the Hohokam Indians which inhabited the Gila River Basin beginning in 300 B.C. until 1400 A.D. The Hohokams brought significant technology to the Southwest with the introduction of agriculture, irrigation canals, and extensive trade networks. This tradition of agriculture is still at the heart of the Akimel O’Otham culture and is a key component of the school climate. **The vision of the school, “Quality Education Begins Here” is exemplified by integrated researched-based educational practices and, the presence of the traditional language and culture evident on the campus.**

The establishment of Akimel O’Otham Pee Posh Charter School in 2000 was possible because of a unique partnership that included the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), Gila River Tribe and the Arizona State Board of Charters. The charter sits on federal trust land set aside for Blackwater Community School (BWCS) dating back to 1939. Blackwater Community School operated as a PreK - 2nd grade school and could not expand because of a 1991 Congressional Moratorium on the expansion of BIE schools. However, the parents’ desire to keep their children in a neighborhood, culturally sensitive school, instead of sending children off the reservation to “feeder” schools was granted when Akimel O’Otham Pee Posh Charter (3-5) was accepted and approved to reside on Blackwater’s campus by the BIE and the Gila River Indian Community. **As a result, the school has a powerful partnership built on a triad of federal, state and tribal cooperation focused on a holistic, scientifically-based researched education model coupled with professional development that supports Native American Children and their community.**

Akimel O’Otham Pee Posh Charter School/Blackwater Community School has NCA CASI / AdvancED Worldwide Accreditation. The current enrollment of Akimel O’Otham Pee Posh Charter is 134 students grades 3–5. Blackwater Community School (K-2) enrollment is 265 students. The two schools operate as one school/district. The distinction between the two schools is a funding issue rather than how the school operates. For the students, it is a seamless transition from the BIE school to the charter school. The school is overseen by a local five member Board of Trustees elected by the community. **Furthermore, Blackwater Community School/Akimel O’Otham Pee Posh Schools has received, “Best School of the Year” in 2007 and 2011 by the Gila River Indian Community Education Department.**

Curriculum and Instruction

Akimel O’Otham Pee Posh Charter School, under the consistent and robust leadership of Jacquelyn Power, who has been at the school for 18 years, has adopted Larry Lezotte’s Seven Correlates of Highly Effective Schools. The seven correlates are: safe and orderly environment, climate of high expectations, instructional leadership, clear and focused mission, opportunity to learn/student time on task, frequently monitoring student progress, and home-school relations. These tenets have been at the heart of the school’s success and have been the passion of the Board and Ms. Power.

Akimel O’Otham Pee Posh Charter School competed for and received the ADE Reading First (RF) grant from 2006 - 2011 in support of these correlates. It is a scientifically-based reading model tied to direct, explicit, systematic instruction of the big five components of reading, professional development and accountability. Akimel O’Otham Pee Posh Charter consistently ranked in the top 5% of the schools in Cycle 2. This level of performance can be attributed to the successful implementation of the RF Model that consistently raised the reading performance of all students in K-3. Moreover, the school adopted Houghton Mifflin (HM) for its scientifically based reading research curriculum in reading as well as math, and social studies, hired instructional coaches, a reading interventionist, administered DIBELS assessment and participated in extensive monthly professional development (PD) on-site from State Reading Specialist, Rhonda Jones, and attended required ADE monthly PD.

The RF Model is the basis of the daily schedule and routines that include a 120 minute English Language Arts (ELA) block and a 60 minute math block. The block schedules are tiered to address intensive, strategic and benchmark students and to provide differentiated instruction for all students. All students receive the core instruction, using research-based instructional strategies in a rigorous academic setting that is taught with fidelity to the curriculum and with direct, explicit, systematic instruction. The core is 90 minutes followed by small group instruction to target strategic learning skills. Intensive students receive an additional 60 minutes of concentrated support in reading. Within the ELA block, writing is supplemented by Writing UP a Storm © that includes benchmark on-demand writing assessments. Math is also tiered with intensive, strategic and enrichment support is provided during AIMS Academy which includes Everyday Counts Math©. Teachers have a master assessment schedule in reading (DIBELS), writing and math, established schedules for all blocks/specials, common grade level lesson plans with differentiated plans tied to data, and weekly grade level planning times with coaches.

Another aspect of the RF grant that continues to influence the classroom setting is the learning environment that includes student friendly objectives, focus and high frequency word walls, five literacy stations tied to the Big Five in reading, pacing, student engagement, academic language, fluency skills, and technology. These components are tracked weekly by the coaches using the T4S observation tool. Teachers receive timely feedback from coaches so that immediate adjustments to instruction can be made to benefit the learning environment. This process helps teachers become highly effective instructors. Coaches also oversee and assign paraprofessionals/interventionists to assist small group instruction/intervention.

The overarching focus of the curriculum and instructional model are the Arizona State Standards/National Common Core Standards. Through grade level curriculum mapping and benchmark assessments, teachers can determine how effective the lessons are in ensuring all students gain mastery on priority standards. As noted by both Lezotte (1991) and Schmoker (2011) the challenge is for teachers to embrace “organized abandonment” of elements within the state and now national standards so all students can master meaningful skills rather than pushing forward and leaving learners behind. In response to this challenge, all teachers and administrators are participating in a professional learning community using Dr. Mike Schmoker’s book, FOCUS, to assist in curriculum mapping.

In order to manage the complexity of the instructional model, teachers, coaches and administration participate in collaborative planning. Plus, teachers participate in monthly grade span meetings (K-2/3-5) to discuss student data, curriculum, special education services, intervention, and instruction. Representatives from each grade span attend a monthly leadership team meeting with administration to discuss the implementation of the instructional model. Similar to the instructional tiered model, this three tiered model ensures that all ideas/concerns are addressed in a solution-oriented environment. Agendas and minutes are available at each level of the process for accountability. **This collaboration model would not be possible without the four strategically scheduled specials: Culture/Language, PE/Health, Library/Music, and Positive Behavior Support.**

The PE/Health program actively partners with Gila River Health Corporation’s Genesis Program to provide specialized programs that teach children how to eat healthy, utilizing traditional foods and attempting to combat the high level of obesity and diabetes in the Pima population. In fact, Type II Diabetes is found in children as well as adults. All children have PE/Health for 50 minutes a week, plus grades 3 -5 have an extra period on Friday. Students are taught sportsmanship through organized games and a commitment to lifelong healthy activities. **The entire community is focused on reducing the epidemic of diabetes through partnerships with schools to break the cycle early in the lives of children.**

The Culture/Language classes teach the newly adopted (2009) Gila River orthography of the O’Otham language. The revitalization of the O’Otham language is critical to the future of the tribe and is pivotal to raising the self-esteem of all students. The lessons are tied to the ADE foreign language standards. All children are learning to read, write and speak their traditional language. The culture program supports the Desert Tortoise Habitat and Butterfly Garden programs. Also, the culture program sponsors a Feast Day during Thanksgiving week that feeds over 600 people and includes traditional foods. **Within the culture classes, traditional stories and beliefs are taught to all students, which are publically celebrated in the O’Otham murals on campus.**

The Positive Behavior Support Program(PBSP) that includes Character Counts, Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, Childhelp’s Good Touch/Bad Touch, Red Ribbon, and Peaceful Playground are a schoolwide focus and address a variety of ways that children can learn critical thinking skills to solve problems associated with bullying, negative choices, and community and peer pressure. This program emphasizes positive behavior and recognizes students as Eagle Kids of the Week and Month. Other

activities that foster school spirit, pride and self-esteem include a Karate Club, the Spirit Line and the school's first Girl Scouts troop. **The PBSP supports the Native American Four Hills of Life model that reminds us all to, "bring the wonderful parts of being a child along with you as you travel through the seasons of life".**

Lastly, the Library/Music program encourages children to read through a variety of activities on campus including book fairs and family literacy nights. The school's library began ten years ago with 100 books and now exceeds 3000 books. The library is fully automated through the use of internet technology. At the Family Literacy Nights free books are given out to all children to encourage reading in the home. Each classroom also maintains a library with authentic literature that children keep at their desks so they can read anytime they are done with class assignments. **The message is clear to children and families that reading is the greatest gift you can give a child to ensure his/her success in life.**

Providing opportunities for all children to learn

The focus of the curriculum/instructional model of the school is to identify individual learning styles and meet the needs of all students. Included in this model are the services provided for special education students in the appropriate Least Restrictive Environment. Currently, less than 10% of students in 3-5 receive special education services. This is well below the national average for Native American students. This low percentage can be attributed to the Response to Intervention Model (RtI) and the impact of Reading First on the school. The school employs a full time speech therapist, special education teacher and paraprofessionals to support the students. This service model is based on inclusion with limited pull out so that all children access the curriculum and receive accommodations in the classroom. Additionally, the special education students are included in RtI groups to increase their service hours and to maximize their exposure to the academic standards they too must master. **The special education staff hosts Child Find events, in partnership with Gila River Special Services, twice a year, 45 day screening, SPED training for parents/staff, and participate in child study team meetings to determine if a child needs a special education referral in partnership with parents.**

The role of the Parent Liaison is critical to increasing communication with parents and is a member of the Family Involvement Action Team (FIAT) which coordinates the monthly family events that promote literacy, homework support, training on special education services, culture/language and the school's mission. The parents, as equal partners, support the school's mission by instilling the importance of education in their child. Parents may request that school information be provided in O'Otham. **Parents are the key to the school's success and a focus under the Title I programs.**

Two other learning opportunities for children are the use of technology on campus and the intersession/summer programs. All classrooms have computers and Smart Boards. These tools have increased and enhanced student engagement which improves learning by all children. The children enjoy using computers and/or Smart Board to enrich or remediate their individual skills. Additionally, teachers have laptop computers that host their data, lesson plans and emails in support of the educational model. **The intersession/summer programs provide enrichment opportunity in science,**

technology, culture, music, art, sports, Spirit Line, and Karate in conjunction with academic instruction in reading, writing and math.

The school operates an **AIMS Academy** that provides intensive, strategic, and enrichment intervention in reading and math for 45 minutes four days a week. The K-1 students are dismissed at 2:15 p.m. allowing the K-1 teachers to work with the 2nd – 5th grade teachers and students in AIMS Academy. With the addition of 9 certified teachers, the students in 2nd – 5th grade receive individualized instruction based on specific skills tied to weekly data. The goal for the school is to meet or exceed the AIMS results from SY 2009 to 2011. **In fact, the school was recognized in Category 1 and 2 for exceeding AYP for two or more years and significantly closed the achievement gap between students.**

Coordination of Title I Program with other programs

The school is a Title I Schoolwide model and leverages its Title I dollars with funds from Impact Aid, Tribe Title VII, REAP, 21st Century Community Learning Grant and State M&O and indirectly the facilities and transportation are supported by the BIE. The Charter Budget is \$1,697,467 and Title I is 2.7% of this budget or \$46,957. These funds support 1 FTE paraprofessional position to support small group instruction/intervention. Other funds are allocated for the set aside programs that include professional development (\$6989, including Title IIA), Parent Liaison/parent involvement and homeless programming. Supplemental Education Services (SES) services were offered last year to a select number of students to address math and reading deficiencies. The Parent Liaison is primarily funded from Title I BIE; however, a small portion of the ADE Title I funds support this program (\$495). The homeless program is limited to supplies to advertise the availability of the program (\$247). **The addition of ARRA Title I funds pay for a portion of a paraprofessional salary. The 2011 School Improvement Grant Tier III grant is funding the AIMS Academy and an instructional coach in support of the Title I Program. Also, the 2011 Special Education Achieving Success in Mathematics IDEA Part B grant targets SPED students with scientifically-based math strategies. The Gila River Tribal Grant supports PD, Parent Involvement, Attendance, Farming/Culture, and PE/Counseling. Other federal grants include Title VII and Rural Education Achievement Program. Collectively, all funds are coordinated in support of the goals/mission of Title I.**

Implementation of sustained research-based professional development

The Governing Board and Administration recognize that in order to achieve the highest level of academic achievement they must invest in the professional development of the administrators, teachers and support staff. To this end, the Board/Administration has adopted **the Five Core Propositions of Professional Development developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.** Paraphrasing these propositions: Teachers are committed to students and learning, know how to teach their subjects, manage and monitor student learning, systemically think about their practice and reflect on such practices, and are members of a learning community. The school contracts with experts in school improvement (Dr. Charlotte Wing/Dr. Ron Areglado), math (Nancy Harrison/Mike McCarthy), writing (Wilda Storm/Virginia Rascon) and reading (Julie Cibbarelli/Rhonda Jones). These services are

offered on-site weekly, monthly and quarterly. Consultants provide timely feedback to teachers, coaches and administration on the five propositions. Furthermore, teachers are given opportunities to attend state, regional and national institutes to further their professionalism. Incorporated in the school's PD plan is a professional learning community component that focuses on education research and practice. In fact, the instructional model would not succeed without this level of investment in the teachers, staff and administrators who truly affect the learning of every child. **Teaching is not about programs, it is about how to educate children effectively and ongoing professional development is the key to this outcome.**

Established partnerships with parents, families and the community

The extensive network of partnerships within the school setting ensure that parent, families and community agencies are active stakeholders for the success of the children. The following list provides a picture of the investment of time, resources and talent offered in coordination with the school.

1. **School:** The FIAT is made up of staff and parents that plan monthly events and training opportunities to build a strong connection between the school and home.
2. **Gila River:** Genesis Program for Diabetes Prevention, Behavioral Health/Counseling Services, Culture Committee, Tribal Education/Education Standing Committee, First Things First Preschool Program, School Nurse Program, School Resource Officer, District 1 and 2 Service Centers, Tribal Council, Gila River Schools, and Tribal Projects.
3. **BIE:** Family and Child Education Program (FACE), facilities, transportation and food service programs.
4. **State:** College partnerships include Central AZ College for distance learning, Chandler/Gilbert Community College for service learning, and NAU and ASU student teaching and program evaluation.
5. **ADE:** Technical/PD/ Financial support.
6. **Volunteer Organizations:** The San Tan American Legion Auxiliary Post, who assist with the library program and special Flag Ceremonies, Girl Scout Council, and AZ Game and Fish for the Tortoise Habitat. For the most part, the partnerships are limited to the tribal entities because of the school's rural reservation setting. **However, the overarching partnership that allowed the Charter to form and thrive has been the support of the BIE, Gila River Indian Community and the State Charter Board.**

Greatest Contributing Factor in the School's Success

The greatest factor in Akimel O'Otham Pee Posh Charter School's success is the shared belief that **every child is everyone's child and they are the future leaders for this community, failure is not an option and all children can learn.** The school's vision permeates every aspect of the school day. Specific elements include scientifically-based research curriculum delivered by highly effective teachers with a structure that differentiates instruction for each child tied to data. Embedded professional development supported by instructional coaches ensures success. Most importantly, we provide a culturally sensitive education model from the revitalization of the language to the striking, authentic murals. **"Quality Education Begins Here"** is truly a community commitment, which honors the Akimel O'Otham Pee Posh Legacy!

Bray, John

From: Jacquelyn Power [Jacquelyn.Power@bwcs.k12.az.us]
Sent: Tuesday, November 27, 2012 1:35 PM
To: Bray, John
Subject: RE: John Bray, School Visit

Hi John, 1 p.m. is fine. As for driving here is the best way to get to the school isnce GPS can be wrong. Please tak I-10 south towards Tucson to exit 185. It will be about 30 miles. The exit is for Casa Grande, Florence and Coolidge. At top of exit ramp turn right and cross over freeway. Make the first righ onto 387 North. There will be sign for Coolidge and Casa Grande Ruins. Don't go straight which is 187. This road is 6 miles and deadends at Highway 87. Turn left and go about 1/4 mile look for green highway sign that says Blackwater School Road and turn right (only choice). The school is about 4 miles down the road on left. Park in first lot on west side of school and check in at the office. Please call the school at 520 2155859 if you get lost. It will take an hour from Phoenix to get to school or more depending on where you are coming from in Phoenix. I hope that helps. Jacquelyn

From: Bray, John [jbray@air.org]
Sent: Tuesday, November 27, 2012 11:26 AM
To: Jacquelyn Power
Subject: John Bray, School Visit

Hi Jacquelyn,
I'm thinking about 1 p.m. I'd like to see school in session if possible, and have time to speak with you. Will that work? Any background I should read before I arrive? Any quirks to driving to the school? Not sure what's going on with the link. You can try this forwarded version if you have time ...
Thanks much,
John

To view this email as a web page, go [here](#).



National Charter School Resource Center July 2012 E-Newsletter

News, Insight, and Resources to Support the Development of High-Quality Charter Schools

To [receive this e-newsletter](#),
please provide your e-mail information.

Charter Schools Offer Option for Aiding Native Education

Educators, researchers, and policymakers are examining the potential of charter schools as an option for improving the academic achievement of Native students. The [2011 National Indian Education Study](#), published in July 2012 by the U.S. Department of



**Federal Charter Schools
Program Opens \$500,000
Collaboration Grant
Competition**
The federal [Charter Schools](#)