

COIL CHARTER SCHOOL



A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING

A SPECIAL ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT

What is a charter school?

Charter schools are independent public schools offering a rigorous curriculum and unique approach to education. Schools are established by a charter, or contract, that details the school's mission, program, goals, students served, methods of assessment and ways to measure success. Charter schools offer quality and choice in the public education system. These schools are tuition-free and open to all students.

About COIL Charter School

Established: 1998

Enrollment: 250 students

Staff: 12 advisory teachers, a marriage and family therapist, secretary, a library media technician and part-time office assistant

Serves: Students in Fremont and adjacent counties

Vision: "The Circle of Independent Learning is designed to reach the unique bent of genius in each of its students through personalized learning."

United in Serving Students

A letter from the Superintendent

The Fremont Unified School District and the Circle of Independent Learning (COIL) Charter School have a long-standing and positive relationship. We serve one community and are united in our commitment to academic excellence for all students. COIL provides a unique option for families, and our collaborative relationship allows us to work together to provide families with choices. Just as each student possesses unique gifts and talents, each of our schools offers learning experiences and programs designed to address a variety of student skills and talents. COIL is a very special place with a caring and committed staff.



James Morris

*Superintendent
Fremont Unified School District*

COVER PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEROME LOVE



Lisa Cole is a parent to a former COIL student. She became an advisory teacher at COIL in 2002 and has been executive director since 2010.
PHOTO BY JACQUES GROSS

RE-IGNITING A LOVE OF LEARNING

Personalized approach and parent involvement are keys to student success

BY MICHELLE CARL

Lisa Cole's love of learning ended in middle school, when a project-based exploration of subjects she loved turned into the regurgitation of facts from a textbook. By high school, she felt class was a waste of her time, so she took the proficiency exam and left during her junior year.

Hearing Lisa's story, you might be surprised to learn that today she is the executive director of a school. But it's a very different one.

Circle of Independent Learning (COIL) Charter School is a K-12 public charter that personalizes education for its students. Now in its 15th year, COIL has around 250 students who came to the charter school for very different reasons.

Lisa, who has a bachelor's degree in child development, a master's in educational leadership and her Administrative Services Credential, first came to COIL as a parent. Her daughter Rachael practiced figure skating during the day and needed a school that would work with her schedule. Lisa also saw echoes of her own student experience in Rachael, who was in the first grade at the time.

"For me, I understand where the student comes from, and for the parent, I get it because I did this myself," she says. "I know the challenges and the rewards."

Part of why COIL is so successful, Lisa says, is its personalized approach to learning. Students follow a path based on their unique bent of genius, which takes into account their learning style and interests. As a result, students are more motivated because their schoolwork connects to their passion. Lisa points to her daughter, who incorporated figure skating into her lessons by reading about famous skaters and studying the physics of moving on ice.

"When it works right, it's magical."

LISA COLE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF COIL CHARTER SCHOOL

Another strength of the school comes from its name: circle. Circle of Independent Learning offers a community of learning that fully encircles the student and includes parents, teachers, a therapist, a college and career adviser, special education services, community-based education providers and more.

Although parents are the primary teachers at COIL, they have plenty of guidance in fulfilling that important role. The

most important resource is the advisory teacher, who works with the student and parent to craft a personalized education plan.

Andrea Starkey has been an educator for close to 35 years in both the classroom and in independent study. She co-founded COIL in 1998 and continues to serve as an advisory teacher, earning a recognition as the California Consortium for Independent Study's Teacher of the Year. When she created COIL, she had a vision for helping parents who want to home-school, but also reaching the students who are falling through the cracks.

"Students that are struggling just need a different approach so we can reach their unique bent," she says.

Andrea has a special passion for working with students who learn differently. She mentions an autistic boy who didn't comprehend what he was reading. Her solution? Have him draw what he read about.

Lisa is proud that teachers like Andrea can help parents and students create a community that makes learning fun.

"I love that our teaching staff and school have a passion for learning. And many students come here to find their passion," she says. "When it works right, it's magical."



Jordan Smith was struggling in the traditional school environment, but after he enrolled in COIL, he flourished both academically and as a person.
PHOTO COURTESY OF TAMMY SMITH

THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

Student labeled a troublemaker finds a school where he can thrive

BY MIKE BLOUNT

By the end of the fifth grade, Jordan Smith wasn't doing so well in the traditional school environment. His grades had fallen. According to his mother, Tammy Smith, he was labeled as a troublemaker by his teachers because he couldn't sit still in class. Jordan often had to bring his work home because he didn't learn it at school.

Something needed to change.

During a summer program, Tammy met one of Jordan's teachers and he told her Jordan was a kinesthetic learner — meaning he learned best by being active and engaged. At COIL, teachers have a personalized approach to learning so they can tailor their teaching style to the student. Tammy decided to transfer Jordan to COIL to try it out and let him finish fifth grade at the school.

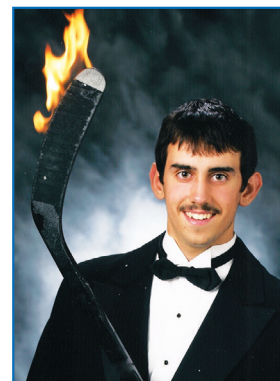
"[Teachers at COIL] suggested I complete my work through projects, rather than the traditional text style learning," Jordan says. "They also suggested I take frequent breaks, which helped my brain retain learned information, boost my understanding and increase my focus. Additionally, this gave me an outlet to move my body. This made a big, positive impact on my overall learning."

Jordan's grades dramatically improved after the

transfer. Not only that, but he was no longer seen as a problem student. Tammy was extremely pleased with her son's improvement.

"COIL is like a second family and they inspire students to become lifelong learners."

JORDAN SMITH
COIL GRADUATE



"They had great teachers that worked with Jordan and their goal was to support him in any way they could to get him to learn the information," Tammy says. "They knew it didn't matter how he got the information. All that mattered was that he got it."

Jordan says transferring her son to COIL also gave him flexibility. Jordan played ice hockey and started taking martial arts lessons — two things he was interested in before, but was never able to devote the time to pursue. Jordan was even able to spend time playing hockey and training in Europe due to COIL's flexibility.

"I initially played hockey for fun, but it soon grew into a passion," Jordan says. "COIL was 100 percent supportive and encouraging of my overseas training, as I always completed my work on time ... As long as I got my schoolwork done, they encouraged life and learning outside of school. I never had to wait for official school dates. If an opportunity presented itself, I was encouraged to take it."

Today, the COIL graduate continues to play hockey at a post-graduate school in Maine. Jordan says he is thankful that he was able to find a school where he was able to succeed. In fact, his first college report card includes comments from Jordan's instructors, praising him for his maturity and ability to learn independently.

"I highly recommend COIL to all students, as it adapts and supports the needs of all learners," Jordan says. "COIL is like a second family and they inspire students to become lifelong learners and prepare you for college and beyond."

Personalizing learning to the student

When the traditional approach to learning math didn't work for Vanessa Thompson, her teachers at COIL created a new way of teaching that she could understand. Personalized learning gives teachers at COIL the flexibility to tailor a student's education to his or her learning style. In Vanessa's case, COIL teachers helped her learn math through a story, where the

decimal sign and minus sign were characters.

"For a lot of kids who are not left-brained, it's a lot easier to learn through a story," Vanessa says. "It's a lot easier for me to learn through videos and stories."

Vanessa was so excited about being able to learn math through a story, she and her mother, Bonita Thompson, created the website storybookmath.org to

help other kids who are also struggling with math.

"We've received a lot of support from the COIL teachers," Bonita says. "A one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work in education, and **I think more schools are going this direction because they realize that students learn differently.**"

A school that goes the extra mile

David Bettencourt found the support he needed to succeed academically and in life at COIL Charter School. Having been born with velocardiofacial syndrome, David struggles with language and long-term memory in addition to having a heart condition.

“He has many challenges,” says Fatima Bettencourt, David’s mother. “At COIL, they personalized everything for him.”

David was able to take speech therapy at COIL, and his parents met regularly with the school counselor and his teachers to ensure the books and curriculum were the right fit for his learning needs. During his senior year, David took a class in the ROP program and was able to work part time at a local store for school credit. Fatima says his teacher really prepared him for working with the public, and as part of a team.

“I just love the way they supported our family,” Fatima says. “I felt like the whole COIL team was right there with us. They really go that extra mile for you.”

Alex and Ana Rapposelli found success at COIL Charter School, which helped their mother, Diana Rapposelli, take a more active role in their education.

PHOTO BY JACQUES GROSS



HELPING THEM SUCCEED

Parents of special needs students find support through COIL’s personalized approach to learning

BY MEREDITH J. GRAHAM

After watching her kids struggle in traditional school environments, Diana Rapposelli knew it was time for a change. That’s how she discovered COIL Charter School, which she credits with helping both her children succeed academically.

Fifteen-year-old Alex is dyslexic and had trouble keeping up in public school. His parents enrolled him in private school, but when the Rapposellis’ financial situation changed about five years ago, Diana started looking for other alternatives. She attended an orientation meeting at COIL and immediately knew it was the right place for Alex.

“My son is very smart, but he struggles in a regular school environment,” Diana says. “At COIL, they make a special effort when they hire staff — they’re looking for a particular type of teacher who can deal with different learning levels. Once I saw that, I was sure it was the right place for my kids.”

Diana also enrolled her daughter, Ana, in COIL. Diana describes 12-year-old Ana as an artist-dreamer who also has become more successful in school since transferring to COIL.

“I’m really impressed with the teachers, and the way they tailor the curriculum to each kid,” Diana says.

She actually attends the on-site math classes with her children and helps out as a “mom in the classroom.” So, she is learning pre-algebra alongside Alex and Ana and is able to provide more assistance with their math homework. The various on-site classes offered by COIL enhance the home-school and independent study experience for her children.

“At COIL, there is a family of parents and advisory teachers that come together to help all of our children succeed in school.”

DIANA RAPPOSELLI
COIL PARENT

“When you’re a parent of a child with special needs, sometimes you feel like you’re on your own,” Diana

says. “At COIL, there is a family of parents and advisory teachers that come together to help all of our children succeed in school.”

Diana remembers her first year home-schooling Alex and Ana through COIL. She says it was difficult at first to adjust from being Mom to being Teacher. She joined a parent group through the school and said the support of other parents really eased the transition in the Rapposelli home.

One thing that stands out for Diana about the environment at COIL is the inclusiveness. She says the classrooms are filled with students who learn on different levels, but all of them work together to succeed.

“There’s no bullying, no negativity,” she says. “Because of the classroom environment, they have good friends that are safe friends at this school.”

As an accredited school that is part of the Fremont Unified School District, Diana sees COIL as an invaluable resource for kids who benefit more from a personalized curriculum and one-on-one teaching.

“I encourage parents with kids with special needs to look into COIL as an alternative, as well as parents of kids who operate on all levels,” Diana says. “COIL is sort of a picture of what the real world is. The kids work as a team, and learn from each other. It’s very productive.”

A PATH OF HER OWN

Student finds the right school — and her calling

BY SHANNON SPRINGMEYER

Katie Siegel had always been a good student — as a middle-schooler she had strong grades, loved science and was active in student council. But things changed dramatically when she entered high school. She now attended an overcrowded school and felt lost in the shuffle. Students had to sit on the ground in some classes for a lack of chairs, and the chaotic environment, coupled with unruly student behavior, had Katie feeling overwhelmed and distracted. Her grades took a sharp dive.

"I basically figured out this wasn't working for me, either emotionally or academically," Katie says.

So she and her parents started looking for alternatives, and they found COIL Charter School.

"It was a beautiful fit for my daughter," says Katie's mother, Elizabeth.

Through COIL's independent study approach, Katie was able to turn her grades around to maintain a high GPA.

"I am able to get so much more work done," she says. "I was able to do a lot of extra things that I wouldn't normally have been able to do if I was in a school setting for eight hours."

The flexibility offered at COIL has allowed Katie to earn college credits while still in high school, as well as dedicate time to volunteering. She's also taken advantage of some of COIL's in-class offerings that round out the educational experience.

"For me, it's been a perfect balance," Katie says.

The well-rounded educational opportunities at COIL have also helped Katie build a bridge to college and career. Because COIL is within the Fremont

Unified School District, students can enroll in district-offered Regional Occupational Program (ROP) classes to garner hands-on career experience. As a junior, Katie enrolled in the Mission Valley ROP nursing program.

"I was really interested in learning about how to take care of people and the physical and social aspects that go along with nursing," Katie says. "I just fell in love with the program."

The year-long program began with textbook study and skills practice within the classroom, and progressed to clinical experience two hours a day at an in-patient skilled nursing facility. Katie found that she thrived in this environment, and began to

realize she had found her calling in life. For her, the most rewarding part of this line of work is being able to care for others.

"I loved being able to get to know the residents on a personal level," Katie says. "The smiles that they had on their faces just made it all worth it."

At the completion of the program, Katie undertook a daunting six-hour gauntlet of testing to become a state-certified nursing assistant at just 17

years old. The certification recently helped her land a job as a caretaker for special needs kids. Katie, now a senior, has also decided to pursue a degree in nursing when she starts college next year at Sonoma State University.

As if to confirm that she was on the right path, Katie's instructor honored her as student of the year when she completed her ROP nursing program last year.

"That was thrilling," mom Elizabeth says about the award. "It just affirms to everybody that [COIL] is working. If students are succeeding, that's the indication."

High school senior Katie Siegel got back on track and even discovered her calling as a nurse with the help of COIL Charter School.

PHOTO BY JACQUES GROSS



"I was able to do a lot of extra things that I wouldn't normally have been able to do."

KATIE SIEGEL
COIL STUDENT

Options abound

COIL provides many opportunities to supplement the independent study experience. COIL offers on-site classes based on student interests and needs, in topics varying from writing to science labs to art history. A variety of field trips throughout the year help learning come to life. High school students can participate in the Mission Valley Regional Occupation Program (MVRP) and take classes at the local community

college. Junior and senior high school students can even enroll in the Split Day Program to take one or two classes at their neighborhood school, such as Advanced Placement classes. COIL teacher Teri Topham, who teaches in-class writing workshops, says these additional offerings provide a valuable opportunity for engagement. She cites a recent lesson in which students read an article questioning whether all kids

on sports teams should receive end-of-season trophies, or only those who had made truly outstanding contributions. "They were able to discuss both sides of that argument. It was a pretty lively discussion and their writing displayed that enthusiasm too," Teri says. **"I think [in-class experiences] are really important because of the class discussion, peer response and group work."**



Gino Barichello has been a teacher at COIL Charter School for 14 years. Gino says he enjoys the variety of students he gets to work with and see grow each year.
PHOTO BY JACQUES GROSS

“After you’ve worked with a student for a while, you become familiar with their family. You start to feel that you are part of that family.”

GINO BARICHELLO
COIL ADVISORY TEACHER/COLLEGE AND CAREER ADVISER

SETTING A COURSE FOR SUCCESS

Teacher instills students with skills for life

BY MIKE BLOUNT

For Gino Barichello, it’s not good enough to just teach lessons from a textbook. He wants his students to think critically about what they’re learning. At COIL Charter School, Gino has the flexibility to do just that, and he believes it is helping his students prepare for college and beyond.

Gino has been a teacher at COIL for 14 years. He is also a college and career adviser. Part of his role at the school is to help students prepare for their future by teaching them critical thinking skills.

“Critical thinking is important because it allows students to unpack ideas and understand them better,” Gino says. “That’s going to prepare them for the future as they go into the world and make decisions.”

At COIL, teachers compare notes with each other. Working as a team gives Gino a better idea of what works and what doesn’t work for different learning styles. COIL also gives teachers an opportunity to teach to the student’s strengths if the student is having trouble with a particular subject.

One of the unique experiences that COIL has offered in years with enough student interest is a mock trial. In the annual exercise, students go before a judge in an actual courtroom and deliver arguments on current issues. For example, one student might argue that typed or written words in an email are private speech, while another argues

that the National Security Administration has the right to view them as a matter of national security. Attorneys critique their arguments and the judge renders a decision on the case based on the students’ performance.

Gino says the exercise is not about having a right or wrong answer. It’s about learning how to defend or support an idea. It’s about being able to communicate those ideas to others.

“The mock trial experience is a wonderful opportunity to culminate all of the things students have been learning throughout the year — working as a team, learning how to speak in a public forum, critical thinking,” Gino says. “The more we can draw our students into those types of experiences, the more it will prepare them for adult life. Traditional classrooms do not offer the experiences that COIL does.”

Gino recalls one student he taught who had aspirations to become a concert pianist. COIL gave her the flexibility to practice her craft, while Gino worked with her to achieve her academic goals. The student went on to get accepted to The Juilliard School in New York.

“I love my job because every student is different,” Gino says. “After you’ve worked with a student for a while, you become familiar with their family. You start to feel that you are part of the family, and parents trust you to help their children carve out a path and do well.”

Ready for Higher Learning

COIL parent Debbie Amato is thrilled to have found an alternative school where home study allows Debbie’s son and other COIL students the opportunity to participate in high school athletics and real world learning. She says students are not just learning in classrooms. They are learning lessons in the real world as well. Home study has afforded Debbie’s son, Andrew, the opportunity to visit various organizations such as the 49ers NFL team, Rolls Royce and a patent law firm to explore career opportunities in addition to many field trips that enrich his academics.

COIL’s curriculum satisfies the University of California A-G subject requirements, meaning COIL students meet the requirements to attend any public university in California. But COIL goes a step further by preparing students for the transition to college through the real world exploration of people and careers.

“It’s about getting out in the world to find out how things work — meeting people and asking them how they got to where they are at,” Debbie says. **“They are not just satisfying a statistical requirement. They are growing great people.”**



ANDREW AMATO



MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT CHARTER SCHOOLS

BY MICHELLE CARL

The charter school movement in California began in 1992 with the passage of the Charter Schools Act, which allowed parents, community groups and organizations to create schools that met the needs of their students. But many people still don't understand the facts about charter schools. The following are some common misconceptions:

Myth: My child won't have opportunities to socialize.

Fact: COIL provides many ways for students to form bonds, not only with their peers but with adults, too. There are regular field trips, classroom courses, extracurricular activities and career planning offerings that expose students to their peers and professional adults. Because COIL allows students to pursue their passions outside of school, such as drama or athletics, it allows more opportunities to socialize during these activities.

Myth: Most people home-school because of religious reasons.

Fact: People choose to home-school their children for a variety of reasons. While religion may be one of them, it is not the most common one. In fact, as a public school, COIL teachers may not assign nor evaluate any work completed from religious curriculums. Many parents choose COIL for safety, or because their child is struggling in traditional school, whether by falling behind or not being challenged enough.

Myth: My student won't be able to play sports.

Fact: COIL Charter School is part of the North Coast Section of the California Interscholastic Federation, which means students can play on local high school teams (Fremont Unified only). The flexibility at COIL also allows students to pursue athletics such as gymnastics or swimming, which may be more demanding on their schedule.

Myth: Charter schools cost money and are hard to get into.

Fact: Charter schools are public institutions of learning and receive funding from the government, just like traditional schools. That means there is no tuition. The enrollment capacity at COIL is set by charter school regulations, so at times, COIL may not have openings at particular grade levels. When that happens, your child will be placed on a waiting list. Openings will be filled by a lottery, with priority going to Fremont residents first.

Myth: Going to a charter school will make it harder for my child to get into college.

Fact: COIL prepares students for higher education through an academically rigorous program that satisfies University of California A-G subject requirements. Required coursework includes two years of laboratory science and two years of a foreign language. But getting into college is about more than GPA. In addition to academic achievement, many college admissions departments look at community service and other extracurricular activities. COIL gives students the flexibility to explore outside interests that can make them more well-rounded individuals.

Myth: Charter schools don't serve special needs students.

Fact: COIL serves a wide variety of students, including gifted, challenged and special needs students. Because COIL tailors its education plans to the student, many special needs children benefit greatly from an approach that matches their unique abilities. While COIL currently has only one credentialed special education teacher on staff, its relationship with Fremont Unified School District allows it to offer special education services to eligible students.

JOIN THE COMMUNITY

If you ...

- Are looking for support in educating your child
- Want to encourage your child's passions and love for learning
- Believe school should conform to the student, and not the other way around

... Then COIL is for your family!

Attend an informational session

Prospective COIL families must attend a one-hour informational session. These meetings are designed to give an orientation to COIL Charter School and to answer the most commonly asked questions about the school.

See the COIL website for Orientation Meeting dates and times.

Have a question? Contact us

Circle of Independent Learning Charter School

4700 Calaveras Ave., Hyman Building
(on the Adult School campus)
Fremont, CA 94538

School office hours:
9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Monday-Friday
(closed daily from 12-1 p.m.)



Phone: 510-797-0100



Web: coil.schoolwires.net



Email: pfitzgerald@fremont.k12.ca.us



AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS

COIL Charter School has a track record of excellence in the academic community. Here are some of the recognitions bestowed upon COIL:

2013 Personalized Learning Pioneer Award

for Academic Achievement

(Association of Personalized Learning
Services for reaching all
categories of AYP for 2012-13)

2012 and 2003 Personalized Learning Pioneer

Award for Exemplary Leadership

(Association of Personalized Learning
Services)

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

6-year Accreditation (WASC)

Certificate of Recognition for Personalized Learning

(California State Assembly)

Certificate of Recognition for Personalized Learning

(California State Senate)

2012 MATHCOUNTS Chapter Competition

(Honorable Mention)

