

Preschool to Eighth Grade

Welcome



To



**The
San Francisco School**

Founded 1966

A Special Greeting from The San Francisco School



As you explore schools for your child, consider the unique attributes we treasure most here at SFS— an emphasis on strong academics, sound thinking, clear values, and a crucial understanding of the impact each of us has on our community and our world.

As Head of School, I am often asked what is exceptional about The San Francisco School. There are some fundamentals common to all highly respected independent schools, including SFS: A strong academic program based on a talented faculty; the personalized attention afforded by a generous teacher-to-student ratio; emphasis on multicultural curricula; and an inclusive and diverse community. Clearly SFS is exemplary in all these measures. But I believe there are three aspects that make us stand out among excellent schools.

First, our educational approach teaches students to think and work like the professionals they will become. In science, students observe and reason with evidence like true scientists. In art, students face technical problems much like working artists. The daily program for preschoolers through middle school includes challenges that encourage thinking practices professionals use in everyday situations.

Secondly, we focus student attention on big questions that are central to a subject, such as “How can I be independent and still be part of the group?” for preschoolers, or “How can we learn the truth about the past?” for middle school students. Teachers create opportunities for students to connect their daily learning to these important considerations, and in so doing, help them to make sense of both their daily work and of the world around them.

And finally, the SFS program is structured to help students find and nurture their passions in an environment where each child feels safe bringing his/her whole self to school. Teachers create a community where children can comfortably express their culture and family dynamic, and classrooms where students can take risks, articulate opinions and learn from thoughtful dialog.

Of course, there are other areas where SFS stands out among its peers, such as our comprehensive visual and performing arts program that is highly integrated with other disciplines; the depth of multiculturalism embedded in the curriculum; the strong, collaborative community among students, teachers and families; a commitment to equity, justice and social action; and even playgrounds where children can still climb trees, collect bugs and get dirty!

Thank you for considering The San Francisco School.

Terry Edeli
Head of School

Our graduates leave SFS academically prepared, inquisitive, compassionate and eager for the challenges ahead. They are accepted to and attend the Bay Area's finest high schools, and continue on to some of the nation's most outstanding colleges and universities.

Overview

The San Francisco School is an independent, coeducational day school for pre-kindergarten through 8th grade students. SFS is a vibrant educational community with a focus on strong academics, conceptual understanding, critical thinking and creative expression. Founded in 1966 as a preschool, SFS has grown to include 270 students, 34 faculty members, and 235 families representing the ethnic, cultural and socio-economic diversity of San Francisco and its nearby communities.

SFS is recognized among local independent schools for its outstanding, personalized academic program, deep sense of community, and dynamic visual and performing arts program. The elementary program and middle school offer a comprehensive, challenging and multicultural curriculum built on the ideals of a progressive, student-centered approach, while the preschool-kindergarten program centers primarily on the renowned educational philosophy of Maria Montessori.

SFS recognizes the value of strong faculty leadership and serious professional development. Many SFS teachers have been with the school for more than 20 years and continue to bring a perspective rooted in experience, dedication to their students and a passion for their profession. Our extended community consists of current and alumni families, whose enduring participation in and commitment to the school ensures its long-term viability.

On the following pages, you will discover information about each of the school's three age groups: preschool-kindergarten, elementary and middle school. For more facts about SFS, see page 8 or visit www.sfschool.org.



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Preschool & Kindergarten



Art, Music and Physical Education

While art and craft activities are always available in the classroom, preschoolers and kindergarteners attend weekly art classes facilitated by an art specialist. Likewise, music is a large part of every-day life in the classroom. All students attend weekly music classes taught using the Orff Schulwerk method, an internationally recognized approach to music and movement education. Preschoolers and kindergarteners also attend weekly physical education classes and visit the school library.

The San Francisco School has two preschool-kindergarten classrooms, each comprising approximately 36 children ages 3 to 6, with four teachers in each room. Based on the teaching methodology of Maria Montessori, as well as more recently developed approaches to early childhood education, the SFS preschool-kindergarten program fosters a strong foundation for future learning and growth.

The program focuses on creating independent, self-disciplined and creative children who love to learn by using the Montessori principles of



the “absorbent mind” and “sensitive periods” as a guide to the educational experience. The absorbent mind refers to a child’s ability to learn through interaction with the environment, especially in the area of oral language acquisition. Sensitive periods are brief cycles during which children are highly focused on particular aspects of their environment.

Carefully selected learning materials are incorporated into the classroom to allow for specific learning opportunities. Activities include independent and small-group work periods, circle time, outdoor play, and special areas of focus, such as “Sound-of-the-Week,” an early introduction to phonetic learning.



The teachers in the SFS preschool-kindergarten classrooms serve as guides for the students during these formative years. Their strong educational backgrounds and individual expertise enable them to create an experience that is appropriate for each child’s age, temperament and desire to progress. Additionally, the span of ages in the classroom benefits all students, as the older children serve as mentors to the younger children both in play and academics, while the younger children benefit from a wider range of education experiences.

Through an integrated, multicultural program of early academics, art, music, movement and play, SFS provides a supportive environment crucial to the growth, development and education of the young child—fundamental experiences that serve as their foundation for the future.





The 3 R's—Rights, Respect and Responsibility

First through 5th grades is a key time for building self-esteem, creating independence and learning responsibility at SFS. Many activities involve taking on new responsibilities and understanding how one's actions have certain consequences. The elementary curriculum also emphasizes each student's role in working toward common goals and teaching ways to mediate conflicting situations. Rotating jobs are part of every classroom, and annual camping trips in grades 3-5 test students' skills in cooperation, mutual respect and task sharing.

Elementary School



Integrated Arts at SFS

The art and music program at The San Francisco School seeks to build children's self-confidence and abilities, but also complements and supports the curriculum. During weekly art classes, children are exposed to a range of creative media, including painting, sculpture, textiles and even scenery building. The music program is based on the philosophy and practices of Orff Schulwerk—making music through body, voice, movement, and work on specially designed instruments. Each elementary class has two 45-minute music sessions weekly, and the entire elementary school gathers weekly to learn music from around the world. Small group music lessons and a jazz band are also available as part of the extended day program.





The physical, emotional and academic growth of 1st through 5th graders is a phenomenon like no other. From young 6-year-olds to pre-adolescents, the students' ability to learn, create and discover is a process that The San Francisco School helps nurture, guide and sustain throughout the elementary years.



Strong academics with an integrated arts and music program is the hallmark of SFS's elementary program. The elementary academic program provides engaging and comprehensive curricula in reading, writing, mathematics, spelling, science and social studies appropriate for each grade level. Students gain essential disciplinary understandings in each field while kindling their passion for learning by honoring their own interests and talents through special projects and activities.

A Spanish language program is introduced in 2nd grade and continues through middle school. Early study is aimed at good aural understanding and pronunciation; later studies expand to reading, grammar and in-depth conversational skills. The program features cultural studies about Latin America, Mexico and Spain, including literature, geography, history and holidays. Physical education is also a key component in the elementary education process. The goal of the SFS PE program is for each child to enjoy physical activity with their peers while providing opportunities to acquire, improve and utilize skills essential for lifelong fitness.

Creating an atmosphere that allows each child to nurture their passions, excel at academic fundamentals, and be exposed to a multicultural community through the classroom, arts, music and language provides an excellent framework for future learning at SFS.





Preparing for High School

In addition to their rigorous academic efforts, SFS 8th graders work through the demanding high school applications process. At SFS, our faculty and administration advisers are well-versed in guiding families through the application process and helping them select the schools that best fit the strengths of each student. Our middle school graduates are consistently accepted into top independent, public and religiously affiliated high schools.

MiddleSchool



Creating Responsible Citizens

SFS middle school students learn accountability in an atmosphere that continually asks them to make decisions and to reflect on the wisdom of their choices. The middle school community meets weekly to celebrate students' passions and achievements, and to discuss topics of importance to our community. The advisory program supports the social and emotional development of students and offers a structure in which to practice healthy decision-making. Students are also given opportunities to become involved in things that matter to them through participation in student government and the service learning program, which includes school policy-making, school and neighborhood improvement projects, and social activism.



Adolescence is a time of profound social, emotional and biological changes. In adolescence, students expand their ability to think abstractly and complexly. They mature physically and begin to develop their belief systems. The SFS middle school program—with its caring network of adults who understand the particular needs of adolescents—is specifically designed to nurture and guide students on their journey to becoming responsible, thoughtful and actively engaged adults.



The academic program is structured to deepen students' understanding of each discipline. For instance in social studies, students think about important questions like "How does geography influence culture and history?" or "How are just and equitable societies created?" Each discipline also has its own unique set of skills. For example in science, students are building understanding of this discipline by considering questions like "How do scientists use models?" or "How can we get quality data?" The middle school curriculum focuses on students learning about important ideas in meaningful and engaging ways, thereby expanding students' ability to think in an integrative manner.

In addition to traditional academic subjects and a wide range of electives, the core middle school program includes Spanish, technology, physical education, visual arts, drama and a world-renowned music program. Students also participate in a series of independence and community building activities during their middle school years at SFS, including two weeklong visits to the Yosemite Institute in Yosemite National Park, a total immersion program at a Mexican arts camp in Michoacan, a ropes course and an annual three-day backpacking trip in Point Reyes National Seashore.

As students enter adolescence in the SFS middle school program, our goal is to create a stimulating learning environment that is safe and comfortable, while also challenging each individual to grow intellectually and emotionally.



FAQ

What is the applications process for SFS?

All families applying to The San Francisco School must attend at least one tour to ensure the school will be an appropriate fit for your child. Tours for preschool, elementary and middle schools begin in October of the academic year, with applications due in mid-January. Kindergarten applicants must attend one Open House prior to signing up for a tour. For further information on tours or to access admission forms, please visit www.sfschool.org/admissions.

How is SFS governed?

SFS is a non-profit independent school governed by a Board of Trustees. Board members include parents, alumni, staff, faculty and educational professionals. We strive for a Board representing diversity in background, interests and concerns. Primary responsibilities of the Board include long-range planning, fiscal management and fund-raising. Committee heads oversee special responsibilities, such as facilities, finance and diversity.

Is there a participation requirement for parents?

SFS counts on the good will, expertise and financial resources of the parent community, but it is recognized that each family has its unique situation. Thus parent participation is encouraged, but never required. Being an inclusive community, SFS hopes that each family will identify the level and type of participation that works for their current circumstances.

What high schools do SFS graduates attend?

SFS middle school graduates are consistently accepted into a broad variety of local and national high schools, including Lick Wilmerding, University, Urban, Lowell, Thacher and St. Ignatius. To see a complete list of high schools being attended by our most recent graduating students, visit www.sfschool.org/highschool.

How does SFS support the wide range of students' learning needs?

Our small class size, low teacher-to-student ratio and depth of faculty experience help us meet the educational needs of most students. However, for those students who need additional encouragement, SFS staff includes two part-time learning specialists. Their role is to assist children encountering exceptional academic difficulty and to work with the student, teachers and family to identify strengths, learning styles and sources of learning difficulties, and to recommend in-class,

at-home, and outside services and interventions as necessary. SFS also hosts an on-campus tutorial program as part of its extended day program.

Does SFS offer financial assistance?

Twenty-five percent of our student body receives financial aid toward tuition. Financial aid applications are available in early December and are due in early February. Visit www.sfschool.org/tuitionaid for application information.

Does SFS provide meal service?

Nutritious lunches for preschool through 5th grade and daily snacks for all ages are part of the SFS meal program. Middle school students bring their lunches daily, as do elementary students on Fridays

Does SFS provide extended day care?

Extended day care programs are offered from 7:30 to 9 a.m. and 3 to 6 p.m. each day for an hourly fee. Preschool children enjoy outdoor play, art projects and indoor activities. Elementary students sign up for specialty classes, including cooking, art, music, academic enrichment and team sports. Middle school students also can choose student government, supervised homework or other specialty clubs and classes.

Does SFS offer a summer program?

SFS offers a variety of day camps at the school, including one for preschool students ages 4 to 6. Elementary and middle school students can choose from a variety of academic and athletic programs and a Shakespeare camp. Current offerings can be referenced online at www.sfschool.org/summer.

Is SFS approved by any educational organizations?

SFS is accredited by the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) and is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). We are also actively affiliated with a number of education-related associations, including:

- A Better Chance
- Bay Area Teacher Training Institute (BATTI)
- Bay Area Teacher Development Collaborative (BATDC)
- Project Zero
- Schools Mentoring and Resource Team (SMART)
- People of Color in Independent Schools (POCIS)

SFS values the richness of its diversity and actively seeks students from racially, culturally and socio-economically diverse families, including single-parent families, gay and lesbian families, adoptive and foster families.

The San Francisco School cultivates and celebrates the intellectual, imaginative and humanitarian promise of each student in a community that practices mutual respect, embraces diversity, and inspires a passion for learning.



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The
San Francisco School
Founded 1966

