

**WOODLAND
SCHOOL** | PORTOLA
VALLEY





MISSION

Woodland School develops collaborative, creative, and confident learners with the strength of voice to follow their hearts and make a difference.

VISION

Innovative, compassionate stewards creating a joyful world.

CORE VALUES:

Curiosity, resilience, integrity, equity, respect, stewardship



Welcome to Woodland!

We are a small school with a big heart where personal relationships between students, faculty, staff, and parents are paramount. From our youngest learners through eighth grade, each child is seen, heard, and valued by our community who know them well. Since our founding in 1981, Woodland has developed students who demonstrate a courage to do what is right. We believe it takes both strength of mind and heart to live with integrity, to find one's passions, and to create meaningful change in the world. As a result, character education is thoughtfully woven into all aspects of a Woodland experience. Our core values of curiosity, resilience, integrity, equity, respect, and stewardship serve as guideposts for our community.

Woodland specializes in education that empowers students by nurturing each child's intellect and character. We believe students reach their potential when they are inspired, and accomplish this through rich content and student-driven projects that allow children to be active, engaged learners. Through this, we realize our mission to develop collaborative, creative, and confident learners with the strength of voice to follow their hearts and make a difference.

We pride ourselves on being a school for the whole family and are fortunate that parents play an integral role in a wide range of community activities. Families find a myriad of ways to support one another and the school during their time at Woodland. In that same spirit of belonging, I invite you to explore this overview of our school, as well as our website, to learn more about our educational program, current events, and the community as a whole.

It is an honor to lead Woodland School and I look forward to meeting each of you during this admission season.

Warmly,

Jennifer Warren, Ed.D.
Head of School

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ABOUT WOODLAND SCHOOL



Relationships are the heart of Woodland, where students, families and educators grow alongside one another within a community who know them well.

Nestled in a residential neighborhood in Portola Valley, Woodland School is an independent school that offers a balanced approach to learning in a diverse and inclusive environment for approximately 315 students in preschool through eighth grade.

Our pastoral campus spans 10.5 acres and houses spacious indoor classrooms, several outdoor classrooms, a large gymnasium, outdoor lunch areas, outdoor playgrounds, as well as a grassy field, allowing students space to grow and learn in a natural environment. Students spend their school day with a minimum of one hour outdoors playing, eating, and developing relationships with one another.

Relationships are the heart of Woodland, where students, families, and educators grow alongside one another within a community who know them well. Families trust that their child will build a strong foundation to support their lifelong learning and become collaborative, creative, and confident learners with the strength of voice to follow their hearts and make a difference.

HARNESSING THE MAGIC OF CHILDHOOD

There are countless benefits to choosing a preschool through eighth grade environment, however, perhaps the most significant is that this educational model celebrates the magic of childhood. With three distinct divisions on campus - Early Childhood, Lower School, Middle School - students range from 3-14 years of age, giving Woodland the unique ability to fully represent childhood at its best. Within each division of the school, students are exposed to age-appropriate materials and learning experiences that are relevant to their developmental stage. In addition, this educational model provides organic opportunities for students to develop leadership skills as they progress through each division of the school.

Our Early Childhood Education program promotes learning through play and provides an enriching introduction to each child's educational journey. With three mixed-age classrooms, students in preschool and pre-kindergarten are exposed to leadership opportunities, early social-emotional skills, and collaboration as they uncover the world around them.

RESPECT
Honoring the dignity of self, others, community, environment and the earth



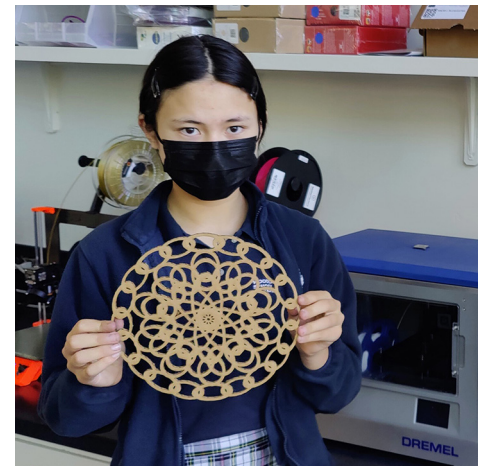
STEWARDSHIP

The responsible protection and care of what is of value to self and others

Students in our Lower School discover the importance of community through Morning Meetings, learn the value of being a bucket-filler and upstander, and how to identify and articulate their feelings and emotions. From discovering “just right” books and making pattern predictions in Number Corner, to learning cursive and performing in the Living Museum, students transition through the Lower School division as they shift from learning to read to reading to learn. Through regular public speaking opportunities in their classroom communities as well as presenting to older and younger peers in kindergarten through fourth grade assembly, Woodland students gain confidence in the power of their voice. As leaders of the Lower School, fourth grade students expand their leadership skills when they become reading buddies with kindergarten students, establishing the tradition of cross-grade relationships throughout the Lower School grades.

In Middle School, students have the freedom to explore their varying developmental stages without the social pressures to live up to or emulate high school students. Our fifth through eighth grade students are encouraged to take risks, develop leadership skills, and *play*. When students enter Middle School in fifth grade, they learn from older peers. In turn, as the students get older, they become confident leaders and role models for younger students.

Woodland students are encouraged to explore their ideas, share their creativity, and develop a growth mindset. Students throughout each division of the school develop their strengths and areas for growth in an environment supported by adults who know each individual child. Woodland provides a safe and pressure-free space for growth and personal development. The Innovation and Design program, for example, is centered around a particular skill -- the capacity to fail, iterate, and ultimately succeed through a problem-solving process. This skill requires not only a strong mindset from Woodland students, but also a safe and positive environment in which failure and risk are allowed and even celebrated.



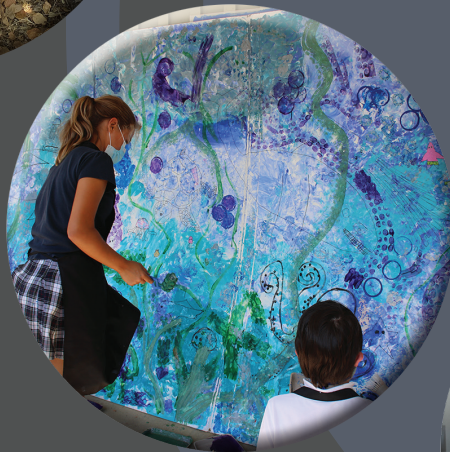
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BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

Connection is at the core of all Woodland experiences. Students connect personally with the learning experience by selecting topics of individual interest or by finding meaning in topics at hand. They connect socially with each other through collaborative learning experiences in every class and at every grade level. And they connect locally and globally by linking their learning to what is around them.

Woodland students seek not only to understand but also to change the world they have inherited and will ultimately steward.



HANDS-ON MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES

Woodland's Early Childhood Education (ECE) program is rooted in the theory that children learn best through hands-on meaningful experiences with ample opportunity to pursue self-directed interests. The uniqueness of Woodland's ECE program lies in the emergent approach to project-based learning, where children explore a topic of interest deeply for several weeks using the cycle of inquiry as a framework for discovery. Throughout the day, children have time for independent as well as guided play. The addition of guided play allows the teachers to ensure that developmental milestones are being met, and that children achieve specific growth goals. The combination of play-based, child-led learning with teacher-guided, small-group learning, inspires children to explore new topics and acquire new skills.

Social-emotional growth is the foundation of early childhood. At Woodland, children are guided in the development of their social skills and awareness of themselves and others. Children are supported as they learn to take responsibility for their own actions, build self-care routines, manage transitions, and follow through with a plan. The ability to self-regulate, cooperate with others, manage and control emotions, and sustain relationships are key to success, not only in school, but in life. Children are guided in developing these skills by recognizing and naming their feelings, and by utilizing tools to handle big emotions. Children are provided a safe and nurturing place to express themselves, which allows them to develop the confidence to find solutions for their own challenges.



CURIOSITY
The desire to
learn new things
and explore the
unknown





DISCOVERY AND CONNECTION

Students in Lower School embrace learning with their arms and hearts wide open. Their excitement is palpable each day as they race onto campus to greet friends and connect with one another. Kindergarten through fourth grade students relish in discovery; from exploring measurement of Popsicle stick towers or the length of a jump rope, developing presentation skills in student-led assemblies and publishing parties, to learning the importance of inclusion and belonging, learning is meaningful and active. Students are continually provided opportunities to think creatively about and examine real world situations while making connections within their classroom and family communities.

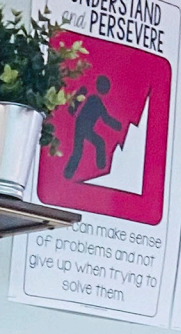
Small class sizes in the lower and middle schools foster close student-teacher and student-student relationships. Woodland's academic program provides students with exploratory, project-based, skills-based, and inquiry-based experiences, which encourages students to take risks and reflect.

Lower School students discover and uncover who they are as learners during these early foundational years. With an emphasis on Social Emotional Learning (SEL), students practice social skills in real time through authentic conversations about feelings, perspective taking and social impact. SEL at Woodland begins with each student identifying feelings within themselves and then learning to identify feelings in others. Social Emotional Lessons are often embedded across content areas so that students experience SEL themes throughout their day. Teachers proactively identify age-appropriate themes and experiences and tailor integrated lessons to include opportunities for continued practice of social skills.



STUDENT-CENTERED
Through our student-centered hands-on curriculum, Woodland students develop critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and problem-solving skills. Through differentiated instruction and small class sizes, we are able to meet students' individual needs and support them in reaching their true potential.



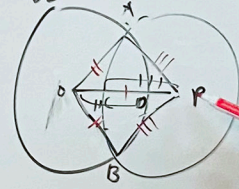


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GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Middle School brings significant growth and development for students. Throughout adolescence, students are more self-conscious and concerned about the impressions they make on friends and family. Middle School students are also inquisitive and curious, wanting to share their new discoveries and interests. At Woodland, Middle School students feel safe to be themselves, try new activities, and take on different challenges. Because of Woodland's unique preschool through eighth grade environment where Middle School students share a campus with younger students, wonder and joy are always present. Middle School is indeed a special time in which students are given the tools to have the courage to question, the confidence to speak up, and the compassion to take action.

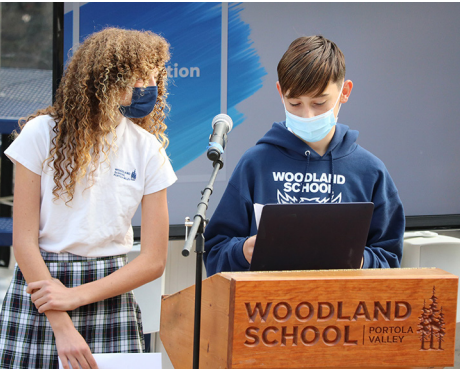
Advisory serves as a space for students to be supported in their executive functioning, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), and overall development. Building relationships amongst students and receiving support from adult advisors are core components of Advisory. Woodland's Middle School students exhibit the Core Virtue of curiosity through the clubs/electives experience. Students have the opportunity to bond with classmates over similar interests and activities, while also learning new concepts and skills.

Situated on a wooded campus, Woodland is unique in its connection to nature. A core hallmark of the nature experience is Outdoor Education, a time for Middle School students to go on overnight camping trips in various areas of California. During Outdoor Education students make connections, take risks, and learn new skills. They learn to depend on each other through team building that creates long lasting friendships.



CORE VIRTUES, ASSEMBLY AND HOUSE SYSTEM

Core Virtues, such as joy, compassion, and gratitude, are the qualities students and employees exhibit that directly connect with Woodland's Core Values. Each month, teachers in the Lower School nominate students in K-4 who embody one or more Core Virtues. In Middle School, students nominate their fellow classmates who embody one or more Core Virtues. Recipients of Core Virtues are recognized during assembly at the end of each month, which takes place in front of peers, to help signify the significance of each Virtue to the Woodland community.



A treasured Woodland tradition, morning assembly is led by and for students. Topics range from academic share outs to students' personal interests. Students gain self-confidence as they become accustomed to regularly speaking in front of peers, and their world view is enhanced by the information students share with our school community. Assembly also connects all members of our community to one another as parents, teachers, and staff attend.

A true Woodland hallmark, our cross-grade House system continues to foster deep connections with adults and students alike. All students in kindergarten through eighth grade join all faculty and staff in one of four Houses - Maple, Cypress, Oak, and Pine - through a ceremonious House Induction celebration. Students remain in their House throughout their Woodland journey, building relationships with older and younger peers through joyful House Cup competitions and buddy lunches. Our Early Childhood students are Saplings as they await to discover which House they will integrate into once they enter kindergarten.



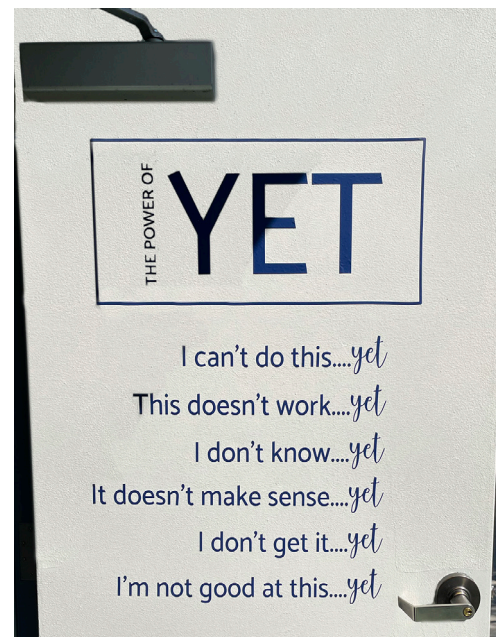
COMMUNITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

Woodland strives to create a community that is reflective of and responsive to who our students are as people and learners. Through intentional lessons and casual interactions, students share their identity and learn about the identity of their classmates and teachers. Morning Meetings and Advisory provide opportunities for teachers to highlight Social Emotional Learning skills and competencies that enhance a child's interpersonal understanding and challenge them to take risks and explore new friendships, hobbies, or academic endeavors. Teachers understand each student's strengths and areas for growth and partner with families to create an experience that allows them to reach their potential.

Woodland offers a safe space for children to take risks and be supported by teachers and peers. Teachers often facilitate conversations around growth mindset and the power of YET. Students understand that their work will undergo several iterations and with each iteration learning is fine tuned. Through individual, partner and small group support, students are encouraged to share their thinking and engage in conversations that pique curiosity in developmentally appropriate ways.

INTEGRITY

The quality of having
a strong moral
compass



Middle School doors welcome and inspire students.



MORE THAN A SCHOOL, A COMMUNITY



At Woodland, students and parents meet new individuals who become long-time friends. Many of our parents mention that through community activities, playdates, and athletics, they have expanded their group of friends and felt a sense of community within the school. Our cross division buddies also exemplify Woodland's sense of community. It is common to witness an older student waving across the playground to their buddy and a younger student jumping out of their car at drop-off to high five their older buddy.

A community provides support for all members. We intentionally integrate new members of our community each summer offering multiple opportunities to join in grade level meetups, allowing for both students and parents to get to know one another and have a resource as they navigate their first days on campus. Our returning parents are eager to share Woodland traditions with new parents including House Induction and House Cup Games, Free Dress Fridays, the Back to School Social, Fun Run and Bingo Night.

ONEWOODLAND

OneWoodland, an initiative of the school, was created with the vision of creating an inclusive, welcoming environment within the Woodland community. The goal is to see all forms of diversity reflected in our community so that a richness from a variety of perspectives is reflected in Woodland's students, families, and employees. We believe that everyone feeling a deep sense of belonging is essential to our success as a school community.

During the 2020-21 school year, Woodland embarked on a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity (DEI) journey. We established a Board Task Force to ensure that Woodland is an equitable learning and working environment for all, and participated in the NAIS Assessment for Inclusivity and Multiculturalism (AIM) to help us understand our strengths and areas for growth in this important area.

In winter of 2020, many of our stakeholders (administrators, parents, teachers and students) participated in a Pollyanna conference. We created resources for families to engage in critical conversations around diversity, equity and inclusivity, and provided teachers with the tools necessary to deliver a robust curriculum that is inclusive of all perspectives, ensuring that all students have access to instruction that consistently reflects our mission and values aligned with this work. In the spring of 2021, teachers began to integrate Pollyanna DEI lessons into their Social Studies instruction which continues in the classrooms today.



Student Support Services

At Woodland, we think about the whole-child when creating their unique educational experience. Our support services ensure that each student is getting what they need which is made possible through a partnership with both teachers and families.

Through biweekly collaborative meetings, we are able to identify, discuss and strategize around ways to support teaching and learning in the classroom. Teachers are able to voice what is going well, get support in areas that have been identified and create a plan of action that would not only impact the teacher's experience but that of the students as well. Through these collaborative meetings, teachers prioritize social and emotional well being as a lens for which to plan more opportunities for learning and enrichment.

Students have a support services team in the wings to meet their ever evolving needs. We consider the social and emotional well being of our students paramount in their development and growth. We anticipate the needs of our students through proactive SEL (Social Emotional Learning) instruction, equipping them with tools to navigate the world and opportunities for connection and reflection. Social Emotional Learning is delivered directly to students through push-in instruction from our SEL teacher. Lessons are crafted to meet the unique needs of students and their classrooms. Instruction is targeted at developing competence in self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Families are an integral part of the support services model. We invite the voices of family members in order to gain a perspective of students outside of school. Through transparent and frequent communication with families, we are able to highlight student strengths, areas for growth and possible plans of support/enrichment. Parents and teachers connect often to streamline the experience from home to school and vice-versa.

EQUITY

A strategy used to produce fairness—giving everyone what they need to be successful, and not necessarily treating everyone the same



WOODLAND'S COVID-19 RESPONSE

RESILIENCE

The ability to adapt well in the face of adversity, to learn, rebound, and grow stronger with each experience

March 2020 will forever be a date that marked the beginning journey of Woodland School's response to a global pandemic. In a matter of 2 weeks, we turned our in person program into a virtual one with several opportunities mapped out for continued learning, growing and social emotional experiences. For the remainder of the 2019-20 school year, our Learning Specialist met twice weekly with Lower School students over Zoom to read aloud books and to explore topics such as resilience, joy, and wonder. This opportunity was born from the identified need to prioritize students' social emotional well-being while also trying to maintain connection. This seed planted during a very scary time resulted in a school wide initiative to infuse SEL opportunities more explicitly in our daily programming and resulted in the creation of an SEL Teacher and Counselor position beginning in August of 2021.

A sense of community has been a necessity throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Our parent association provided multiple opportunities for families to connect virtually and when COVID-19 safety policies and procedures allowed, small group outdoor meetings took place. This included grade level gatherings in early June. During COVID-19, Woodland parents checked in with one another, organized virtual playdates, and stayed connected, patiently awaiting the time when they could share time on campus together.

The Woodland School community has had the fortunate position of being situated on a 10.5 acre campus, which proved to be an unexpected gift during the pandemic. With large classrooms and small class sizes, we have been able to have all students safely on campus while following all COVID-19 safety protocols. In addition to the outdoor classroom spaces already in place, additional outdoor classrooms and shade structures have been constructed to allow for more outdoor learning. With weekly testing in place for all students and employees, there has been zero COVID-19 transmission on campus. We feel strongly that there is nowhere safer to be than Woodland School.



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JOY

Dr. Dan Cristiani

Director of Teaching, Learning, and Professional Growth

I have always known Woodland as a joyous place, and with good reason. The gleeful sound of children at play is a campus constant, and laughter and giggling percolate throughout every inch of our 10-acre campus. But what I've truly come to appreciate is the incredible variety of the happiness our students experience. Woodland joy, it turns out, comes in many forms.

There is the pleasure of accomplishment, the feeling of satisfaction from doing something hard. "What makes science fun is that it's a challenge," a second grader revealed to me in a casual morning conversation. When I asked another student if she finds Spanish difficult, she looked at me askance as if I were missing the point. "I love learning Spanish because I only know one language so far," she returned, shaking her head at my ill-judged inquiry.

Woodland joy also comes from the delight of surprise and novelty. Two young students shared with me the exhilaration of an environmental-science lab in which they tested the properties of rocks and minerals. "It was cool because we had no idea what would happen," they smiled. Two sixth graders jumped at the chance to tell me about their study of dystopian novels. "It's interesting to think about how societies can be so different from one another," one said. A fifth-grade Wildcat stated simply: "I like learning new stuff," a comment that drew nods of agreement from her classmates.

And then there is the joy of self-expression, the feeling we get when learning connects us with others. I have seen the pleasure and pride our first graders take in their "Best Part of Me" identity projects. I have watched students nearly roll over from cheerful chortling as they exchanged ideas during a small-group activity. I listened as two seventh graders explained to me the fun to be had with historical simulations in Humanities: "Like game night with your family!" The pleasure Woodland students take in their learning is a shared one, a collective joy.

And that is what makes it so infectious. It's impossible to enter onto the campus without being caught up by the many joys of learning. Maybe that is why my own child, a young Wildcat, proclaimed grumpily on a recent Saturday morning, "What, no school? Just a weekend with boring ol' dad? Darn it!"

"I don't want any child to leave K-12 without ever experiencing authentic joy. Joy is something that we all deserve."

**-Gholdy Muhammad,
author of Cultivating
Genius**





BUILDING MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Woodland School Parents Association

Colleen Falls **WSPA President**

When I walked onto Woodland's campus for my first tour, I never could have known just how critical Woodland and our school community would be to my family's future. My husband and I initially chose Woodland for our eldest daughter as we felt the mission, vision, and values aligned with what we were looking for in an educational philosophy. What we never could have fathomed was what was to come, and that most of our initial years at Woodland would be through a pandemic. It was during this pandemic, that we saw just how strong Woodland was and how much our community grew, making Woodland even more impactful in our lives.

With both of our children enrolled at Woodland in the kindergarten and second grade programs, we are continually impressed with Woodland's ability to spark their curiosity, build their confidence, and instill joy on a day to day basis. Furthermore, thanks to Woodland's focus on diversity and inclusion, we are proud to see them embracing and learning about culture and developing a broader worldview which we strive to espouse in our day to day lives.

It was a culmination of the experiences from the last two years that sparked my desire to contribute back to the Woodland Community as a whole through our WSPA Board. While I had been involved in WSPA in years past through various events and activities, this is my first year to have the opportunity to serve on the WSPA Board. My hope is that through my service, I may pay it forward to both tenured and incoming families so they feel the welcoming, strength, and warmth that I have felt over the last two and a half years of being part of this unique and incredible community.

WSPA activities and events:

New Parent Social ● *Community Connections* ● *Room Parents*

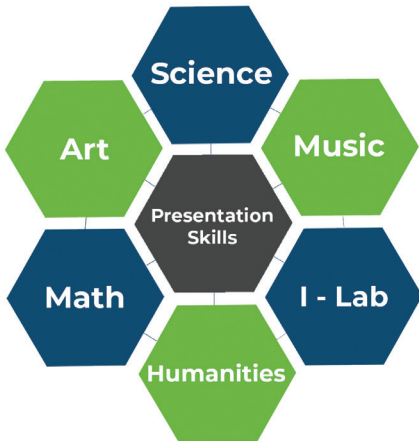
Back to School Social ● *Book Swap* ● *Fun Run*

Bingo Night ● *Faculty/Staff Appreciation Week*

All parents are members of the Woodland School Parents Association (WSPA). We play a critical role in building and fostering community throughout the year by volunteering, hosting events, welcoming new families, and supporting the school.



CAPSTONE



Translating Passion into Purpose

At the start of eighth grade, students identify an issue of global or local significance that they are curious or passionate about and create an interdisciplinary project to make a difference or have impact at some level. These “Capstone” projects mark the culmination of middle school and prepare students for more in-depth research in high school and beyond. Guided by a faculty advisor, they conduct research, interview experts in the field, write an expository paper and design an action piece, and present their work by year’s end.



CLUBS AND ELECTIVES

Woodland students enjoy a myriad of clubs and electives where they pursue interests, work collaboratively, learn to manage extracurricular activities alongside homework, and demonstrate leadership. These electives and clubs are an integral part of the Woodland experience that graduates will bring to high school and beyond.



ALUMNI AND HIGH SCHOOL READINESS

Woodland alumni enter ninth grade equipped with more than the skills and knowledge to succeed in their classes; they enter with the motivation and confidence to make better whatever community they are in. While they have found success in high-school academics, their positive impact extends far beyond the classroom.

Woodland School graduates attend a variety of public, private, and independent schools across the Bay Area. Approximately 75% of our students choose private or independent schools. Alumni attend a variety of universities across the United States.



Adam Fagin and the Woodland
Basketball Team in 2002



Adam Fagin and Coach Fanucchi
Summer 2021

Adam Fagin, Class of 2002, recalls being a 2nd grader in public school and struggling with learning to read. At Woodland, he found the personalized attention, dedicated teaching and culture of Core Virtues that he credits with helping him develop the discipline and work ethic that "undoubtedly made a difference in my future academic and career pursuits." Adam recently completed both medical and dental schools and is now a practicing oral surgeon in Palo Alto.





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Woodland School is fully accredited by the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) and Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and a proud member of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).

Woodland School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or national origin in the administration of its educational or admission policies, tuition assistance distribution, or other school programs. Woodland School is dedicated to the goal of building a culturally diverse and pluralistic faculty committed to teaching and working in a multicultural environment and strongly encourages applications from candidates who reflect such diversity.