

# From Strength to Greatness

## **STERNE SCHOOL**

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020–2025





## From Strength to Greatness

Dear Sterne Community,

The past months of unprecedented change in our world and our country meet at a crossroads of change within Sterne School. With the departure of our longtime Head of School and an inspired new strategic plan, Sterne is poised to chart a new course. Over the past year, it has been my honor to work with so many different members of our community to develop a strong vision and future for Sterne. We could not have achieved this without the unique and transformative leadership of Ed McManis or the vision and resolve of our devoted Board of Directors.

One of our Core Values—Learn From Everyone’s Uniqueness—guides us and captures the spirit of this work. From alumni to current parents, teachers to Sterne School “champions,” we developed a thoughtful and inspired plan ensuring that every Sterne Student leaves our school understanding their strengths, capabilities, and their own version of greatness.

Over the next five years, we look forward to creating more opportunities for our community to work together to achieve the goals laid out in our plan and monitor our progress. I am honored and excited to be an integral part of the growth, the vision, and the future of Sterne School.

We can do this, together!

Melissa Myers  
Head of School



## About Sterne

At Sterne, we know there simply is not a one size fits all educational approach in a world where everyone's learning profile is unique.

Every day, we teach students how to unlock the learning style that works best for them.

We believe that when support is a part of, not an exception to the school day, kids can focus on being kids while also becoming confident, capable learners.

### History

Sterne School was founded in 1976 by educator Valerie Anthony, who, along with her husband Xen, operated the school in a storefront in the Inner Sunset before moving the school to a home on Jackson Street in 1982. For much of its 44-year history, Sterne was staffed by six or seven teachers and enrolled 30 to 60 students. In 2008, Head of School Ed McManis took the helm and ushered in a period of revolutionary growth at Sterne with the addition of a second campus and the student body quadrupling in size.

Over the years, Sterne's dedicated community of educators, parents, and board members have come together to support various capital projects that have allowed Sterne to grow and expand its student-centric program to serve more students. In 2016, Sterne signed a 99-year lease and established a new home at 838 Kearny, bringing all grades (4–12) under one roof in the heart of downtown San Francisco.

Over four decades since its founding, Sterne School continues to emerge as a thought leader in education, honoring individual learning profiles and strengths.

### Vision Statement

EVERY PERSON HAS A LEARNING PROFILE

### Mission Statement

BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION OF INDIVIDUAL STRENGTHS TO DISCOVER AND NURTURE EACH STUDENT'S VERSION OF GREATNESS

## Core Values

### START WITH STRENGTHS

Everyone has a gift that makes them shine and a talent to share. At Sterne, we build and nurture from there. While we don't ignore deficits, we are committed to making sure each of us knows where our superpowers lie, and we lean on those to make the most of our time here.

### BRING JOY TO LEARNING

Sometimes when life lessons become challenging, we lose our way and get discouraged. At Sterne, we seek to rediscover the joy in learning a new language, a complex problem or simply how to be a good friend. We approach our daily work, whether teacher or student, with an optimism that today we will know more than we did yesterday, and we look forward to that opportunity.

### LEARN FROM EVERYONE'S UNIQUENESS

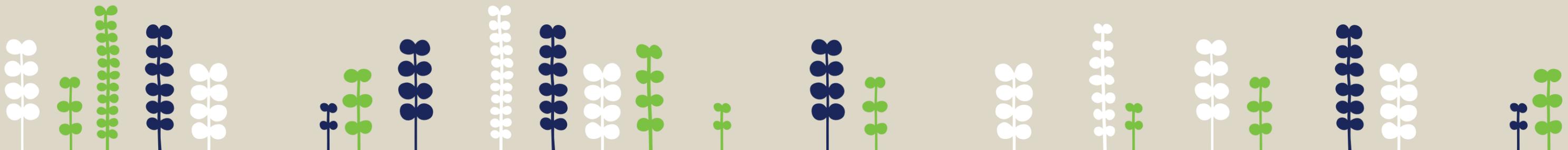
We welcome the opportunity to learn from and about each other. We know every member of our community adds to, not detracts from, that dynamic. We seek to understand, appreciate, and develop empathy around our differences and hope to model how we assimilate those differences in a way that makes us all proud.

### HONOR THE EDUCATOR

Each of us has had many teachers throughout our lives. They have shaped us and encouraged us to be the very best version of ourselves. At Sterne, we recognize and see the value of educators who work with students in a variety of approaches to learn the lessons needed for a life well lived. That conscious recognition fills us with gratitude and respect for their craft.

### NEVER GIVE UP

Our community believes in each other. We will do everything in our power not let each other fail. This resilience also applies to the individual. Being part of the Sterne community means sometimes we "fall down seven times, get up eight." We are buoyed by the knowledge that our students, teachers, and parents demand the same of themselves.



# We commit to...

## THE STERNE STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

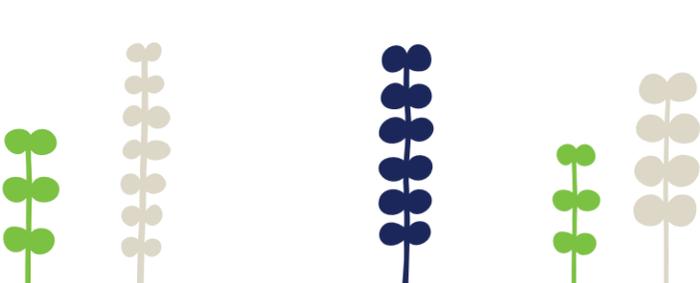
**We commit to a staff recruitment and retention program that sets new standards for compensation excellence and best-in-class training for everyone.**

### THE PRIORITIES

- Improve the recruitment and retention protocols of teaching staff and administration.
- Prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion in our hiring and recruitment practices.
- Invest in and improve access to professional development and advancement for teachers.
- Develop a long-range compensation package for faculty and staff that meets or surpasses the benchmark of other select Bay Area independent schools.
- Identify and create programs that support faculty and staff well-being, community, and collaboration.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How do we demonstrate that we care about our faculty and staff as much as we do our students?



## THE STERNE ACADEMIC PLAYBOOK

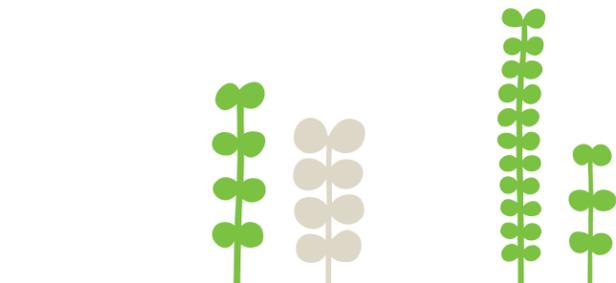
**We commit to optimizing the curriculum by creating a playbook that guides educators to amplify and teach to the strengths of all learning profiles.**

### THE PRIORITIES

- Evaluate our curriculum and assessment philosophy by grade and department using best practices in teaching and learning for neurodiverse learners.
- Integrate assistive technology in ways that enhance the Sterne curriculum.
- Leverage the Sterne Academic Playbook in parent education, teacher recruitment and training, and professional development for non-Sterne learning specialists and teachers.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How will we know we are effectively engaging and teaching every student?



## STERNE STUDENT AND COMMUNITY LIFE

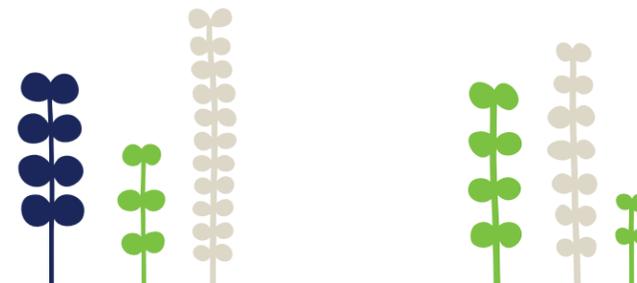
**We commit to offering a Sterne community experience that is fulfilling, enriching, and made to stick.**

### THE PRIORITIES

- Uphold Sterne’s unique brand of diversity and recommit to supporting every member of our community academically, professionally, socially, and individually.
- Fulfill our vision for the Kearny Street campus resulting in more environments for creative exploration, athletics, personal growth and community gathering.
- Increase the engagement of our students, parents, faculty, staff, and alumni in the life of the school beginning with actively engaging them in our strategic initiatives.
- Become more connected and visible in San Francisco in mission-appropriate ways.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What must we do to continually optimize the Sterne School experience so that all members feel invested in the community?



## STERNE OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

**We commit to excellence in institutional infrastructure and operations to cement our reputation as a West Coast thought leader for neurodiverse education.**

### THE PRIORITIES

- Board of Directors will study and employ the NAIS principles of good practice for Boards.
- Generate a multi-year financial plan tied to the priorities of the strategic plan.
- Improve data quality and reporting capabilities to support business decision making, student recruitment and outcomes, employee systems, and compliance.
- Communicate Sterne’s brand and message to impact the image, visibility, recruitment, and enrollment of the school.
- Evaluate and implement a multi-year fundraising plan to promote annual fund support, capital campaign(s), foundation support, and endowment growth.
- Implement and continue to evaluate school safety, both on and off campus.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What are the standards for and indicators of operational excellence and how does Sterne measure against them?



# STERNE SCHOOL

838 Kearny Street  
San Francisco CA 94108  
415.922.6081  
sterneschool.org

## 2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David Bradlow, President  
Cassie Bahan  
Janet Chen  
Hali Croner  
Jack Hug  
Greg Hylton  
John Kunze  
Constance Laflamme  
Eric Lauterbach  
Russell Reiff  
Lee Schweichler

## STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE

Cassie Bahan  
Board Member, Parent

Angelica Boivin  
Parent

Danielle Bonequi  
Finance and Business  
Manager

David Bradlow  
Board Member, Alumni Parent

Susie Cain  
Director of Communications

Janet Chen  
Board Member, Alumni Parent

Spryte Heithecker  
Lower School  
Homeroom Teacher,  
Health and P.E. Director

Christina Herubin  
Lower School Homeroom  
Teacher, Upper School  
Science Teacher

Eleanor Jones  
Upper School Literature  
and Composition Teacher,  
Academic Advisor

Martina Lauterbach  
Parent

Ed McManis  
Head of School

Naheed Misfeldt  
Parent

Melissa Myers\*  
Associate Head of School

Sarah Ridenour  
Director of Learning

Jaime Tollas  
Strategic Planning  
Process Coordinator as  
Director of Development

Evelyn Vogelstein  
Parent

Mary Wong  
Parent

Richard Wong  
Parent

\*Melissa was appointed Head of School and took the helm on July 1, 2020. She will be leading Sterne on the implementation of this strategic plan.

