

LA RIVISTA



2024-2025 / A RETROSPECTIVE Edition

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LA SCUOLA
International School • Preschool - 8th Grade

Inspiring brave learners
to shape the future

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LETTER FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL



Cari Amici,

As I'm sure is the case for many of you, I sometimes get caught up in thinking only about the future. These thoughts span from the mundane—What is next on my calendar? Where do I have to be tomorrow?—to the existential. Are we preparing our children to succeed in the world, and what kind of world will there be to greet them?

When these thoughts get overwhelming, I find it helpful to take a moment to look back. Seeing how far we've come reminds me that we will make it to our next destination.

The 2024-25 school year was a great example of that. When I think back to all that we accomplished between the first day of school in August and the last day of school in June, I'm filled with both a sense of pride and a deep determination. We are reaching milestones that once felt beyond our grasp. We are on the right path, and we will keep going, always keeping in mind our mission of inspiring brave learners to shape the future.

This year, the La Scuola community grew to more than 430 students over three campuses. Each one of our students, along with their family, is a valued member of our globally-minded community of learners. They bring their unique background, culture, and history

into the classroom, where they are met by educators who do the same. The result is a multi-lingual learning environment full of genuine curiosity, respectful dialogue, and boundless inquiry. Not to mention warmth and care.

Our investment in this type of education is clearer than ever—literally! In October, we broke ground on La Scuola's new, one-of-a-kind Mission Campus building and the progress since has been remarkable. This space is being intentionally designed, in partnership with Michele Zini, to be a world-class Reggio Emilia-inspired environment for students up through Grade 8.

The California International Reggio Center (CIRC), La Scuola's professional development arm, has also grown this year. CIRC's workshops and roundtables, many of which sold out, are an important way we support educators from the Bay Area and beyond to bring the Reggio Emilia Approach® into their classrooms.

Our commitment to giving back as a community remains strong. Our annual gala and fundraiser, La Dolce Vita, raised a record-setting \$900,000 for La Scuola and Sliding Scale Tuition. This fund allows us to make La Scuola accessible to more families and students, including those that are a part of the Schools Mentoring and Resource Team (SMART) program. La Scuola supports the most SMART scholars of any school in San Francisco, which would not be possible without the generosity of each of you.

We have also seen our students' generous spirits and cultural awareness on full display this year. As current events permeate throughout our community and global issues have local impact, they have impressed me with their open-mindedness, their thoughtful

pursuit of truth and justice, and their understanding of just how complicated those concepts can be. Through the Primary Years Programme Exhibition, our Grade 5 students took meaningful action to amplify the causes that matter to them. Similarly, for the Middle Years Programme Community Project, our Grade 8 students dedicated time, effort, and energy into exploring topics that they find personally meaningful.

None of this would be possible without the unwavering commitment of our faculty & staff—who show up every morning not knowing what the day will bring, but prepared to meet every challenge and celebrate every success—or without the trust and partnership that we share with La Scuola families.

This is what inspires me—what gives me hope, what spurs me to action, what expands my imagination. To see how much can change in a year is a beautiful reminder that every day matters.

I will leave you with a request. In difficult times, remember our motto: Niente Senza Gioia/ Nada Sin Alegria/Nothing Without Joy. This does not mean that we expect to be happy every day, but it is a reminder to find joy in the small things and to always look for the light at the end of the tunnel. And if you cannot see that light, we are here for you.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership in making the La Scuola dream possible every day.

Con Stima,

Valentina Imbeni, Ph.D.
Head of School

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRS



Courtenay Brown,
Board Co-Chair



Susan Lyon,
Board Co-Chair

Dear La Scuola Community,
On behalf of the Board of Directors, we extend our thanks to you for a wonderful and unique school year. In particular, we want to recognize our intrepid leader, **Valentina Imbeni**; the incredibly committed faculty and staff; our dedicated parent community; and our curious, kind students.

We are excited to share some of the highlights and new beginnings from this school year. Each one represents our efforts to make La Scuola an even better place for our children, teachers, staff, and families.

NEW BUILDING

By now most of you have seen the new Mission Campus construction growing taller everyday. We are happy to share that the building is on schedule for opening in April 2026. Once complete, this will be the first ever K-8 Reggio Emilia-inspired learning space in the United States, and La Scuola's flagship building. We want to thank each and every one of you who have committed to making this dream come true.

STRATEGIC PLAN

We have been working to meet goals aligned with our new Strategic Plan 2025-2030 which will be shared in the fall. The strategic planning process engaged families, students, faculty, staff, and members of the Board to ensure the voices and perspectives of our community, both past and present, are represented.

MISSION MINDED PARTNERSHIP

This year we partnered with Mission Minded, a strategy and creative firm which helped bring La Scuola's brand and messaging to life. Through our work with them, we are evaluating how and what we communicate about La Scuola International School as we grow into the future.

LA SCUOLA INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION

Silicon Valley Campus: The Board continues to work hard on this campus and its sustainability with particular focus on growing enrollments.

Milano Campus: For the past five years we have been exploring opening La Scuola International in Italy for several strategic reasons and have focused our site search primarily in Milan. Working with the Milano International Board, we recently found an ideal space for our new campus and approved the backing of the lease. There is much work ahead as we hope to open our doors for the 2026-2027 school year.

The California International Reggio Center (CIRC) continues to grow, offering professional development to the community and consultancy to schools around the globe. The highlight of CIRC this year was beginning research with Reggio Children on the graphic languages. This study included 100 children and data from 165 videos documenting students' drawings from La Scuola and four other Bay Area schools.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING

As many of you know, we announced the hiring of our new Director of DEIB and Community Engagement, Alejandra Navarro. The Board and the administration continues to believe in the importance of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging as a key value.

GOVERNANCE

In closing, we would like to share Board member changes this year. We have several Board members leaving, some of whom have served multiple terms of service. We would like to thank them all for their stellar work on the La Scuola Board.

Outgoing Board members:

Janet Rasic, Ariadna Ruder, Helena Choi, Eric Tokstad.

Janet Rasic served on the Board 2020-2025. She served as Secretary, Chair of the Advancement and Audit Committees, and a member of the Finance Committee.

Ariadna Ruder served on the Board 2022-2025. She was a member of the Finance Committee.

Helena Choi served on the Board 2019-2025. She served as the Chair of the Governance Committee.

Eric Tokstad will take a sabbatical this year while he and his family live in Italy. Eric will remain on the Facilities Committee for the new building and return to the Board the following year.

These Board members have given time and expertise for many years, and are invaluable to the growth of La Scuola. All will be greatly missed. We wish you all the best!

Incoming Board members:

We are thrilled to welcome our new Board members joining us this summer: Ledion Bitinka, Helen Jones, and Jim Eagan

Ledion Bitinka: Founder and CTO of Cribl. Ledion is a parent to two La Scuola students, a daughter headed into Grade 4 and son transitioning to Kindergarten. Ledion will serve on the Strategic Planning task force.

Helen Jones: Co-Chair of La Dolce Vita for four consecutive years, and Co-Chair of the Annual Fund. Helen is a parent to two La Scuola students, Lexi, a rising sixth grader, and Coco who will be in Grade 1.

Jim Eagan: Head of School at the Synapse School. Jim previously served on the La Scuola Board for six years, and is currently serving as an Advisor on the Board. We are excited to welcome him back.

A special thanks to Courtenay Brown for his tenure as Board Co-Chair. Courtenay will be stepping down as Co-Chair but will remain on the Board serving as Finance Committee Chair. We welcome Jeffrey Krause as new Co-Chair.

With gratitude,

Courtenay Brown,
Board Co-Chair

Susan Lyon,
Board Co-Chair



THIS YEAR WAS ONE OF

tremendous growth for the California International Reggio Center (CIRC), as we led professional development workshops, facilitated dialogue among teachers through our roundtable events, and supported educators to deepen their understanding of the Reggio Emilia Approach®. Our events continue to sell out, making it clear that CIRC is filling a need for the Bay Area and beyond.

Since launching last year, CIRC has hosted more than a dozen workshops for those at the heart of the learning experience, and there is much to look forward to in the year ahead.

La Scuola faculty and staff will continue to create and provide workshops for educators at the elementary and middle school levels, focused on implementing the Reggio Emilia philosophy for older students.

Collaborating with other Bay Area schools on how they can set up their environments and present their own professional development will remain a central focus.

Exploring partnerships with colleges and universities to create courses focused on the Reggio Emilia Approach® will help ensure that the next generation of educators is inspired to seek out this pedagogy throughout their careers.

In 2027, we will join Sonoma State University in presenting a Reggio Emilia Conference, expanding the reach of our work.





CELEBRATING GROWTH AND PURPOSE

Highlights from La Scuola's Joint PYP & MYP Evaluation Visit

This spring, La Scuola International School welcomed a visiting team from the International Baccalaureate (IB) for a joint evaluation of our Primary Years Programme (PYP) and Middle Years Programme (MYP).

These visits, which take place every five years, are designed to reflect on how the IB philosophy is being lived out in practice—and they also offer schools a valuable opportunity to pause, take stock, and learn.

What started as an external evaluation became a moment to honor our journey and reaffirm the values that guide La Scuola. We are grateful to our students, faculty, families, and community partners for participating in this evaluation visit and shaping a school where joy, inclusion, and learning thrive. As we continue to grow, we look forward to deepening our impact and walking bravely into the future, together.

STAYING TRUE TO OUR IDENTITY AND MISSION

Throughout the visit, the IB team saw how multilingualism, the Reggio Emilia Approach®, and the IB mission come together to guide our decisions, shaping our curriculum and the culture that fills our classrooms and hallways. Evaluators commended how this unique combination drives innovation, informs strategic planning, and is evident in the joyful, student-centered culture throughout the school.

They remarked on how these elements aren't treated as separate strands, but as part of a shared vision for learning. The team noted how our students not only understand IB learner profile attributes but also live them through school-wide agreements and real-world applications.

POWERFUL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

La Scuola's Reggio-inspired environments were celebrated for promoting wellness, creativity, and engagement. The evaluation affirmed our deep understanding that the environment is a teacher, an active and essential component in the learning process. From classroom design to outdoor learning spaces, every detail fosters transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary thinking.

The team also appreciated the way our school connects with the broader community. Our partnerships with organizations, such as the Italian Consulate and the SMART program, were recognized as powerful assets that enrich learning and embody our global citizenship goals. Our efforts to make La Scuola accessible through Sliding Scale Tuition were highlighted as an important commitment to equity in IB education.

STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING AND INSPIRED TEACHING

The evaluation team highlighted the strength of student agency and voice throughout La Scuola; students are active participants in shaping their learning experiences, supported by robust advisory programs and service learning that emphasize reciprocity and reflection. In both PYP and MYP, learning engagements are dynamic, inquiry-based, and connect meaningfully to local and global contexts.

Teachers were praised for fostering meaningful collaboration, creating inclusive spaces, and using feedback as a tool for growth. Our differentiated professional development program and strong mentorship for new teachers was seen as a key factor in sustaining this work, demonstrating a commitment to continuous learning and equity.

IB EVALUATION

LOOKING AHEAD

The evaluation team celebrated the rapid growth and progress of the MYP as our newest program at La Scuola, and approved our clear action plans and structures for future growth, encouraging us to continue investing in collaborative planning, interdisciplinary units, teacher wellness, and student-friendly assessment tools.

We were also invited to explore additional ways to support multilingual families, leverage Reggio-inspired documentation, and promote reflection using the "hundred languages of children" across all areas of school life.



A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

La Scuola's new Mission Campus expansion and the establishment of the California International Reggio Center were noted as exciting signs of our evolution and leadership in the global education landscape. These developments reflect our commitment to creating innovative spaces for students and educators alike to imagine and enact the future of education.

In their final remarks, the evaluation team concluded that La Scuola "demonstrates exceptional commitment to educational innovation" and praised our efforts to bridge cultures, languages, and pedagogies into a cohesive and joyful learning journey.





INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE AND REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH IN ACTION PRESCHOOL

One of the foundational principles of a Reggio Emilia preschool is recognizing that children are capable and competent. At La Scuola, this mindset is applied to all students, beginning with our youngest learners in Piccoli. They are encouraged to ask questions, and supported in their efforts to follow lines of inquiry until they arrive at an answer.

This year, our Piccoli students embarked on a sensory journey to discover the many qualities of chocolate—the way its aroma can permeate a space, how it feels melting in their fingertips, what it sounds like when you snap a piece in half.

Research into this sweet universe began with a moment of discussion, where students expressed their ideas and knowledge and shared their curiosities and personal experiences. From there, the children's inquiry unfolded as it always does—down a circuitous path, where one discovery leads to another, and then another, and then still more.

Students observed chocolate at every stage, from a simple cocoa bean along with its plant, to the refined version that we all know and love. They explored the long process of chocolate transformation through discussions of time, human labor, and the use of specific tools, and how all these factors contribute to the final product.

As they spent time deeply engaged with chocolate in its many forms, seeing where it comes from and how it changes over time, their understanding of this ingredient grew.

Of course, the beauty of La Scuola's preschool program is that the process of inquiry leads to discoveries about infinite subjects, and never the same thing twice. For this year's Piccoli classes, the fact that it was chocolate just made it that much sweeter.



INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE AND REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH IN ACTION KINDERGARTEN-5

What Is It Like? How Does It Work?
Why Is It As It Is? How Is It Transforming?
How Is It Linked To Other Things?
What Are The Points Of View?
What Are Our Obligations?

At La Scuola, to inspire brave learners to shape the future, we know that durable learning needs to inspire curiosity, transfer to new situations, and also encourage agency and action. We can do this by approaching learning not through topics and lists, but through concepts. Last June, our faculty took a fantastic **IB training on the topic of concept-based learning**, and this has been a real inspiration as we updated and revised our **Program of Inquiry in the Elementary School**. Concept-based learning applies across all subject areas, not only in our units of inquiry.

When we examine math through the conceptual lens, it opens up the possibility of deeper exploration, and teaches students to see everything as related. When we see a new math problem, we think: How is this related to what I already know? What is the relationship among these numbers? For example, Grade 2 students work on fluency with addition and subtraction; they learn to compose and decompose numbers in different ways. They explore and recognize that there is a pattern in the numbers that compose ten, and learn they can use tens as a strategy to make harder problems easier: for example, to do $8+5$, I can break up the 5 into $2+3$ so I have $(8+2)+3 = 10+3 = 13$. But this concept applies to much larger numbers and to much smaller numbers as well—I can make 100s, make 1,000s, or when working with decimals and fractions, I can make 1.



INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE AND REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH IN ACTION MIDDLE SCHOOL

THE JOURNEY OF WHY

Inquiry and Expression in a Connected World

This year in the Middle Years Programme, our focus was on creating Interdisciplinary Units (IDUs), which assess learning independently in two or more subject areas while also introducing a third set of criteria that considers students' ability to transfer knowledge and skills across disciplines to further conceptual understanding through application and reflection.

We found that our professional goal of introducing new IDUs in the Middle Years Programme readily aligned with our commitment to Experiential Education. Each grade level in the Middle School participates in a class trip that extends inquiry into the world beyond the walls of the classroom—our grade six students spent five days at NatureBridge in Yosemite, deepening their understanding of the California landscape and fire ecology; seventh graders acted as environmental stewards in a changing climate in Mendocino in collaboration with Jug Handle Creek Farms; and our graduating eighth grade class traveled to Italy to investigate perspective in verbal and visual language. These experiences in open-air classrooms allow our IB learners to consolidate disciplinary knowledge through direct contact with diverse communities and contexts while employing their creative and critical thinking across 100 languages.

During their trip to Mendocino, seventh grade students bridged the distinct disciplines of science and art through first-hand experience in field study. The unit, challenging young learners to employ art as a means of environmental stewardship, helped students understand biodiversity in the broader environmental and social context of the Mendocino Coast. Grounded in scientific research and enriched through artistic expression, students engaged in field studies, observation, and illustration to explore local ecosystems. Scientific method and prior knowledge provided accuracy and depth for observing and understanding ecological systems, while art and visual expression offered a powerful means of communication. By synthesizing precise observation with creative interpretation, they employed multiple languages in order to communicate ecological concepts effectively, demonstrating how art enhances scientific understanding and inspires advocacy.

As our eighth graders traveled to Italy, they were asked to contemplate how our sense of identity and the ways we represent ourselves and the world are shaped by where—and when—we are. Students absorbed and reflected on their experience abroad through the lenses of art, literature, and social history, investigating how place influences human perspectives, values, and ways of living, and asking: *How does our environment shape who we are? Are there parts of our identity that remain constant, no matter the place or time?*

Drawing on the unique experiences of travel and cultural encounter—where one can feel both foreign and familiar—students reflected on the complexities of belonging, memory, and identity.

Our interdisciplinary journeys during the 2024-2025 academic year reflect our Reggio-inspired commitment to inquiry-based, student-centered learning rooted in real-world experience. Through connections and experiences, our students not only deepen their conceptual understanding but also learn to see the world—and themselves—through multiple perspectives and expressive forms, embodying the spirit of the IB learner as thinker, communicator, and changemaker.



ITALIANO

AT LA SCUOLA

At La Scuola this year our exploration of “L’italiano e il libro”—the theme of La Settimana della Lingua Italiana nel Mondo—became an opportunity to engage students as inquirers, authors, artists, and thinkers. Rooted in our belief that children are capable, curious, and full of potential, this project invited learners across all ages to interact with literature not just as readers, but as creators and interpreters of meaning.

In the preschool environment, where the hundred languages of children are honored and nurtured, students expressed complex ideas through a variety of symbolic languages. Emotions were explored and given form through materials such as clay, paint, and gesture. Mythical creatures like dragons and monsters became the catalysts for collaborative storytelling and graphic representation. Children investigated the properties of chocolate, discovering its textures and transformations through sensory exploration. Their curiosity extended to the human body and space, interpreting patterns of the skin, veins, and even imagining astronaut menus—each inquiry grounded in observation, dialogue, and aesthetic expression.

In the elementary years, language acquisition and literacy unfolded through a multilingual, transdisciplinary lens. Students build vocabulary connected to daily life, seasons, and emotional literacy. Literature served as a springboard for creative expression: stories were reimagined through drama, costumes, choreography, and filmmaking. Inquiry into historical and contemporary narratives sparked reflection on identity, memory, and belonging. In one powerful example, a literary circle centered around *Le valigie di Auschwitz* invited students to consider what we carry—physically and symbolically—when we leave a place behind. Meanwhile, poetic forms like haiku were paired with calligraphy, offering students a contemplative space to blend form, rhythm, and meaning.

Middle School students deepened their engagement by crafting biographies of figures who inspire them, while learning the artisanal process of bookbinding. Through writing, designing, and filming video tutorials, they took ownership of both content and form, blending research, storytelling, and craftsmanship into a unified expression of learning.

Throughout this school-wide journey, the Italian language became not only a medium of communication but a tool for inquiry, identity-building, and creativity. In line with the Reggio Emilia Approach® and the IB learner profile, students developed their voice, expanded their thinking, and strengthened their sense of agency. Books were not only read—they were lived, embodied, and transformed.





OUR ATELIERS

The atelier: Encounters, discoveries, wonders, and experiments

At La Scuola, atelier spaces provide students with different tools for learning, from building and tinkering to digital art and music. Students explore many of the 100 languages and from that, they can develop new ideas and find new ways to illustrate their learning.

Together with the atelierista, students engage in the process of constructing knowledge—an experience that nurtures a lifelong love of learning.

ART MUSIC GARDENING & ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES DESIGN

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Learning and teaching should not stand on opposite banks and just watch the river flow by; instead, they should embark together on a journey down the water.

— Loris Malaguzzi

OUR ATELIERS

ART ATELIER

PRESCHOOL

Throughout this school year, the Atelier at the Dogpatch campus has affirmed itself as a vibrant and generative space—an environment of encounters, discoveries, and transformations.

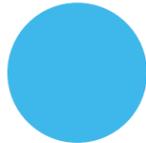
It is not only a physical place, but a landscape of relationships, where children have been able to inhabit the time of research with slowness, wonder, and depth. A qualitative time—suspended and active—where observation becomes experience, intuition transforms into hypotheses, and thought takes shape through multiple expressive languages.

Over the course of the year, the Atelier has emerged as a fertile crossroads between nature, art, and technology, welcoming children into an expressive ecosystem rich with possibilities. It is an aesthetic and relational context where mark-making, materials, light, sound, and digital tools are in constant dialogue—interweaving and supporting each other in the construction of meaning.

The natural world has represented one of the key axes of our research: trees, flowers, and living beings have been carefully observed, narrated, and interpreted through the children's curious gaze, generating questions, connections, and reflections. The graphic-visual language has been cultivated as a tool for both knowing and interpreting reality, refining the gaze and giving visible form to what is seen, perceived, and imagined.

Alongside this exploration, a second research direction emerged around light and digital languages. Experimentations with RGB lights opened poetic and immersive scenarios, where light—in its ephemeral and transformative nature—became an expressive material, capable of dialoguing with darkness, the body, and space. Technology, far from being a mere tool, has become a language of relationship and a generative possibility, at the service of imagination, play, and storytelling.

In the Atelier, languages became thought, and thoughts became visible—passing through materials, tools, and technologies. The children inhabited this landscape with authenticity, leaving sensitive traces of their way of being in the world—telling it, questioning it, and re-creating it each day with ever-renewed eyes.



OUR ATELIERS

ART ATELIER

KINDERGARTEN - GRADE 5

The Embodiment of a Forest

In the Elementary Art Atelier, we explore ideas about being, including the vision of each child as a whole universe. As each young artist considers what this could mean for them personally, and wonders about the universe we are all part of, our conversations and creative meanderings speak to elements and celestial details, to stories about being somewhere special—where they saw a sunset or a shooting star, and to what it means “to be”.



Our investigations include observations of movement—what is it like to move through space, to move like water, to be “water-beings”? The artists take turns drawing each other dancing, and in stillness, their marks showing contours and gestures, becoming traces of a memory, and although derived from observing form, they shapeshift into abstractions. We have created abstract works that surprise us and make us laugh. We continue to incorporate our own movements into our studies of being, with freeze-dance, improvisational games, and a study of yoga, including observation of breath and movement practice.

Our atelier studies delve into close study of artwork by Bay Area artists, Masako Miki and Rupy C. Tut, along with American portrait artist Amy Sherald, all recently celebrated at SFMOMA. We spend time in conversation with their imagined landscapes, filled with symbols depicting personal and shared worlds. La Scuola artists then created their own shape-shifting characters and environments—transformer race cars, talking teapots and rice bowls, enchanted forests, and mountain ranges filled with the music of songbirds.

Within this context, first and second grade artists have been creating short films in a performance art unit, emerging from the study of tree (*vrikshasana*) and mountain (*tadasana*) asanas in yoga. Most of their *corto metraggi* are filmed by the young artists themselves, and the perspective we get from the camera in their hands captivates with dynamic peer-to-peer relationships, abstract qualities of film-making with their precious hands covering the lens as they move through the performance, sometimes pretending to fly like a bird or a plane.

The students take turns with the camera-person role, and also as the lead in the performance, as other participants, and as observers. After a performance, the participants will interview the observers asking them *what did they notice?* and the observers will describe what it was like to see their classmates embody a forest, or a mountain range. The working



title of this unit is *The Embodiment of a Forest*, which fits into our theme of *Beingness*. What is it like to be a forest when the breeze moves through all of its branches? What is it like for an entire mountain range to be filled with the songs of many birds? What does it mean, “to be”?



OUR ATELIERS

ART ATELIER

MIDDLE SCHOOL

This year in the Art Atelier, students created works of art driven by emotions.

GRADE 6

In Grade 6, students expressed their emotions through art using varied media—such as landscapes, abstraction, and self-portraits. They explored color psychology as well, considering questions of how certain colors can influence mood, behaviors, feelings, and actions.

GRADE 7 & 8

In Grades 7 and 8, students chose personal media such as acrylics, printmaking, and wood panel drawing, among others, to create fearless, emotional artworks. Their inspiration came from many places, most notably from a field trip to **Creativity Explored**, a local art studio that partners with artists with developmental disabilities.



OUR ATELIERS

MUSIC ATELIER

PRESCHOOL

Dogpatch Campus

Musical Journeys in Early Childhood

At La Scuola's Preschool, music is woven into the children's everyday experience, supporting their physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Children explore a wide variety of musical instruments—observing, comparing, and experimenting with sound to develop auditory awareness and appreciation. We introduce ear training through playful listening activities using drums with different pitches, helping children distinguish and describe what they hear. Building on their familiarity with color-coded bells, we transition to the xylophone to deepen their understanding of pitch, tone, dynamics, and melodic patterns. This hands-on approach strengthens their ability to recognize patterns and sequences, building confidence in identifying and reproducing melodies.

A key part of our approach involves bridging sound and vision in musical learning through the use of color-coded music sheets. These visual tools help children connect what they see with what they hear, making abstract concepts like pitch and sequence more concrete and accessible. Activities like the "Color Music Creation Game" and the "Color and Sound Pattern Game" invite children to compose original sequences using color-coded notes, encouraging creativity, independence, and collaboration. As they create and perform their own melodies, children begin to understand how sound works, how music is structured, and what it means to play as part of an ensemble.

Dance and movement remain a constant within the curriculum, offering regular opportunities for children to engage with rhythm, coordination, and self-expression through music. These



AGE 2 DISCOVERING SOUND THROUGH MOVEMENT AND PLAY

At two years old, children are full of curiosity and wonder. Music becomes a sensory-rich experience that invites the whole body to participate through feeling the beat, singing simple songs, listening to different timbres, and through music and movement.

AGES 3-5 DEEPENING MUSICAL UNDERSTANDING

As children move into the preschool years, they begin to explore music more intentionally. At La Scuola, this stage focuses on nurturing creativity, pattern recognition, and cooperative play. Students learn to sing in pitch, use solfège and hand signs, keep a steady beat, and see sound and silence.

KINDERGARTEN - GRADE 2

At La Scuola International School, music is more than a subject—it is a language that helps children express who they are, connect with others, and make sense of the world around them. In Kindergarten – Grade 2, students embark on a joyful musical journey that nurtures creativity, confidence, and collaboration.

From playful movement to reading music notation, our young musicians explore rhythm, melody, and sound with curiosity and purpose. As students grow, they recognize that music is everywhere and can distinguish between beat, rhythm, and movement. They make music together, collaborating to share this important language—one of the 100 languages they have to express themselves.

experiences encourage the use of the whole body in learning—integrating listening, memory, and motor skills while building collaboration and empathy. Children also develop important self-regulation, patience, and social-emotional skills through cooperative music-making.

Exploration of musical instruments and sound is a foundational element in our preschool, helping children actively understand qualities like pitch, volume, and timbre. Guided by the Reggio Emilia approach and grounded in IB Early Years principles, our music program fosters curiosity, creativity, and a lifelong appreciation for music. Through engaging, inquiry-based experiences, we ensure every child has the opportunity to discover and express their unique musical voice.

PRESCHOOL

Silicon Valley Campus

At La Scuola, we believe that music is a natural language for young children—a way of exploring the world, expressing identity, and connecting with others. Music is integrated into daily experiences, supporting cognitive, emotional, and social growth through joyful, play-based discovery.

Here's a look at how music supports developmental milestones across early childhood, inspired by our Reggio Emilia and constructivist approach.

OUR ATELIERS MUSIC

GRADES 3-8

Music and Performing Arts

Students in music were busy before the school year started performing for the opening of a San Francisco Giants Game at Oracle Park. **July 9, 2024**

Ambassador Ensemble performed and represented Italian culture for Europe in the Park, an event produced by the E.U. to celebrate music, food, and European cultures. **September 21, 2024**

The Pertini Vocal Ensemble, a high school chamber choir from Genoa, Italy, visited our school and performed for our lower grades in their classrooms. **October 3, 2024**

All La Scuola students performed in our Winter Performance at the beautiful Herbst Theater. **December 6, 2024**

For our Carnevale celebration, students in Middle School learned music from the Elizabethan Era, and performed it between acting scenes from Shakespeare. The first of many theater performances in our school. **February 26, 2025**

Our second annual Dance Showcase held in San Carlos, with each grade K-5 dancing a routine for the school community. **March 5, 2025**

Ambassador Ensemble performed at La Scuola's annual gala, La Dolce Vita. **March 22, 2025**

Ambassador Ensemble performed at Festival of the Mandolin, a yearly mandolin festival held in San Francisco. **April 27, 2025**

Ambassador Ensemble performed at SMART's yearly gala. **April 30, 2025**

All students performed in our Spring Performance at Herbst Theater. **May 28, 2025**



OUR ATELIERS

GARDENING & ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES ATELIER

Dogpatch Campus

Who is our garden community? A study of observation, empathy, collaboration, and connection.

This year-long inquiry, connected to the IB-PYP unit **Who We Are**, helps us to understand the innate and inextricable links between the natural world and our own lives.

At the preschool, children come together in small groups to visit and tend to the garden on a weekly basis. Over the course of the school year, the children care for the plants as they grow through their life cycles—from seed, to flower, to fruit... "and the cycle goes again." —*Oliver, Grandissimi Azzurri*

Hands-on gardening experiences—such as planting, watering, weeding, and harvesting—support strong neural development in early childhood by engaging the brain-body connection. These activities promote sensorimotor integration, a critical process during the early years when children learn best through movement and physical interaction with their environment.

In our ever-changing living classroom, we are always observing the ways in which the world around us shifts over time, mirroring our own growth and changes through life. One of the clearest ways this was exemplified this year was in a study of comparison—who is taller, me or the artichoke plant? For our oldest students, their scientific studies included tracking these measurements of plants and each other inside their nature journals.

“
...and the cycle goes again.
— *Oliver, Grandissimi Azzurri*



These journals served as a place to document their garden observations over the course of many consecutive months, nurturing their observation skills and curiosity, strengthening early language and literacy through drawing and labeling, and building memory and understanding of changes over time. The journal becomes both a scientific tool and a personal record of their relationship with the natural world.

For young children, working in a garden instills a sense of compassion and stewardship for the natural world. Each day, there are countless opportunities to discover and say hello to insects of all shapes and sizes, expanding their worldviews and understanding of how much diversity exists in the world around us. This year, there was a particular enthusiasm around caring for the worms living in the vermicompost bin within one of the garden beds. Every day, without fail, at least one person would ask, "Can I check on the worms?" With this care and attention, our worm community is thriving and helping our plants to do the same!



Silicon Valley Campus

Garden

This year, the garden of our Silicon Valley campus has opened up multiple opportunities for exploration for our students. It has been a special place where numerous inquiries were born and later interacted across the various classes, creating a circularity of knowledge.

Through the garden, we observed the cycles of the sun and the days, studied the behavior of certain plants, and documented their transformations in the garden over the weeks and months as the seasons changed.

Seasonal harvesting also became part of the investigation of cycles. Observing the stages of a fruit's ripening, then harvesting and studying it in the atelier helped the children become aware of nature's rhythms, fostering important connections and developing a strong sense of care.

The children also formulated theories about the conditions of some plants, proposing solutions that nurtured their critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Knowledge building was also supported by an imaginative gaze: the different plant species, with their particular and unique shapes, opened up worlds that led to the creation of stories.

These evocative forms remained vividly in the children's minds, leading them to inquire about the morphology of various species.

“There are three teachers of children: adults, other children, and their physical environment.”

— Loris Malaguzzi



K-8 Mission Campus

Garden

The La Scuola environmental studies and garden program provides our students with a unique opportunity to be in a natural setting when learning about the environment. They practice empathy while navigating a thriving habitat and touch, feel, and experience science and math firsthand. Students authentically feel a duty to steward the planet and to help others do so as well.

The natural environment quite often surprises children and provides them with the spontaneity that leads to new ideas, curiosities, and a sense of wonder. During the lessons in our garden, students explore gardening practices and identification of plants and vegetables, as well as common garden visitors like hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees. Through a multi-sensory relationship to the garden, children gain an understanding of the ecology, the cycle of food production, consumption, and a strengthened sense of stewardship toward their community.



OUR ATELIERS

DESIGN ATELIER

In the International Baccalaureate

Middle Years Program (IB-MYP) Design, the Design Cycle empowers students to be the protagonists of their learning journey, where failure serves as a valuable learning opportunity. Through the structured framework of the Design Cycle, students actively engage in problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration. They navigate through the iterative stages of identifying problems, generating ideas,

and refining solutions, fostering critical thinking skills along the way. As students encounter setbacks, they learn to overcome emotions and persevere, discovering alternative approaches and innovative solutions independently. By embracing the Design Cycle, students not only develop essential design skills but also cultivate resilience and independence in tackling real-world challenges.

DESIGN CYCLE / FOUR PHASES

Design is the subject where Middle School students learn and apply the concept of design thinking. Every project we engage with asks students to dive into one or more of the four phases of the Design Cycle:

Inquiring and Analyzing

This phase is brimming with research and analysis, aimed at understanding existing knowledge around the issue or design. Students immerse themselves in the challenge, probing its nature. What exactly is it? Why does it manifest? Where does it occur? Whom does it impact? This exploration of existing products and knowledge guides and informs our approach as designers.



Evaluating

During this phase, testing methods are devised by students to assess the efficacy of their designs and solutions against specified criteria. Feedback is collected to pinpoint areas for improvement and to measure the impact of their designs on the intended audience. While this stage often marks the culmination of the process, it can also serve as a catalyst to revisit parts of the cycle to enhance their designs.

Developing Ideas

In this phase, students begin contemplating a range of approaches to tackle the challenge. Typically, every student sketches and outlines one or two individual solutions. As these solutions are deliberated upon in a classroom environment, and often evolve or intertwine with peers' ideas, fostering extensive collaboration and attentive listening.

Creating the Solution

Once brainstorming concludes and feedback has been applied, a final design or solution is selected. Students create a detailed action plan and follow it to produce prototypes and models of their final designs, demonstrating their technical skills.

OUR ATELIERS DESIGN

Student Projects

This year, Middle School students were able to use the Design Cycle on various projects:

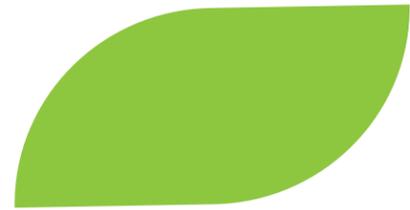
- **VISUAL IDs GRADES 7&8**
Students designed and created a unique visual identity for an existing brand that they had a personal connection to.
- **CREATING EDUCATIONAL BOARD GAMES GRADES 6**
Students prototyped complete and original educational board games with partners. They engaged in a dynamic learning process of play-testing a variety of board games on the market—studying techniques, and identifying key strategies and modifications that improve the player experience. They then collaborated to design their own unique games. As they developed their games, students tested their prototypes, providing peer feedback on the player experience.
- **PROPAGATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES GRADES 7&8**
Through an inquiry based approach, students investigated the health benefits of nurturing plants and developed their understanding of propagation techniques. They collaborated with our community members to collect clippings from diverse plant species. By nurturing these plants, they contributed to creating a greener and more sustainable classroom environment, fostering both well-being and a sense of global responsibility.



EMPOWERING FUTURE LEADERS THROUGH SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

At La Scuola International School, we understand that academic success goes hand in hand with emotional intelligence and strong social skills. That's why Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is a cornerstone of our educational approach, woven into every aspect of our school culture.

Our wellness goal for our community is clear: To empower students with the skills and attitudes needed to navigate diverse social contexts, build healthy relationships, and thrive academically, personally, and socially.



Through SEL, students are given tools to reflect on their emotions, understand others, and respond thoughtfully in challenging situations. Our SEL practices include intentional routines like student check-ins, journal reflections, effective communication skills, mindfulness practices, and restorative circles. Students are given real-world opportunities to build empathy, resilience, and communication.

These practices are not isolated lessons—they are practical, repeatable applications that are threaded throughout the school day, from classroom activities to interactions on the playground. Our teachers model these skills in every interaction, creating an environment where students feel safe, supported, and encouraged to grow.

By embedding SEL into daily life, we are preparing our students not only for academic success but also to become resilient, compassionate, and socially responsible global citizens who are ready to contribute positively to the world. Together as a community, we're building a generation of emotionally intelligent, globally minded citizens.



STUDENTS REFLECTING ON LA SCUOLA'S SEL PROGRAM:

I have always loved SEL classes and look forward to them every week since I was in first grade. One of my favorite routines in SEL is the Open Session circle because it allows us to express our feelings in a way that no one judges us and allows us to support each other by listening and giving helpful support and encouragement. It's a reminder that I may not be close friends with everyone but I can still connect and collaborate with others. A highlight for me was creating Vision Boards in Wellness Class this year of all of the great things I have in my life and reminds me to feel gratitude and happiness.

— *Natasha Baker, 4th grader*

If there was no SEL program in our school, we may not have a safe place where we can really express our thoughts, feelings, and emotions. These are skills that are essential to learn for the rest of our lives. The "i-Message" is a tool that I have used since I was in first grade and it has helped me navigate conflicts with clear and direct communication and have helped my relationships at school and at home with my siblings.

— *Maddie Reid, 4th grader*

I am so grateful that I am attending a school that cares so deeply about my feelings and well-being and considers my happiness and my joy! Niente senza Gioia!

— *Lian Levi, 4th grader*



DEIB & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Building a More Connected La Scuola

This year marks an exciting and transformative time for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging at La Scuola. With the onboarding of Alejandra Navarro as our new Director of Community Engagement and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB), we have launched a renewed and strategic effort to ensure our school culture is not only inclusive in principle but also in daily practice. Alejandra's first few months focused on listening deeply, learning across departments, and collaborating with students, faculty, staff, and families to elevate a shared sense of purpose and connection.

Across our community, we are aligning DEIB more intentionally with our IB and Reggio Emilia-inspired practices—supporting holistic learning, fostering intercultural understanding, and helping every child and adult feel a strong sense of belonging.



LEARNING IN MANY LANGUAGES: STORIES, CULTURE, AND BELONGING

Curricular work across all grade levels is evolving to more fully reflect the rich cultural diversity of our world and the lived experiences of our community. In K–8, cultural literacy lessons are being deepened to help students explore identity, empathy, and global perspectives through developmentally appropriate inquiry.

In the preschool, educators are being supported with tools for inclusive language and diverse books, helping even our youngest learners develop empathy and awareness. Across all divisions, interdisciplinary projects now increasingly reflect DEIB themes, and Alejandra is working closely with teachers to integrate this work into existing units of inquiry.



DEVELOPMENT THROUGH A GLOBAL AND INCLUSIVE LENS

Professional growth is central to sustaining this work. Alejandra has launched a DEIB Faculty and Staff Committee that will meet regularly to address student belonging, review classroom case studies, and share practices across campuses. She has also joined grade-level and departmental meetings to build relationships, provide real-time support, and ensure staff feel equipped to address complex conversations with confidence and care. 1:1 coaching and classroom modeling have been especially impactful, helping educators integrate DEIB principles into their unique teaching styles and student groups.

DEIB & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND ENGAGEMENT

We continue to strengthen our ties with the broader San Francisco community through intentional partnerships with non-profit organizations in the Mission District, including the SMART Program. La Scuola successfully created institutional equity for SMART Scholars in our Middle School. With 10—and soon 13—SMART Scholars currently enrolled, we are proud to have the highest number of SMART students of any independent school in San Francisco. Their leadership and thoughtful advocacy were deeply appreciated by the wider SMART network and further highlight our school's commitment to creating truly inclusive systems of support.

We are also excited to continue growing **affinity groups** across our community—from families, to students, to faculty and staff—offering intentional space for people to connect, share experiences, and build community. These groups are vital spaces for belonging, identity affirmation, and mutual support.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND LOOKING AHEAD

These early months have also laid the foundation for longer-term planning. We're currently reviewing and refining our strategic goals around belonging and community engagement, with plans to share updates with the community in the months ahead. This includes a deeper integration of DEIB throughout our academic scope and sequence, improved reporting practices, and more intentional alignment with our schoolwide events and calendar.

We're also building the framework for an institutional DEIB action plan for the 2025–26 school year—one that is measurable, sustainable, and reflective of our community's values. Key elements of that work will include continuing to grow our internal capacity through the DEIB Committee, enhancing student engagement and leadership, and creating a feedback loop through check-ins, surveys, and direct staff support.



At La Scuola, we believe that belonging is not a destination but a shared, ongoing practice. Through curriculum, relationships, partnerships, and everyday moments, we are shaping a school culture where every member of our community—child and adult—can say, “I am seen. I am valued. I belong.”

We are excited for what's ahead, and grateful to be building this future together.

Building Our Future

THE EMBRACE CAMPAIGN AT LA SCUOLA

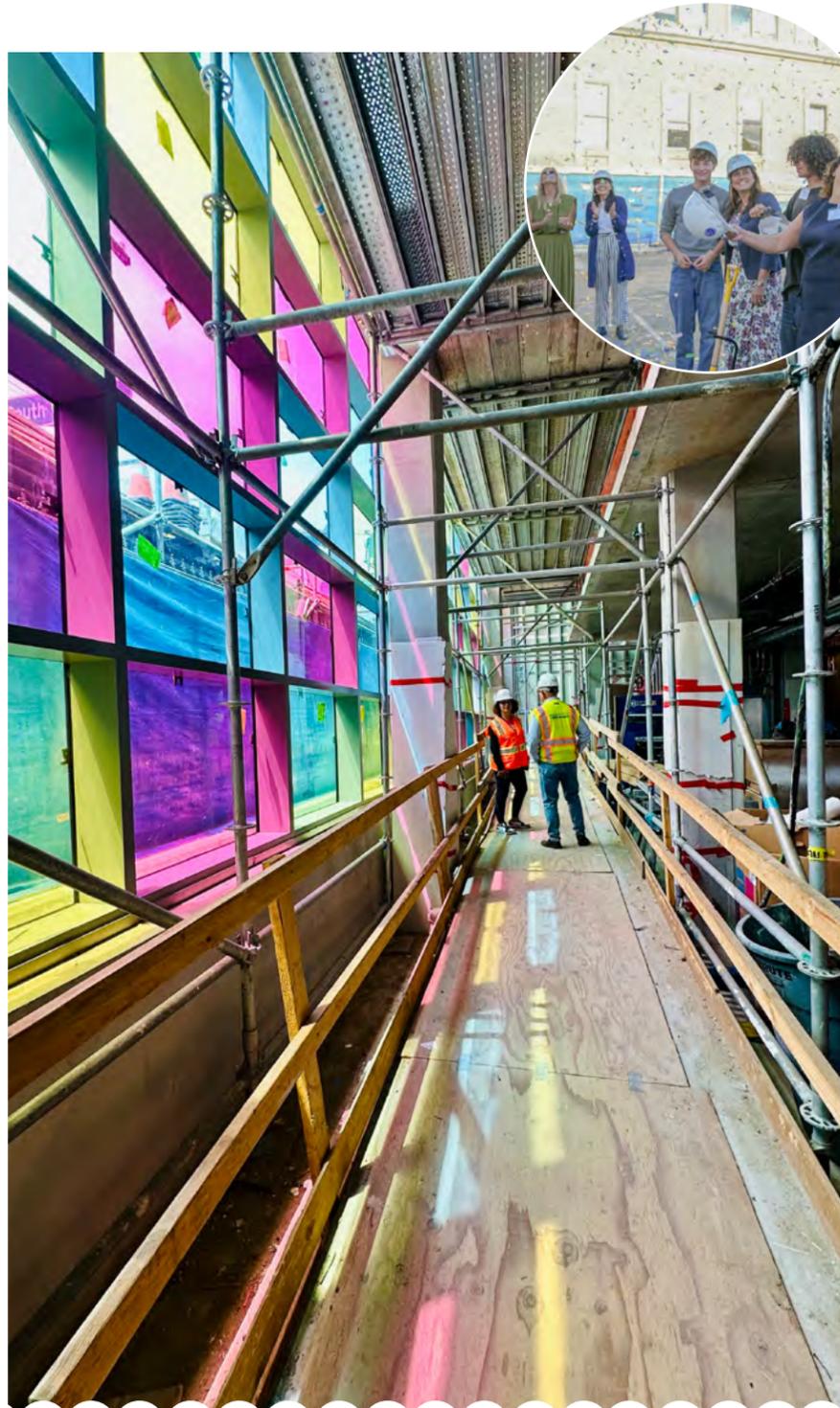
This year, La Scuola reached a defining moment in our history, and one that we will remember for generations to come.

In October, we officially broke ground on our new building, launching a new chapter in our story. Since then, construction has progressed with remarkable momentum, on schedule and on budget, bringing our shared vision to life day by day. The new building is rising on a foundation of generosity and community, and the deep belief in the transformative power of a La Scuola education.

Thanks to your incredible support, we have raised over \$9.5 million toward our \$10 million campaign goal. Highlights include a historic \$1 million challenge gift, the successful launch of our public phase, and more than \$3.5 million raised through our Community Loan initiative, which helps ensure the long-term financial health of the project.

As we head into the coming school year, we're thrilled to watch our vision continue to rise from the ground. The building is on track to open in Spring 2026, and we can already imagine the joy and inspiration it will bring to our students and community.

The Embrace Campaign has been about more than a building: it's about building a legacy. Together, we are creating a space that will inspire joyful, brave learners to shape the future. As we look ahead to our final stretch, we are filled with immense pride and gratitude. Thank you for being part of this remarkable journey.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

At La Scuola, we value an approach to education that results in lifelong learners—those who know that there is always something new to discover, always another question to ask.

Our Faculty & Staff embody this value, which is why we offer many opportunities throughout the year for their professional development. This includes both in-school professional development days and external classes and courses.



HERE ARE JUST SOME OF THE EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES THAT WE MADE AVAILABLE THIS YEAR:

- Onsite, expert-led trainings on topics including neurodivergence, AI, DEIB, admissions trends, and more
- Emergency preparedness and de-escalation training to improve the safety and security of all campuses
- Our beloved annual trip to Reggio Emilia, Italy, to attend the Reggio Children® International Study Group at the Loris Malaguzzi International Center
- Presenting at the 2025 People of Color in Independent Schools (PoCIS) Regional Conference
- Exchange programs to share knowledge, ideas, and best practices with other Bay Area independent schools
- Participation at various national Head of School conferences throughout the year, including the NAIS and AAIE conferences
- Attending CIRC roundtables at schools throughout the Bay Area, including those held at our San Francisco preschool campus
- Volunteer efforts to support the creation and growth of the Northern California chapter of Private School Village, a nonprofit organization consisting of BIPOC Private School Administrators & Parents



We place a high value on professional development for our faculty and staff.



FIELD TRIPS & OVERNIGHT ADVENTURES

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

From Preschool to Grade 8, students at La Scuola ventured far beyond campus to explore the rich natural, cultural, and historical landscapes of the Bay Area. These field trips—ranging from visits to museums and libraries to explorations of nature preserves and cultural centers—offered students unique opportunities to learn through experience and inquiry.

Our overnight excursions added another layer of growth and discovery, supporting both environmental science learning and social-emotional development. Students immersed themselves in nature at the Marin Headlands' NatureBridge retreat, hiked through the wonders of Yosemite National Park, connected with each other and the environment at CYO Camp in Caritas Creek, and camped beneath the stars at Jug Handle Farm.

At La Scuola, the world is our classroom—and as in all Reggio Emilia-inspired environments, we treat every space as a teacher. These shared experiences spark curiosity, strengthen community, and nurture the brave learners our mission speaks of.



FIELD TRIPS & OVERNIGHT ADVENTURES



STUDENT LIFE

IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Community-building, relationships, connections, and civic participation are at the core of Middle School life and learning, and are imperative to nurturing our students as whole people.

These efforts take many forms, but highlights throughout the year include events such as **Spirit Week**, **school dances**, and **Giorno di Gioco**.

During Spirit Week, students express themselves in new and creative ways as each day features a unique theme. The week includes a festive **Carnevale** event, led by Middle School students. Seeing students come together for this schoolwide celebration is a joy.

In the fall and spring, we also host two dances for our Middle School students. They are encouraged to dress in theme, socialize with their peers, and enjoy a night of games and class bonding.

A little friendly competition between grades also boosts overall school spirit, and that's what **Giorno di Gioco** is all about! Students spend the day at **Mission Dolores Park**, playing games to ultimately determine which grade will come out on top. This year, Grade 7 took first place!



ATHLETICS

A year of growth, community, and passion

Welcome to the dynamic world of La Scuola Athletics, where Middle School students embark on a transformative journey that builds character, inspires pride, and unites our community. At La Scuola, athletics go beyond the scoreboard—they are serious and seriously fun. It's a space where skill, intelligence, passion, and heart come together. Our student-athletes play because they love their sports, value their teammates, and take great pride in representing something bigger than themselves.



Athletics at La Scuola foster more than just physical strength—they cultivate leadership, resilience, sportsmanship, and a deep sense of belonging. Our program embraces cultural diversity and promotes gender equity, ensuring that every student feels welcomed, supported, and empowered to thrive.

During the 2024–2025 school year, our Middle School athletes had the opportunity to participate in a robust lineup of team sports across three seasons:

FALL

Volleyball + Performance Training

WINTER

Basketball + Performance Training

SPRING

Track and Field + Performance Training

Our student-athletes represented La Scuola with pride in the **San Francisco International Athletic League (SFIAL)**, competing with spirit and sportsmanship against neighboring independent schools. Remarkably, 80% of our Middle School students took part in at least one athletic program this year—a testament to the excitement and energy surrounding our athletics community.



MIDDLE SCHOOL: LA SCUOLA ATHLETICS

This year also brought two exciting new initiatives designed to deepen student engagement and strengthen our connection with the broader community:

COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY INITIATIVE

Launched three years ago, the Community Opportunity Initiative offers our student-athletes a chance to connect athletics with service, emphasizing the importance of giving back. During each season, participating students engage in meaningful outreach activities with a variety of local nonprofit organizations.

Through partnerships with the **SF-Marin Food Bank**, students helped address food insecurity by sorting and packing meals for families in need. At the **San Francisco SPCA**, they supported animal welfare efforts and learned about the role of compassion and care in community work. Collaborating with **The Women's Building**, students contributed to programs that support women and families across the city, gaining a deeper understanding of equity and empowerment.

Additionally, students worked with other neighborhood-based nonprofits, strengthening their sense of civic responsibility and developing a broader view of how they can make a positive impact beyond the playing field. This initiative not only nurtures empathy and leadership, but also reinforces the idea that teamwork extends far beyond sports—it's about showing up for one another, both on and off the court.



USF PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

In collaboration with the University of San Francisco, our students got a first-hand glimpse into the world of Division 1 athletics. Highlights include receiving signed memorabilia, standing courtside with USF teams during the national anthem, and hearing directly from Jess Smith, President of the Golden State Valkyries, in a special Q&A with our Middle School basketball teams.

As we reflect on a year filled with accomplishments, personal growth, and unforgettable moments, we look ahead with great excitement to the continued evolution of La Scuola Athletics. The success of our program is fueled by the dedication of our students, the passion of our coaches, and the unwavering support of our community.

Join us in celebrating the remarkable spirit, achievements, and memories that define La Scuola Athletics. Together, we are building a legacy of pride, excellence, and unity—one season at a time.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

At La Scuola, we believe that education is not confined to the classroom—it's about how students connect what they learn to the world around them. Community engagement is a central focus of the Middle School experience at La Scuola. This year, each grade level has taken on a project that enriches their academic learning and deepens their connection to our broader community. From cultivating our school garden to supporting food access in the Mission to launching passion-driven impact projects, students are learning what it means to be thoughtful, active citizens.



GRADE 6 Growing Community in Our New School Garden

This year, our 6th graders didn't just tend to a garden—they built one from the ground up. Due to the construction of our new school building, the community garden had to be relocated to a new space near San Carlos Hall. Our students were the driving force behind bringing this new garden to life.

From day one, students rolled up their sleeves and got to work. They began by researching which plants would thrive in our specific

microclimate, creating a garden map proposal outlining which plants to grow and where to place them. Guided by their plans, students filled the new garden beds with soil, planted the first round of seedlings and began shaping the space into a vibrant, functional outdoor classroom.

But their work didn't stop there. To make the garden both beautiful and sustainable, students took on a range of hands-on projects: they painted the garden beds, developed a compost system, and designed a water capture plan to make the most of San Francisco's rainy season.

This garden is more than just a science project—it's a living symbol of community. Through collaboration, creativity, and a lot of muddy hands, our 6th graders have created a space that will serve our school for years to come.



GRADE 7 Supporting Access to Healthy Food at The Women's Building

Seventh grade continued their partnership this year with The Women's Building, a local nonprofit dedicated to empowering and serving the Mission community. Every other week, students volunteered at the food pantry, helping to provide hundreds of families with access to healthy, fresh groceries.



This hands-on experience became the foundation for a deeper exploration of food insecurity and food waste in the classroom. In science, students investigated how climate change impacts global food systems, how food waste contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, and why food insecurity persists—even in a city as resource-rich as San Francisco. Building on this knowledge, students designed and implemented projects aimed at reducing food waste and food insecurity within our own local community.



Through this work, students have developed a strong sense of civic responsibility and a clearer understanding of how academic learning can support the work of local organizations.

GRADE 8 Passion Projects for a Better World

Our 8th graders worked hard on their Community Projects—an integral part of the IB Middle Years Programme that asks students to identify a need or issue they care about and take action to address it.

“

... From day one, students rolled up their sleeves and got to work.



From preparing meals for Rise Against Hunger to creating a website helping students track their assignments to designing a homeless shelter in San Francisco, each student chose a project that reflected their passions and values.

Students spent months researching, planning, and implementing their ideas. They interviewed experts, designed campaigns, created websites, built prototypes, and shared their work with both the school and local communities.

The Community Project process challenges students to think deeply, act purposefully, and reflect meaningfully. It prepares them not just for high school—but for a lifetime of engaged, compassionate leadership.

ITALY TRIP 2025

8th GRADE

EXPLORING PERSPECTIVE THROUGH EXPERIENCE

This year, our 8th graders embarked on an exciting journey to Italy that brought our interdisciplinary unit on perspective to life. Combining art, literature, and social studies, students explored how places shape identity and storytelling, learning to see the world—and themselves—from new viewpoints.

We began our adventure in Bologna, where students connected with local peers during a shadow day at the Scuole Malpighi and experienced Italian culture firsthand through a cooking class. We explored the city from below and above from the San Petronio to the Santuario della Madonna di San Luca. A special visit to Reggio Emilia introduced them to the Reggio Emilia approach to education, emphasizing creativity, collaboration, and learning during an engaging atelier workshop. At the Centro Loris Malaguzzi, we paused to appreciate the importance of the environment as the third teacher and consider how architecture aids education.

In Florence, students delved into Renaissance art and history, sketching in the Boboli Gardens, exploring famous viewpoints like Piazzale Michelangelo and Piazza del Duomo, and participating in a Medici-themed scavenger hunt. They reflected on how history, place, and power influence the ways people live and express themselves. A day in Modena expanded their understanding of scale and design, from the sleek innovation of Ferrari to the rich tradition of balsamic vinegar production.

The journey wrapped up in Milan, where a street art tour revealed how contemporary urban spaces tell powerful stories today. Throughout the trip, students blended observation, research, and creative expression—using drawing, writing, and photography—to deepen their understanding of identity, space, and perspective.



LA SCUOLA EXHIBIT

INSIEME Exhibit



“It’s a collaborative effort, emphasizing the importance of working together.”

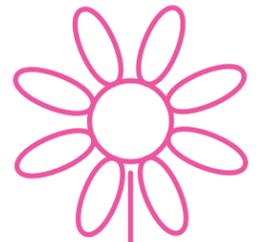
WINTER & SPRING CONCERTS



“All students perform in our Winter and Spring Performances at Herbst Theater.”

GRANDPARENTS AND SPECIAL FRIENDS DAY

Each year we welcome our students' Grandparents and Special Friends onto campus. This day serves two purposes: it recognizes and celebrates the importance of the relationship that children have with adults other than their parents, and it makes the magic of La Scuola visible to these special individuals. This beloved tradition extends the warmth and *gioia* of La Scuola learning to even more members of our community.



La Dolce Vita



SAVE THE DATE!
LA DOLCE VITA
2026
 Saturday,
 March 28, 2026

“
At La Scuola,
we believe in the
power of community.”

La Scuola's beloved spring gala and fundraiser, La Dolce Vita, was nothing short of magical this year as we gathered for the first time in San Francisco's historic Armory in the vibrant Mission District. The stunning venue set the stage for an evening filled with joy, celebration, and a deep sense of community.

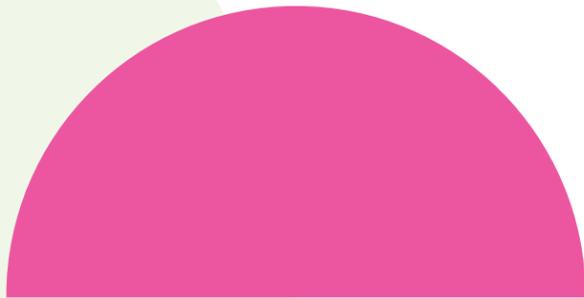
Thanks to the remarkable generosity of our parents, friends, faculty, staff, and extended community, we raised over **\$900,000** in support of our school's unique and inspiring programs! Of that, almost **\$450,000** was dedicated to our **Sliding Scale Tuition** program, ensuring that a La Scuola education remains accessible to as many families as possible.

From the beautiful cocktail hour and lively auction to the student and staff performances and the dance floor that kept us going all night, La Dolce Vita truly captured the heart and soul of La Scuola. Every dollar raised helps sustain our unique and extraordinary programs in art, music, design, environmental science, and more—programs that inspire curiosity, cultivate joy, and create a connection to the world and each other.

A heartfelt *grazie mille* to our dedicated LDV Committee, led by our fabulous Chair **Kelsey McNellis**, along with **Erik Hopfinger**, **Marina Kawagishi**, **Hannah Collins Tate**, **Stephen Scarpulla**, **Saba Obaid**, and **Divy Malhotra**, whose vision, creativity, and countless volunteer hours made the night an unforgettable success.

To all who attended, donated, volunteered, or supported us from afar, *grazie di cuore*. Your impact is deeply felt in our community and enriches the experience of every La Scuola student, every day.

GRADUATES



MEET OUR 8th GRADE GRADUATES



When the school year comes to a close, as an educator, there can be a moment of doubt and uneasiness about whether or not you've done your job—no matter if you've been teaching for two years or for twenty. It has nothing to do with assessing each strand twice or turning in final grades. The questions are always the same: Did the students learn? Are they prepared for what will come next? On a personal note, will they remember this class, this subject, this experience with fondness? Will it have been meaningful? The maddening part is that we, your teachers, never get to know... we can hope, but hope by itself feels a bit passive these days, as we bear witness to the world changing around us.

I cannot convince you of who you are and what you might become, but I can tell you what I see. I see... acute intelligence, budding courage, diligence, a joy for life, creativity, reason, resilience, determination, strength and loyalty, care, and a strong sense of self. I see that there is work yet to do, but each of you has the foundation you need. My final request of all of you as you move onto your next endeavor, is to embrace these qualities to intentionally envision how your future-self will show up as an active participant in the world around you. You are not too young to have agency or influence. You are not relegated to the hope that things will change or that the adults will figure it out. You are responsible for creating radical solutions in a future that only you can imagine.

Buon viaggio!

*Carmen Gomez,
Middle School Director*

HIGH SCHOOLS OUR GRADUATES WILL ATTEND IN THE FALL:

- Urban
- International High School
- Sacred Heart Cathedral Prep
- H-Farm International School (Italy)
- Abraham Lincoln High School
- Gateway High School
- Archbishop Riordan High School

“
The wider the range of possibilities we offer children, the more intense will be their motivations and the richer their experiences.

— Loris Malaguzzi

LETTER FROM THE PARENTS ASSOCIATION OF LA SCUOLA (PALS)

The Parents Association of La Scuola (PALS) had a busy year celebrating all things community!

We started over the summer matching our incoming families with "Welcome Families" to help ease the transition to the start of school and ensure each child had a friendly face when school started. We kicked off the school year with our Welcome Picnic, which we held at Golden Gate Park. Parents mixed and mingled, kids played lawn games and soccer, and we chatted over Aperol spritzes and Italian sodas. We enjoyed Parents' Night out at Harmonic Brewery; participated in the Italian Heritage Parade (with our own float!); brought back the Dogpatch Halloween parade; held our first annual Dogpatch cookie swap party; served hot chocolate on the last day of school at the Mission campus; launched a community engagement committee which held some amazing volunteer events; supported Annual Fund, La Dolce Vita; and supported an amazing Admissions season!

We celebrated our phenomenal faculty and staff with Teacher Appreciation Fridays and closed it down with a new

event we hope becomes tradition: a last day of school celebration. Overall, it was a wonderful year of building community and making friendships that will last a lifetime and across continents.

It has been our pleasure leading PALS this year and we thank all those parents who supported us and our events.

**Sophie Scharf,
K-8 Co-Chair**

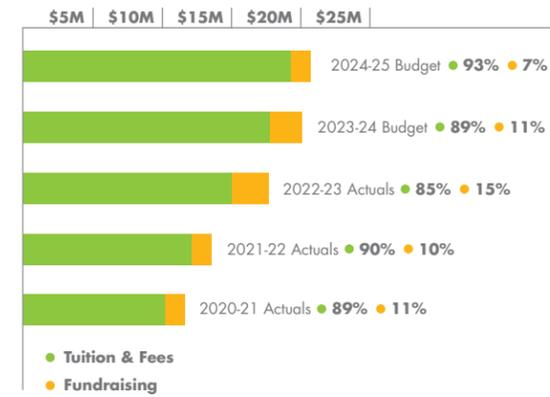
**Sierra Scarlatta,
Pre-K Co-Chair**

**Bonnie Ainsworth,
Silicon Valley Co-Chair**

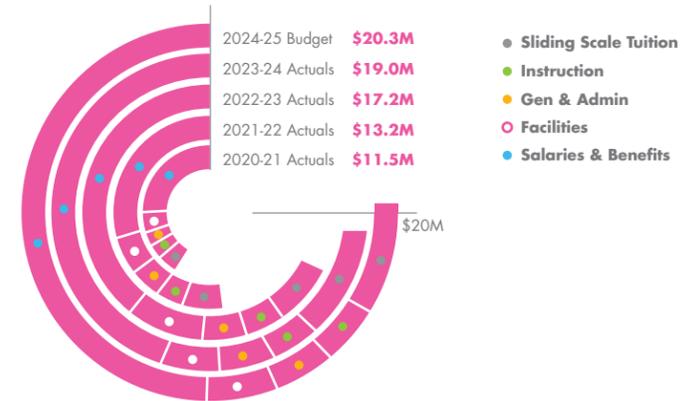


FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

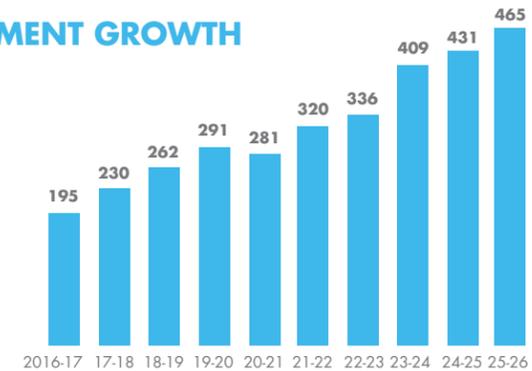
GROSS REVENUES



EXPENSES



ENROLLMENT GROWTH



La Scuola is projecting enrollment of 465 students across our San Francisco and Silicon Valley campuses in 2025–26—a continued upward trend driven by strong demand and program growth.

Operating expenses continue to rise in step with program expansion, facility improvements, and our dedication to delivering a high-quality, mission-aligned educational experience.

Salaries and benefits remain our largest investment, reflecting our commitment to recruiting, retaining, and supporting a high-performing faculty and staff.

La Scuola's financial position remains strong and well-balanced, guided by a strategic plan focused on long-term sustainability.

We are steadily increasing operating revenue to support continued growth in program offerings and academic innovation.

For 2025–26, 16% of gross tuition revenue is dedicated to supporting families through our Sliding Scale Tuition program.

Enrollment is projected to reach 465 students, including the Silicon Valley campus—representing a 7% increase over the current year.

As we grow, we remain committed to investing in both program excellence and broad access for our community.

LA SCUOLA *by the numbers*

435

Number of students

334

Number of families

Faculty to Student Ratio

Preschool	1:6 to 1:8
Grades K - 2	1:12
Grades 3 - 8	1:14 to 1:20

114

Number of faculty and staff

LANGUAGES

34

Number of languages spoken by La Scuola families

17

Percent of families that have at least one Italian speaker at home

17

Number of languages spoken by La Scuola faculty and staff

83

Percent of families that do not have at least one Italian speaker at home

GEOGRAPHY

39

Zip codes represented

DIVERSITY

17

Percent of students of color

12

Percent of Family & Staff identifies as a person of color

12

Percent of Faculty & Staff identifies as a person of color

3

Percent of families LGBTQ

48

Percent of Faculty & Staff from international origin (self reported)

AFFORDABILITY

34

Percent of families participating in Sliding Scale Tuition





Niente Senza Gioia!
Nothing Without Joy!
Nada Sin Alegría!

LA SCUOLA
International School • Preschool - 8th Grade



SERVING THE BAY AREA IN THREE LOCATIONS

**Dogpatch Campus
Preschool**

728 20th Street
San Francisco, CA 94107
415-558-9006

www.lascuolasf.org

**Mission Campus
Grades K - 8**

3250 18th Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
415-551-0000

admissions@lascuolasf.org

**Silicon Valley Campus
Preschool - Grade 2**

2086 Clarke Avenue
East Palo Alto, CA 94303
650-800-9650

