



# School Life

LIVING THE MISSION



San Francisco Day School



# A Letter from the Head of School

San Francisco Day School is so many things: a place to be challenged, inspired, cared for, heard, and understood. It's a place for fun, laughter and friendship; a place for serious conversations and intellectual discovery; a place for sharing your story and embracing the stories of others.

For over 40 years, this school has led the way in K-8, co-educational student-centered education, based on a curriculum that draws from the three pillars established by our visionary founders — our commitment to teaching and learning, to social-emotional wellness and growth, and to a culture of inclusion and community engagement. We know that our students, each of them talented, passionate, and curious individuals, are enriched and stretched by the complexity and nuance these pillars bring to our programs.

In our School Life handbook, you'll find insights into how we bring our mission to life every day on our campus, where students are inspired by dedicated teachers who work productively with parents and guardians. You'll learn how you can participate in the life of the school, and about the programs and initiatives that set SF Day apart.

In our Curriculum Guide, you'll discover the intentional scope and sequence of our curriculum by reading our mission statements and understanding how we approach teaching, learning, and the acquisition and mastery of skills. It's also the place where you see our commitment to the whole child, and where our foundational belief that wellness and inclusion strengthen and deepen learning is lived every day.

I love to think about SF Day as a village, where humans, young and not-so-young, come together to be part of the work of growing, stretching and learning — and through the trust and joy of being a part of the village, feel brave enough to share their stories, advocate for difference, and teach by example.

There is so much to learn — and so much to share. So let's get started!

With gratitude,



**Dr. Racheal Adriko**  
Head of School



**Dr. Racheal Adriko**

# OUR Mission

## Mission Statement

**At SF Day, we ignite curiosity. We cultivate a diverse, nurturing community that encourages learners to expand their perspectives and become their true selves. Students develop as compassionate, creative problem-solvers, prepared to thrive in an ever-changing world.**

Every school has a mission — but how does it come to life? SF Day's mission is grounded in three pillars, which always interconnected. The school's enduring commitment to intentional, student-driven teaching and learning practices; the importance of social and emotional wellness in and out of the classroom; and the bedrock belief in respect for identity and the community around us. Every aspect of school life has connections to all three of these central ideas — and each is strengthened by the others.



# WE ALL Belong



## Belonging & Equity Come Alive in Many Ways at SF Day

**VISION:** We Aspire to create a welcoming, diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment where each person feels that their whole identity is known and respected.

**PURPOSE:** We, the members of SF Day — faculty, staff, students, alumni, families, and trustees — believe we have a mutual responsibility to ourselves, each other, and society. We are committed to ensuring that our students emerge with the confidence and skills to interact in a respectful way with people who bring different lived experiences and perspectives in an ever-evolving world.

**APPROACH:** We are purposeful in building a community that shares this vision. All community members should see their identity reflected in the school (mirrors), to know that people “like me” are full citizens at school. Equally important is that everyone is challenged to look outside themselves (windows) to understand, respect, and appreciate the cultures and identities of others.

**COMMITMENT:** We are teaching our children to be active participants in a democracy and preparing them to recognize systemic injustice and know how they can advocate for equity for themselves and others.

# HONORING Perspectives

How do we honor our diverse community?  
By constantly evolving.

At SF Day, we recognize that there is no true “finish line” when it comes to diversity, equity, and belonging. However, an unwavering commitment to diversity has always been a founding value of the school. As such, we sought to codify our commitment with a formal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) statement in 2019.

All members of our community — administration, faculty, staff, parents/guardians, students, alumni, and trustees — collaborated on this statement, helping to shape and articulate this expression of our vision, purpose, approach, and commitment to Inclusion and Community Engagement at SF Day. We are incredibly grateful to our community for its active engagement and drive to pursue diversity, equity, and belonging, both within and beyond the walls of San Francisco Day School.

And as we head into the school's future, we are not just evolving our definition, but expanding it: to create more space for community engagement connected to our curriculum.



# OUR Values



The Phin Foundation is a shared set of values that unites our community.

**CURIOSITY:** Children are inherently curious about the world around them, how it works, and the people in and beyond their communities. We honor their curiosity by providing them with the space and grace to explore, centering their lived experiences as children and students.

**COMPASSION:** Children are inherently kind. We build on their natural love for community and teach them how to care for, and learn with, others.

**CHARACTER:** Children build character through guidance, positive examples, and personal experience. SF Day leads children through the process of self-reflection to promote growth for continuous self-improvement and to develop a strong moral compass.

**COURAGE:** It takes courage to take positive risks and to make choices that align with their values, particularly in difficult situations. SF Day honors our children's courage by providing an environment in which they feel secure enough to take risks in the spirit of being their true selves and acknowledging the efforts in doing so.

# Community, Culture, & Engagement

A dedication to community is knitted into SF Day's DNA: for over 40 years, we have been pioneers in making inclusion a meaningful and authentic part of our curriculum. Our students make tangible contributions to their immediate and greater communities; in turn, these community connections help our students develop a global perspective. By giving back, SF Day students prioritize good citizenship and internalize leadership skills. Our layered approach to community engagement shows how thoughtful, developmentally appropriate programming can inspire children and build responsible, caring young adults.



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## Community, Culture & Engagement Days

SF Day is dedicated to a holistic education in which students live what they learn and through doing so, give back to the Bay Area. Through providing exciting, creative, and challenging engagement experiences in collaboration with Bay Area partners and community members, students gain a deeper understanding of the world around them and develop a sense of social responsibility.

## Connected to the Arc of Development

SF Day dedicates four days solely to hands-on community engagement within the greater SF Day and Bay Area communities. During those days, each grade level will focus on a different theme that draws from their curriculum and will experience learning, meet members of the greater San Francisco community, and make meaningful contributions to the communities around them. These themes are connected to the work our students are doing in the classroom and enrich their academic experience.



# Community Engagement

KINDERGARTEN – GRADE 8

Our Community Engagement programming starts in kindergarten with an examination of the world immediately around our youngest students — an example of meeting them where they are. As the journey continues, our students venture beyond their classrooms to make connections in their city and the entire Bay Area.

# THE WORLD IS Co-ed

Our school was founded on the principles of co-education, and we continue to champion gender inclusivity and the benefits of a co-educational program. Every day, we provide a highly intentional, inclusive, mixed-gender educational program that thoughtfully serves all learners. We recognize students as individual learners who each have unique personalities, dispositions, interests, and orientations, and we do not label children according to gender stereotypes.

## What are the benefits of a co-educational school?

A look around San Francisco will show you one obvious reason: the world around us is co-ed. By educating children in a setting that represents the world around them, they are prepared to be active participants in their communities. In addition, co-education:

- Promotes our school's value of inclusion
- Demonstrates that leaders can come in all forms
- Teaches students to notice, examine, and disrupt gender-stereotyping of all kinds, including fixed gender roles
- Models positive and productive relationships across genders



**We believe students thrive when introduced to a diversity of representation, which in turn allows them to express their individual identities**

# WHAT IS **special** ABOUT THE K-8 EXPERIENCE?

A K-8 school is a place where children grow into responsible and insightful young adults on their own terms and at their own pace. The natural peaks and valleys of child development provide opportunities for real-life learning and growth. A K-8 education is also scaled to offer connections between younger and older students, and give children chances to lead early and often. Our approach allows us to meet children where they are and preserve a sense of curiosity and wonder, while also building towards the hallmark of an SF Day graduate: a grounded, caring citizen, confident in their talents, and aware of the world around them.



## Lower School: K-5

### **Building the Foundations**

SF Day's foundational pillars build the framework for our approach to early education. Teachers honor and value the importance of conversations around conflict resolution, identity, and social-emotional learning from kindergarten on. SF Day encourages students to embrace and enjoy problem-solving, so that students see challenges as opportunities for learning. By the end of Lower School, children understand how they learn best and proudly advocate for themselves as learners.

## Middle School: 6-8

### **Expanding Horizons**

While students learn how to advocate for themselves as learners in the Lower School, the Middle School strengthens that muscle to help them advocate for others in the classroom as well. These pre-teens and teenagers are confronted developmentally with the natural shift in personal and interpersonal identities during Middle School. SF Day's program strives to deepen their sense of self, all the while keeping them connected to the community around them. As the natural leaders of the school, our Middle School students have endless opportunities to develop passions and interests and gain insight into the idea that there are many ways to lead, just as there are many ways to identify yourself. Giving students this foundation through co-education allows these students to be ready to take big risks in high school and beyond.

# Signature Programs & Experiences

SF Day's signature programs, which are featured both inside and outside of the classroom, are designed with the intention of sparking excitement and curiosity, encouraging intellectual risk-taking and innovative perspectives, and celebrating the confidence to embrace developmentally appropriate challenge at all grade levels.

## Buddy Program

The Buddy Program links students in different grade levels and provides each student with a younger or older buddy. On any given Buddy Day, you may see a kindergartner working with an 8th grader on an art project or reading a book together. Other Buddy Day activities include math games, team building games, service projects, and banners for graduation. The buddy system is one way to strengthen ties across grade levels to build a stronger school community and a lasting connection for our children: our students often remember their buddy fondly, whether younger or older. In 5th grade, students write a letter to their former kindergarten-8th grade buddies to wish them luck in their first year of college.

## Entrepreneurship & Dolphin Tank

Dolphin Tank is our signature entrepreneurial competition that gives our students the opportunity to explore their passions, share, and celebrate their ideas. After workshopping their ideas with Innovation & Technology leaders in class, students pitch in front of a panel of judges for the chance to receive funding and mentorship to turn their visions into reality. Following the competition, finalists can continue to work on pitch and product development with real-life entrepreneurs and innovators. We believe that it is important for our students, who are surrounded by innovation in their city, to try it out first-hand!



# Signature Programs & Experiences

(CONTINUED)

## Math Honors & Math Counts

Math is embraced at SF day in and out of the classroom. Our rigorous math program includes an opportunity for 8th grade students who demonstrate the ability to tackle accelerated concepts to take Math Honors, an independent study program taken alongside Algebra I. With concepts in geometry, trigonometry and advanced algebra, this opportunity allows students with a strong interest in mathematics to challenge themselves, improve their skills, and pursue concepts beyond the core curriculum. Our Math Counts team competes in local, state and national contests, where SF Day students often make the podium!

## Movement, Physical Education & Athletics

Movement at SF Day starts with building body awareness and motor skills, with the early grades exploring balance, rhythm, and teamwork. From 3rd grade on, physical education develops fitness, technique, and sport-specific skills, which serves as a foundation for Middle School team sports. Students learn to refine their athletic ability, set personal fitness goals, and connect movement to overall well-being. Across all grades, the program fosters individual growth, integrity, perseverance, and teamwork. We are also proud to offer extracurricular athletic team experiences for our K-4 students through our afterschool program.

## Performing Arts & Music

Every student at SF Day learns to play an instrument, aligned with our belief that musical literacy and appreciation is core to a well balanced graduate. By the time they graduate, they'll have performed as singers, actors, and musicians. Music is an important part of the fabric of SF Day culture. Teachers and students enjoy providing joyful musical experiences that bring the school community together, including all-school concerts like San Fran Jam and Concert for Community, which showcase their team work, collaboration, and sense of community.



# Signature Programs & Experiences

(CONTINUED)

## Outdoor Education

Our signature Outdoor Education program began in 1985 and remains an integral part of the SF Day educational experience. It begins with overnight stays in 3rd grade, and ends with two 8th grade trips, one in the fall and one in the spring to Washington, DC as part of their Social Studies curriculum. Outdoor Education provides SF Day students with the quintessential risk-taking opportunity, and gives them an occasion to demonstrate their learning in different ways. We teach our students to develop their own ideas about responsible use of the outdoors and how we can help protect our planet's vital resources.

## Speech & Debate

SF Day's Speech & Debate program provides a life-long skill that builds confidence, develops logical argumentation skills, and teaches students how to make an impromptu speech. It is a wonderful opportunity for Middle School students to try out their arguments at national competitions. Travelling across the country, SF Day students embrace the challenge of going up against peers from around the country, and have earned top placements at numerous tournaments. Younger students also have the opportunity to take Speech & Debate through our after school program starting in 3rd grade.

## Nest & Stretch

At SF Day, we ensure that all children are challenged and supported effectively, with their talents and passions at the center of what we do. Focusing on the continuum of academic experience, our faculty, including math and humanities extensions coaches, help students develop those passions through extension work and intellectual challenge in and out of the classroom. Our Office of Student Support & Wellness takes a proactive approach to student care, focusing on both academic and social-emotional growth. Our team provides guidance in skill building, conflict resolution, and academic support, while also creating opportunities for students to be challenged.



# Signature Programs & Experiences

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## Teaching Fellows Program

SF Day's Teaching Fellowship Program guides young teachers as they hone their skills under the mentorship of SF Day's experienced faculty. Budding educators are immersed in SF Day-specific learning and teaching approaches. As Teaching Fellows gain more skill and understanding of their areas of interest, their responsibilities and experiences expand within the classroom and the school. Our students benefit from the energy and enthusiasm our Teaching Fellows bring to the SF Day experience.

## Innovation & Technology

Technology starts early with the idea of innovation and design partnered with digital citizenship and are intentional about screen time. From kindergarten on, we teach computational thinking skills to our youngest learners, including sequencing, pattern recognition, and algorithmic design. We have a competitive robotics team, starting in 5th grade, that competes in the First Lego League Qualifying Tournament each fall. In the Middle School, SF Day's innovation and technology curriculum fosters curiosity and individual passions, while honing life skills and learning by doing. This is a student-driven, interdisciplinary approach where students can explore their talents and passions, supported by their teachers.

## Visual Arts Education

SF Day's visual arts program is foundational to the school and enriches the academic experience by helping students make connections to the real world and grounding their learning into interdisciplinary thinking. An SF Day signature program is the Artist of the Month program, a K-8 based curriculum where lessons are planned around the artist's creative expression, aesthetic perception and values. All grade levels study and model the artist's techniques and learn about the artist's sensibility in a developmentally appropriate way; one highlight is the Designing My Feelings fashion workshop, which culminates in a fashion showcase attended by all students. The Visual Arts curriculum culminates with the all-school Imagination Celebration, where all grades display artwork inspired by the artists that they have studied.



# DAY IN THE LIFE OF A SF DAY STUDENT

## Lower School



### Good Morning!

Every morning, students and families are greeted at our Golden Gate Avenue entrance by Mr. Washington and his security team. After signing in on SchoolPass, children make their way to their classrooms.



### Parents are Welcome

Parents are invited to walk our youngest students to their classrooms and stay until "big hug" time. Parents also have the opportunity to volunteer and help with lunch.



### Wellness Every Day

We know how important healthy food is for healthy bodies. We are proud to offer delicious lunch in our cafeteria every day; in addition, bowls of fruit and other good-for-you snacks are available at school.



### Spanish

Our Lower Schoolers engage with Spanish through storytelling as a group, reading short texts, playing games and performance.



### Art & Music

Fundamental to an SF Day education, our Lower Schoolers perform for their families and peers, and display artworks inspired by the Artist of the Month.



### Science & Math

Lower School students leave their classrooms to explore the scientific method in our Science Labs and in Math Lab, which allows children opportunities to investigate current math ideas in a deeper or imaginative way.



### Library

Students have access to our two-story library both as a specials class and a way to discover books during school hours. Students and teachers work closely with the librarian to meet the emerging needs of our young readers.



### Innovation & Technology

From kindergarten on, Lower Schoolers become the creative problem solvers of tomorrow in Innovation & Technology. Our youngest students have many screen-free experiences, including screen free coding and robots.



### Physical Education

Our gym is not just a place where Lower Schoolers develop fundamental movement skills, but a place where the spirit of teamwork and sportspersonship bloom.



### Outdoor Time

Outdoor time is important for unstructured play. It's a time for them to unwind and relax so they can connect back to learning.



### Rooftop Garden

Children spend class time in SF Day's beautiful rooftop garden learning about nature, or exploring plant lifecycles, and gaining appreciation for our planet's resources.



### Learning Specialists & Counselors

At SF Day learning specialists and counselors work together hand-in-hand to support the whole child. This includes learning interventions and accommodations as well as counseling services.



### Affinity Circles

Starting in the Lower School, students participate in affinity circles, which can be based on race, gender, sexual orientation, language, nationality, family structure, religion, and more. The goal of affinity circles is to facilitate positive identity exploration and development towards the larger goal of creating an inclusive learning environment.



### Assemblies

Lower Schoolers participate in both divisional and all-school assemblies, as participants and/or performers. Assemblies provide a wonderful opportunity to take risks and share and celebrate aspects of student and community identity.

## DAY IN THE LIFE OF A SF DAY STUDENT

# Middle School



### Advisories

Three days a week, Middle Schoolers start school with Advisory in groups of eight. Their advisor is also a member of the grade's teaching team. Advisory is a safe time and place for students to formulate academic and personal goals, discuss issues, and form relationships with their peers.



### Electives

The Middle School Elective Program allows students to try something new or build on their skills and knowledge in a particular subject. Classes are multi-grade 6–8, and examples include: ceramics, creative writing, speech and debate, yearbook, and sketch comedy.



### Learning Lab

Learning lab is a daily time where students develop their executive functioning. Students work independently, collaboratively, or with teachers to develop study habits, routines, and strategies for academic and personal success.



### Student Congress

SF Day's student government adopts the structure of the US government with representatives and committees and affords more opportunities for student leadership and collaboration grounded in real-life concepts. The student congress meets weekly with a faculty advisor.



### Latin

Starting in 5th grade, SF Day Middle Schoolers can choose to take Latin. Our program emphasizes the connections between Latin and modern languages, the cultures of the ancient world, and Roman mythology.



### Jazz Band & Music

Every SF Day Middle Schooler learns to play a brass or woodwind instrument. Many students also join our legendary Jazz Band, whose members get to play SF Jam, Jazz Fest, and at concerts during the school year.



### City- and Nation-Wide Competitions

SF Day Middle Schoolers compete against other SF Students in a host of programs, including Speech & Debate, Model UN, Math Counts, and robotics competitions.



### Athletic Teams

Go 'Phins! Our Middle Schoolers have 11 sports to choose from during the year, including soccer, volleyball, baseball, track and field, and cross country.



### Affinity Circles

SF Day is proud to host student affinity circles to support and celebrate our community's diversity and to facilitate identity exploration towards the larger goal of creating an inclusive learning environment. Middle Schoolers participate in affinity circles, which can be based on race, gender, sexual orientation, language, nationality, family structure, religion, and more.



### Student Clubs

In the Middle School, students also lead student clubs focused on specific interests or passions. Examples include Gardening, Sports Analytics Club, Yoga and Meditation, and the school literary magazine.

# The Portrait of a Graduate

Our SF Day graduates enter high school equipped to thrive academically and confident knowing themselves as learners. They are compassionate and grounded and engage in communities with kindness and respect. They honor and celebrate differences. Most of all, they are ambitious and resilient — students engage joyfully with productive struggle, and know there is value in the process of learning, not just in the end result.

## HS Counseling Process

SF Day's personalized counseling process begins in the spring of 6th grade, when our High School Placement Counselor invites families to start the conversation regarding the next step in students' learning journey through informational sessions. In 7th grade, the High School Placement Counselor meets with students and families one-to-one to share their goals for high school. In 8th grade, students attend a high school counseling class to prepare for all aspects of the high school admissions process (i.e., school research, visit expectations, application writing, interview practice, and test-taking preparation). We encourage our students to take ownership of the high school admissions process by focusing on finding the best fit for them academically and socially.

Over the past five years, SF Day graduates have matriculated to more than 30 of the top independent, public, parochial and boarding high schools in San Francisco and around the country.



# ANNUAL School Events

## Head of School's Welcome

This event is a moment for the whole community to get together, celebrate the school, and share the Head of School's vision for the year ahead. This moment of celebration will include special guest speakers who can reflect on the school's history or experts who can share perspectives on the future.

## Bridge Meetings

Taking place in the week before children arrive in their classrooms, Bridge Meetings provide a valuable time for teachers and parents/guardians to meet one-on-one to discuss their child's progress, hopes for the year ahead and past successes and challenges.

## Family Photo Night

A beloved SF Day tradition where whole families — including pets — can have a portrait taken, that will then be displayed in the school's corridors. It's a wonderful opportunity to say hello at the beginning of the year and celebrates the school's rich diversity of backgrounds and experiences. (These portraits are also how kindergartners learn about bar graphs!)

## Winter & Spring Concerts

The two major musical events of the school year, which feature students performing on instruments and singing. Held in our theater, together they are an unforgettable bonding experience for the community.

## State of the School

Each January, the Head of School and school leadership address the extended school community, unveiling strategic initiatives and celebrating successes by our students and faculty.

## SF Jam & Concert for Community

Each year, SF Day students give back to the community by fundraising through music and sharing their talents, giving evening concerts for SF Day students, faculty, and parents/guardians.

## Fall Fest

Fall Fest is the long-standing celebration of our library's birthday. Each fall, families come together for seasonal fun while supporting our library through book sponsorships that creates a lasting legacy for our community of readers.

## Cultural Journey Night

Cultural Journey Night is our annual celebration for families to come together and learn, share, and celebrate the many cultural backgrounds that make up the tapestry of our community.

## Curriculum Nights

Our Curriculum Nights illuminate the learning journey for our students, provide families with intellectual exercises highlighting the developmental arc of K-8 education, and define SF Day's learning process.



# Beyond THE SCHOOL DAY



## Afterschool Enrichment Program (AEP)

SF Day's afterschool programming was established at the founding of the school to support families who may need or want child care. It's evolved to include enrichment classes for kids who want to deepen their learning. Our daily after school schedule gives students some structure around afterschool play while allowing them room for choice and autonomy. Enrichment classes and 1:1 music lesson offerings include ceramics, cooking, chess, dance, drawing, drums, theater, singing, speech and debate, Digital Dolphins robotics team, and much more!

## K-4 Athletics

The K-4 Athletic program provides a pathway for students to explore their athletic abilities. SF Day oversees a comprehensive K-4 Athletics program for three sports seasons — soccer, basketball, and baseball — as part of its afterschool program offerings. Lower School's programming is focused on building solid foundations in sportsmanship and teamwork, with some skill acquisition.

Students build upon the movement and spatial awareness they develop during the school day, gaining confidence in applying those skills to team play. This early foundation prepares them for the expanded opportunities of Middle School Athletics, where they can further develop their skills, compete, and deepen their love of sport.



# Family & Faculty Partnership

## OUR PHILOSOPHY

### Our Commitment to Partnership

We believe in a strong home-school connection that supports the progress of the child in and out of the classroom. In that spirit, we are committed to a long and productive partnership with families that centers the child and navigates the inevitable ups and downs of child development.

### Parents/Guardians in the Classroom

SF Day welcomes parents in the classroom at appropriate, pre-approved times, including our Lower School open classroom days when parents can see the learning in action. In kindergarten, parents are welcome to stay until “big hug” time as your child learns to transition from home to school. All parents are also invited to select assemblies and Open Fridays, where they will get to see their child’s learning in action.

### Parent/Guardian-Teacher Conferences

SF Day holds Parent/Guardian-Teacher Conferences twice a year, in the fall and spring. These conferences may include student-led conferences. Our goal is to share updated information since the interim progress report. Though these are the “official” meetings with faculty, parent questions and concerns are always welcome and we are here to listen.



# Getting Involved



## Meet the PGA

Every parent and guardian at SF Day is a valued member of the Parents and Guardians Association, or PGA. Volunteerism is an essential aspect of our flourishing community. As our children watch parents, guardians, grandparents, and alumni give generously of their time and talent, they learn the importance and value of giving back.

## Make an Impact

Volunteering provides many benefits, including the opportunity to explore your child's school life and get to know their classmates. It also provides an opportunity to build relationships with staff, teachers, fellow parents and guardians, and see firsthand how our mission is carried out every day.

Each year, volunteers contribute to a range of projects and events through our PGA. There are many ways to get involved according to your interests, experience, and schedule. You can:

- Serve as a Room Parent
- Participate in the IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity & Equity in Action) Parent/Guardian Group
- Serve as a Class Captain for the Annual Fund
- Volunteer as an Admission Ambassador
- Help plan SF Day Fest
- Volunteer at SF Day

At the start of each school year, current SF Day parents/guardians are invited to complete a Volunteer Form to share their interests.



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