



SAN DOMENICO LOWER SCHOOL

Where Wonder Leads

Facts at a Glance

176 years of excellence — continually evolving to meet the needs of today's learners

515-acre campus — garden, hiking and biking trails, and room to explore

6:1 K-5 student-teacher ratio — helping every student feel known and valued

Average class size: 18 students — ensuring personalized attention and support

2 world languages — Mandarin and Spanish taught to all Lower School students



Dedicated specialist classes for **all grades** — Including Art, Music, PE, Science, Sustainability/Garden, and World Languages

35 after-school enrichment classes offered each year

Zero additional fees for bus transportation and lunch — included in tuition for every student

Hot Chocolate **Fridays** — a beloved weekly tradition

Millions of dollars in tuition assistance awarded every year

Countless bowls of homemade soup served each week

680 K-12 students (140 in Lower School)

Ranked **#4 in the world** in sustainability by the Green Schools Alliance annual assessment

38 species of friendly animals spotted by students on campus

1-acre organic garden with outdoor kitchen, classroom, greenhouse, and performance space

47 annual field trips





Rooted for the Future

Since 1850, San Domenico has nurtured children through an education grounded in curiosity, creativity, and joyful discovery. Holding the unique distinction as California's longest-standing independent school, we continue to evolve our programs to meet the needs of young learners while remaining deeply rooted in values that endure across generations.

In the Lower School years, wonder is the spark that drives learning. We believe children learn best when they feel safe to ask questions, try new things, explore their interests, and fully engage with the world around them. Through hands-on experiences, meaningful relationships, and a balance of challenge and encouragement, students begin building the confidence to think independently and grow into themselves.

At the same time, we believe academic growth should always be paired with kindness, reflection, and care for others. From the earliest grades, students learn that their ideas, actions, and voices have the power to make a positive difference in their community and beyond.

This is what it means to be Rooted for the Future.



Our Core Values

For nearly two centuries, our timeless values have remained embedded in every aspect of the SD student journey—empowering generations with a framework for navigating challenges and a deeper awareness of the world beyond themselves.

STUDY:

Pursuing deep understanding through curiosity, thoughtful inquiry, and engagement with diverse perspectives.

REFLECTION:

Taking time to think—learning from experience and discerning what is true, valuable, and worth pursuing.

COMMUNITY:

Fostering an inclusive, supportive environment where everyone feels respected, valued, and a joyful sense of belonging.

SERVICE:

Acting with purpose to uplift others, advance justice, and improve the world beyond ourselves.



Guided by these values,
we create an environment where students learn to try new things, to spread their wings and stretch their limits, to live with purpose—rooted for the future.





The K-12 Advantage



Consistent Values and Confidence

San Domenico's sequential K-12 structure provides a supportive, values-driven environment where students develop confidence, feel known and valued by the community, and are encouraged to take healthy risks as they grow academically and personally.



Leadership and Mentorship Opportunities

Bringing students of all ages together on one joyful campus creates natural mentorship opportunities. Younger students actively build confidence and a sense of belonging through meaningful connections with older peers, growing as learners while inspiring leadership and empathy in those who guide them.



Seamless Transitions and Personal Growth

Eliminating stressful school transitions allows students to confidently explore expanding opportunities as they progress through grades and school levels. Students thrive within a familiar, supportive environment, seamlessly accessing enhanced programs and experiences at each stage of their educational journey.



A Lifelong Sense of Community

The shared K-12 journey cultivates a deep sense of belonging. Students graduate equipped with strong community ties, integrity, kindness, and a lasting commitment to service, preparing them to positively impact the world.



A Campus Designed to Inspire

Set on 515 picturesque acres of open space, San Domenico’s campus offers a college-like atmosphere, blending state-of-the-art facilities with expansive natural beauty, including miles of hiking and biking trails, lush woodlands, and stunning ridgetop vistas. Distractions fade as students settle into a peaceful environment that invites them to stop, think, and immerse themselves deeply in their studies.

From high school science labs analyzing creek water samples to seventh graders tending vegetables in the Garden of Hope to fourth graders hiking through the woods to refresh their minds and bodies, our campus provides unmatched opportunities for experiential learning.

This environment nurtures curiosity, promotes well-being, and strengthens each student’s connection to nature and community.



Through Lines that Shape Us

Confident Voices: Public Speaking and Presentation

Throughout their K-5 journey, students develop public speaking and presentation skills in a progressive and intentional way. Beginning with **early storytelling** and expressive sharing in kindergarten, students build toward **structured debates** and **student-led discussions** in the upper elementary grades. At every grade level, students perform **play productions** that are connected to their academic curriculum. This integrated approach ensures that leadership and communication skills are not taught in isolation but are continuously reinforced and expanded upon. Students gain confidence in articulating ideas, engaging with audiences, and speaking with clarity and conviction: skills that empower them both academically and personally.

Across the Lower School experience, these distinctive programs serve as continuous elements of a San Domenico education. Each supports the development of critical skills and mindsets that grow in depth and complexity as students advance through the Lower School. Together, these hallmark programs prepare students for success in Middle School and beyond, academically, socially, and as thoughtful members of their communities.



“Tell me,
what is it you plan
to do with your one
wild and precious
life?”

— Mary Oliver



Global Cultures and Language Exploration

Our Global Cultures and Language Exploration programming weaves cultural learning into the K-5 experience, introducing students to **world languages (Mandarin and Spanish), traditions, and perspectives** in dynamic and immersive ways. Through storytelling, food, music, art, local trips, and meaningful dialogues with students and faculty from around the world, students progressively build **global awareness and cross-cultural understanding**. This approach nurtures curiosity and empathy, equipping students with the skills and mindset to engage thoughtfully with the diverse world around them.



Outdoor Learning and Eco-Exploration

Taking full advantage of San Domenico's expansive campus, our Outdoor Learning and Eco Exploration programming engages students in **environmental science, sustainability, and outdoor problem-solving**. From early sensory exploration in nature to more complex studies of ecological systems and sustainability, students develop a deep, lasting connection to the natural world. Hands-on activities evolve with each child's growing understanding, fostering not only scientific knowledge but also a sense of responsibility for and stewardship of the environment.





Service Learning Through Action

Service is a cornerstone of the San Domenico student experience, empowering students to become compassionate leaders and changemakers. All grades K-5 include at least one service-learning unit that is intentionally **connected to curriculum**, while sequenced from one year to the next to develop greater empowerment through education. Whether studying housing and food insecurity in Marin County or the sustainability of our National Parks, students develop the skills to **investigate the roots of the problems** that service can address. With more than 15 service experiences each year alongside community partners throughout the Bay Area, Lower School students build empathy, compassion, and a growing sense of responsibility as they learn how to care for and support their community.



Creativity Explored

Creativity is embedded across disciplines at every grade level, inspiring students through **interdisciplinary experiences** that integrate art, music, science, and independent study. By encouraging curiosity, imagination, and critical thinking at every stage, students develop both creative confidence and a deeper understanding of the world around them. This continuous approach ensures that **creative exploration is not confined to a single subject** or moment but is a vibrant, ever-present part of their learning journey.





Academics

We believe that children learn best when they feel a sense of belonging, have a voice in their learning, and are guided by caring adults who see and nurture the whole child. Our philosophy centers on creating a joyful, inclusive, and engaging learning environment where students feel safe, valued, and empowered. Our teachers intentionally integrate academic rigor with social-emotional learning to help students thrive both in and out of the classroom. We develop confident, curious, and compassionate learners who are prepared to contribute positively to their communities.

Academics:

Reading, Writing, and Literacy

Our Lower School literacy program builds strong, confident readers and writers through an integrated approach combining **Reading and Writing Workshop** methods, guided reading, and structured phonics instruction. Students in grades K-3 use the **Foundations** curriculum for systematic phonics, ensuring solid foundations in phonemic awareness, decoding, and fluency.

Grades 4-5 expand their vocabulary and comprehension with the **Wordly Wise** program. Across all grades, explicit small-group instruction focuses on units of study and the cultivation of joyful, independent readers through research-aligned strategies for phonics, comprehension, and engagement. Classroom libraries, daily independent reading time, and inspiring writing projects nurture a lifelong love of literacy. Families partner in their child's journey through shared reading at home and participation in literacy-focused school events, reinforcing the home-school connection.





Academics: Mathematics

Our math curriculum employs the proven **Singapore Math philosophy**, guiding students from concrete experiences to abstract understanding through the **Concrete-Pictorial-Abstract (CPA)** approach. Students first engage with hands-on materials, then transition to visual representations, and ultimately master abstract concepts. By emphasizing deep understanding over memorization, our curriculum develops students' critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and strong numerical foundations. Concepts are spiraled, revisited regularly at increasing complexity, fostering both confidence and long-term retention. Our engaging, visually rich lessons empower students not only to excel mathematically but also to apply their learning confidently to real-world scenarios.

Academics: Science

Our science curriculum sparks curiosity and discovery through hands-on experimentation led by a **dedicated science teacher in a specialized laboratory space** with unique equipment and materials. Students actively engage with foundational concepts in Earth, physical, and life sciences, developing critical inquiry and creative thinking skills. Interactive lab experiences foster contextual learning, enabling students to understand complex natural phenomena. Our expansive campus provides a natural extension of the classroom for students to observe wildlife or take data samples. An integral part of a STEM education, our science program cultivates students' inherent curiosity, preparing them to become confident, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic young scientists.





Academics: Social Studies

The Lower School social studies curriculum develops informed, thoughtful, and active citizens who appreciate our diverse and interconnected world. Students explore community, geography, environment, history, and economics, gaining multiple perspectives to deepen their understanding. Geography and cultural lessons expand global awareness, while historical studies teach students to consider varying viewpoints. Fundamental economic principles help students understand resource management and decision-making trade-offs. Our goal is to equip students with the awareness, critical thinking skills, and appreciation for diversity necessary to become empathetic global stewards.



Academics: World Languages

Students in our Lower School explore **Mandarin** and **Spanish** through engaging, immersive language instruction designed to spark joy and curiosity. Our hands-on activities introduce cultural practices and global perspectives, helping students appreciate the diverse communities around them. Instruction takes place primarily in the target language, building confidence, reducing language barriers, and preparing students for authentic, real-world communication. With lively lessons and interactive experiences, language learning becomes a dynamic part of every student's educational journey.





Arts

Creativity takes center stage in the Lower School, where students explore new interests, learn to take creative risks, and discover the joy of self-expression.

Every grade level has a class play integrated into the curriculum, making student learning come alive with interdisciplinary connections across science, history, and the performing arts.

In the visual arts studio, young artists experiment with paint, clay, fabrics, natural materials, and more, developing foundational skills while expressing their unique perspectives. Students draw inspiration from diverse artists and cultures, often connecting their work to themes in literature, nature, or service.

In music, students try their hand at instruments and activities of their choosing, including violin, cello, piano, percussion, chorus, or even rock band. Whether performing on stage or experimenting in class, they learn rhythm, technique, collaboration, and the confidence that comes from trying something new.



Physical Education

Our physical education program encourages students to discover the joy of movement and physical well-being. Students actively engage in developmentally appropriate experiences designed to build fundamental motor skills, fitness knowledge, and cooperative teamwork. Lessons incorporate activities that foster kinesthetic learning, critical problem-solving, and lifelong appreciation for an active lifestyle. With a balanced emphasis on personal growth and fitness, our PE program takes full advantage of San Domenico's state-of-the-art athletic facilities and expansive outdoor campus—including swim instruction starting in third grade—giving students space to move, play, and thrive.





After-School and Athletics

Our after-school programs are consistently recognized among the best in the Bay Area, offering families both high-quality experiences and peace of mind. Our offerings provide students a nurturing environment where they play, relax, and explore interests with peers daily. Families interested in further enrichment for their students can choose from specialized activities such as animation, art, ceramics, chess, coding, cooking, dance, mock trial, robotics, theatre, and woodworking.

SD Athletics also offers after-school options that provide development of athletic skills and confidence throughout the year, including basketball, cross country, futsal, mountain biking, soccer, swim, track and field, and volleyball. The Mouratoglou Tennis Academy operates on our campus, offering further after-school opportunities for SD students and families.

Conveniently timed to coincide with our late bus schedule, these engaging programs encourage students to discover new passions, deepen existing interests, and provide valuable flexibility and support for busy families.





Counseling and Support

Our Lower School is committed to fostering a community where every student feels known, valued, and supported. A **dedicated Lower School counselor** plays an integral role in creating an environment of safety, warmth, and belonging. The counselor oversees our social-emotional learning (SEL) program, ensuring consistency, intentionality, and skill development across all grade levels. Through classroom lessons, small groups, and one-on-one meetings, the counselor helps students build emotional awareness, resilience, and positive peer relationships.

Beyond direct student support, the counselor partners closely with families and faculty to provide education, guidance, and resources. **As a proactive and visible presence on campus**—from leading mindfulness exercises to greeting students at the bus each morning—the counselor fosters continuity and connection within the school community. Beyond school,

our K-12 counseling team curates a **Family Education calendar** of recommended parent-oriented events and resources from the broader community, offering families valuable tools to support their child's growth and well-being.

For students who may benefit from additional academic support, our **Learning Resource Center (LRC)** offers early identification and targeted assistance from licensed specialists in mathematics and literacy. The LRC bridges gaps, promotes inclusion, and helps all students achieve their fullest potential. When needs extend beyond the school's resources, the team collaborates with families to connect them with outside specialists.

By combining strong social-emotional learning with academic support, San Domenico ensures that **students develop the confidence, skills, and resilience to thrive** both in and out of the classroom.

Day in the Life

Ride Green! Go Yellow!

Many students start their day on the school bus—already part of the SD community before arriving on campus. (And yes, bus rides are included in tuition!)



Morning Meeting

Morning begins with a warm welcome, community-building activities, and a preview of the day ahead.



Core Academics

Engaging lessons in math, social studies, and language arts (Mandarin and Spanish) provide a strong academic foundation. Students build critical thinking skills and a lifelong love of learning.

Soup Break

This cherished daily tradition offers a mid-morning moment to recharge—plus hot chocolate on Fridays!



Core Academics, Continued

Students return to core academic subjects, applying new skills and deepening their understanding through interactive lessons and collaborative projects.



Lunchtime

Students enjoy a delicious, healthy lunch prepared fresh daily, with a variety of options to suit all tastes—including vegetarian choices. Meals are included in tuition and shared with classmates in the dining hall or outside in Panther Plaza. Wednesdays bring an extra treat: fresh-baked cookies!



Specialist Classes

Students explore their passions and talents in classes taught by dedicated specialists—including music, physical education, gardening/sustainability, science, and art—developing well-rounded skills and discovering new interests.



Student Clubs

During recesses, clubs provide an opportunity for students to dig deeper into shared passions or lean into something new. Popular clubs include Math Olympiad, science lab, library, art studio, gardening, and Dance Party Fridays!

After-School Adventures

Whether relaxing with friends, playing sports, or trying new activities in areas like robotics or ceramics, students enjoy meaningful, supervised fun. Programs are timed to align with our late bus schedule for added family convenience.



Middle School Bound

As fifth graders complete their Lower School journey, they don't just move up—they step up into Middle School, ready to embrace new challenges and opportunities. This milestone is both a celebration of how far they've come and a launching point for the next stage of their growth.

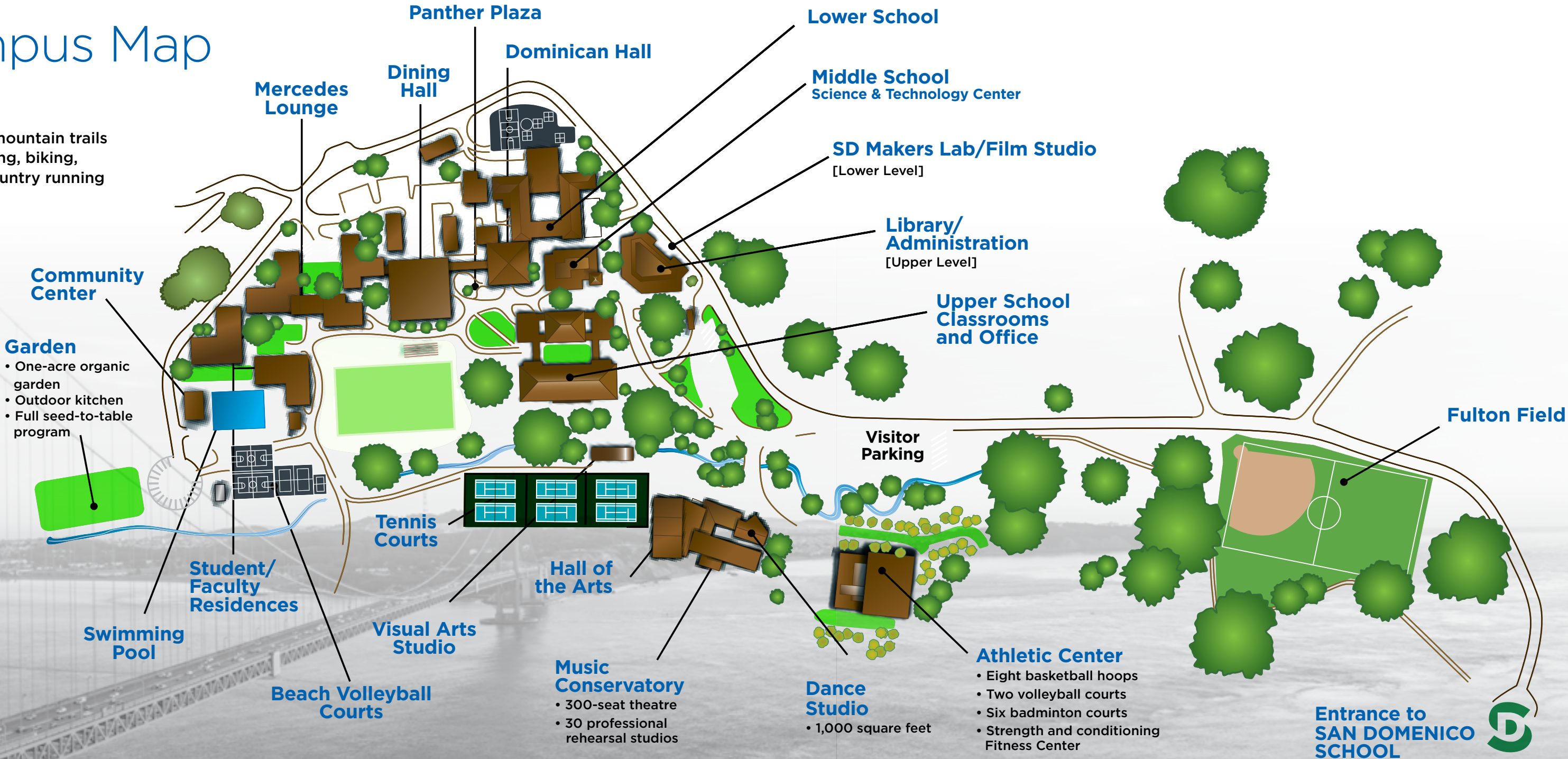
Through years of thoughtful preparation, our students have built the academic foundation, resilience, and independence they need to thrive. They transition into San Domenico's Middle School with confidence, curiosity, and a strong sense of belonging. Here, they continue to be known and valued by teachers and peers while exploring advanced academics, meaningful advisory connections, and a wide range of electives in the arts, sciences, and more.

Lower School graduates carry forward not only their knowledge and skills but also the joy of learning, the courage to try new things, and the confidence to lead—all within the supportive SD community they've called home.



Campus Map

20 miles of mountain trails
ideal for hiking, biking,
and cross-country running





SAN DOMENICO SCHOOL

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San Domenico school admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

