

## FACTS

In 1972 parents and teachers founded San Francisco Community School. Their mission was to start a family-involved, child-centered school, that represented the ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of San Francisco. SFC is a San Francisco Unified School District public school located in the Excelsior neighborhood. We are a Small School by Design within the SFUSD Small Schools by Design Pilot Project.

We are a kindergarten through 8th grade school serving 285 students. 39% are Latino, 14% are African-American, 23% are Chinese, 11% are White, 7% are Filipino, 6% are multiple or other ethnicities. 69% qualify under the federal free and reduced price lunch program and 35% are English learners. 50% of our students live in the Excelsior District, 20% in Bernal Heights or the Mission District, 15% in Visitacion Valley, and 20% live elsewhere in the city.

The middle school day is from 8:55-3:35 and the K-5 school day is from 9:15-3:30. We dismiss at 2:15 on Tuesdays for staff development. We have a free after-school academic and enrichment program, Third Base, until 5:45 each day.



## OUR TEACHING APPROACH

- We identify what we want students to know at the end of each year, semester, quarter, month, and unit. We create assessments to give us information about how students are progressing toward these standards. We map our instruction backwards to ensure that all instructional activities support students to meet the standards. Students and families are engaged in this through the portfolio process.
- We make learning relevant and interesting through challenge driven projects.
- Teachers take responsibility for students' achievement because they have small enough class sizes to make this possible.
- We provide interventions for students who are struggling to meet standards, in the form of tutoring, small group instruction, counseling, and/or grade level retention.
- We provide differentiated instruction in small groups within the classroom.
- We teach students how to think powerfully throughout the curriculum. We teach them how to use evidence, focus, create, plan, analyze, question, communicate, synthesize, empathize, and reflect.
- We set students up to learn by showing them love on a daily basis in the form of personalized, supportive, loving relationships with teachers and other staff members.
- We build an adult culture focused on excellence and equity so that educators can find support from each other to do the hard work of taking responsibility for students' learning.
- The staff and community work together to create an anti-racist, culturally competent, and inclusive school culture that supports all students to meet our goals of excellence.

# San Francisco Community School

**Strong Minds**  
**Strong Hearts**  
**Strong Individuals**  
**Strong Community**



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## WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT S.F. COMMUNITY SCHOOL?

### Combined grades and small class size

Children learn in combined grade classrooms, K-1, 2nd-3rd, 4th-5th, 6th-7th, and 7th-8th grade, with small grade-specific math classes. Class size is no more than 22 for K-5, no more than 25 for 6-8. Elementary students generally retain the same teacher for two years. Middle school students are in an advisory group of 11 students that meets daily, and retain the same advisor for the three years of middle school.

### Project based learning

Students learn best and are most engaged when skills and concepts are contextualized in real-world, meaningful challenges. SFC students participate in two nine week science-based, challenge driven projects each year. K-5 projects incorporate four themes in a two-year rotation: Human Body, Environment/ Earth Science, Physical World/ Design, and Community. For example, within the Environment theme, 2nd-3rd grade students designed and created habitats for classroom fish and geckos. In a 4th-5th grade Human Body project, students hiked the eight peaks of San Francisco and created a guidebook, as they studied the circulatory, respiratory, and muscular-skeletal systems. Middle school teachers implement projects within their subject area, e.g., a trial of Ulysses in the Language Arts/ Social Studies class; building rockets in Science.



### Portfolios

Students in 5th and 8th grade show that they have achieved the standards at their grade level by preparing and presenting portfolios of mastery-level work in order to graduate and advance to the next level of school. Students present their portfolios in May to panels of teachers, family members, community members, and peers.

### Alternative leadership structure

SFC is a teacher-run school. We choose a teacher to take the role of "Head Teacher" for three years. Staff are involved in all school-wide decisions and make major decisions by consensus. This collective structure provides a model of egalitarian and shared leadership for our students, and has allowed the school to maintain a continuous program for the last 35 years, changed only by site-based decision-making.

### Virtues

As a school, we uphold eight "community virtues" which lay the foundation for our positive school climate: propriety, justice, truth, community, balance, respect, perseverance, and harmony. We teach these values as part of our core curriculum and honor students for them.

### Outdoor education

Our program includes annual camping trips at all grade levels, and other outdoor education. We have transformed our schoolyard into an Outdoor Learning Environment with a sand and water play area, greenhouse, and large organic garden where all students receive hands on environmental and nutrition education.

### Parent involvement

As a small school by design, our partnerships with families are essential. Families participate in myriad ways: as volunteers in the classrooms, on field trips and camping trips, in making a monthly "home cooked lunch" for the entire school, in our active School Site Council. Our Parent Action Committee plans fundraising and community building events, including our annual fall auction and spring Carnival in the X. All families come to two family/student/teacher conferences each year, and two open houses where students showcase their project work.

### Our vision

Our vision is that ALL students, regardless of ethnicity, home language, socioeconomic status or other forms of difference, acquire the skills and knowledge required to be successful in high school, college, and beyond. We embody this vision in our programs, in our teaching methods, and in our relationships with students and families. We are determined to educate all students well, and evidence shows that what we are doing is working. We have been selected by San Francisco Unified School District as one of eight exemplary schools that are succeeding in closing the achievement gap—the persistent disparity in learning outcomes based on ethnicity, socio-economic status, and home language.

## PROJECT OLE!

(Outstanding Learning Environment)

Project OLE is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit corporation made up of SFC family, community, and student volunteers.

The organization fundraises to support SFC's alternative school programs.

Contributions to Project OLE are tax-deductible.

Donations can be made online at:

<http://www.my-sfcs.org/33.html>

or by mail:

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