

SAN FRANCISCO COMMUNITY SCHOOL
P A R E N T H A N D B O O K

2011-12



Strong Minds, Strong Hearts, Strong Individuals, & Strong Community

OUR PROGRAM



School Mission

In 1972 parents and teachers founded San Francisco Community School, one of SFUSD's first "alternative" programs. The goal was to establish a city-wide, ethnically integrated, K-8 school where parents are deeply involved and where all children can be successful and celebrated. The emphasis is on "community"; because of our small size (285 students in K-8) students and staff develop a family-like rapport. Students are provided with an environment where they can learn self-respect, practice respect for others, learn to resolve conflict and develop appreciation for all people. Our vision is that ALL students, regardless of ethnicity, home language, socio-economic status or other forms of difference, acquire the skills and knowledge required to be successful in high school, college, and beyond.

SFC is a San Francisco Unified School District public school, not a charter. We are a Small School by Design within the Board of Education's Small Schools By Design Pilot Project, which protects our small size and gives us some autonomy over our curriculum and personnel.

Alternative leadership structure

SFC is a teacher-run school. We choose a teacher to take the role of "Head Teacher" for several years. Staff are involved in all school-wide decisions and make major decisions by consensus. This collective structure provides a model for egalitarian 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.

The school's Lead Team is made up of the Head Teacher and representatives from each of the grade level teaching teams and the staff team. The Lead Team makes decisions about all the day-to-day operations of the school, as well as curriculum, safety, parent involvement, discipline, etc. They meet regularly and also conduct school-wide retreats.

Combined grades and small school community

Children learn in single and combined grade classrooms. For example the K/1 team consists of a kindergarten class, a first grade class, and a K/1 combination class. The 2/3 team is a second grade class, a 2/3 combination class and a third grade class. The 4/5/6 team has a 4th grade single grade class and two 5/6 classes. 5th and 6th grade students have a block schedule with humanities, math/science, and PE daily. Students generally retain the same teacher for two years K-8 through looping and combination classes. 7th/8th grade students are in an advisory group of 11 students that meets daily and retain the same advisor for the two years of middle school. In our small community, adults strive to know all the children in our school. Students get to know each other across grade

levels, and older students have opportunities to help and be positive role models for younger children.

Project Based Learning

Research shows that students learn best and are most engaged when skills and concepts are contextualized in real-world, meaningful challenges or projects that are truly interesting to them. SFC students participate in science-based, challenge driven projects. 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 and 3rd grade students designed and created habitats for classroom fish and geckos. In a 4th and 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 and sometimes in partnership across subject areas, such as a trial of Ulysses in the Language Arts/ Social Studies class; building rockets in Science.



Outdoor education

Our program includes annual camping trips at all grade levels. 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.

Restorative Practices

SF Community was selected as one of three schools to be a restorative practices demonstration school. Staff at SFC create space for class meetings, individual conferences with students, circles and groups to provide students opportunities to share their feelings, build relationships, and problem solve. When there is wrong-doing, staff work with students to help students see their impact on others and support students to play an active role in taking responsibility, addressing the wrong and repairing the harm. For more information see www.safersanerschools.org.

How we assess student learning

Teachers use many kinds and levels of assessment throughout the school year to make sure that students are learning what they need to and see where they need help. Students in K-4 don't receive letter grades. On SF Community's standards-based report cards, teachers report whether students are "not yet meeting standard", "approaching standard", "meeting standard", or "exceeding standard" in specific areas. In the middle school, students receive traditional A-F grades and teachers use a program called SnapGrades to make sure families can track progress in each subject. Project work and portfolio work (see below) are important ways we assess students' progress toward learning goals in all subjects. Students' work throughout the year is assessed using rubrics. A rubric is a scoring tool that lists the criteria, or "what counts", in a piece of work, and describes levels of quality for each of these criteria, so that students clearly understand what is expected and learn to evaluate and improve their own work. In addition, teachers at each grade level assess each student's literacy skills on an ongoing basis using a number of different measures and methods; and math skills through tests, open-ended questions, and projects. Students in second through eighth grades take the STAR tests (state-mandated standardized tests) in the spring each year. There are two teacher-parent-student conferences per year.

Portfolios

Students show that they are ready to graduate and advance to the next level of school by preparing and presenting portfolios of meeting standard work to panels of teachers, family members, community members, and peers.



THE BASICS

Hours

The middle school (grades 5-8) day is from 8:55-3:35 and the K-4 school day is from 9:15-3:30. Middle school students line up in front of the school at 8:55 and K-4 lines up on the lower yard at 9:15. Students are dismissed out the front gate of school. We dismiss all grades at 2:15 on Tuesdays for staff development. SFC does not offer a formal before-school program, but there is at least one adult supervising the school yard starting at 8:00am. Please do not drop your child off earlier. We have an after-school academic and enrichment program, Third Base, until 6:30 each day. We share our gym and lower yard with the Boys and Girls Club that adjoins our school site. The Club is another after school alternative that is open from 2:15 - 7pm, and on some school holidays. SFC students who are at least 6 years old may use the Club for an annual membership fee of \$10. The Mission YMCA offers a free weekend children's and youth program at the Club.

Please make sure your child arrives to school on time. Students arriving more than 10 minutes late must sign in and pick up a tardy pass in the office. Middle school students who are late to school will make up their missed minutes during Catch Up Time at lunch recess.

Absences

Please call the office if your child will be absent. Have your child bring a note when s/he returns to school indicating reason for absence, date and your signature. Only absences due to illness, medical appointments, funerals, religious observances, or family emergencies are considered "excused."

Independent Study: If a student is going to be away from school, please request an independent study and classwork. If approved for an independent study, the absence is noted but not recorded as absence because the student continues to learn.

Illness: Children may not attend school when they exhibit contagious symptoms such as fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or have a communicable condition such as chicken pox. If your child becomes ill while at school, we will call you to pick up your child. Please be sure to inform the office if there is a change in your emergency contact information.

Physical Conditions

If your child has a chronic condition such as asthma, allergies, headaches, seizures, or diabetes please make sure this information is on file with the emergency card in the office. Include medications the child takes regularly and any warning signs or emergency procedures. Medication the child needs on hand during school hours must be stored in the office or kept by the teacher. If your child needs to be restricted from certain activities such as P.E., please provide a note from you or your child's physician describing the situation, restrictions and expected duration.

Transportation

The school bus drops children off and picks children up on London Street. If you drop off or pick your children up by car, please either find legal street parking and walk your child to and from

school, or stop on Paris Street. Do not double park on Excelsior or block the school bus zone on London. MUNI buses 14, 49, 44, 52, and 29 and the J stop near school; Glen Park and Balboa BART are also within walking distance.

Snacks

K-4 students are given snacks before recess. Parents are usually asked to bring in snacks for the entire class two weeks per year. We ask for healthy and substantial, easy to serve snacks such as cut up fruits and vegetables, cheese, hard-boiled eggs, and/or whole grain baked goods. For middle schoolers, we purchase (and are always seeking donations of) energy or granola bars. No peanuts or strawberries are allowed at school due to allergies.

Lunch

All students can eat school lunch. SFUSD lunches now meet the USDA's Healthier US Schools Challenge, including more fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains than in the past. Students who qualify can receive free or reduced price lunch; all families are asked to complete a form at the beginning of the school year to determine their child's eligibility. Lunch costs \$3 for students who do not qualify for free or reduced price lunch. Parents can prepay for lunches at www.mealpayplus.com. See last page for more information about the lunch program.

Students who bring their **own lunch from home** should bring their own fork, napkins, etc. Food should be in containers that your child can open by him- or herself, and ready to eat: students cannot heat up lunches at school.

Tuesday Packet

One main way our school communicates with families is through the Tuesday packet (Wednesday for middle school), which includes the weekly school newsletter and other important information. Parents/ Guardians can receive the Tuesday packet either by having the packet sent home with your child, or by email / web download. For more information please contact Rachel Lederman, rlederman@2momslaw.com, or Marcie Fountaine at 469-4739.



How can parents get involved at SF Community?

There are many ways to support our school, whether your free time is in the day, evening or weekends.

Parents can contribute by volunteering at the school, participating in special events to raise funds, signing up with our ongoing fundraising programs and pledging to donate to SFC.

We have a sign-up calendar on the parent bulletin board (on your right as you enter the school) to help parents know when events are happening, and so that parents may sign up to volunteer each week or even one day a month. If you have a general question or need help, ask Ivy in the office (415) 469- 4739. To talk about ways you can volunteer your time at SFC, contact Kamille Hitz (2nd grade parent), rockakamille@yahoo.com, or 510-593-5591.

VOLUNTEER WITH THE CHILDREN

1. Volunteer in the classroom: Children greatly benefit from additional adult attention and teachers need help with basic tasks. K-1 teachers ask that parents wait until after the first few weeks of school to allow children to develop their new school identities. Contact: your child's teacher.

2. Tutor children before, during, or after school: students need extra help with everything from ABCs to Algebra. Contact: Ivy (415) 469-4739.



3. Volunteer on the school yard at recess, either before school or during lunch. This is a great thing to add on to other duties, for example: working in the classroom and staying for lunch recess. Parents can also bring a special activity or start a club at lunch. Contact: Kamille Hitz, rockakamille@yahoo.com (510)593-5591.

4. Be a parent chaperone: Parent chaperones are essential for field trips. In addition to single-day trips, every grade level goes camping each year. Parents participate by shopping for and preparing food, transporting gear and supplies, helping run activities, helping transport children safely, and cleaning up. Contact: your child's teacher.

5. Work in the Garden: Parents can help with classes in the garden, which are held two days a week. The first Saturday of the month is a general garden clean up and work day for families. Contact: Brooke Hieserich, bythebrook@hotmail.com, or John Katz, katzdipko@sbcglobal.net.

6. Work in the Library: Parents can help with classes in the library, which are held two days a week. In addition, they are needed to re-shelve and repair books, and can open the Library for lunch recess. Contact: Tawnya Dudash 469-4739, trdudash@yahoo.com.

7. Portfolio Assessments: Students present portfolios in the spring to show that they are ready to advance to the next level of school. Parents of any grade level students can be trained and participate in assessing portfolio presentations. Contact: Ivy, (415) 469-4739.

GET INVOLVED IN FUNDRAISING, EVENTS, OR THE SCHOOL SITE COUNCIL

To find out what's going on and communicate with others, parents can come to meetings at the school, come to events, or sign up for one of the email lists. There are email lists for announcements, questions, middle school parents, and lists for chinese or spanish speakers. To sign up, go to the school's website at <http://my-sfcs.org>, then click on the "parents" link; or contact Keith Keller, kkeller@wombat.san-francisco.ca.us.

1. Parent Action Committee (PAC) / Project OLÉ! (Outstanding Learning Environment)

The PAC is the parent organization at SFC. Project OLÉ is our nonprofit corporation, which allows the PAC to receive tax deductible donations and grants. As a collaborative group, members of the PAC strive to:

- *Raise money to supplement the school budget, with an awareness of equity issues.
- *Build a sense of community and promote communication between and among families, the school, and the broader community.
- *Support and appreciate teachers.
- *Contribute to the cleanliness, safety, and attractiveness of the school.
- *Act collectively on issues of concern to the school families.
- *Contribute, communicate, and implement family-generated ideas with the SSC and Lead Team.

The PAC meets monthly from 6 - 7:30pm at the school. Dinner and childcare is provided for meetings. Contact: Ivy, 469-4739 or or Jessica Fishman, FishmanJ@sfusd.edu.

2. Fundraising Committee: The aim of the fundraising committee is to oversee and organize fundraising efforts for SFC. This group presents its projects during Parents Action Committee (PAC) meetings, where it also asks for any help it needs. To join the committee contact Rachel Lederman, rlederman@2momslaw.com, 415-350-6496.

3. School Site Council (SSC): Every public school in California has a School Site Council made up of educators, parents, and sometimes students. The SSC makes decisions about the school budget and oversees the school program in conjunction with staff. At the beginning of each school year, the SSC sets an agenda for the issues it will tackle that year. SSC members are elected every two years, but everyone is welcome to attend and participate in SSC meetings. No experience necessary! The SSC meets monthly. Dinner and childcare is provided. For more information, contact: Ivy at 415-469-4739 or Jessica Fishman, FishmanJ@sfusd.edu.

4. Parent Pledge: The Parent Pledge Campaign is the main non-grant source of funding for our school outside of the budget we get from the state. At SFC we ask families to contribute what they can afford, whether it is \$10 a month, \$50 a month, \$200 a month, \$1,000 a year, or more. The parent pledge pays for many of the things that make our school special, and helps us keep class sizes small. The parent pledge campaign is more crucial than ever because of severe school funding cuts, which are forcing us to use parent pledge funds to pay for K-5 PE, garden, and other key programs. Our fundraising goal for 2011-2012 is \$110,000. You can make a tax deductible contribution to SF Community programs by clicking on the "Donate" button on our web site, my-sfcs.org, or by sending in a check made out to Project OLÉ, our fundraising nonprofit, to the school at 125 Excelsior St., San Francisco, CA 94112. For more information please contact John Katz, katzdipko@sbcglobal.net, 415-238-2013.



CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Our school community is committed to using conflict resolution to settle arguments and to prevent violence. Conflict resolution helps us learn to disagree respectfully, to understand each other better and to respect the minds, hearts and bodies of everyone in our community. In order to live and learn and grow together, we need to build trusting, positive relationships. We expect all members of our community — teachers, parents, students and staff — to practice this method and ask for help when we need it. We encourage families to reinforce this at home and adjust it to meet your family's needs.

We use our conflict resolution policy for major disagreements and minor misunderstandings. We encourage everyone to talk directly to each other when conflicts first arise. People can follow the steps on their own or ask someone (a teacher, conflict manager, another parent) to help guide them through the steps.



The Process:

- ◆ Cool off (sit in a quiet place, take a walk, talk to a mediator)
- ◆ Agree on the ground rules (no interrupting, no put downs, no yelling)
- ◆ Each person tells what happened and how s/he felt (use I-statements)
- ◆ Each person says what s/he needs to happen next
- ◆ Brainstorm solutions
- ◆ Choose one solution (write down the agreement, plan to check if it is working)
- ◆ Use the solution

If this process does not result in a solution:

For Students:

- ◆ A teacher will repeat the process
- ◆ The head teacher or a class meeting will mediate
- ◆ Parents will participate in the process
- ◆ The district will participate

For Adults:

- ◆ Another adult will mediate
- ◆ Two adults (staff or parents) will mediate
- ◆ The entire staff & interested parents will participate
- ◆ The district/union will participate



Put San Francisco Community School on your shopping list! It's Free. It's Easy.

Register Your Safeway Club Card Today – have your friends and family register too. SFC will get \$ every time you shop! There is no cost to you.

Safeway Club Card Number or Phone Number _____

Last Name First Name

Address

City State Zip

Email Address Phone Number

Already registered with Safeway? Make sure you 'Renew' your commitment at escrip.com.



Rainbow Grocery gives 10% back to SFC when you shop using Rainbow Scrip. Buy Rainbow scrip from parent Amy Berk and use it like cash at the store. amy@amyberk.com 415/ 824-1372 (home) 420-1267 (cell); or return this form to the office and Amy will contact you.

your name daytime phone number and/or email

child's name teacher

Amount \$ (\$50 increments) (make checks payable to Project OLE)



Shop Online? Then go to <http://www.onecause.com/schools/san-francisco-community-alternative> . Sign in and pick your merchant - SFC will get money every time you shop at Amazon.com, EBay, American Airlines, Travelocity, iTunes, Office Depot and lots of other merchants, as long as you first sign in through One Cause.

RECYCLE YOUR OLD CELL PHONES AND INK CARTRIDGES in the bin in the 3rd floor main office. SFC gets \$\$ for each phone or cartridge!



We Need Every Family to Fill out a Meal Application By September 24th!

Why is this so important?



We Get More Money for More Eligible Forms! Our school's federal (Title 1), local (Weighted Student Formula), and private grant funding is based on the total number of eligible Meal Application Forms collected.



Better Quality Meals! The more eligible forms collected, the more money Student Nutrition Services (SNS) receives to spend for better food.



What if I know I do not qualify for free or reduced price meals? You can still help our school by filling in your child's First and Last Name, date of birth, and checking the box in the upper right corner, shaded in pink, which says "No we do not want to apply for meal benefits." Be sure to sign the form!



What if my child doesn't want school breakfast or lunch? If there is a chance that you qualify for free or reduced price meals, please fill out the form, including income level, to help our school receive more funding.



But I filled out a form last year! Federal Law requires schools to recertify all students for the School Meals Program each year. Even if you qualified last year, SNS will only receive reimbursements for your child if you fill out a new application this year. Our school's funding is also determined each year based on current forms.



What if we are not citizens or legal U.S. residents? Free and reduced price meals are available for all children regardless of their citizenship status. All information on the Meal Application Form is confidential – it is **not** shared with INS / ICE or any outside agency. If you do not have a social security number, simply write "none" in that space.



Do I have to fill out an application if we already qualify for food stamps or other public assistance? Yes! Although your child is automatically eligible for the School Meals Program, we still need you to fill in your child's FIRST and LAST NAME, SCHOOL, and CaWORKS CASE NUMBER under Student/Child Information in Section III.



What if I don't want others to know my child receives a free lunch? We are requesting applications from ALL students, qualifying or not, so returning the application won't identify your child as receiving a free lunch. Neither our school nor the School District singles out or publicly identifies children who qualify for School Meal Programs.

Questions? Call Student Nutrition Services at 749-3604