



STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2022: LIVING OUR HUMANITARIAN PROMISE

Fall 2017

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MISSION STATEMENT

The San Francisco School is committed to cultivating and celebrating the intellectual, imaginative, and humanitarian promise of each student in an environment that practices mutual respect, embraces diversity, and inspires a passion for learning.

OUR STORY

In 1966, a spirited group of preschool parents and teachers conceived of a new school. They imagined a community where parents and teachers could share in school leadership, and where preschool children could thrive in a program guided by the principles of Maria Montessori who believed in every child's ability to learn with grace and courtesy. In March 1966, five parents and four teachers signed the original Articles of Incorporation for The San Francisco Montessori School, which opened the following September. Tucked away in a church basement in the quiet, working class [Portola District](#) neighborhood, the school had just seven preschool students its first day, and fees were \$100 per student. In 1969, the school purchased the present property at 300 Gaven Street. Today, 50 years later, we still reside in the beautiful Garden District - the Portola - and are extremely proud to be one of the oldest coeducational day schools in San Francisco.

Throughout the decades, our school has grown and matured. The San Francisco School (SFS) now offers programs for students from preschool to grade 8. As an institution, we have taken significant strides to be at the forefront of education, including our membership in the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS). By joining this network of over 200 independent schools, we officially became an accredited school and simultaneously built in a process of consistent and deep reflection, insight on best practices in education, and a host of professional learning opportunities for our staff.

Subsequently, SFS has created and completed several bold strategic plans. Looking back nearly two decades, in 2000, the School embarked on a plan that inspired measured growth in enrollment, especially for our middle school; a strong focus on the development of the academic program; and attention toward innovative teacher professional development and competitive compensation. In 2007, the school crafted its strategic plan entitled *A Broad and Adventurous Look at the Future*. This plan focused on creating an exceptional physical and intellectual environment. During this time, the school community successfully funded and completed the [Community Center](#) project after raising more than \$5 million. Other priorities focused on enhancing and deepening academic programs across all grades, creating environmental and socially responsible policies and actions, inspiring and sustaining staff with innovative professional development programs, and building a strong home-school partnership. Financially, the School became a much more fiscally sound institution growing its endowment to \$3 million.

All of this led us to our current strategic plan, *Living our Humanitarian Promise*. Building on our strengths and areas for growth, it focuses on community both inside and outside the gates of 300 Gaven Street. This plan looks closely at and dreams big about the realities of contemporary teaching and learning. Lastly, it envisions a school that is innovative and supports our staff and families as they face the benefits and challenges of living in the world-class city of San Francisco.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2022: LIVING OUR HUMANITARIAN PROMISE

The San Francisco School is committed to humanitarian promise. We are extraordinary in our empathy, our relationships within our community, and our regard for humanity. In this age of rapid acceleration and growing inequities, we resolve to create a strategic plan that stays focused on people, including our students, staff, families, alumni, neighbors, and community partners. We embrace technology as a tool for creativity, innovation, and productivity. We accept the challenge of financial stewardship and growth at the forefront of all we do while preserving our fundamental tenets of mutual respect and social justice.

PROCESS

The momentum for this current strategic plan arose from the recent institutional self-study during the CAIS accreditation process and the recommendations made during the subsequent site visit report. Emboldened by an invigorated appreciation of our school and inspired by possibilities, we formed the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) and included diverse members of the SFS community, from the head of school and chair of the board to other trustees, administration, staff, parents/guardians, and alumni. We consulted Carla Silver, a recent SFS trustee and the executive director of Leadership + Design, to lend her expertise in design and strategic thinking. This human-centered endeavor has resulted in not only a plan that is true to our school and the times in which we live, but also in a greater understanding of our school and our community. As a result, our strategic plan honors our mission, values, history, and culture while rising to the challenge of demographic, technological, and pedagogical changes. It has been of paramount importance for the process to be inclusive of the entire SFS community.

In May 2016, during its most preliminary stages, the board of trustees developed a context map to understand the internal and external trends that might impact our school as we look ahead to the future. We embarked on the process of discovery and exploration. In August 2016, the SPC members shared stories centered around the SFS culture, and, with the entire community at the All School Meeting in September 2016, we generated “more beautiful questions.” That is, we asked “ambitious but actionable questions that can begin to shift the way we perceive or think about something--and that might serve as a catalyst to bring about

change.” (*A More Beautiful Question*, Warren Berger) Further, in October 2016, parents/guardians volunteered to be involved in “think tanks” during which they provided their current impressions of the school, a description of its ideal graduate, and what SFS would be like 10 years from now.

Subsequently, Inquiry Teams of the SPC performed observations and interviews within and outside of SFS, specifically investigating the following topics with institutional financial health as a constant theme: academic curriculum, faculty and staff, campus and size, and diversity and community. From its research, the SPC identified human and institutional needs, and from these, the Strategic Priorities were created.

During the spring of 2017, we presented the Strategic Priorities to the SFS community. We collaboratively scrutinized them and assessed their suitability and appropriateness for SFS. We realized that the distinctive quality of SFS is its commitment to humanitarian promise, and we ensured that the Strategic Priorities reflected it. After incorporating the collective approbation, critique, and feedback on the priorities from staff, parents/guardians, and trustees, they were presented to the board of trustees in May 2017 for approval.

To support these priorities, we have composed the Strategic Initiatives to be desirable, feasible, and viable. They are the compass with which to guide SFS as we advance in the world of technological acceleration and global interconnectedness and boldly forge ahead into the future.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Incorporate cutting-edge research in order to place teaching and learning in a global contemporary context

The San Francisco School staff will teach and work in a collaborative and intentional way and they will be supported with focused professional development. This professional support will include peer mentorship, coaching, and instructional leadership opportunities. Not only will our staff learn from one another but we will invite others to learn from us. Our faculty’s work will be data driven and guided by current research in teaching, learning, and brain science. Integrated with our highly-regarded arts programming, the subjects of math, science, and technology will have a more visible presence. There will continue to be a strong through line of the humanities, empathy, citizenship, and social-emotional learning.

Global programs and innovative technology will provide students and teachers opportunities to connect with others from around the world through both virtual and physical interactions. These will strengthen cultural understanding and provide language opportunities for our students. Keeping pace with technological tools expands possibilities beyond our classrooms.

We will enrich student learning through global relationships, strengthening cultural understanding, and language learning opportunities for our students.

We will renew our commitment to environmental sustainability and pledge to engage in the critical fight against climate change through education and actions that will have an impact on our campus and our planet. The campus will remain green and alive with abundant spaces for students to find adventure, learn about ecology, and develop a love of nature. Indoor spaces will include nimble, flexible classrooms that encourage collaboration and partnership as well as spaces for staff and parents/guardians to work or get together.

Finally, the school day schedule will support a more flexible, collaborative, and balanced approach to the way SFS uses time and meets the needs of students and the professional community. We will thoughtfully adjust programming to optimize when and how students learn best. We will evaluate and revise the schedule to allow the faculty sufficient time to work together on multidisciplinary, project-based lessons and to have adequate time for collaboration and professional development.

Safeguard the diverse and inclusive community of SFS, to enrich accessibility for families, and to deepen our experiences with diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice both on and off our campus

The San Francisco School was founded under the principles of Maria Montessori, and we recognize the diversity within all children and that each child has a special characteristic that makes him or her wholly him- or herself. As our Educational Philosophy states, we believe students learn best when they are encouraged to be curious, to explore, to ask meaningful questions, and to discover. They will be challenged to master a varied curriculum that will progressively increase in complexity. Our students will collaborate across grades and disciplines to learn teamwork, cooperation, and problem solving. We will urge them to be courageous, to take risks, and to embrace their mistakes. We will inspire them to be compassionate and know that their actions make a difference.

We will take a bold approach to equitable access to education. We will welcome multicultural students and staff from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and family structures. We will incorporate opportunities into the students' educational experience as they will be encouraged to explore, deeply understand, and solve real-world social justice challenges by engaging in service learning both on and off campus. The curriculum will systematically integrate issues of equity and social justice on a local, national, and international level.

The San Francisco School will strengthen its endowment to allow families to creatively approach the cost of an SFS education, including but not limited to managing the cost of

education and exploring different models of tuition and tuition assistance. Increasing the accessibility of an SFS education will solidify the representation of diverse communities from throughout the city and Bay Area, promoting the inclusion of its many voices. Students will have equal access to educational supports and resources throughout their time at SFS and as they enter the high school application process, resulting in greater choice and opportunity beyond SFS.

Engage more fully with the Portola neighborhood and San Francisco and to address the challenges and benefits of living, working, and thriving in the Bay Area

The San Francisco School will be more deeply integrated with its local neighborhoods, the city of San Francisco, and the Bay Area. With our increased visibility and outreach, as well as greater accessibility for all, we will have more students from the Portola, Excelsior, and Bayview. It is important that the SFS student body include children of families that have lived in the area for many generations and families who have recently arrived to reflect the demographics of our neighborhood as well as the evolving nature of the San Francisco Bay Area.

We will explore the many resources that our location offers: institutions of art, culture, and science; the wealth of natural space such as ocean, coast, woods, and mountains; the technology and entrepreneurialism of the Bay Area; and collaboration with local institutions such as schools and neighborhood organizations. The result will be an expanded, limitless classroom in which our community both learns and instructs. It will also strengthen our appreciation and pride in the Portola and San Francisco.

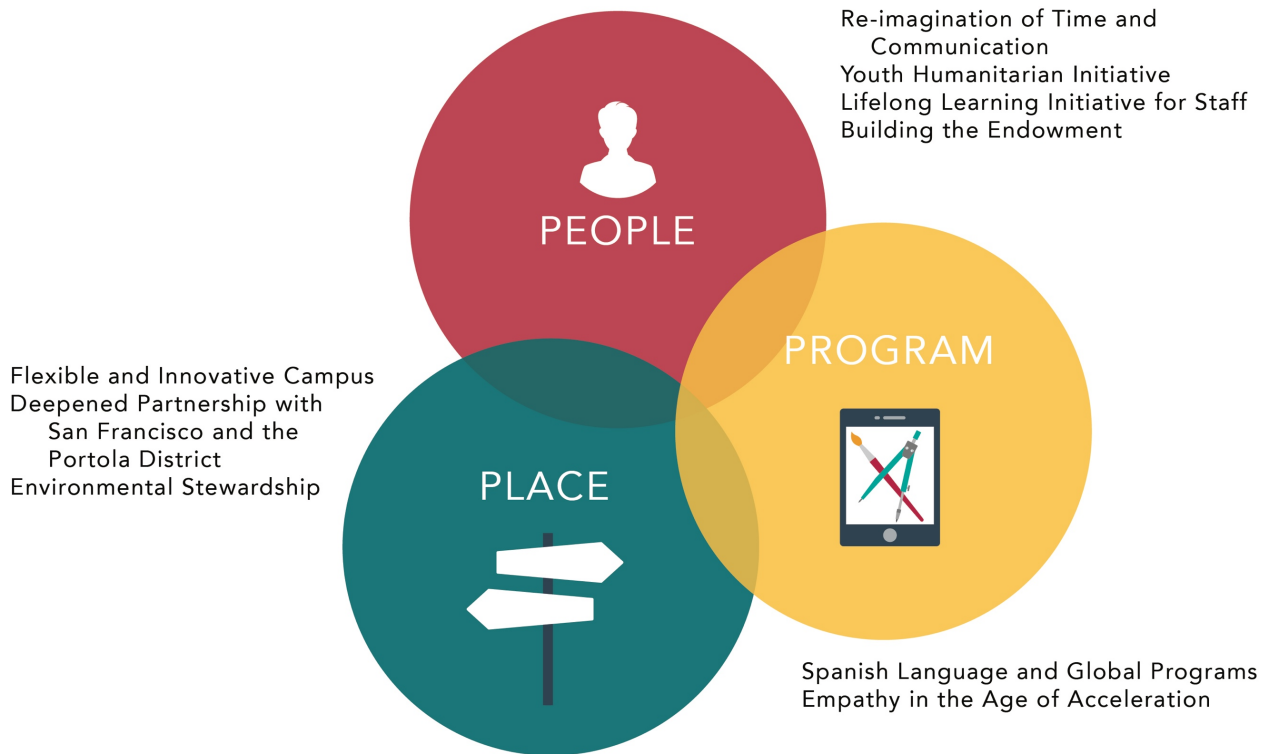
The growth of our endowment will permit competitive salaries and benefits. We will support our staff to find housing in the area, simplifying their commute to work and promoting an improved quality of life. For those who reside in other parts of the city and the Bay Area, commuting will be facilitated through access to public transportation and shuttles.

In further consideration of the various logistical challenges confronting families and staff, we will be innovative with the structure of our academic calendar. This will promote the health and wellness of our community and maximize our resources, both human and institutional.

INITIATIVES

Our strategic priorities are interconnected, created to realize our commitment to humanitarian promise, and therefore they do not exist in separate contexts. The success of our plan recognizes the interdependence of the priorities, and our thoughtful, innovative initiatives reflect this. Rather than addressing each priority separately, we strive to actualize them

simultaneously by creating initiatives that provide a diverse and inclusive community; ensure contemporary teaching and learning; and support living, working, and thriving in the Bay Area.



Program

Spanish Language and Global Programs

Our ongoing commitment to developing global citizens, combined with a strengthened commitment to teaching the Spanish language, will be realized through expanded cross-cultural experiences for both students and staff. Spanish language will be spread across the program and learning will be deepened through shared projects and immersion opportunities. Our decision to intentionally focus on a single language at this time will ensure that our students leave SFS with a level of fluency and comfort with the language as well as an in-depth appreciation of worldwide Hispanic cultures. In addition, building on the current music program intern model, we will continue to host visitors and experts from other countries. We will create global connections not only with the diverse members of our surrounding neighborhoods but also through virtual communication and technology.

Empathy in the Age of Acceleration

The teaching of empathy has long been a hallmark of The San Francisco School. To thrive in the future, students will need technological fluency and the capacity for innovation and collaborative problem solving with deeply human skills. We will provide human-centered,

interdisciplinary, and project-based opportunities in technology, coding, math, engineering, product design, and science. These will be integrated with instruction in the arts, humanities, socio-emotional learning, digital citizenship, social justice, and empathy. As students move through the school, they will have opportunities to engage in projects where they combine age-appropriate technology, ethical decision-making, and human-centered problem solving.

People

Re-imagination of Time and Communication

The San Francisco School will undertake an expansive exploration of how we use time, both the annual calendar and the daily schedule. We seek to benefit the educational program, to meet the needs, demands, and circumstances of our diverse families and the staff, and to promote wellness. We will examine daily class and staff schedules, explore the summer months, assess the needs of our community before school hours and after school ends, and get curious about how time can support greater health and wellness for the community and more joyful teaching and learning. Lastly, in this age of instant and various methods of information exchange and media, we will explore and implement the most effective and efficient ways to communicate with students, parents/guardians, and alumni about our program as well as to receive feedback.

Youth Humanitarian Initiative

As we seek to find ways for our students to truly develop their humanitarian promise, we will develop a Youth Humanitarian Initiative. This effort will develop curriculum, experiences, leadership/mentoring, and real-world opportunities for preschool to grade 8 students that allow them to gain service learning, social justice, and entrepreneurial skills through projects on and off campus. Focusing on diversity, equity, social justice, civic engagement, and global citizenship, the Youth Humanitarian Initiative will serve the SFS students and collaborate with students throughout the Bay Area in order to benefit the broader community.

Lifelong Learning Initiative for Staff

The professional community of the San Francisco School represents the heart and soul of our program. This initiative will ensure the ongoing quality of the curriculum and instruction at SFS and the professional learning of teachers. More specifically, the initiative will also showcase our talented educators and staff members. The initiative will provide professional development in the form of on- and off-site curriculum training, instructional technology, mentorship for both new and experienced staff, feedback and evaluation, space for collaboration, health and wellness programs that support work/life balance, and internal professional learning groups. This initiative will also provide formalized opportunities for our teachers to share their expertise with the staff from other schools through on- and off-site trainings and coaching.

Building the Endowment

We will double our endowment over the next five years in order to deepen our commitment to diversity, inclusion, and cultural competency. This will allow The San Francisco School to be more intentional with its outreach, recruitment, and retention of families and staff. We will reinforce this increased endowment with a schoolwide commitment to philanthropy and fundraising campaigns for specific programs or needs, such as supporting our staff in professional development, competitive salaries, and benefits; adopting programmatic changes or modifying curriculum; and making campus enhancements.

Place

Flexible and Innovative Campus

In order to design more student-centered, individualized learning experiences, we will continue to enhance our campus with learning spaces that support our program. Creating more flexible classroom spaces that can be arranged in many different configurations will enable our students to more easily engage in collaborative projects, move their bodies, and access appropriate technology. Flexible spaces also allow our educators to design the classroom around lesson objectives rather than have a classroom determine the pedagogy or curriculum.

Deepened Partnership with San Francisco and The Portola District

As we consider more real-world learning opportunities for our students, we will expand our concept of “campus” beyond the schoolyard gates. We will utilize the resources available in San Francisco, especially within the Portola. We will engage with the people and places that make the area unique. Our amazing neighborhood, historically known as the Garden District, offers students and teachers an abundance of natural resources, a rich history, and a myriad of adventures. It also provides opportunities for our students to identify challenges and to investigate solutions in our immediate community.

Environmental Stewardship

We will maintain our commitment to environmental stewardship, being conscious of our local ecology and aware of regional, national, and global issues. Our commitment to the environment will inform our decisions on campus enhancement. We will utilize resources efficiently while we reduce our environmental impact and costs, thereby improving the health and wellness of our students and staff. Our environmental and sustainability education will result in further appreciation of our natural surroundings; maximization of energy conservation; reduced water use, waste, and emissions; and stronger recycling and composting efforts. We will be ecologically literate, advocate on behalf of our environment, and be responsible denizens of the earth.

CONCLUSION

We thank the students, families, staff, and trustees of the San Francisco School for their diligence, open minds, and honest voices throughout the strategic planning process. We are grateful to the members of the Strategic Planning Committee for their critical observation, innovative thought, expansive ideation, and vision. Also, we are thankful to our visionary facilitator and partner, Carla Silver from Leadership and Design. Finally, thank you to Jeanie Chang, Strategic Planning Committee Chair. Her reliable, committed, and tireless leadership were instrumental throughout the process. We hope that this strategic plan will guide our school in providing our children with the knowledge, experience, and empathy to be humanitarians in all of their future endeavors.

The SFS Strategic Planning Committee, 2016-2017

Trustees

Jeanie Chang (Chair), 1st Grade Parent
 Ellen Fey, 8th Grade Parent
 Jim Macksood, 4th Grade Parent
 Dee Desmond, Alumni Parent
 Gabe Lucas, Alumnus
 Ruth Chang Hess, 7th and 8th Grade Parent
 Anne Hipskind Roberts, PS 4 and 1st Grade Parent

Faculty

Vahlee Peters, PS/K Head Teacher and Alumni Parent
 Melissa Holman-Kursky, 4th Grade Teacher
 James Harding, Music Teacher
 Eugene Stampley, 7th and 8th Grade Science Teacher

Administration

Jeanette Moore, Director, Finance & Operations and 7th Grade Parent
 Chris Mader, Head of Middle School
 Stewart Dorsey, Director of Admissions
 Jenn Keese-Powell, Director of Advancement and 6th Grade Parent
 Steve Morris, Head of School and PS 4, 4th, and 6th Grade Parent

Parents

Samantha Campbell Scheben, PS 4 and 3rd Grade Parent
 Sunil Chandra, K and 3rd Grade Parent
 Kim Oakes, 1st and 3rd Grade Parent