

THE GAVEN STREET

SPRING/SUMMER 2020

GAZETTE

THE SAN FRANCISCO SCHOOL MAGAZINE





The San Francisco School

cultivates and celebrates the intellectual, imaginative, and humanitarian promise of each student in a community that practices mutual respect, embraces diversity, and inspires a passion for learning.



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Accreditation and Membership

The San Francisco School is accredited by the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) and is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).

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ON THE COVER: Abby '29 and Christian '28 at play

INSIDE COVER: Middle School PE Class



LETTER FROM STEVE

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us....”

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

As a former English teacher in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, these words of Charles Dickens are on my mind. A few months ago, it would have been inconceivable to me that, in the middle of an academic year, our beloved Gaven Street campus would be closed, and we would create a whole different school.

It was the best of times at The San Francisco School. Faculty and students were happy and thriving. Plans for the Preschool/Kindergarten Reimagine and the Schedule Redesign were progressing. Parents and guardians were enjoying family education, service learning, and social opportunities. Laura Burges and Maggie Weis were making their final impact on the community, while a film crew was documenting Doug Goodkin’s final year. The capital campaign quietly gained momentum.

It was the season of darkness. As February drew to a close, we prepared for the arrival of the coronavirus epidemic in the Bay Area. Our staff developed a distance learning plan and we formed the Emergency Preparedness Team, partnering with parents who are medical professionals in infectious disease and public health. Two weeks later, we filled *School on the Go* (SOTG) bags with materials, sent all students in 2nd-8th grade home with iPads, trained faculty and students in software and platforms.... and then we stayed home.

It was the spring of hope. Of course, the shift from our brick and mortar campus to distance learning has faced many challenges, but most have been met with innovation, compassion, and strength. SOTG was well received—parents and guardians partnered admirably with our staff. Other aspects of life at SFS were preserved. The Auction for Indexed Tuition moved online and was a fundraising success. More community members came together in the virtual All School Meeting “Town Halls” than at any previous spring All School Meeting. The School reached out to families to offer support through economic hardship.

When school reopens, in many ways, it will be different from the SFS we have known. But the creativity and innovation we have demonstrated over the past few months will carry forward. Even when the pandemic is over, the school won’t completely revert to its pre-COVID state. Instead, SFS will incorporate what’s been learned to be a stronger, more forward thinking school in the future.

Now that the school year has ended, there is barely time to take a breath. As the *Gazette* goes to press, we are solidifying summer programming and the 2020 - 2021 academic year, whether it be on campus, online, or a combination of both. I am beginning my term as the President of the Board of the California Association of Independent Schools, an important opportunity to be on the front lines of California schools. We are still writing the *Tale of Two Schools*, and whether we’re together on Gaven Street or in cyberspace, we will remain true to our mission, values, and educational philosophy.

STEVE MORRIS
Head of School

STRATEGIC PLAN: INITIATIVES IN ACTION

During the past academic year, as the fall semester finished and the spring semester began, The San Francisco School quietly observed a significant milestone as The School crossed the midpoint of its Strategic Plan 2017–2022: *Living Our Humanitarian Promise* (<http://sfschool.org/our-story/strategic-plan>). The product of an extensive self-study and the recommendations from the CAIS accreditation committee, the five-year plan has been the compass for SFS's people, place, and program, guiding the School's navigation of the sometimes unpredictable educational terrain.

No one could have predicted a pandemic would occur in the middle of implementing the plan. COVID-19 has interrupted the fulfillment of some of the strategic initiatives, but it has accelerated others and provided the opportunity to reflect on how well the Strategic Plan prepared the School to weather such an extreme and unexpected event. Three initiatives in particular have gained new significance in the face of the coronavirus outbreak.

PROGRAM:

Empathy in the Age of Acceleration

In prioritizing the *Empathy in the Age of Acceleration* initiative for the past three years, SFS expanded its STEAM curriculum significantly, strengthening the math curriculum, introducing age-appropriate technology in the classroom, and integrating of the STEAM disciplines. Creating the role of Director of *Design, Engineering, and Technology* was critical to ensuring learners of all ages have the opportunity to engage in interdisciplinary lessons in science, engineering, and technology. The School invested in software and hardware, and a generous donation made optimal internet service and security possible. In the Workshop, an art, design, and build space, curious minds have been collaboratively synthesizing technology and humanities in human-centered, empathic ways. The faculty, integrating the arts and humanities with math and science, have taught the students they can develop and use technology as a tool for social good. The proficiency of the students and staff in the use of technology facilitated the transition to *SOTG* significantly.

PEOPLE: Lifelong Learning for Staff

The faculty, the heart and soul of SFS's program, has demonstrated tremendous talent, strength, and endurance over the past year, and particularly these last few months of sheltering in place. For the last few years, the faculty

have been learning to integrate online tools and digital media into their curriculum. As such, they are conducting online school with creativity, calm, and compassion. The staff have taught and mentored each other, providing support, feedback, and collaboration. And they have shown educators around the world how to be creative about online instruction. This evolution in program could not have happened without the concomitant focus on the *Lifelong Learning for Staff* initiative. In order to support the professional community and ensure the excellence of academic instruction, much of the faculty has participated in professional development in instructional technology. For the past three years, the instructional technology firm Knowing Technologies has coached a cohort of faculty members weekly throughout an entire academic year, teaching current skills and supporting the implementation of new techniques. The teachers gained knowledge, confidence, and technological fluency, and in turn, became mentors to their colleagues. Their new skills have been critical to the execution of *SOTG*. Knowing Technologies has also guided SFS in updating and managing tech infrastructure and hardware, ultimately facilitating the transition to online school. Adopting communication and learning management systems like ParentSquare, Seesaw, and Schoology has made exchange of information much more efficient and effective prior to and during *SOTG*.

PEOPLE: Building the Endowment

This initiative called for doubling the endowment within the term of the five-year strategic plan in order to deepen the School's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and cultural competency. This bold intention led to the development of *Forge Our Future: The Campaign for SFS* which aims to secure the philanthropic support needed not only to grow the endowment, but also to deepen the STEAM program. The campaign has been quietly and steadily progressing over the last year, during which time all currently endowed funds were moved into socially responsible investments. With plans to share the campaign priorities more broadly with the community, the pandemic hit. The priorities of the campaign have proven extremely relevant in the current situation. The generosity and vision of early donors have supported the School in pivoting so successfully to *SOTG* and standing by its commitment to SFS families and staff as they confront the challenges presented by COVID-19. For now, the School is focused on the success of *SOTG*, supporting the community, and the health and safety of the staff and students. We look forward to sharing more about this transformational campaign in the coming months.



SCHOOL ON THE GO

“Our kid has been able to rise to the challenge... because of all the work SFS did to lay the foundation.”

Elizabeth Steinfield, Parent

In rapid succession, San Francisco independent and public schools decided to close their campuses, Mayor Breed announced the shelter in place order by the six county health officials, and SFS’s *School on the Go (SOTG)* commenced.

Students left school on March 13 with *SOTG* bags filled with books, notebooks, assignments, art supplies, and science project materials; recorders and ukuleles; and freshly baked pies in celebration of Pi Day and Circle Up: the Auction for Indexed Tuition. Days later, students and faculty gathered online for Phase 1, SFS’s initial iteration of distance learning. Students were provided with suggested schedules and the materials needed to complete their lessons. Asynchronous programming was created as equitably and inclusively as possible to ensure access for all students. There were expected struggles with the challenges and limitations of technology, family realities, and space.

It was a major effort, and the program evolved over the next two months. But according to our educational technology consultants Knowing Technologies, SFS delivered a quality program that was significantly ahead of our peers. Students completed their take home assignments, watched daily lessons pre-recorded by their teachers, performed science experiments in their kitchens, and uploaded videos to share with their teachers and classmates. Extended Day’s AfterSOTG provided enrichment opportunities and spring break diversions.

Upon returning from spring break, Phase 2 marked a bigger emphasis on synchronous (live) learning. Students (and faculty) missed interacting with each other, so their schedules were structured with live sessions from advisory, morning meetings, and book clubs to math lessons, art class, singing time, and much more. The duress of being separated was diminished in reuniting in real time. Moreover, trustees met online, parents/guardians gathered for eCommunity Cafes and Town Halls, and families competed in Trivia Nights by Google Meet.

As this unusual semester comes to a close, the School will continue to observe many of its traditions. Though there can be no hug line, the SFS community will not be deterred from celebrating the end of the year with mud pies, gongs, and a graduation ceremony. The School will commemorate the achievements of its students (especially our eighth graders!), honor the staff who have made it possible, and appreciate the SFS community.

MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES

Each spring, we honor our faculty and staff who are celebrating milestone anniversaries at the school. We appreciate the wealth of experience, history, and wisdom that they bring to The San Francisco School. Congratulations!



Left-Right: 35 - Erika Lietdke, 6th Grade Humanities | 30 - Dolores Elkin, North Class PS/K Teacher | 15 - Melissa Doezema, 6th Grade Math & Science | 10 - Talia Goodkin '98, 5th Grade Head Teacher | 10 - Molly Treadway '99, 1st Grade Head Teacher



Left-Right: 5 - Jenn Keese-Powell, Director of Advancement | 5 - CJ Logel, 2nd Grade Head Teacher | 5 - Araceli Quezada, 7th Grade Humanities Teacher | 5 - Afandie Winter, Technology Support Specialist | 5 - Jiazhen Zhang, Middle School Math Coordinator

RETIREMENTS

After decades of building community, educating generations, and creating traditions, Maggie Weis (Head of Lower School), Laura Burges (3rd Grade Teacher), and Doug Goodkin (Music Teacher) are retiring. These beloved three have made monumental contributions to the School and the lives of countless others.

Though their final months should have been filled with overnight trips, spring musicals, and schoolwide celebrations, coronavirus unexpectedly made this last semester very different. Dedicated to lifelong learning, these veteran educators challenged themselves to make their final semester one of mastering new skills and making a lasting impact on SFS students and the School's future.

Laura, Maggie, and Doug reflect on their time at The San Francisco School and their final months. Please see their full essays at www.sfschool.org/retirements.



RETIREMENTS (CONTINUED)



“Like SFS students who are inherently curious and want to learn, I was allowed to question, face challenges, seek solutions and evolve.”

MAGGIE WEIS, HEAD OF LOWER SCHOOL

Maggie began her career at SFS as a Physical Education Teacher in 1989. She has also served as Athletic Director, Extended Day Director, Student Council Advisor, Middle School Algebra teacher, and Service Learning Coordinator. She is an avid birdwatcher and is a longstanding, active member of the Portola Neighborhood Association.

Excerpt from her “Origin Story,” reflecting on her last twenty years at SFS (presented at the Fall All School Meeting, October 2, 2019)

2000s

SFS is all about “What if?” What if we create a second class per grade in middle school, and build the Edeli Building to support that? What if we need a second art room? What if we build a Community Center? What if we have a Strategic Plan initiative titled Empathy in the Age of Acceleration? Time ReDesign? Preschool Reimagine?

As I look toward this being my last year, folks indicate this will be your last of everything here. Last Opening Ceremony, last 8th Grade class, etc. Time is rapidly accelerating as we head through this, my last year, at SFS.

However, I wish to see it differently. What if I see each event as my first?

What if it is left to move me anew or spark questions around the new challenges vs an embrace of the past?

What if it inspires me to question anew what we do and why, and we tweak something here or there? What if we converse about and tweak our philosophy and practice? People will flock to it. Where we eat lunch as a faculty is fabulous! The Carnival was fabulous! Change is fabulous.

SFS is like a family in a home. You all pull together in good times and bad, solve challenges together, face change and eventually, you each grow and you do move along. SFS has been a home, I have gotten to grow up here and soon I get to play with a whole new round of “What if?”



LAURA BURGES, 3RD GRADE TEACHER

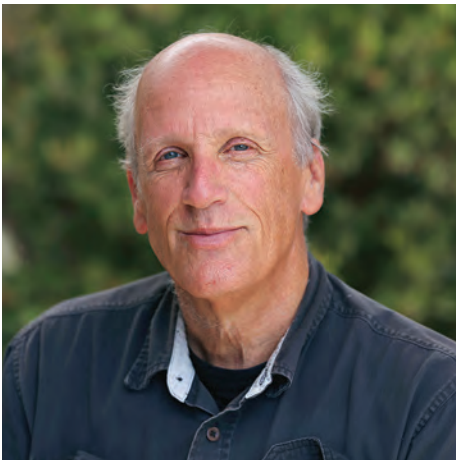
Laura began her teaching career in a one-room schoolhouse in the Los Padres Wilderness. She joined The San Francisco School in 1997 as a drama specialist. She has also taught 4th and 5th grade, but she has been the 3rd Grade Teacher for most of her time at SFS. Outside of school, Laura is a Buddhist teacher and lecturer.

My goal during those weeks of School on the Go was to offer the students real projects to do in a three-dimensional world, with the help of technology. We quickly moved to having a “live” Morning Meeting online every school day at 8:30 am which provided us with a sense of normalcy, since it was close to what we do in class every day. Ringing the mindfulness bell, singing together and reciting poetry, sharing jokes and stories, the buoyancy of the Third Graders lifted my spirits each morning. It became very important to me to see those shining faces every day before sending them off to do their work independently and with the support of their heroic parents!

“During my 33 years at The San Francisco School, we’ve been through a number of major and minor disasters. But the COVID-19 shut down takes the cake!”

Normally, the last weeks of school in Third Grade are the time when we would be reading and discussing *Charlotte’s Web*, when we would be studying trees and learning about seeds and leaves and George Washington Carver, when we would be learning tree songs and tree poetry. We would be writing personal narratives and poetry and reports. Each student would be choosing a topic to teach to the rest of the class during their “Teaching Lessons.” And all of those things were accomplished by the resilient, curious, motivated, and delightful Third Grade class of 2025.

While I could never have imagined finishing my time at The San Francisco School in front of my trusty computer, rather than in the company of my beloved Third Graders, we have truly made the best of things. We never really know what we are capable of until life presents us with difficulties and challenges. When we find we can wholeheartedly meet those challenges with strength and humor, we are the better for it. And for that, I am truly grateful.



DOUG GOODKIN, MUSIC TEACHER

Doug arrived at SFS in 1975, when his love of music and teaching came together in a community sharing his values. He has taught in 44 countries, authored numerous publications, and led his jazz band Doug Goodkin & the Pentatonics. He is the father of two SFS alumnae, Kerala (Goodkin) Taylor '94 and Talia Goodkin '98. Both his wife Karen and Talia have also been SFS faculty members.

I quickly discovered that there are two sides to online learning. One is simply learning the mechanics of it. However the real challenge is to figure out how to communicate the essence of what you want kids to know given the limitations of the technology. Sometimes it’s a bit like playing piano with thick gloves on—or worse yet, manipulating some mechanical hand to play the piano. But some things work as well and a few even better. “The right tool for the right job for the right reason at the right time for the right amount of time” has always been my technological motto and never so much as today. And in my other life as an Orff Schulwerk teacher giving workshops to people around the world, I’m now experiencing this stunning new possibility of inviting all those people I’ve met into my home for an online workshop with 350 people from every continent. What it lacks in depth it gains in breadth and sharing pedagogical ideas and demonstrating musical understanding is just fine online, with a little bit of ping-pong in the chat comments and some hilarious participation with everyone dancing and singing in their homes viewable on little gridded squares.

In short, learning what to click is a good intellectual exercise, but learning how to transmit the essence of what you want to share given the limitations of any media is an aerobic workout of the imagination. That has been one beneficent take-away of this challenging time.

But I think that the most important lesson is to return to real, live teaching with a renewed sense of the precious gift of turning off the screens and returning to the world of touch and movement and singing together and hugs and the ping-pong of things thrown back and forth.

On a personal note: Whoever could have imagined my life at school ending like this? I imagined the final gongs announcing the real end of my glorious life at this most remarkable school, savoring each vibration as it faded into silence, gathering all those years of fellow teachers and students. All of it brought down by a tiny bug. But hey, maybe I’ll pop in next year.

“Just when I thought I could sneak out the door without having to master the kind of mediated learning that I have felt is often an obstacle to the real deal, it suddenly became the only show in town. No choice but to turn on the screens and figure out what’s possible.”

COMMUNITY NEWS

Alumni

Kevin Cunningham '89 is married, living in San Francisco, has a two-year old son, and practices family law. **Thea Anderson '90** (P '14 and '26) served on the SFS Ad Hoc Committee on Affordability and Accessibility and has been elected to the SFS Board of Trustees for school year 2020-21. **Mina Zargham '03** has been on the SFS Board as an Alum Trustee since 2016. During her tenure, she has served on the Advancement Committee and was also a member of the STEAM Task Force. She currently lives in San Francisco and works on the Product Operations team at Twitter. **Jalen Allen '08** completed his master's degree and graduated from the Bay Area Teacher Training Institute program. For the past two years, he has been the 2nd and 3rd Grade Teaching Assistant at SFS, and starting in August, he will be the 2nd Grade Co-Head Teacher and Lower School STEAM teacher. **Jaquez Jordan '07, Brendan Dunlap '11, and Alex Ahrens '11** were all part of the SFS Extended Day staff this year. **Enrique Perez '10** works for Innovative Public Schools, assisting low-income students and students of color in their educational journeys. **Ta'Jae Brown '12** pursued a degree in psychology at Howard University. While there, she interned at the D.C. Superior Court Child Guidance Clinic, and is interested in a career in clinical psychology or social work. **Sophia Yin '13** just finished her junior

year at Brown University, studying biochemistry on a pre-med track. At Brown, she loves teaching and hosting game nights. **Niah Pardue-Bishop '16** graduated from the Sterne School in June as class valedictorian. Three of our Class of 2016 alumni will be collegiate athletes as freshman next year, **Fritz Baldauf '16** will be sailing at Connecticut College, **Bryce Monroe '16** playing basketball at Sam Houston State University, and **Jada Northover '16** playing basketball at Macalester College.



Kevin Cunningham '89 has had a dream for many years of planning a Calaveras Big Trees reunion camping trip. He's trying to gauge interest in the alumni community. If this is of interest to you, please send us an email at alumni@sfschool.org or look for the survey on our Facebook or Instagram pages

Alumni Parents

Ellen Schneider (Parent of Neil Kirchberger '11) organized a mini-reunion on Zoom for the parents of the Class of 2011. **Elena Fuentes-Afflick, MD, MPH** (Parent of Tomás '07 and Andrés '05), UCSF pediatrician and epidemiologist, was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

for her research in issues of acculturation, immigrant health, and health disparities. SF Health Officer **Tomas Aragon, MD**, (Parent of Tomas '11, Luis '12, and Angela '15) has been leading the City & County of San Francisco through the complicated management of the COVID-19 epidemic.

Remembrances

Mark Katz, father of **Madeleine Katz '01 and Lili Katz '02** passed away in April from complications from cancer. He is survived by his wife Paula Tevis, daughters, son-in-law, and granddaughter Audrey.

Do you have news to share?

We are always interested in hearing from our SFS alumni. Let us know what's new these days!

Visit www.sfschool.org/alumni/update

ALUMNI PROFILES



ALEX AHRENS '11 AND BRENDAN DUNLAP '11

Alex Ahrens '11 and Brendan Dunlap '11 were reunited on campus this past school year as SFS has been incredibly fortunate to welcome them both back as instructors in the afterschool Extended Day program.

While at SFS, Alex developed an appreciation for multiculturalism, a strong connection to the natural world, and passion for intersectional social justice movements. "If I try to trace the source of these, the educational opportunities I credit would be the world music department, the garden space, and Laura Burges' great variety of activities. I still remember Shel Silverstein poems, Rachel Carson rhymes, and the 'Estuary, salty and fresh' song." This incorporation of music and rhymes into learning taught Alex the importance of leading an interdisciplinary life where art, science, and community are interconnected and codependent.

Upon graduating from college, Alex searched for a place with a strong sense of community. She wanted to be part of something that was working toward bettering the world. "I feel that Extended Day is a place to relax, learn new skills, and sometimes get a little messy. Getting to know the next generation of students at SFS is so exciting. Our relationships with the students are so important." As a nature-loving home cook, Alex has enjoyed baking club afterschool and getting her hands dirty in the Adventure Playground with natural art, and she provides support and friendship for young people.

She was enthusiastic about reuniting with her classmate Brendan Dunlap '11, who remarked, "If I could go back as a student, I would! It wasn't until I left SFS that I could really appreciate what a magical place it is." Brendan had returned to San Francisco last year after graduating from Whitman College with a Film and Media Studies degree and "a hefty portion of uncertainty" about what to do next. His mother Vivian Walz, SFS Front Desk Coordinator, mentioned the school was looking for substitute teachers, and he jumped at the chance to be part of the community he loved so much; soon afterward, he became part of the Extended Day crew. In addition to leading the Rainbow Alliance and YouTube afterschool clubs, he participated as an SFS alumnus at a conference on implicit bias in Independent Schools and presented to the Board of Trustees his experience at the workshop as an SFS student. "It has been so great working with fellow SFS alumni, who can share in my delight at having experienced the school both from the students and now the staff perspective."

Once coronavirus struck, the Extended Day team (including Keianna Colon, Jacob McDaniel, and Jaquez Jordan '07) created enrichment opportunities for students from preschool to 8th grade online. From recording videos and hosting storybook readings to organizing schoolwide talent shows, the team has provided creative and interesting extracurricular activities. "I am so grateful for the faculty and staff for how they've handled the switch to School on the Go, ensuring that the beautiful spirit of SFS lives on as we have ventured into uncharted virtual territory," muses Brendan.

"Education changes as the world changes, and the fact that we are all learning new social and technological skills through remote learning is an example of continuing social transformation," Alex remarks. "The culture of collectivism at SFS made us feel strong as a community and hopeful that we would recover from this crisis."

“Practicing positivity, patience, and hope — all things I can trace back to the warm SFS community—and trusting in the resiliency of my coworkers, in the school administration, and in the depth of my relationships with some of the people I met at SFS back in the day has helped me to feel less alone during the pandemic.”

Alex Ahrens '11






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