

SAN FRANCISCO WALDORF GRADE SCHOOL



THE EARLY GRADES (1-5): *Engagement and Exploration*

The day begins with a teacher's handshake and a warm greeting. Friends connect, classrooms settle, and singing fills the air.

Welcome to San Francisco Waldorf Grade School.

Engaged Students: The grade school curriculum is designed to engage students at each stage of their development, from the playful and imaginative seven-year-old to the capable and inquisitive eleven-year-old. In the early grades, literacy and numeracy are introduced creatively through stories, poetry, and movement. Fables and folk tales captivate young imaginations and impart universal stories of humankind. The curriculum increasingly challenges older students' emerging intellectual capabilities, encouraging deep exploration into the worlds of mathematics, sciences, and languages. History and language arts are explored through mythology, ancient civilizations, and the great works of literature. Across the grades, movement, the arts, and the outdoors are integrated into the curriculum, an innovative approach facilitates understanding and engagement.

Exceptional Teachers: Fundamental to Waldorf education is the Class Teacher, an educator who stays with students through the grades. San Francisco Waldorf School teachers are highly trained in child development and curriculum studies, and committed to helping students reach their individual potential. The approach increases instructional time, provides continuity, and instills confidence in students. In addition to the Class Teacher, specialty teachers provide expert instruction in world languages (both Spanish and Mandarin for all students), outdoor education, eurythmy (movement education), music, games and gym, handwork, and woodwork.

In-Depth Exploration: The two-hour morning Main Lesson is the academic cornerstone of each day. Planned around a block system that lasts from three to six weeks, the Main Lesson provides comprehensive instruction in the areas mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts.

Rather than relying on textbooks, students record their studies in individual portfolios called Main Lesson books. In these books, students write, illustrate, and investigate subject matter, creating their own primary source material. The artistic and academic exercise gives students the opportunity to reflect deeply on subject matter across disciplines.

THE MAIN LESSON CURRICULUM

Language Arts: Comprehension and joy are hallmarks of the Waldorf approach to language arts. Literacy is directly taught in first grade through storytelling and the recitation of eloquent poetry. The alphabet is introduced in an imaginative way. Reading takes off naturally as students make sound-symbol connections by reading their own writing. As literacy emerges, teachers offer phonetic and sight word instruction. Students are immersed in literature and poetry. They develop critical and creative thinking and writing skills, as well as fluency in grammar and spelling.

Mathematics: Numeracy is introduced joyfully in the early grades: a times-table bean bag toss replaces math worksheets; a building project becomes a measurements lesson; and fractions are discovered while cooking. Increasingly complex mathematical concepts engage fourth and fifth graders: factoring, decimals, proofs, metrics, and more. These math lessons lay the foundation for a multi-year study of geometry and algebra during the middle school years.

Form Drawing: The drawing of forms – lines, curves, and shapes – helps students develop a sense of balance, proportion, and symmetry while improving fine motor skills, artistry, and mental picturing. The exercise supports early penmanship and cursive writing and continues through the free-hand geometric forms of fifth grade.

Science: Science at San Francisco Waldorf School is a process of discovery; direct experience and inquiry lead to scientific understanding. The curriculum takes students from early immersion and observation of the natural world through the study of zoology and botany. The approach is designed to cultivate scientific observation and deep understanding.

Social Studies: Children explore the world and its diverse cultures through literature and mythology. Older students learn how human beings started living on earth and explore local and state geography and history.

TRACK CLASSES

World Languages: San Francisco Waldorf School has a unique dual world languages track: Spanish and Mandarin are taught through the grades. Language studies mirror the grade school curriculum topics and integrate cultural studies with festivals and celebrations.

Music: Vocal music and recorder are part of the students' day beginning in first grade. Each child learns a second instrument in the third grade. Fourth grade marks the formation of a class orchestra.

Eurythmy: Eurythmy is an artistic movement education that incorporates music, poetry, and speech. The practice helps students develop spatial orientation and physical coordination.

Painting: Painting instruction begins with early explorations into color, progressing with increasingly complex compositions.

Practical Arts: Handwork is mastered in many forms, from knitting to the design and making of clothing. Woodworking class begins in fifth grade, giving students the opportunity to shape useful objects and work with tools in a safe workshop environment.

Games and Gym: This gives students the opportunity to work and play cooperatively while improving gross motor skills and spatial awareness.

Outdoor Education: Students get outside and explore nature; the Presidio is used for daily excursions. By third grade, an annual overnight, nature-based class trip becomes a much-anticipated part of the year.

