



THE SAN FRANCISCO SCHOOL

Head of Lower School

SUMMARY

Location | San Francisco, CA

Post Date | November 7, 2019

Application Deadline | December 9, 2019 @ 11:59pm PDT

Final Round | January 6 - 10, 2020

Decision Announced | January 31, 2020

Start Date | July 1, 2020

Reports To | Head of School





SUMMARY

Community. Diversity. Inclusion. Creativity. Arts. Humanitarianism. Social justice. Love. Step on to the campus of The San Francisco School, and it's easy to see examples everywhere showing why this school of 280 learners from age three through grade eight is so special. The school, with its adventure playground and large garden, sits in the heart of a vibrant urban neighborhood in San Francisco known as the Portola. For decades, the school has prioritized the arts, brought experiential and outdoor learning to life right on its campus, and helped everyone not only find but express their true identity. At The San Francisco School, students and staff are on a first-name basis with each other, as a way of honoring the equality of each member of this very special village.

After thirty illustrious years, the head of lower school is retiring at the end of this June. Without question the community seeks an early childhood and elementary school educator who will bring the same passion for the school's mission. But as the school continues to live out its core set of values, it is also focused on exciting changes—some underway, some imminent—that are all inspired by a bold five-year strategic plan developed in 2017. To that end, the school is ready to welcome an administrator well versed in faculty professional development, change leadership, and instructional design. The next head of lower school will join a high-functioning leadership team that works in a collaborative manner to support deeply interconnected initiatives. This position reports to the head of school and starts July 1, 2020.

CORE VALUES

At the core of The San Francisco School (SFS) are the values of culture, community, and diversity. From what we teach to how we teach it, we strive to model these values and instill them in our students.

While these values are present in all schools, they do not come without the intentional effort we dedicate to every facet of the SFS experience. Whether it's through opening day ceremonies, assemblies, parent/guardian committee work, or teacher curriculum development, our school aims to embrace each family. We invite every family to participate in cultivating our culture and become an active member of our vibrant school community.



URBAN SCHOOL, VILLAGE ATMOSPHERE

The San Francisco School actively seeks to be a community where all types of people can thrive, and it values the richness of diversity in all its forms. Within this urban school, a vibrant village of learners and educators exists and supports one another. Some highlights of the program, campus, and community include:

- SFS teachers truly know their students. With small classes, an integrated curriculum, and a collaborative culture, SFS teachers are able to provide an optimal academic, creative, and social-emotional experience.
- SFS has ten dedicated specialist teachers in Spanish, Music, Art, and P.E. These classes occur every week in every division.
- The Community Center features a full-size gym/350-seat theater.
- SFS offers Spanish beginning in Preschool and offers multiple proficiency levels beginning in Middle School.
- SFS offers a robust student support team, including learning specialists, a counselor, and an elementary math coordinator.
- SFS leaves its Adventure Playground intentionally wild — preserving a place where children can climb trees, pick flowers, play in the dirt, and build forts.
- Every Thursday during the fall and spring, families walk to form a coordinated Walking School Bus.
- The wonderful chefs in the SFS kitchen cook delicious, healthy meals from scratch for preschool, kindergarten and elementary students.



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.



A BOLD, NEW STRATEGIC PLAN (2017-2022)

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 have resolved 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.

PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES

Building on our strengths and areas for growth, the strategic plan looks closely at and dreams big about the realities of contemporary teaching and learning. It also focuses on community both inside and outside the gates of 300 Gaven Street. 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.

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 sustain a diverse and inclusive community; ensure contemporary teaching and learning; and support living, working, and thriving in the Bay Area.



To support these priorities, we have composed the following three 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.

EQUITY AND JUSTICE

The San Francisco School is committed to modeling and promoting equity, justice, multiculturalism, environmental sustainability, and peace.



1. 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.



2. 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.

3. 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

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.



BACKGROUND AND OPPORTUNITIES

WHAT MAKES THE SAN FRANCISCO SCHOOL SUCH A SPECIAL PLACE

This could not be a more exciting time at The San Francisco School (SFS). In 2016, the school celebrated its 50th anniversary and reaffirmed its roots while starting to look ahead to the next 50 years. One year later a new five-year strategic plan was developed: *Fulfilling Our Humanitarian Promise*, which focuses on people and community, opens doors for innovation and creativity, and acknowledges a responsibility for financial sustainability and growth.

As the school moves through exciting change, it is blessed with a stable yet dynamic leadership team that is collaborative, collegial, and highly motivated. The school is under



the stewardship of a highly respected head of color—in his twelfth year as head, sixteenth year at the school, and twenty-first year as an educator in the Bay Area independent school community. But most importantly, excitement abounds at SFS because of what has *not* changed: the students and staff truly love to come to school each day.

If you talk to staff at SFS, it is easy to realize why so many of them choose to return year after year. At the top of the list is community: SFS feels like a small neighborhood, where down-to-earth families, students, and staff thrive, feel heard, and support each other. Diversity and inclusion are not just obligatory words in a mission statement; they are deeply rooted values manifested in

almost every major program, initiative, or decision at the school. Teachers are seen both as trusted classroom educators, as well as valued strategic partners in the boardroom.

At many schools, STEM programs are turning into STEAM programs. At SFS, the “A”—arts—have been at the foundation since the beginning. Music and performing arts, along with visual arts, are part of the core curriculum at every grade level. While the school has always valued science and math, it recently took its engineering program to the next level by launching a STEAM think tank and hiring a director of design, engineering, and technology. The result is an exciting new strand of curriculum that will build upon decades of teaching the values of creativity, expression, and empathy—exactly the way it should be at a progressive school that has always prioritized experiential learning.



ABOUT THE LOWER SCHOOL TRANSITION

The current head of lower school is retiring this June after thirty years of dedication to SFS. Having arrived in 1989 as a physical education teacher, she served in a variety of administrative and staff roles—including head of lower school since 2007. Truly a people person, she made lasting connections, brought a student-first mindset to every decision, and took on an unofficial ambassador role to the nearby Portola neighborhood.

One value the school seeks to continue with this role is a mission-aligned approach to leadership. Social justice, environmental stewardship, and service learning are fundamental principles that influence not just grade-specific curriculum in the classroom, but also co-curricular programs and even operational planning. The head of lower school has championed cultural celebrations, external partnerships, and interdisciplinary learning at all grade levels. The result is an academic program that prioritizes an array of diverse voices and makes students, families, and staff of all backgrounds feel welcome and heard.

At the same time, every transition—no matter how bittersweet—is an opportunity to plan for the future. The school has grown tremendously over the years while still preserving its core values—and more changes are on the horizon. Both the head of upper school (now in year three) and the director of design, engineering, and technology (now in year one) have brought decades of combined curricular and pedagogical leadership to the school. Together with the head of school, they are seeking a head of lower school to join their highly collaborative and interconnected curriculum and program leadership team as they embark on some complex and exciting opportunities.

Though each academic leader has core areas of responsibility, the team has intentionally defined common areas of responsibility in two areas. The first is the upper elementary grades 4 and 5, which allows for a smoother student transition to middle school. The second is PS-8 curricular planning within each academic discipline, which lays the foundation for a more cohesive all-school student learning experience. With these strategic intersections of administrative oversight, the leadership team has made headway toward developing a better all-school feel to the program—though this exciting work is ongoing.

Meanwhile, the curriculum and program leadership team has been collaborating heavily on two other major initiatives, both of which will be implemented in the 2020-2021 school year. The first is a complete schedule redesign, which will allow for more collaborative meeting time, flexible class windows, and long blocks for interdisciplinary projects. The second is a re-imagining of the preschool program, which currently comprises two large classrooms of mixed student ages. Next year, the school is considering smaller classes with narrower age ranges, including a dedicated kindergarten class. The next head of lower school will play a pivotal role in helping to ensure a smooth transition to the early childhood program and identify the right leadership structure for the preschool.



LOOKING AHEAD

Putting all of this together, the next head of lower school will have an opportunity to not only make a difference but also have a tremendous impact on this thriving progressive village. SFS thus seeks a truly special leader who brings a wide array of skills and experiences, including:

- Classroom and leadership experience in early childhood and/or elementary grades
- Expertise as a teacher trainer, mentor, supporter, and advocate
- Authentic engagement in pedagogical discussions, inspired by insightful observations in the classroom
- A systems mindset ready to partner on projects involving time and space redesign

SFS is looking for an administrator who sees early grades not just as a pathway to upper grades, but also as precious opportunities to engage with young learners in ways that will impact their lives forever. They want a leader who will take action-oriented strategic work seriously *and* have fun within a small, thriving, interconnected village. Ultimately, the school is seeking someone who has experience with major change initiatives in a school, but who understands that establishing meaningful interpersonal relationships are critical for effecting such change. Those relationships will deepen through many different channels—from authentic conversations with young students in the hallways, to thoughtful and frequent classroom observational visits, to both extemporaneous and well-planned discussions with staff about pedagogy and curriculum. The ideal candidate will bring an unbridled enthusiasm for examining existing programs and implementing new systems, but throughout it all a savvy mindset to effect positive change at just the right pace. These are indeed exciting and special times at SFS!



FIVE TENETS OF AN SFS EDUCATION

The San Francisco School believes students learn best when the following tenets are an integral part of their experience:

CURIOSITY

Students are natural explorers. We encourage students to ask meaningful questions and structure experiences for them to arrive at their own moments of discovery.

CHALLENGE

Students take great pleasure in progressing toward mastery. We cultivate learning by designing lessons with varied and increasing complexity.

COLLABORATION

Students grow through working with others. We model and teach teamwork, cooperation, and problem solving across grades and disciplines.

COURAGE

Students are empowered when they face their fears. We urge students to take risks and embrace their mistakes.

COMPASSION

Students are capable of astonishing kindness and empathy. We inspire students to think beyond themselves and believe that their actions make a difference.





KEY STATISTICS

Founded: 1966

Location: 1.6-acre campus in the heart of San Francisco, CA in the culturally and demographically diverse Portola neighborhood

Campus: 52% of the campus dedicated to outdoor space dedicated preschool and kindergarten play yards; Adventure playground featuring slides, fruit trees, and animals; Facilities include state-of-the-art theater and gym, rainwater cistern, and solar panel system

Students: 278 students in grades PK through 8; 57% are students of color; 13% of families identify as LGBTQIA

Admission: Average acceptance rate of 24% over the last three years; 95% retention rate

Faculty and staff: Student-to-faculty ratio of 6:1; 50% of faculty hold advanced degrees; average tenure is 17 years; 32% faculty of color; 48% staff of color; Over \$120,000 spent on professional development annually

Accreditation: California Association of Independent Schools

Relevant Associations: National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS), California Teacher Development Collaborative (CATDC), People of Color in Independent Schools (POCIS), National Business Officers Association (NBOA), California Independent Schools Business Officers Association (Cal-ISBOA), Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE)

Operating budget: \$9,300,000

Financial aid: Over \$1,100,000 awarded to 26% of SFS families

Endowment: Over \$3,500,000

Website: www.sfschool.org



FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

"Since the founding of our school, the lower school has been our bedrock. We are thrilled with the opportunity to bring on board an early childhood and elementary school educational leader who will help us grow the program while never losing sight of its roots." —Steve Morris, Head of School and parent of 2nd, 7th, and alumni '19



HEAD OF LOWER SCHOOL

SPECIFIC DUTIES

Leadership

- Serve as an active and collaborative member of the administrative leadership team.
- Together with the head of school, head of upper school and director of design, engineering and technology, collaborate on areas of strategic importance: the transitional continuity among the three divisions; both the schedule and preschool redesigns slated for 2020; the ongoing evolution of STEAM curriculum; the development of inspiring staff meetings that foster community; and the programmatic maintenance of inclusion, equity, and social justice as central values.
- Serve on or lead committees as assigned.
- Perform other duties as assigned.

Program Management

- Lead the operations of the lower school, which includes preschool and grades K – 4.
- Co-ordinate all-school coherence of curriculum, student life, and special programs.
- Oversee and coordinate the hiring, supervision, and evaluation of staff as assigned.
- Be a visible presence in all relevant areas of the lower school, and in particular know and be recognized by students and their parents and guardians in the lower school.
- Oversee student success in the lower school, working with parents, guardians, students, and staff on issues of academic performance, social and emotional learning, and behavioral accountability.
- Develop effective systems for parent and guardian communication and partnership.
- Represent the lower school to prospective parents and guardians.

Professional Development

- Lead, facilitate, and plan an array of professional development opportunities for staff—from informal classroom observations to all-school in-service events.
- Support a culture of pedagogical reflection and instructional design, and serve as an engaged thought partner to staff as they continue to improve their craft.
- Maintain an active presence in the local, regional, and national communities of independent school education.



SFS IS LOOKING FOR CANDIDATES WHO CAN DEMONSTRATE...

Professional Qualifications:

- Multiple years of experience as a preschool or elementary teacher
- Experience as a school administrator leading trainings and major initiatives related to curriculum, pedagogy, and student experience—preferably at a progressive school offering early childhood, elementary, and middle school education
- Experience designing, implementing, and improving co-curricular programs and events that connect directly to a school’s mission and values
- Immersion in diversity work—both in training and in implementation—and a commitment to fostering culturally competent and inclusive classrooms
- Experience guiding parents and guardians on sensitive student-related matters
- Knowledge of accreditation standards as well as preschool licensing requirements
- Experience with project-based learning and progressive education
- Possession of a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university, which is a minimum requirement, though preferably possession of a graduate degree

Leadership and Personal Qualities:

- Inspirational, pragmatic, diplomatic, and patient leadership that honors the core values of SFS, but also encourages risk-taking aligned with the school’s strategic plan
- Authentic empathy, warmth, and collegiality, and an ability to spread these qualities across an entire staff
- A passion for inspiring programmatic change, balanced with a judicious understanding that successful innovation at a progressive school requires establishing lasting peer-to-peer relationships
- Savvy communication and dynamic presentation skills—both written and oral
- A collaborative, cooperative, and growth-oriented mindset
- Enthusiasm for students and teachers to pursue their passions, talents, and interests, both in and out of the traditional classroom
- A vision that is aligned with the needs of a dynamic and diverse staff
- A love of learning and love of school, and a willingness to support unique and unpredictable learning journeys of both young students and staff



HOW TO APPLY

12M Recruiting is acting on behalf of The San Francisco School to identify exceptional preschool and elementary school leaders to fill this extraordinary opportunity. Please direct any inquiries to:

Gabriel Lucas
Principal, 12M Recruiting
jobs@12MRecruiting.com

APPLICATIONS WILL BE CONSIDERED THROUGH DECEMBER 9, 2019.

Candidates should email the following four separate PDF attachments to jobs@12MRecruiting.com with the subject heading **SFS**:

- Cover letter introducing yourself to The San Francisco School search committee
- CV or résumé
- A list of four references (include each person's name, organization, title, phone number, email, and connection to you—though we will not contact any references without obtaining your permission first)
- Statement of educational philosophy that addresses the following prompt:

How would you lead change at a school with (1) a well-established set of core values; (2) a deep sense of community, identity, and mission; and (3) a bold strategic plan?

