

POSITION STATEMENT

The Cypress School of San Francisco

SAN FRANCISCO, CA



HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH
START DATE: JULY 1, 2026



OVERVIEW

Founded in 2000, Cypress School of San Francisco is an independent, Reggio-inspired preschool grounded in deep respect for children and a belief in the power of inquiry, play, and nature in early learning. Formerly known as Cow Hollow School, it relocated within the Presidio in 2023, a move that brought a significant shift in its physical setting, programmatic scope, and educational vision. Embracing the symbolism of the cypress tree, long featured in the school's visual identity since its move to the Presidio in 2005, the school formally adopted the name Cypress School of San Francisco (CSSF) on December 20, 2024.

The new campus is a one-of-a-kind, purpose-built facility where light-filled indoor spaces flow seamlessly into expansive outdoor areas, creating an environment that is both beautiful and deeply intentional. Surrounded by the Presidio's natural landscapes, children and teachers learn side by side in a setting that encourages exploration, reflection, and connection. At CSSF, nature is not simply a backdrop but an active participant in daily life, an inspiring "third teacher" that shapes

experiences, fosters curiosity, and nurtures joy. This move allowed Cypress to expand to a full-day, full-year program, strengthen its commitment to outdoor learning, and welcome a broader community of families.

As the school has grown, so too has the complexity of its operations, requiring a leader who can honor its progressive roots while guiding the school into its next phase of maturity. Following the departure of its long-tenured Executive Director, the school appointed a seasoned Interim Director for the 2025–2026 school year. With the Interim Director serving in a transitional role for only one year, the school is now ready to welcome a new leader who can bring stability, clarity, and vision to a strong, evolving community full of heart and potential. The next Executive Director will collaborate with teachers, families, and trustees to sustain the school's joyful culture, strengthen its systems, and ensure a thriving future grounded in equity, connection, and, most importantly, the wonder of childhood.

MISSION AND PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION

Cypress's mission is: "To honor and nurture a diverse community of children to reach their potential as learners, participants, stewards, and critical thinkers in society; and to empower those in the presence of children with the knowledge, skills, and resources to raise and teach with respect and dignity."

The school adopts a Reggio-inspired, social constructivist approach, where children build understanding through hands-on, real-life experiences in a responsive and collaborative learning environment. Learning emerges from curiosity, inquiry, and co-construction.

LOCATION & FACILITIES

Cypress is uniquely situated within the Presidio, the largest urban national park in the U.S., located on the northwest side of San Francisco – right by the Golden Gate Bridge. This world-class setting serves not only as a backdrop but as a living classroom. Indoor learning spaces open directly to gardens and forest trails, embodying the belief that "the environment is a third teacher." CSSF students regularly and actively explore the Presidio and other surrounding areas as part of their learning.

The current facility at 387 Moraga Ave opened in 2023, allowing Cypress to expand into full-day, nearly full-year programming, enhance accessibility, and refine its pedagogy. It features indoor-outdoor seamless classrooms and a large community meeting space, called The Meadow, for assemblies and parent-teacher collaboration. Additionally, in the summer of 2025, the school installed a full kitchen and contracted with a third-party food service, ensuring that delicious, healthy snacks and meals will be served daily to students and staff. For more on this incredible school setting, see [here](#).



FAST FACTS

- **Student ages:** 2 to 5
- **Enrollment:** 135
- **Program:** Full-day, full-year (among the most robust preschool schedules in the city)
- **Staff:** High teacher-to-child ratio with lead and support teachers plus specialists
- **Annual Budget:** \$5 million (2025-26)
- **Annual Fund:** \$720,000 raised in 2024-25
- **Debt:** None
- **Lease:** 5-year agreement with a 5-year extension (rent currently controlled)
- **State-of-the-art kitchen:** Nutritious (and delicious) food program providing lunch and snacks for all students and staff
- **Dedicated art studio:** Students participate in weekly art studio sessions with a long-tenured art teacher who is part of the faculty
- **Hands-on fruit and vegetable garden:** 10 raised beds + a dozen barrel containers growing carrots, blueberries, fava beans etc. enable children to connect where food comes from
- **Board size:** 16 voting trustees plus 2 non-voting trustees (Executive Director and Parent Association President)

CURRICULUM AND PROGRAM OVERVIEW

At Cypress School, learning unfolds through play, inquiry, exploration, and meaningful relationships, with each child supported in their natural rhythms and celebrated as part of a collaborative community. Guided by a social constructivist philosophy, the school creates joyful, intentional spaces that honor childhood itself while nurturing curiosity, critical thinking, stewardship, and social responsibility. Children are also treated to specialist classes that enrich daily learning. Whether creating in the school's dedicated art studio, practicing yoga, making music, or joining in soccer led by outside instructors, the school's well-rounded program is built to help students grow into confident, compassionate, and lifelong learners.

Operational Structure

- Full-day, nearly full-year program for children aged 2–5, operating approximately from 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday through Friday.
- Eight age-grouped classrooms, each supported by three to four educators (lead, support, floaters), ensuring low ratios and responsive care.



Enrollment & Group Size

- Class sizes range from 12–14 children for younger cohorts up to 18–22 for older age groups.

Curriculum & Learning Approach

- Learning is grounded in play, inquiry, exploration, and relationship-building.
- Children learn through authentic, real-life experiences in a collaborative environment that fosters critical thinking and lifelong curiosity.

Community, DEIB & Family Engagement

- Cypress nurtures a diverse community of students, staff, and families, with an emphasis on respect, representation, and belonging.
- Parents are deeply involved, visiting and volunteering in classrooms (with clear guidelines in place), supporting school events, and partnering with educators in reciprocal learning.

For more on the school's program and curriculum, see [here](#).



STRENGTHS

Cypress School of San Francisco has many distinctive strengths:

- Child-Centered, Reggio-Inspired program with a historically strong social justice orientation and a commitment to honoring each child's individuality.
- Dedicated faculty and administrative team with a commitment to professionalism and collegiality.
- Rich documentation practices that capture and celebrate student growth and deepen understanding of the learning process.
- Immersive nature-based learning in a world-class national park setting, with indoor-outdoor classrooms that support children's natural rhythms and foster connection to the environment.
- Spacious, beautiful facility with ample outdoor space and The Meadow, a dedicated indoor community hub for collaboration, reflection, and school-wide gatherings.
- Robust Kindergarten guidance with strong outcomes and a respected reputation among San Francisco schools.
- Supportive, tight-knit and engaged parent community that contributes wholeheartedly through time, resources and spirit to enrich daily school life.
- Full-year, full-day schedule with a competitive per-hour tuition rate, making Cypress a leading choice for working families.
- Tuition assistance and economic diversity that expand access and enrich the community.
- Nutritious (and delicious) food program providing lunch and snacks for all students and staff.
- Consistent, transparent School-to-Home communication that fosters trust and connection.

CYPRESS SCHOOL'S OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Cypress stands at a moment of organizational maturing, ready to capitalize on its strengths while embracing thoughtful growth. With a seasoned Interim Executive Director in place and an "all in" administrative team, many of the challenges below are actively being worked on. At the time of this posting, the priorities are:

Staff Continuity & Community Trust

With multiple years of significant leadership and faculty transition, the community seeks a steady, visible presence in their next leader to rebuild continuity and deepen confidence.

Clarifying Roles and Structure

With a recently restructured admin team and generous teacher ratios, the next ED will evaluate sustainable and strategic staffing models.





THE NEXT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Professional Qualifications

- Early childhood leadership experience, ideally, but not required, in a constructivist or Reggio-inspired setting
- Deep knowledge of and a thought leader around child development and emergent curriculum
- Strong administrative, operational and financial acumen
- Familiarity with independent school governance and board partnership
- Knowledge of Bay Area preschool and K-8 admissions landscape
- Proven ability to build, support, and retain strong teams

Personal Attributes

- Warm, approachable, and values-aligned
- A confident, steady presence with the ability to hold boundaries compassionately
- Visionary and pragmatic, balancing big-picture thinking with daily realities
- Collaborative, curious, and a good listener
- Culturally competent and equity-minded
- A humble leader who "walks the walk" in relationship-driven leadership

Compensation:

Salary Range: \$185-220K (based on relevant experience). Cypress School of San Francisco offers a competitive benefits package, including a retirement plan, comprehensive insurance benefits, and support for professional growth.

Attracting, Retaining, and Developing Best-in-Class Educators

Improving professional development, crystallizing lead and support teacher career trajectories, professionalizing staff, and improving teacher tenure are critical near-to-mid-term priorities.

Curricular Consistency

Ensuring consistent program quality and alignment with Cypress's pedagogical philosophy across all classrooms.

Strengthening Systems

As the school has grown in size and complexity, the next ED will build and support clear systems in areas like finance, operations, and staffing.

Financial Strategy & Reserves

Cypress remains financially strong, but now must rebuild its reserves following the move to the renovated campus, while also laying the groundwork for an endowment to ensure long-term sustainability.

Presidio Lease Considerations

The school benefits from a controlled lease but cannot own property, requiring thoughtful long-term planning.

HOW TO APPLY

The Cypress School of San Francisco has retained Resource Group 175 (RG175) to support this search. Interested candidates should contact: Steve Morris steve.morris@rg175.com

To apply, please submit a cover letter, resume, and a statement of educational philosophy focused on early childhood learning via the RG175 website: www.rg175.com/candidate/signup

Applications are due by October 22, 2025, and others that are received before that will receive priority review.