



## HEAD OF SCHOOL

July 1, 2016

**SAN FRANCISCO FRIENDS SCHOOL**  
San Francisco, CA

## HISTORY AND MISSION

San Francisco Friends School was founded in 2001 by a small group of interested parents and community leaders who saw both the opportunity and the need for Quaker education in the Bay Area. Possessed with great optimism, vision and strong financial backing, the group hired Cathy Hunter to lead the school. Cathy quickly recruited a small staff. In the fall of 2002, 34 pioneering families enrolled their 36 children in kindergarten.

A unique convergence of vision, mission, leadership, and values then took root. The school was housed in rented space and grew quickly, a grade at a time. In 2005, with generous financial support from the school's founders, it acquired an historic Levi Strauss & Co. manufacturing building in the Mission District. The school's first capital campaign helped to finance an ambitious transformation of the building from factory to school. Today, the school enrolls 436 students in grades K – 8, and is one of the city's most respected independent schools.

The school's mission and philosophy reflect the Quaker values that motivated its founding:

*San Francisco Friends School is dedicated to educating, inspiring, and nurturing girls and boys in the Quaker school tradition.*

- *The daily life of our school is rooted in the Quaker values of simplicity, integrity, mutual respect, peaceful problem solving, and service to others.*
  - *We strive to develop in each child intellectual curiosity and passion for learning. We challenge students with academic rigor, while honoring individual strengths and abilities.*
  - *We seek to create a community that embraces children and families of all backgrounds, recognizing that diversity is essential to the vitality of our school.*
  - *We engage with the larger world around us, working toward the Quaker ideal of a caring and just society.*
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## LOCATION AND FACILITY

San Francisco Friends is located in the Mission District, which, like much of the city, has undergone dramatic changes in the last decade. Spurred by the technology boom, the Mission District, home to many Latino and working class families, has “gentrified,” and the area around the school has seen a proliferation of more upscale stores, restaurants and housing. SFFS is keenly aware of these changes and of the history and character of the Mission.

Demonstrating its commitment to the Quaker testimonies of “Community” and “Stewardship,” the school works hard to maintain deep connections to its immediate neighborhood in ways that honor the families and institutions that have long been part of the surrounding area. The school employs a full-time Director of Community Engagement who has developed relationships with neighborhood organizations, services, and schools. SFFS supports low-income neighborhood students with full scholarships through its Friends Community Scholars program and has established a Horizons Summer Program for low-income neighborhood children.



The SFFS building is exceptional – a beautiful and functional space. Retaining the building’s 1906 character with the original maple floors and meetinghouse benches made from the factory beams, the school’s architects created a bright, open, and transparent space, with glass, light, and wood everywhere. Classrooms cluster around open space in hallways, and offices are bright and airy. The Quaker Meeting Room, at the school’s spiritual and physical center, holds large gatherings, including monthly Community Meeting for Worship. (Weekly Meeting for Worship is held in the classrooms). The two-story library, large gymnasium, black-box theatre, and outdoor play space all were designed at an appropriate scale for the age group and mission of the school. The administrative offices are dispersed throughout the building to foster collaboration at all levels.

## SCHOOL AT A GLANCE

Founded:	2002
Enrollment:	437 in grades K – 8
Annual Budget:	11 Million
Annual giving:	750K
Accreditation:	CAIS
Membership:	NAIS, CAIS, FCE

## QUAKER LIFE

SFFS's deep commitment to Quaker values and practices sets the school apart from its local peer schools. Quaker testimonies, known as the SPICES (Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, Stewardship), are the guiding principles for all aspects of the school. These values, so deeply woven into daily life at SFFS, seem especially well aligned with the character and history of San Francisco. Diversity is also a core value and a subject of continuing investigation and effort. Individual voices and the collective inquiry that takes place in every classroom and among the faculty both enjoy deep respect. The school's Service Learning program begins with the youngest students and develops into a key element of the Middle School experience.

San Francisco Friends is not under the care of a Quaker meeting, but maintains a good relationship with the San Francisco Monthly Meeting. The school's active Quaker Life Committee is composed of trustees, staff, parents and Monthly Meeting members. Outgoing head Cathy Hunter is a birthright Quaker. Under her guidance, the school has developed several pathways for faculty to

become knowledgeable Friends educators. Professional development has empowered many faculty members to deepen their experience in Quaker teaching and process, and to create curriculum and programs specific to Friends education. Some current trustees are Quaker; others are Friends school graduates or otherwise experienced in Quaker schools. While there are very few Meeting members with children in the school or faculty members who are practicing Friends, the influence of Quaker values is felt by all.

## THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

SFFS students are lively, confident, and engaged. The school fosters close relationships with adults and honors each student's "Inner Light," and the students are intellectually curious and reflective. The low student-to-teacher ratio and intimate classrooms foster the development of strong verbal skills; SFFS students are articulate and eagerly participate in class. Students are respectful of their teachers, with whom they are on a first-name basis, kind to their classmates, and welcoming to newcomers and guests.



The Board has made access and affordability a budget priority. At present, 26% of the students receive adjusted tuition, representing nearly 20% of the school's budget. The school established "Friends Community Scholars," a merit-based scholarship program for high-achieving, low-income, middle school students from the local neighborhoods. In addition, the school places high value on enrolling students of varied backgrounds. Currently, 47% are students of color, and a number of families bring a range of diversities to the school.

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The students who graduate from SFFS attend a variety of local and boarding high schools. These include Lick-Wilmerding, University High School, Urban School, Lowell High, International High, Bay School, Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory and more. This June, SFFS's original kindergarten class will graduate from high school.

A collegial and collaborative faculty and staff are central to the school's success. These 81 talented individuals share a strong work ethic and sincere commitment to the mission. With the support of the administration, they have developed a challenging academic program within the framework of progressive education. The teaching team is notable for its collaboration, its diversity, its openness to new ideas, and its respect for individuality. They have created a curriculum that is "narrow and deep," giving students the time and space for growth and reflection.

The primary grades have a head teacher and a teaching assistant in each classroom; the middle school is departmentalized. The community's high degree of respect and support for faculty has kept turnover low and their job satisfaction high.

Led by a highly effective and universally admired head of school, the school is very ably administered. The academic

dean and two capable division heads are respected by their faculties and parents alike. The administration includes directors of admissions, communications, community engagement, development, extended day, finance, and technology.

Given the strength of the people, program, and mission, it is not surprising that the school is in high demand. Admissions and tuition assistance decisions are undertaken with great care and sensitivity to the school's mission.

Parents choose SFFS for its Friends identity and for the strength of its academic program. All agree that this is a school that "walks the talk." They trust the school, admire its leadership, and have high praise for the faculty and staff. One barometer of parents' satisfaction is the consistent record of 100% parent participation in the Annual Fund, which in the egalitarian nature of the school, reports all gifts as anonymous.

SFFS benefits from having a high functioning board of twenty trustees, including two of the founding members. Steady and appropriate, this effective board is well led, strategic and mission driven. The board's commitment to the values and mission of the school are evident in their open processes and their understanding of their role and responsibilities.





## PROGRAM

The school's program is child-centered, with a focus on the individual, harnessing the students' natural curiosity, discovery, and joy of learning. SFFS children are remarkably engaged, demonstrating motivation and independence from their earliest years at the school. Tenacity and self-reliance are emphasized throughout the program, with students often revisiting work to edit, polish, and rethink. Risk-taking is encouraged and "failing forward" is a sign that learning is taking place. There are no grades given at any level in the school; students receive detailed feedback on their work and progress. Teachers place equal emphasis on academics and social and emotional learning. Students and faculty form close relationships, making SFFS a school where everyone knows your name.

The school has created strong programs in language and math. As in many Friends schools, social studies and history are vehicles for learning about diversity, culture, justice, and equity. The Humanities approach used in the Middle School integrates language and social studies. Spanish is the only foreign language offered. With the aid of the Spanish-speaking faculty and staff, it is integrated in the program. Science is hands-on and laboratory based. The school has just begun to work on a Maker's Lab.

Thanks to SFFS's outstanding and very visible Arts program, two and three-dimensional student work adorns the walls and the halls ring with instrumental and vocal music. Children of all ages engage in a well-developed drama program.

Athletics and physical education are appropriate for the age level, and the large gymnasium and outdoor play space offer recreational opportunities in an urban setting. The school lives its values in athletics—everyone plays and teams are formed with an eye toward a balance of skills and desire. Though some may wish for a more stratified approach, the school has very high rates of participation, fields more teams than any other in its league, and competes successfully because of the tenacity of its students and their willingness to be coached.

Integrated in the program are service learning and outdoor education. Of particular note is the 7th grade trip to Nicaragua, where the entire class is engaged in service, and the 8<sup>th</sup> grade's weeklong backpacking trip in the Sierras, concluding with a week studying farming and migrant communities in the Central Valley.

For more detailed information about the program, please visit the school's website: [www.sffriendsschool.org](http://www.sffriendsschool.org).

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

San Francisco Friends faces many of the dilemmas common to schools, but other challenges are very much absent. It is notable that the demand for places at the school is high, with upwards of a 5:1 ratio of applicants to admits in its kindergarten and a 70% yield on those admitted students. In short, SFFS is a “hot school” in San Francisco. However, as is ever the case with schools, some dilemmas remain.

### Finance and Development

While SFFS is in excellent financial shape with a strong balance sheet, the school is carrying debt from the build-out of the facility. A very generous financial aid program that accounts for nearly 20% of expenses is absolutely essential to SFFS values, and the school is continually examining ways in which to maintain access and affordability. These factors increase the need for non-tuition revenue and, in all likelihood, the creation of an endowment.

### A City in Transition

Much has appeared in the media lately about the gentrification of San Francisco. SFFS has experienced some of the “barbell effect” of enrolling those who can pay full tuition and those who require full scholarships, with fewer families in the middle. The school’s Quaker values guide its work to stay connected to the community, to offer access to families across the socioeconomic spectrum, and to avoid becoming a school for the elite. As in other schools, this is an ongoing challenge, and the next Head of School will have to steer SFFS through these issues.

### Quaker Concerns

As in any Friends School, Quaker values require active stewardship. The Friends Council on Education has created three pathways to membership, and SFFS falls into the third of those pathways: Membership Renewal Process. The school conducts regular self-study to assess and affirm its Quaker identity. The Head of School, faculty and staff are dedicated to nurturing the Quaker dimension of the school, and to helping all constituencies and new families learn what it means to participate in Friends education and make decisions by Quaker process. Key roles in this work are played by the Head of School, faculty, and the Board Committee on Quaker Life. Continued attention must be paid to maintaining and even deepening Quaker identity, and to continuing to build strong relationships with San Francisco Monthly Meeting and peer Friends schools.



## THE CANDIDATE

The next Head of San Francisco Friends School will follow a highly successful Founding Head, and will lead a school in transition from its pioneer founding years to maturity as a well-regarded, selective school in a city itself undergoing significant change. The foundation for this work is extremely strong. The next Head will need to attract and retain excellent faculty and staff, grapple with issues of affordability and access, articulate a vision for the next phase of the school's growth, and continue to uphold the school's Quaker identity and values. There will be a strong preference for candidates with Quaker background and/or schooling, and extensive experience in Friends schools.

### **Professionally the successful candidate will:**

- Bring extensive leadership and administrative experience
- Demonstrate a commitment to diversity across all aspects of school life
- Understand and be comfortable with Quaker process
- Have been a successful teacher
- Connect with the students and be present in the daily life of the school
- Have a strong track record of good hiring and mentoring
- Know how to evaluate curriculum and pedagogy
- Provide effective support to a talented faculty
- Lead within a consensus-based culture while also showing decisive leadership when appropriate
- Communicate effectively the school's mission and program
- Have enthusiasm for and experience with fundraising, preferably with a strong track record of success
- Seize opportunities for creativity and innovation where supported by thoughtful study

### **Personally the next Head of School will:**

- Have the strength of his/her convictions
- Possess a good sense of humor
- Be warm, genuine, and approachable
- Be a good listener who can assimilate a range of views
- Be flexible and open to change
- Embrace core Quaker values as the guiding principles of the school

## APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Interested candidates should submit a letter of interest, personal statement, and current resume to:

Deborah E. Reed  
dereed2014@gmail.com

and/or

Clay V. Stites  
clay.stites@comcast.net

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