



Presidio Hill  
School  
Since 1918

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What are the advantages of being a smaller school?

Presidio Hill School will grow to a maximum of 230 students in the next year or two due to our recently expanded campus; a *short term opportunity to join the school at many grade levels*. We have one class per grade level TK-5 providing an environment where each child is truly known and accountable for their learning and social interactions. K-5 classrooms each have a lead teacher and an assistant or apprentice teacher. We expand by adding 10-12 new students for grades 6-8 resulting in two sections of 16 students and a larger social pool at this important adolescent juncture. The buddy programs and organic opportunities for cross grade interaction at PHS keep our students in tune and empathetic to one another.

### How does PHS define progressive education?

Progressive education stems from a child-centered philosophy and uses engaging, hands-on learning methods where teachers “guide from the side” and design inquiry-based, problem-solving lessons that allow students to go deep in their learning. Teaching about social justice is also a hallmark of progressive education. Students not only study the ideals set forth in society, they also learn how to recognize disparity and injustice by critically thinking about the lived experience of many different groups. We believe a Presidio Hill School progressive education results in students who love to learn. By the time they leave us, they have found their own unique voice and are confident and creative in expressing it. They know their own personal learning strengths and challenges, what interests them, how to advocate for themselves and others. They are builders of community and willing to take responsibility.

### What does it cost to attend Presidio Hill School?

Presidio Hill School currently charges around \$34,000 as the top end of our tuition scale and we have families that pay as little as \$500 annually. Flexible tuition, sometimes called indexed tuition, financial aid, or tuition assistance, is a reduction in tuition for families whose household economics warrant it. Flexible tuition at Presidio Hill School is given in the form of grants that do not need to be repaid. Flexible tuition comes from the School's annual operating budget, which is provided through tuition revenue and fundraising. Presidio Hill currently spends between 15-20% of its gross tuition revenue to offset the full price of tuition where appropriate. Approximately 30% of families at PHS pay a flexible tuition.

### What are my childcare options for before and after school?

Students may arrive as early as 7:45am. There is no cost for the supervised program before the school day begins. The after-school program, “Neighborhood,” runs from dismissal until 6pm and features outdoor play, snack, homework time for the older students and lots of fun activities and crafts. There are bundled rates for frequent users or parents/guardians can use it on a more occasional basis at \$12 per hour. Fees for the extended care program are prorated to reflect flexible tuition levels as are our athletic programs in the middle school. Enrichment classes are also offered in the after school hours for an additional fee. Our program director works with many specialty teachers to bring martial arts, movie making, music lessons, parkour, making/tinkering, gymnastics etc., to families *right here on our campus*. The catalog of offerings changes three times a year.

### Do students have homework at Presidio Hill School?

Homework is minimal in the younger grades (read together with your child) and gradually builds into middle school. We strive for a “sweet spot” that prepares students for class discussions and reinforces key concepts, avoiding excessive amounts or “busy work.” There are specifics by grade level in the academic section of our website.

### What are the expectations for involvement as a parent/guardian?

PHS counts on the adults in our students' lives to help create and support our unparalleled community. All parents & guardians are automatically part of our Parent Guardian Association (PGA). The PGA leadership has organized the volunteer opportunities into fun and manageable jobs making it easy to plug into volunteering that suits your talents, interests and schedules. As a guideline, we ask that you contribute 24 hours (a day in the life of your child) a year to the school. The possibilities are endless; driving for field trips, helping in the classroom, making soup for teachers on Wednesdays, leading a large-scale school event, joining The Board of Trustees or one of its committees and much more. We also ask that families give each year to our annual fund *at an amount that feels right to them* while making PHS a philanthropic priority. As with many private schools, our tuition revenue does not cover the

full cost of a Presidio Hill School education. Our Annual Fund helps close this gap while enabling us to offer a rich, innovative and engaging program.

### I've heard that students don't receive grades at PHS. How will I know how my child is progressing?

The teachers and learning specialists at PHS are constantly doing *authentic assessment*; the goal is for each teacher to really know each student as an individual and for the child to be knowledgeable about and invested in their own growth. Our assessments focus on what's actually taught in the classroom instead of a standardized assessment that may or may not give a good indication of learning. Formal written narratives are prepared twice each year, which include grade-level skill benchmark indicators.

Parent/teacher conferences are held twice a year in the fall and spring. The reasons we avoid letter grades and numerical ranking of students is to emphasize the ongoing and individual nature of learning. We expect students to be focused on "What did I miss?" "How can I improve?" and "What's the next challenge?" not resting on their laurels or over focused on the outcome or competing with peers.

### Which curricula do you use at Presidio Hill School?

PHS curricula are robust and our teachers refer to professional, state and national standards and benchmarks for each subject and grade. We are certified by the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS), which carries its own set of high standards. As a progressive school, teachers are expected to be responsive both to the actual students in their class at any moment as well as to current events that might inform curricula. In addition to the teacher-designed curricula, PHS implements:

- Responsive Classroom and Developmental Designs for building cooperative classroom and school communities to foster social emotional development and a healthy environment for exploring, relating and learning.
- Wilson Foundations® is part of the literacy curriculum used in K-3. Foundations® provides research based materials and strategies essential to a comprehensive reading, spelling, and handwriting program. The Readers and Writers workshop model further supports the language arts curriculum.
- Math curriculum is based on two core programs: Investigations by TERC for K-5 and CMP 3 (Connected Mathematics) for middle school. Emphasis is on conceptual understanding and effective communication about mathematics. It is problem-centered, inquiry based, open to exploration and rich in manipulative materials and visual support.
- Social Justice Standards articulated by Teaching Tolerance as part of the Anti-bias Framework.
- Outdoor educational opportunities across the grades in partnership with the Presidio Trust.

### What if my child needs additional support or challenge?

PHS Learning Services consists of two faculty members who provide classroom-based support to students & teachers. Although PHS has a long tradition of being a supportive learning environment for a wide range of students, we do not have individualized curricula for students with learning differences, emotional difficulties, or those needing significant academic extension. More detailed information about Learning Services is available on our website or upon request.

### Do you have food service & where do the children eat?

PHS families have the option to pack lunches from home and PHS also offers lunch for purchase—including hot lunch options—from School Foodies ([schoolfoodies.com](http://schoolfoodies.com)). The lower school students eat in their classrooms and the middle school students eat outdoors, weather permitting. Families with flexible tuition grants above a certain threshold are eligible for a reduced School Foodies price.

### Do you teach another language at Presidio Hill School?

At PHS we teach Spanish starting in the first grade. Students meet with their Spanish teacher twice a week in first and second grade, three times a week in third through sixth grade and they meet for four periods weekly in seventh and eighth grade.

### What arts and specialist classes do you offer?

Presidio Hill School is committed to the arts as an integral part of the learning experience. Students meet weekly with art and music teachers. Our physical education program meets twice a week for grades TK-2 here on our rooftop yard and three times a week in grades 3-8 off campus on the field and courts adjacent to Presidio Wall playground in The Presidio. We also have a full time librarian who sees students weekly and shares a variety of curricula focused on literacy and digital media as well as facilitating book selection and check out. As students mature they gain skills for developing good digital citizenship and learn about quality online sources of information, privacy issues, plagiarism, online marketing schemes and appropriate behavior on social media.