

MillenniumSchool

WE'RE GLAD YOU'RE HERE!

Millennium School is all about adolescents. We've designed a dynamic program that empowers them to be curious, dig deep, collaborate and care. We offer a safe space for thoughtful exchange and a powerful academic experience that combines project-based learning with Socratic seminars, apprenticeships and community interaction. We're delighted to show you what our 21st century middle school looks like today.

WE'RE FOCUSED ON WHAT ADOLESCENTS NEED.

Our program is designed around developmental science, which points to three elements essential to a positive and safe passage through the middle school years. These crucial elements support healthy personal development and create the platform for advanced academics.

- **Safe Social Environment.** Middle school is the most socially motivated and engaged time of life. Peers become more influential than parents. A positive, safe social environment at school is essential for healthy development.
- **Connection to the Real World.** Students entering adolescence want greater autonomy and opportunities to engage their curiosity through real-world applications of school learning. Their academic motivation depends on a sense of relevance.
- **Resources to Develop Self-awareness.** At this age, inner lives are becoming rich and complex, with emerging emotions and self-awareness. If actively supported with appropriate resources and tools, like mindfulness, students build awareness, emotional intelligence, resilience, and other inner capacities that are highly correlated with long-term success.

WE'RE ENROLLING CURIOUS AND COMPASSIONATE STUDENTS

We're looking for students who bring curiosity, empathy, and self-motivation. We're looking for families who are eager to collaborate and create a positive, inclusive and innovative school culture. We are a "laboratory school" which prizes experimentation and continual improvement, and seeks to develop an appreciation of "useful failures" among our students.

Millennium School aims to represent the full diversity of the San Francisco Bay Area. Our Flexible Tuition Program adjusts tuition levels according to a family's ability to pay and underscores our commitment to make Millennium School accessible to all families. No one should hesitate to apply due to financial reasons.

HELLO, AND WELCOME TO MY SCHOOL!

I hope you'll come see for yourself why Millennium School is THE place to be if you're in 6th, 7th or 8th grade. Until then, take a look at the line-up for my day today. It's a good one!

8:30 AM

MORNING MEETING

I arrive at school and join my friends for our regular student-led morning meeting. We listen to details about the day, share our interests or concerns and take a minute to meditate quietly before the day gears up. I really like Morning Meetings—they make me feel connected to my classmates and guides (we call faculty members at Millennium School guides), and grateful to be part of this friendly and safe community.

8:45 AM

STEM QUEST

For the next two hours I'll be in my STEM quest working with my classmates and our guide on designs for a robot that will greet and guide visitors to the school. Today, my small team of 3 is exploring how humans build and express connection and is also working on programming the moving parts of our robot.

10:00 AM

BREAK

We get several breaks a day—morning, lunchtime and afternoon—and the freedom to choose what we do. Some students head right to the gym. I'll be catching up with some of my friends to talk about the really cool internship opportunity that is coming up next month.

10:20 AM

ROBOTICS ETHICS SEMINAR

During the second part of our quest block, we often do seminars. Today we're gathered around a big table to talk about the ethics of using robots, building on our work before break. We have "Harkness" discussions, which means our teacher usually mostly just asks questions. The discussions get very lively as we review concepts, facts and stories from our reading assignments. It's amazing that our own city is at the forefront for these new technologies! I really like that we get to share our opinions and challenge each other's ideas.



12:05 PM


MATH, CE, PE, AND SPANISH

Today, I also have Math, Creative Expressions or Physical Expressions, and Spanish. Sometimes these take place in the morning and sometimes in the afternoon. This term I've already discovered that I'm obsessed with sculpture and we have a really cool artist from Oakland teaching us to make clay models. Other terms I have somatics practice through yoga and sports. Then I go to Math where we're working on puzzles and problem-solving around fractions. Before I know it we're in Spanish, and I'm realizing that over time, I'm starting to understand the language without translating in my head!

11:20 AM

LUNCH & ACTION

Time to refuel. We eat lunch in our multi-purpose room or outside on our beautiful terrace. I might play cards with my friends or join a game of basketball. It feels good to have open time to move my body and socialize with friends and guides.



2:20 PM

BREAK

3:30 PM

WRAP-UP AND DISMISSAL

That's it! I've got to make a quick stop to check in about my robotics project before two of my Millennium School friends and I grab our gear and go to a nearby field for soccer practice. Some of my buddies head for home, while others stay after for Millennium's aftercare. See you all tomorrow!

2:30 PM

ADVISORY

It's really cool to have flexibility and independence during advisory time. Some days I work on a group project with other students, and some days I get to tackle my homework while the guides are around for questions. My advisor comes and checks in with me too, and I feel really lucky I can talk to her about whatever's on my mind. This week I'm also starting my personal quest project to explore my newfound passion for sculpture!

WE'VE STRUCTURED A UNIQUE ACADEMIC YEAR.

Our school year calendar was created to support deeper learning experiences for students. While the start and end dates are similar to those of many other schools—late August to June—it's how we use that time that sets us apart.

A Millennium School year consists of five terms of 6-7 weeks each. Students take two transdisciplinary courses per term, called quests. These significant blocks of time are ideal for projects and seminars. This structure allows for deeper exploration of key topics during each term and provides a full breadth of subject areas over the course of the year.

Four times per year we have a weeklong “intersession” period that fosters even deeper and more focused learning. Intersession opportunities vary throughout the year—apprenticing with local organizations, taking educational trips, designing and completing a challenging project—and give students the chance to really dig in to their experiences. The first and last intersessions of the year are outdoor expeditions rich with opportunities for building resilience, broadening self-awareness and forming strong bonds with fellow students and faculty.

WE'VE DESIGNED AN ADVANCED ACADEMIC PROGRAM

A Foundation in Developmental Science

Our academic program is built around the neuroscience and developmental psychology of middle schoolers. Science and experience tells us that our students are highly motivated when learning experiences are personal, social, and connected to the “real world” outside the doors of school.

When we help them answer the questions they are most interested in—Who am I? How do I relate to others? How do I act in the real world?—students respond with more focus and as a result make greater academic progress. Whether in quests or skill-building block classes, our students develop skills that will matter, no matter what they aim for in the future. These include academic competencies, like critical thinking, along with whole-self skills, like engaging with awareness.

Our program also prepares students for the next step in their future: the most advanced high school options. While our individual courses are based on topical, specific questions — like “Has America Dealt with Slavery?” —our academic framework incorporates Common Core, Next Generation Science Standards, and the expectations for entrance to highly selective high schools.

How We Learn at Millennium

To tap into the potential of middle school, we make learning highly interactive. Students learn in two primary modalities:

- **Socratic Seminar:** The “Harkness method,” where small groups of students learn to engage in authentic intellectual discussions by asking thoughtful questions, sharing ideas, citing evidence, and listening to different perspectives.
- **Project-Based Learning:** Students investigate complex real-world problems, working both solo and in teams to gain knowledge and skills which are applied in deep, transdisciplinary projects.

MATH

Using research from Stanford University Professor Jo Boaler, our math program is designed to convey both essential computational skills and, equally importantly, a mathematical mindset. This means building cognitive flexibility, pattern recognition, the ability to generate multiple solutions to complex problems, and “number sense,” a student’s fundamental fluency with math as a language of patterns.

STEM

Our students learn science by applying it in meaningful projects. Whether in engineering, coding, work in conservation, or discovering the chemistry in their own kitchens, students experience how scientific reasoning is applied as a tool to explore and discover their world. Our aims are to develop empirical thinking, a spirit of inquiry and investigation, and the savvy use of data.

HUMANITIES

In Humanities our work is two-fold: to develop means of skillful communication, and to appreciate the essential stories, patterns, and trajectories of human experience. We integrate history, social science, and English language arts. Students work to develop excellence in written and oral communication, as well as methods for analyzing and relating to a wide range of texts.

SPANISH

Our Spanish program aims to provide students with both an introduction to Spanish language development and an exploration of the Spanish-speaking world’s cultures and worldviews. Classroom instruction focuses on the immersion model, aiming to use only Spanish in the classroom. We prioritize developing confidence in speaking the language while using Spanish as a vehicle to learn language-learning skills. Spanish is offered at the beginning levels and as an option for native or near-native speakers.

What We Learn at Millennium

While individual courses are framed around fascinating topical questions like “How do We Transform?” – they teach academic skills that truly matter. Rooted in 21st Century Skills, Common Core, NGSS and others, our academic competencies include skills like analyzing and interpreting evidence, and justifying my ideas.

Our aim is to reach these goals while retaining students’ passion for learning – and the key to that is the quest. Throughout the year, students engage in six-week-long quests, which are transdisciplinary courses that tackle real-world challenges, requiring both cognitive skill and social-emotional insight.

Quest example: Can we transcend our limits?

The Challenge: Create a unique rocket design which successfully launches a fragile payload (a raw egg) to the greatest possible height and returns it to earth un-cracked. As they learned Newton’s laws of physics, students practiced design thinking in coming up with ever improving designs for rockets to meet this challenge. Through reflection and revision, they also learned how to transcend their own perceived limits. Each test flight yielded valuable data which led to new designs, all produced in our Maker Space. Along the way they met real rocket scientists and tracked the news about the cutting edge of spaceflight science. The project culminated in an exhilarating series of rocket launches at Crissy Field, with the whole school community cheering.



Authentic Assessment

At Millennium each student project culminates with a presentation to real-world experts – an “authentic audience” – thus elevating expectations and the quality of students’ work. We combine it with mastery-based assessments on progress reports, but the motivation comes from the authentic audience. Here’s how it looks in practice:

The students filed into a sleek conference room at a high-tech San Francisco company, dressed in business casual. With no small amount of excitement and trepidation they gazed at the six “Sharks” waiting for them – real venture or philanthropic investors ready to hear their pitches. It was “Shark Tank” day, the culmination of a month-long project in which each student, solo or in a team, designed a business concept and a “pitch” complete with Profit & Loss Statements, organizational structure, and no small amount of ambition. They had readied pitches to address the crisis of homelessness or to make hilarious t-shirts, and everything in between.






Then came the big moment: 3-5 minutes, recorded, in front of six investors who would then fire away with questions. The students were anxious but focused. Many used their new mindfulness skills to calm and center themselves. The pitches were passion-driven and thorough, and when all was said and done, the students had amazed both themselves and the investors.

Real World Programming

Another standout of Millennium’s program is the active study and participation in the “real” world. We get outside of our building and into our “Classroom Beyond Walls” whenever we can. For us, this most often involves exploring the broader San Francisco community and all that it has to offer. Sometimes we venture further. Wherever we go, we’re working, studying, learning, testing, failing, and practicing again. It’s amazing what adolescents see when invited to turn-off (media, smartphones, expectations) and drop-in to the world they will soon inherit.



MillenniumSchool

Background	Millennium School opened in August 2016 after three years of research and design. We've added a new grade each year since, and are currently at our full size.
Grades	6th through 8th
Size	107 students
Class Size	Average: 17
Diversity	42% students of color 5% LGBTQ families 24 Zip codes represented 21% of families speak a non-English language at home 28% of families receive Flexible Tuition
Faculty	20 Full & Part-Time Faculty 15 Graduate Degrees 35% Multilingual 38% People of Color
Admissions	Online at millenniumschooll.org/how-to-apply/
Organization	501(c)3 non-profit, independent school Member of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS)
Location	245 Valencia Street, San Francisco
Contact us	 admissions@millenniumschooll.org  415-992-8520 x102  millenniumschooll.org/admissions  @MSchoolSF  @millenniumschoollsf  facebook.com/millenniumschoollsf

Millennium.org's mission is to design and disseminate developmental-science based methods and models of education that advance human well-being.