

## **DRAFT SCSD Learning Environments Support the Strategic Plan**

The San Carlos School District is designing innovative learning environments to support whole-child education and engaging, personalized learning for each student. These learning environments match three developmental periods in students' lives: Preschool-3rd grade, 4th-5th grade, and 6th-8th grade. Within each school configuration, learning experiences and learning spaces work with and celebrate the unique qualities of students in service of our vision.

### **SCSD Vision**

The San Carlos School District shall provide an innovative and engaging learning experience that fosters the development of the Whole Child to ensure all students are well prepared for success in the 21st Century, as evidenced by:

- Reaching their highest academic, social, emotional, intellectual, and physical potential
- Becoming problem solvers, critical thinkers, risk-takers, designers, collaborators, and innovators
- Developing into contributing, empathic citizens and leaders who are responsible stewards of their world and care about equity and justice, both locally and worldwide

### **Preschool to 3rd Grade Schools**

Our preschool-3rd grade schools nurture primary-age learners by providing a range of hands-on experiences and opportunities for exploration. At this stage, children are growing by leaps and bounds across all areas of development: social, emotional, physical and cognitive. Teachers honor each child's unique development by celebrating progress and personalizing learning. Children are learning what it means to be an active learner. During these years, students master foundational skills in reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies, applying skills in meaningful ways to create and share new ideas. The arts and physical education are central to our whole child education in these years, as is outdoor learning. Young children are naturally drawn to the outdoor world, and teachers in our preschool-3rd grade schools foster environmental stewardship and a connection to nature. In all areas of the curriculum, students learn individually, in small groups, in whole class lessons, and in collaborative partnerships across classrooms and grade levels. Opportunities to develop self-efficacy by making choices and navigating conflict during play and "tinkering time" are an essential part of the school day. Young children are deeply curious, full of questions about the world around them. Schools harness this zest for learning by devoting significant time to student-driven projects where children develop a driving question, research, and share high quality work with a public audience. Primary learners are full of creative confidence! Across the curriculum, learning experiences are designed to help children see themselves as capable problem solvers, "makers", and innovators. Socially and emotionally, children are learning how to communicate needs and express opinions. They solve problems, resolve conflicts, and help teammates while considering the perspectives of others. Our preschool - 3rd grade students are emerging as leaders in their school, contributing to our community of kindness, caring and learning.

### **4th and 5th Grade Schools**

Our 4th-5th grade schools are designed with flexibility and collaboration in mind, helping children take the next leap forward as leaders and learners. This is a very exciting time in a child's life, when students are strengthening their cognitive, social, emotional and physical development and also expressing preferences for areas of focused study. Children deepen their foundational skills in reading, writing, mathematics, social studies and science so that they can readily use these skills to engage in challenging projects and tasks.

They actively design, 'make', build, and innovate in ways that require problem solving, perseverance and creative thinking. At this stage, students are testing out their physical strength, stamina, and agility while also forming complex peer relationships. School days include more physical challenges and opportunities, including organized and free-form play. Across the school day, students develop communication and collaboration skills, participating in a variety of activities and projects where they can learn to communicate effectively and resolve conflicts peacefully. At this stage, children are very concrete thinkers who have the ability to apply logic and reasoning to concepts and ideas, while also considering multiple perspectives. They are now ready to strengthen their conversation and argumentation skills, which will help them to share their findings and perspectives in articulate, evidence-based ways. Opportunities to give back and to develop leadership skills are intentionally designed for them to explore, in service to the school and local community. Our 4th-5th grade students are strengthening their understanding of what it takes to become well-rounded citizens and stewards, from simple acts of kindness and contribution to greater acts of leadership and commitment to the community and environment.

### **6th-8th Grade Schools**

During the middle school years, students dive deeply into core content areas, the arts, physical education, and leadership. They also explore personal areas of interest, strengthening the foundations of academic learning and developing skills and tools to prepare for high school, and beyond. Peer relationships, self-actualization, and "voice and choice" are central to learning. Students are now solidifying how they see themselves by recognizing the strengths and talents that they offer to the world, building upon this emerging sense of self as they choose areas of focused study and inquiry. Entering adolescence in a complex world can be challenging, and our 6th-8th grade schools are designed to promote the 'habits of mind' of ownership, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, citizenship and stewardship. Students also learn to navigate the technological world as digital citizens researching, creating, and communicating in support of their own learning. Through team-teaching and co-teaching, students learn across diverse classroom settings. In addition, students pursue individual interests and after school activities designed to foster the development of the whole child. Students in these grades are concrete thinkers who have the ability to apply logic and reasoning to concepts and ideas, while also considering other perspectives. Students begin to think abstractly and these skills are applied across the curriculum through integrated, collaborative projects. Students engage in complex, multi-faceted, projects that contribute to an existing body of knowledge, solve a relevant, vexing problem, and/or inspire others through their work. Students extend their conversation, argumentation, writing and mathematics skills in authentic situations where they share their findings and perspectives in articulate, evidence-based ways. They give back and lead in ways that serve the school, local and global community. Our middle school students develop a strong understanding of what it takes to become well-rounded, contributing citizens and stewards of their community and environment.

To learn more, visit <http://www.scsdk8.org/strategic-plan/>