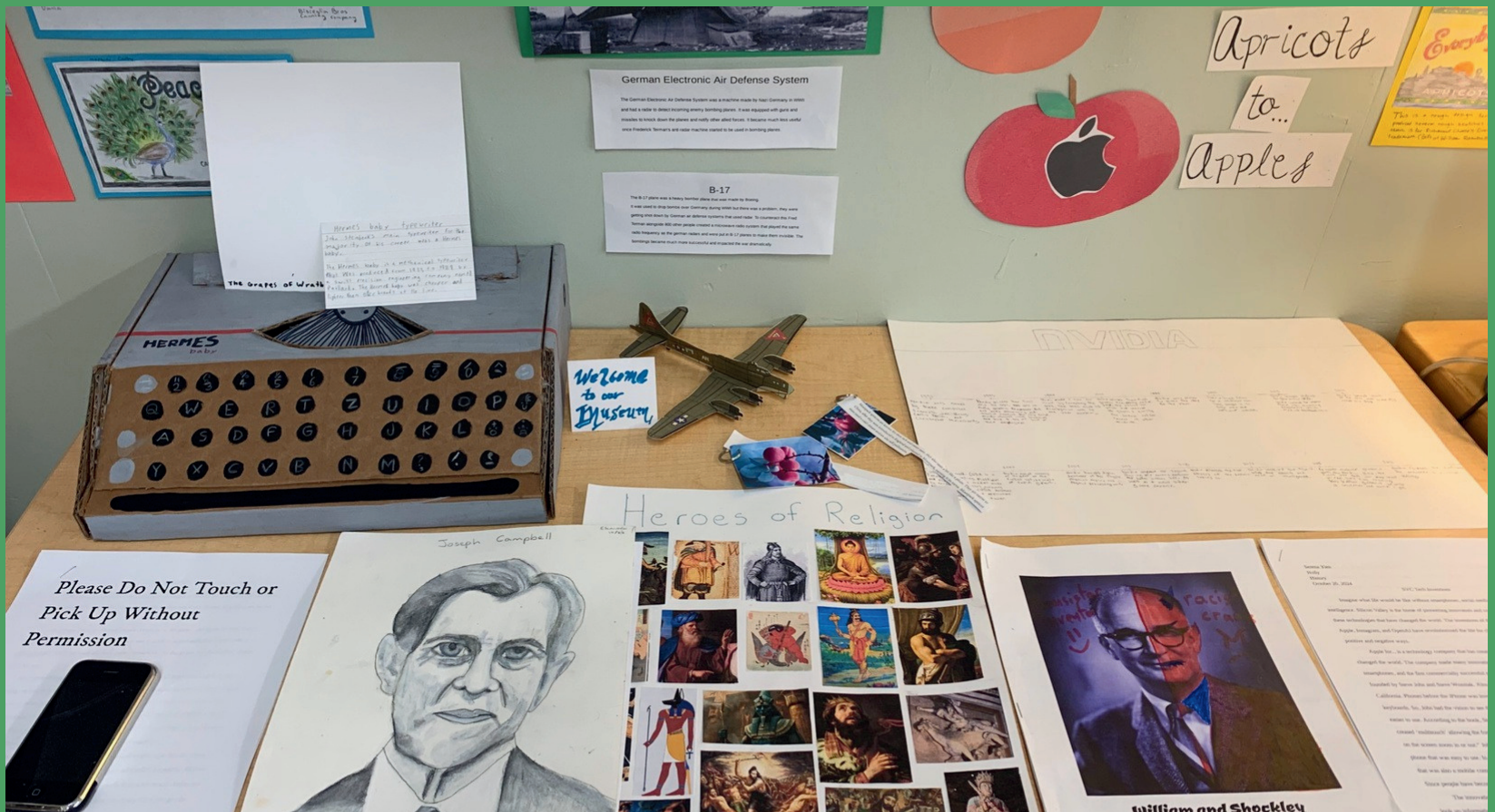


The Vision

Our vision for middle school is to foster a dynamic learning community, fully engaged learners with each other and the issues of our day. Rigorous academic preparation, with a focus on social justice and sustainability, equips our young people with skills of service and connection. Our students build skills for critical thinking and civil discourse, try out adult roles and responsibilities, develop knowledge of themselves, and find their place in the world.



Overview

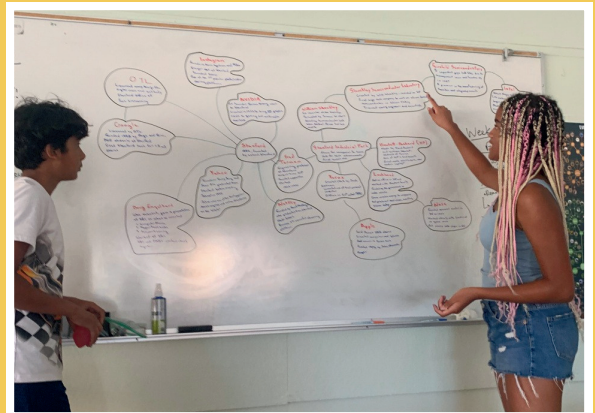
As an authentic project-based program, we provide learning experiences that allow students to explore issues across the disciplines in their real-world complexity. Utilizing a uniquely place-based curriculum inspired by the rich cultural and natural resources of the Bay Area, we engage with the landscapes, people, and ideas that flourish here.

The adolescent need for variety and change is met with a block schedule for Humanities and Science in which topics rotate on an eight-week basis. Consistent student engagement is supported by guiding questions and seminar style class meetings. Students complete a self-directed study project in each block that can include a variety of creative forms.

Casa's middle school is a **mixed-level program** with 7th and 8th graders sharing core lessons in the Humanities & Sciences. In Mathematics, Spanish and some writing classes, students work in smaller proficiency level groups.

Sustained Key Experiences

- Individualized Education
- Social-Emotional Development
- Peace Education
- Service Learning
- Integration of Curriculum
- Community Meetings
- Balance of Individual and Group Work
- Overnight Experiences
- Protected Work Periods
- Differentiated Instruction



MS Key Experiences

- Socratic Seminars
- Field Studies
- Micro-Economics
- Off-Campus Engagement and Adventures
- Pedagogy of Place
- Solo-Time
- Emphasis on Erdkinder
- Rotating Electives
- Self-Reflective Evaluations
- School Leadership Roles
- Regular "Going Outs"
- Block Schedules

The Sciences

The science curriculum uses a hands-on, inquiry-based approach to explore the world around us. While the schedule focuses study, we embrace and integrate both physical and life sciences, as well as labs, within each block.

Life Sciences (Year A)

Environmental Science

How do interrelationships among living organisms, physical features, bio-chemical processes, natural phenomena, and human activities impact ecological communities? What roles can we play as stewards of our local and global environments?

Cellular Biology

What are the building blocks of living systems? How are cells structured? What are their parts and their chemical and physical properties? How do cells reproduce and how does this impact health? How do cells interact with the environment?

Genetics and Heredity

What are genes and DNA? What factors influence gene expression into the traits we see in organisms? How are heritable traits passed down from organisms, and how do they change in a population over time? What is the role of probability in genetics? What is natural selection? How do evolution and natural selection explain life's unity and diversity?

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Physical Sciences (Year B)

Astronomy

What is the Big Bang? How did the structures of the universe develop over billions of years? What do observations of the universe tell us about its history? How do we build understanding of the history of Earth and its life forms from clues left in the Earth itself?

Physics: Motion and Force

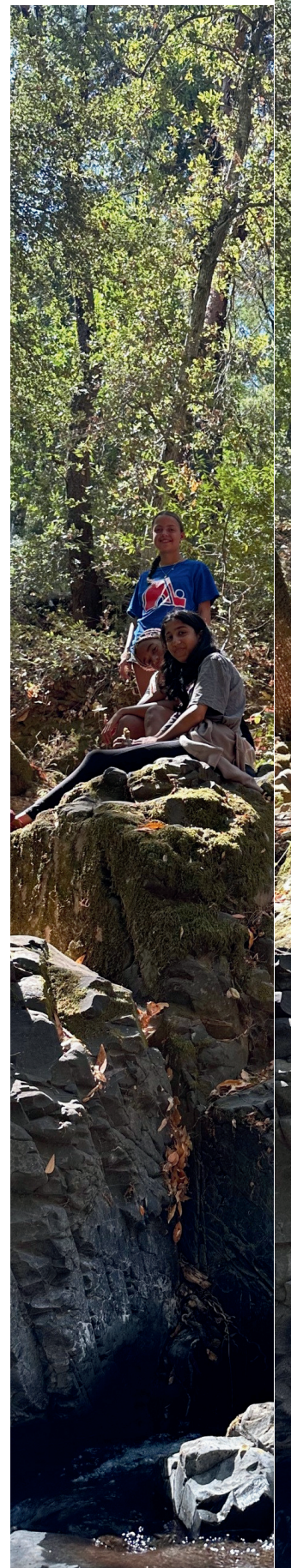
How do motion and force influence phenomena locally and in the solar system? How does the work of Newton influence our understanding of the physical world? What are speed, velocity, acceleration, force, friction, and momentum? What are simple machines and how do they work?

Physical Science: Waves and Energy

What is energy? What different types of energy are there? How does energy interact and what role does it play in our lives? How does energy transform? What are the characteristics of waves, sound, and the electromagnetic spectrum?

Chemistry

What are the properties of matter and how can they be explored and manipulated? What is the structure of atoms, molecules, and compounds? How do chemicals interact and react with one another? What role does carbon play in living systems?



Humanities

The Humanities program incorporates Culture, Government, and Language Arts; integrating literature with the study of people and societies. Students expand their perspectives and construct meaning by following their curiosity in response to open-ended questions. They research and mature their speaking skills needed for participation in Model UN, as well as other immersive experiences, while local issues come alive through engagement with community service work. Our writing curriculum incorporates journaling practices with creative work, as well as structured analytical writing.

Humanities (Year A)

From Apricots to Apples

How do places change over time?
How did the orchards of Santa Clara become Silicon Valley?

Civics – Democracy & the US Government

What are the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy?

The United Nations

How can countries work cooperatively to achieve justice and peace? [Includes: Model UN Conference in New York City.]

Social Justice Practicum

What social forces and conditions foster change and progress?

Humanities (Year B)

Wisdom Traditions

How do humans approach these essential questions: Where did we come from? How should we treat each other while we are here? What happens when we die?

Peace and Conflict: Resolution

What are the roots of human conflict?
What is the work of peace building?

Asian Studies

How do societies maintain their values over time?
What is gained and lost through immigration, or assimilation?

20th Century American History

What are the forces and ideas that have shaped the post-WWII American experience?



Mathematics

The goal of the mathematics curriculum is to ensure that students gain skills in quantitative reasoning and problem solving that they can then apply in a variety of contexts. Through problems and investigations, students develop their knowledge of mathematical concepts, their practice of mathematical thinking, and their skill at communicating mathematical thought. Connections to science, micro-economies, humanities, and the arts play a substantive role and are the center of several projects over the two-year course of study.

Differentiated Instruction

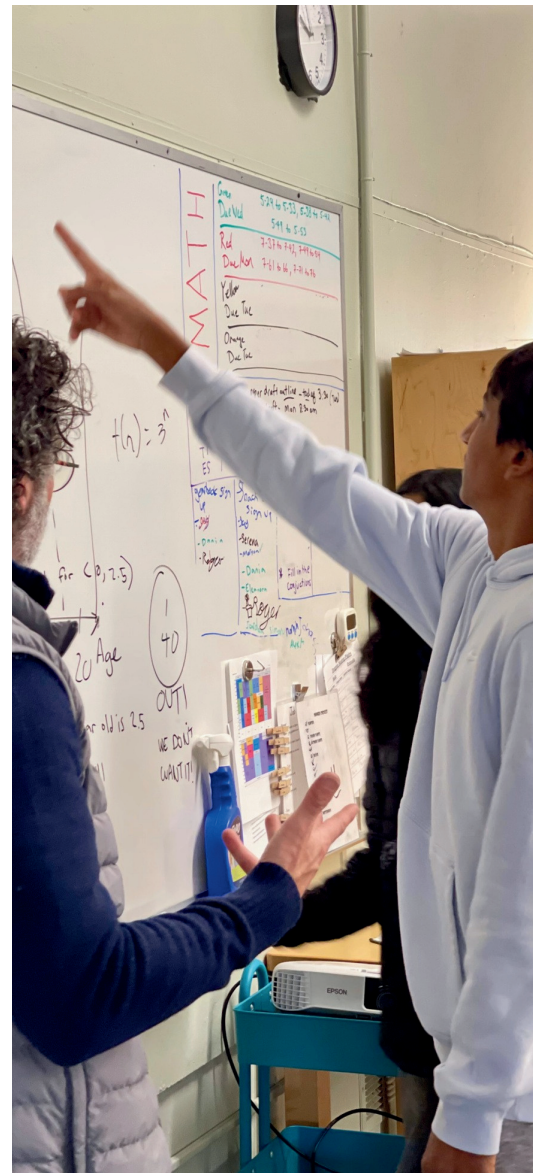
The Casa program is student-centered and problem-based, and encourages students to grapple with math tasks in collaborative teams. Students are typically divided into leveled groups according to their ability. At times, individuals create their own group, working independently to meet their own pace and personal challenge.

Guides work to support these individual trajectories which map both the ability and depth of interest of each student. In practice, this may involve individual lessons, small group efforts, or large group conversations.

Each week sustains a focus on three touch points to support each student's math progress.

The Math Curriculum

Our Core Connections courses aim to prepare students for their upcoming High School college preparatory math classes. Course 2 covers topics usually found in Pre-Algebra, such as probability, fractions, proportions, percent, angle relationships, volume, circles and solving inequalities. Course 3 builds on the topics covered in Course 2 and covers topics typically found in Algebra and Geometry, such as simplifying with variables, graphs and equations, systems of equations, slope, exponents, functions, surface area and the Pythagorean Theorem. More advanced students have the opportunity to move into upper-level courses, such as Algebra 1, Geometry 1, and Algebra 2.



Electives

An Elective for Each Block

Short elective classes allow students to participate in various activities outside of the core academic areas. These offerings can be quite diverse. Electives are chosen each year by group interests and availability, while utilizing teachers and studios in the San Jose area. Typically, there are opportunities for eight unique classes!

Past Electives include: Hip-hop dance, yoga, African drumming, woodworking, cooking, coding, oil painting, CrossFit, mountain biking, opera, ukelele, and more.



Micro-Economies

Students thrive within micro-economy opportunities, as this is where leadership and social responsibility shine. Students plan, create, and run small business ventures throughout the year including multiple events, Holiday Cafe and Kids Night Out. These projects require students to learn the basics of business: making a plan, start-up costs, accounting, marketing, distribution, banking and profit or loss. Students make all decisions relating to the business, with an adult advisor. Of course, businesses must be ethical and sustainable. All profits are spent, saved, or invested according to group consensus.

Spanish

Spanish classes support bilingual skills, and are core to our middle school's commitment to global citizenship. Twice a week, both practice in conversation and independent study are required. Advancement goals in Spanish will be established between instructor and students at the start of each school year. The goal for our students is to complete the equivalent of High School Spanish 1.

Physical Education

Each student participates in multiple PE classes, each week. The physical education program can include blocks in dance, yoga or other of physical disciplines similar to Electives. These studio classes are in addition to our outdoor PE activities, which focus on skill development and personal fitness. Additionally, Human Growth continues from UE, following a 7th/8th Year specific curriculum.



Why Montessori is important for adolescents?

01 Individualized Education

A decade ago, Casa began the journey of building our area's the only Montessori Middle School in the South Bay. This process brought our community together to envision both what our families desired for our 12-14 year olds what aligns with best practices in Montessori. The Key Experiences practiced in our program reflect the commitment of our families and staff to this pedagogy, as do the individualized, localized, and child-centered services our faculty employ. As an authentic Montessori program, our strength is the differentiation in our instruction, guiding each child to meet their potential.

02 Community

Casa purposefully limits the size of our 12-14 year -old classroom, for 2 critical reasons: First, the smaller class size allows Guides to authentically integrate curriculum, properly individualize instruction, and work with the 'whole-child.' Second, a Casa-sized cohort creates the exploratory and supportive space needed for the social, emotional, and intellectual development of this age. While traditional schooling attempts to partially imitate these 'home rooms,' 'advisor groups,' etc., our community is based on this principle of what's best for the 12-14 year old.

03 Valorization

The opportunity for a young person to be of value through purposeful work is essential at this age. In fact, this search for valorization is one of the key elements an institution can provide as a Middle School. Every year, through a multitude of outdoor adventures, community-wide responsibilities, and 'real-life' experiences in the adult world, our program pointedly engages students in their search for their place to make a difference. It is rare to find a place that creates such a platform for self-growth, Casa has been doing this successfully for over a decade.

