



**PARK DAY SCHOOL**

**OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA  
HEAD OF SCHOOL**

**START DATE: JULY 2020**

**[WWW.PARKDAY SCHOOL.ORG](http://WWW.PARKDAY SCHOOL.ORG)**



**Carney  
Sandoe**  
& ASSOCIATES



## Mission

At Park Day School, dedicated teachers and engaged students collaborate to create a dynamic and joyful learning community for mastering academic and interpersonal skills. Students construct meaning and deep understanding through inquiry and discovery-based teaching. Our practices promote critical and creative thinking, artistic expression, and a commitment to diversity and social justice. In the spirit of partnership and service, students expand their perspectives through participation in the broader community. Continuing the legacy of the progressive education movement, Park Day School prepares students to be informed, courageous, and compassionate people who shape a more equitable and sustainable world.

## OVERVIEW

*"We would stop lessons if someone was called a name to talk about the importance of that. The learning was about who you are as a person, this society, and what you can do to fix it." - Jackson Grigsby, Class of 2012*

*"Park Day was the place where I learned that my ideas were important, and that I should ask questions. I was given every opportunity to express myself and explore my interests." - Niko Darci-Maher, Class of 2013*

*"Park Day School taught me to take risks." - Sarah Schechter, Class of 2017*

Described as kind, engaged, courageous, and curious, Park Day School students are the heart of the dynamic and joyful learning community. An emphasis is placed on connecting student's social and emotional well-being and intellectual power in support of one another. Park Day's graduates are lifelong learners, engaged citizens, and passionate change makers who grapple with what it means to be part of a democratic society.

Park Day School is seeking a dynamic, visionary leader whose values align with the school's progressive mission: someone who is skilled in supporting the faculty, energized by building a collaborative adult community, and who holds students at the center. The next Head of School is a strategic thinker who is committed to bolstering the school's national leadership in progressive education, student activism, social justice, and maker-centered learning. Park Day School seeks a new Head of School, effective July 2020.



## Fast Facts

Grades Served: K-8

Student/Teacher Ratio: 8:1

Average Class Size: 16-18

Approximate Annual Budget: \$8 million

2019-2020 Tuition: \$27,500 for K-5, and  
\$29,800 for Middle School

Students Receiving Financial Assistance: 35%

Campus: Four acres in the heart of Oakland's  
Temescal neighborhood

Average Faculty Tenure: 7 years

Teachers with Advanced Degrees: 67%

Students of Color: 48%

Faculty/Staff of Color: 38%

School Mascot: Mighty Apples



## SCHOOL HISTORY

Park Day School has provided young people with a child-centered, progressive education from its inception. Founded in 1976, the school has grown steadily over four decades while maintaining a close-knit, open-minded, and forward-thinking community committed to social justice.

Over the years, Park Day School has been a leader at the forefront of educational practices and progressive curriculum development. Tom Little, former Head of School, offered a snapshot of Park's educational practices in the nationally recognized book, "Loving Learning: How Progressive Education Can Save America's Schools" (2015). In 2017, Park Day School received its seven-year accreditation from the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS). Other notable markers in the school's educational landscape include:

- As part of Agency by Design, a research project of Harvard's Project Zero, teachers helped to define maker-centered learning practices. See "Maker-Centered Learning: Empowering Young People to Shape Their Worlds" (2017).
- Out of a pilot program involving teachers, students, and mindfulness practices, emerged the first Mindfulness in Schools curriculum (which has grown to have global impact).
- Early on, the school incorporated service learning into its curriculum and embraced public-private partnerships. Two current examples are: 1) the annual fourth grade Emerson School collaboration in which students from each school build something for each community, and 2) teacher leadership for and participation in Agency by Design Oakland, a teacher fellowship program predominantly serving Oakland public school teachers.
- Teachers actively engaged with research that resulted in the Lawrence Hall of Science GEMS curricula.



- Park Day School has long been at the forefront of education practices embracing the LGBTQ community. The outcomes of this work have been evident in publications and film, and most recently has informed the work of Gender Spectrum, one of the leading consultants on gender diversity.
- Park Day School hosted the world's first mini-maker faire. The East Bay Mini-Maker Faire is a celebration of all things related to making. This is now an annual event attracting 7,000 visitors in one very family-friendly and inspiring day.
- Park Day School also has the distinction of being the first green certified school in Alameda County.

The school has grown from its founding four teachers, who instructed just 28 students, to a staff of over 70, working today with 306 students. For years, Park Day School retained its founding teachers until retirement. The school is currently in a new era of growth and learning among its staff, who range from 15+ year teachers to new staff who are already deeply engaged with the school's mission and values. Throughout this change and growth, the school has remained true to its core mission while embracing the possibilities for its future.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE

Park Day School believes that promoting social justice, equity, and inclusion requires critical dialogue around its practices, programs, and policies. Social justice is everyone's responsibility, and an important part of educating, learning about, and acting for equal access to rights and opportunities for all people.





At Park Day School there is partnership among teachers, students, parents/guardians, board, and staff to engage with social justice in order to empower everyone “to be informed, courageous, and compassionate people who shape a more equitable and sustainable world.” This comprehensive approach realizes the school’s commitment to systematically increase structural equity and foster an inclusive school community.

## THE SCHOOL

Park Day School lives and breathes the 6 Tenets of Progressive Education, as defined by its former Head of School Tom Little. Progressive education values and dynamic teaching practices shape the student experience and are embraced by the larger community.

### ***1. Attention to student’s emotions as well as their intellects***

Recently, an alumni parent remarked, “Park Day is an immersion school where the second language is social-emotional learning.” The empathy, relationship skills, and compassionate understanding for others that students develop over their time at Park Day is intentional teaching and learning which relies on teacher expertise, collaboration, and continuous professional development.

Strong teacher-student relationships allow for forthright conversations and reflect an understanding that students need to feel safe, heard, and empowered in order to learn. The school expects social and emotional issues to arise and addresses them directly both proactively and responsively; teachers weave social and emotional learning throughout every strand of the program. Across the school, within the structure of class meetings, students learn to engage with democracy: What does





it mean to be an ally? What do you do when there are many perspectives on a problem? How you solve a problem so that everyone has a voice? What is our ongoing work as we continue to reflect upon how we are doing? As a school, Park Day views each problem that arises to be a teachable moment.

In daily work with children, the school provides space to engage students with problem-solving and perspective-taking, often asking the class community to actively dive in to the work of solving problems together. For example, last year, several third graders noticed that there was conflict on the yard, so they were guided through some whole class conversations about what they could do to help. As a result, they decided they wanted to build a “Plinko machine” to remind the rest of the students what strategies might work. With the support of their classroom teacher as well as the Design+Make+Engage Director, they used systems thinking and design principles to come up with their idea, test and iterate their design, and build a final product that lives on the yard today.

## ***2. Reliance on students’ interests to guide their learning***

Teachers strive to build genuine excitement for the pursuit of knowledge, inspiring students to actively inquire and explore. They empower students to follow their interests, take initiative, and to grow from their mistakes in order to build resilience. Faculty cherish and challenge each child as they learn, respecting students for their whole human selves, and welcoming the whole child into the classroom.

Park Day School has long believed that emergent curriculum is a powerful motivator to student learning. First graders eagerly studying dinosaurs might decide to build a life size T-rex and from this desire, a math investigation involving whittled dinosaur teeth and class members’ lost baby teeth is embarked upon. The seventh and eighth grade math program features an elaborate model train system used to investigate algebra, logic, and precalculus concepts; this ongoing building project





(surrounding the classroom!) allows students to learn and apply math in a contextualized manner. Rich programs in music, visual art, and drama invite students to bring their identities into their artistry. Skill building and creative exploration are combined as students direct scenes, create self-portraits, and improvise within jazz standards.

### ***3. De-emphasis on grading, testing, ranking***

Park Day's programs are grounded in a respect for childhood and a determination to protect and honor each child individually. For Park Day students, academic excellence emerges from intellectual power and critical thinking, as well as personal resilience to overcome setbacks. Students are held to high expectations, which are intentionally balanced with social-emotional learning and a strong emphasis on social justice.

In concert with these values is the routine use of authentic formative and summative assessments to give specific meaningful feedback to each student. Park Day has led the way in this area, having successfully petitioned the California Association of Independent Schools to drop the standardized testing requirement of their certification program. Rather than relying on standardized tests, assessments are informed by the Curriculum Matrix, the school's research-based progression of program content, skills, and overarching goals. Teachers direct their instruction toward defined learning outcomes, with the intent to meet or exceed curriculum guidelines. Age-level developmental traits and markers are continuously reflected upon. Teachers recognize milestones and challenges and adapt the learning experience based upon individual student needs. Furthermore, teacher excellence is ensured through solid in-house professional development, new teacher mentorship, academic coaching by content specialists, collaborative planning, and peer review opportunities.



#### **4. Involvement of students in real-world endeavors**

*“If you see a problem, do something about it.” - Park Day saying*

From their first days on campus, students are asked to notice the problems around them: a friend’s upset face, a piece of trash on the yard, a friend needing help picking up a spilled pencil container. This is the foundation on which student engagement in real-world endeavors is built.

On campus, elementary school students tend to the Learning Garden, growing food and caring for the land. The middle school Student Action Committee organizes to make change within the school. Students also apply and grow their learning in the larger Oakland community. The third grade is spearheading a campaign to make the urban-displaced Black-crowned Night-Heron the Oakland city bird, which has included advocating to the city council. In eighth grade, students are required to take individual initiative to find and participate in a community event outside of school (such as a meeting, rally, or march) and then present to the class on their experiences.

Immersive field trips also hold an important place in the curricula. The Spanish program, for example, includes a fifth-grade visit to The Center for Farmworker Families in Watsonville and a migrant camp, where students speak with and learn from the farmworkers who live and work close by. A culminating eighth-grade cultural exchange trip to Mexico is a rich opportunity for student leadership as they fundraise for the partner organization.

#### **5. The study of topics in an integrated way from a variety of disciplines**

Park Day has a rich history of integrated learning across disciplines. As students engage in their work, the themes of their studies radiate out from the core academic disciplines into arts,





language, environmental and physical education, as well as the Design+Make+Engage Program. The transformative power of the visual and performing arts, including social justice themes, are embedded in many cross disciplinary projects. The kindergarten through fifth grade Spanish and Music teachers integrate Spanish songs into schoolwide Friday Sings and plan rich experiences such as a half day “Celebremos el Español” of language and culture. The athletics program centers around collaboration and individual responsibility, reinforcing these ever-present classroom themes. The Design+Make+Engage Program supports teachers and students engaging in complex hands-on projects by applying curricular concepts, collaboration, cross-age mentoring, and exploring new technologies. Social and environmental justice themes are more often interwoven into projects. Systems thinking is emphasized, as students are asked to take on the thinking dispositions of designers, engineers, builders, and scientists.

## ***6. Support for children to develop a sense of social justice and become active participants in America’s democracy***

*“How can I be a changemaker and caretaker in my community and environment?” - 2018-2019 All-School Theme*

Social justice informs the heart of Park Day School. A key priority is that students develop a sense of agency to make a difference in the world and a duty to try. Graduates are equipped with an understanding of who they are within the context of a wider world and are empowered to be active participants in a democratic society. Park Day School has continually worked to be a leader in developing students’ political awareness and social engagement.

The social justice program at Park Day School is comprehensive and integrated into the curriculum and community. At each grade level, teachers engage students in intentional, age-appropriate





discussions of relevant social issues, often drawn from current events. These explorations are woven into academic units of study, service learning projects, and community-wide initiatives. Starting with kindergarten, students are challenged to probe and openly acknowledge the existence of bias in society and recognize how it manifests as discrimination and oppression, both in the past and present-day. By the eighth grade, students have developed social perspectives and the agency to thrive—and lead—as members of their broadening world. Park Day is a community of compassionate young people committed to helping make the world a better place.

## COMMUNITY

Alumni often remark upon how impactful their Park Day School experiences have been in shaping their world views. The deep involvement of both staff and parents is key to this outcome.

Park Day staff are deeply committed and work to create a school culture of respect, caring, and collaboration. Critical to this work is a longstanding tradition of strong teacher leadership and empowerment, with the question “What’s best for the child?” at the center of decision-making. Once a school that ran by consensus, the staff voice continues to be integral to both program and school governance. Faculty and administrators hold voting positions on the Board of Trustees, and have representation on committees including hiring, strategic planning, and budget. Much as the staff is preparing students to engage in a democracy, so do they strive to create this environment for themselves.

Beyond the classroom, the warm environment and wide range of events and activities for students and their families have created a strong and engaged community that sets Park Day School apart.





The parent community engages with passion by volunteering in classrooms, participating in campus cultural events, attending parent group and Board meetings, fundraising, and participating on committees and task forces. Parent education events are offered towards a goal of learning together as a community. The sense of community is highly valued by the students, teachers, and families.

## CAMPUS

Park Day School's campus is exceptionally lovely and offers a warm invitation to linger with nature. The appeal of the outdoor space supports the school's educational values of learning through play and interacting with the natural environment. The four acres are rich with greenery. The physical plant is comprised of seven buildings, and most classrooms and other indoor spaces have high ceilings and significant natural light. In addition to many distinct play areas, there are several notable campus features. Two large classroom buildings have a long history of serving women and children, formerly housing the Matilda E. Brown Ladies' Home Society of Oakland (the oldest nonprofit in California, dating to 1872). Surrounded by massive California oaks and a graceful Magnolia tree, the yurt is home to the learning garden program. The visually dynamic Innovation Workshop supports the Design+Make+Engage Program with 800-square-feet of flexible indoor-outdoor lab space. Finally, the Nature Zone is particularly unique, offering an outdoor area stocked with a "library" of natural items that students use for sculptures and play.

Park Day's campus stands on Lisjan Ohlone land and the school celebrates this history by paying Shuumi Land Tax to the Sogorea Te' land trust.





## OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

Oakland is rooted in a history of multicultural influences, a vibrant arts and music culture, and political activism that has influenced the nation. Oakland's cultural vibrancy is part of the secret sauce that Oaklanders embody in their daily lives. It's in dance its moves, lyrics, murals, paintings; the notes of its musicians, the wisdom of cultural bearers, the voices on the stage and in the streets, and in the words of its writers and poets. These creative expressions ensure that Oaklanders live, work, and play in a city where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

Oakland was named one of "28 Best Places to Visit in the World for 2019," according to National Geographic Traveler's Editors and Explorers. And National Geographic Traveler said "...Oakland's 'there there' is in its diversity, its distinction, its sense of place, its people."

Oakland has been shaped by the people who have moved into the city from around the world. With a significant influx of African Americans relocating from the Deep South in the 1940s, and decades of immigrants who landed here from all over the world, Oakland is widely known as one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the U.S. More than 65% of Oakland residents identify as non-white. As a result, Oakland has long been a richly multicultural city. It has been the birthplace for social justice movements such as the Black Panther party to the current day Radical Monarchs, is home to a vibrant Chinatown district, and holds its place in music history as the West Coast hub for jazz and blues.

Today, Oakland is the trade center of the San Francisco Bay Area. Approximately \$41 billion in international trade moves through the Oakland Port, making it the fifth-busiest port in the United States. The city is a hub for large corporations, nationally recognized nonprofits, and most recently





tech companies and green energy startups. As the tech boom and the social impact movement has fueled the local economy, Oakland continues to attract young, well-educated professionals to plant their roots and grow their families.

The emergence of nationally recognized restaurants, booming art galleries, music venues, and independent shops and nightlife have drawn the attention of travelers. The New York Times has named Oakland as the #1 place to visit in the U.S. With Oakland's mild climate – averaging 260 sunny days each year, the city has consistently been named the #1 climate of all U.S. cities.

Oakland residents enjoy life outdoors. The East Bay Regional Parks system includes incredible land preserves no more than 15 minutes from any part of the city. In Oakland's center is perhaps the city's most popular outdoor attraction: Lake Merritt. A large tidal lagoon, the lake features popular walking and jogging paths, and its "Necklace of Lights" illuminates its entire perimeter each night.

With the greatest number of artists per capita in the United States, Oakland's art scene is seeing a resurgence. The Oakland Art Mural is a street art festival held the first Friday of every month. Jack London Square, the Fox Theater, and the Paramount Theatre all serve as venues for theater tours, music groups, art events, and more. Sports fans will also enjoy access to the Bay Area's professional sports teams including the Raiders, the Golden State Warriors, and the Oakland A's. With the Oakland Zoo, Oakland Museum of California, Chabot Space and Science Center, and the Oakland Aviation Museum, there are many places to spend time.

With its burgeoning economy, blissful weather, wealth of attractions, outdoor experiences, and natural beauty, Oakland is a city like no other.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND THE FUTURE

At its core, Park Day is a deeply aspirational community celebrating more than 40 of years of success in its endeavors. The Head of School will work closely with the Board of Trustees and staff in setting and leading the next phase of the school's strategic vision. Within the framework of the school's progressive education mission and values are opportunities for the next Head of School to further distinguish Park Day as an exceptional school.

### **Deepening Progressive Education Mission and Values**

Park Day School has been an incubator for developing child-centered educational practices. Its social justice mission, values, principles, and practices continue to evolve. The Design+Make+Engage Program, alongside Park Day's established project-based learning, the East Bay Mini Maker Faire, and Park Day's relationship with Harvard's Agency by Design project, offer tremendous opportunity for the school, particularly with regards to the educational movement to bring maker-centered learning into more schools across the nation. The next Head will help to leverage these assets as Park Day School pushes forward while maintaining its excellent reputation as a role model school for progressive education.

### **Working Toward Financial Abundance**

Looking ahead, Park Day School seeks a leader who has a proficient understanding of the interdependencies between program, admissions, and finances. The school seeks ways to enhance the culture of philanthropy amid the changing economic landscape in the Bay Area in the interest of raising staff salaries to support the goals of retention and increasing diversity among staff. The next Head of School will also work with the Board and the community to raise the capital necessary for ensuring the financial stability and future growth of the school.

### **Pursuing Greater Access and Affordability**

The five-year projected demographic shifts for the Oakland Metro Area (NAIS demographics center) indicate strong opportunities to increase both the school's diversity as well as its fundraising goals and alternate revenue streams so that the school can advance its purpose of diversity, equity, and inclusion, which includes compensation, financial aid, and program initiatives. Park Day is strongly and uniquely positioned to ride the crest of these trends.

### **Articulating the Value Proposition**

Clarifying the school's vision and strategically communicating its message to prospective families in the competitive market will be key to the success of the next Head of School. As progressive practices are being adopted by a growing number of schools, public and private, Park Day will need to highlight itself as a nationally-recognized leader in progressive education.

### **Nurturing the Community**

The school has experienced several transitions, including interim heads, after a history marked by tremendous staff longevity. Looking forward, the incoming Head of School will prioritize partnering with and nurturing its diverse, energetic, and passionate community.



## QUALIFICATIONS AND QUALITIES OF THE NEXT HEAD OF SCHOOL

### Professional Characteristics

The next Head of School at Park Day School is driven by the belief that the world can be a better place by supporting a community of learners who are encouraged to be empathic, take risks, think creatively, and stand up for themselves and others. Successful candidates will be:

- A highly effective leader who sets the tone for the community and inspires everyone around them to excellence in achieving Park Day's vision and mission.
- An educator imbued with deep knowledge of progressive pedagogy and an articulate advocate for the values of progressive education, bringing a learning and teaching orientation to all interpersonal interactions.
- A forward-thinking visionary who is able to lead change while holding true to the founding principles of the school.
- A reflective and confident leader, versed in the practice of collaborative leadership, who builds consensus, serves as a role model of transparency, builds trust among the entire community, and who has the humility to acknowledge and reflect on their personal journey in the realm of social justice and privilege.
- A skilled practitioner of social justice, diversity, and inclusion, and who is committed to fostering and sustaining a truly inclusive and diverse community that celebrates differences, including racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, sexual orientation, and gender identity.
- A strong communicator who is energized by actively engaging in ongoing dialogue that fosters community growth.
- An experienced administrator facile in all aspects of independent school administration, with proven skills in building and leading a high-performing administrative team across all functions including academic program, financial management, enrollment, philanthropy, facilities, and operations.

### Personal Characteristics

A successful candidate must possess a love of children and the distinctive environment that Park Day School has created and sustained for them. The students have expressed that they would like the next Head of School to be someone who is a good listener and who has a great sense of humor.

The ideal candidate is inspired and invigorated by performing the fine art of balancing the dynamics of multiple stakeholders. Park Day School seeks someone who is warm, approachable, empathic, down-to-earth, and relishes knowing and being known by everyone in the community. This thoughtful and decisive manager enjoys being a mentor to their administrative team and an ally and inspiration to faculty. As a school in which everyone participates in the individual journey to overcome implicit bias, the next Head should be comfortable acknowledging their own journey. The next Head will be a diplomatic facilitator and consensus-seeker who listens with an open mind to the passionate opinions of the teachers, parents, students, and alumni, and connects all to find common ground and focus on the whole picture.



## To APPLY

Interested and qualified candidates should submit electronically in one email and as separate documents (preferably as PDFs) the following materials:

- Cover letter articulating your fit with the values and needs of Park Day School
- Current résumé
- Personal Statement
- A list of five professional references with name, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate's permission) to:

### **Bob Fricker**

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