

CREATING A CULTURE OF COLLEGIALITY AND INNOVATION

HILLBROOK SCHOOL

REACHING BEYOND CLASSROOM AND CAMPUS

SCHOOL
Hillbrook School
Los Gatos, CA

GRADE LEVELS
Junior K-8

PRESENTERS
Mark Silver
Head of School
Ilsa Dohmen
Director of Teaching & Learning

HISTORY

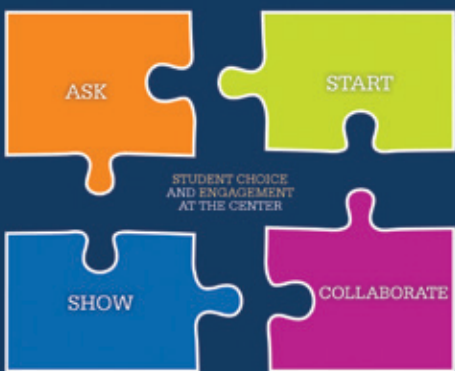
HILLBROOK SCHOOL (CA) is a coeducational, independent, junior kindergarten–8th grade school located on 14 acres of oak woodland in the heart of Silicon Valley. Founded in 1935, Hillbrook School remains deeply connected to its historical roots as a school where children are known, learning is authentic and active, and success is measured one child at a time. During the past 80 years, we have grown and evolved from a small boarding school serving wards of the state, to one of the leading independent schools in the Bay Area. Our vision remains the same: to inspire children to achieve their dreams and reach beyond themselves to make a difference in the world. Our talented faculty delivers a program that provides more than 350 students with a unique blend of challenging and engaging academics, visual and performing arts, passion-driven projects, and opportunities to serve and partner with others in our community.

IMPERATIVE

As a school, we have been on a journey to meet our vision, which is to inspire students to achieve their dreams and reach beyond themselves to make a difference in the world. This vision, deeply connected to our historical roots as a progressive school from the 1930s, challenges us to rethink traditional educational approaches and to provide a program that places student choice and engagement at the center of the learning process. While many schools are preparing children for a world of the past, we want to prepare children for a future that we cannot yet imagine.

How do we do it? The Hillbrook Way, a culture that guides everyone from our youngest learners to our most seasoned faculty members. The Hillbrook Way captures our conviction that the creation and continual renewal of culture—not just the implementation of specific strategic initiatives is what enables us to continually find innovative ways to better meet our vision and mission. While two ambitious and successful strategic plans have guided our actions, the commitment to the Hillbrook Way creates the environment in which innovation emerges from throughout our community, as adults and students embrace the opportunity to ask, start, collaborate, and show.

THE HILLBROOK WAY



ASK • START • COLLABORATE • SHOW

IDEAS

LAUNCH A 1:1 IPAD PROGRAM

- ▶ We created the foundation for how we manage change with one of the first **1:1 IPAD PROGRAMS**. Weeks after the iPad was launched in 2010, we started a pilot program with one grade. Two years later, we implemented the program throughout the school.
- ▶ This move toward more personalized, dynamic learning inspired several other day hikes that have transformed our program.

REIMAGINE LEARNING SPACES

- ▶ The shift to iPads opened up our old computer lab, which became our first “agile classroom” called the iLab. **WE LAUNCHED A SERIES OF TEACHER-LED RESEARCH STUDIES** in this fishbowl learning space, and have become a national leader in the conversation of how physical space measurably affects student learning.
- ▶ Flexible furniture, wiggle stools, whiteboard tables, and more changes to classrooms show our commitment to student-centered learning. As our spaces evolved to **INCREASE STUDENT CHOICE, MOVEMENT, OWNERSHIP, AND INCLUSION**, so did our program offerings.
- ▶ In an effort to expand student and teacher learning beyond our campus in 2017 we opened a **SATELLITE SPACE IN DOWNTOWN SAN JOSE, AT A WEWORK COWORKING FACILITY**.

UNLEASH STUDENT-DIRECTED LEARNING

- ▶ Starting with the creation of the iLab, one of the first makerspaces in the country, we have been pushing the boundaries about how to create student-directed learning throughout our campus.
- ▶ **PROBLEM-BASED SCIENCE, INDEPENDENT LEARNING EXTENSIONS** across lower school, independent study time in fifth and sixth grades, culminating in an **EIGHTH GRADE CAPSTONE PROJECT**, commit time each week to students pursuing passions and developing their own projects.
- ▶ **REACH BEYOND WEEK** pushes all sixth- through eighth-grade students and faculty out of the classroom. A typical school schedule turns into weeklong, real-world learning excursions, collaboratively designed by faculty and chosen by students based on interest.

- ▶ **A NEW SCHEDULE FOR THE 2018-2019 SCHOOL YEAR** increases flexibility for students and teachers, allowing for increased opportunities for interdisciplinary, cross-grade learning, and for experiences that reach beyond our campus.

REDESIGN ADULT LEARNING

- ▶ Utilizing a design-thinking approach with all employees, we collectively determined **OUR FACULTY AND STAFF NEED THREE THINGS FOR SUCCESSFUL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS, CHOICE, AND ENGAGEMENT**.
- ▶ We have used these touchstones to design new professional learning structures (including an overnight employee retreat, open collaboration times, protocol groups like instructional rounds and SEED, program audits, and research and development days).

LAUNCH THE SCOTT CENTER FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- ▶ We’re helping students reach beyond themselves and make a difference in the world with one of the only social entrepreneurship programs in the world for elementary school students. In fall 2017, we launched the program and have already embarked on several day hikes. We used our WeWork space to **PARTNER WITH KIVA TO CREATE A STUDENT LENDING CLUB AND OFF-CAMPUS ELECTIVE**; designed an **ETHICAL FASHION PROGRAM** as part of our newly launched Reach Beyond Week; hosted lunches with social impact, entrepreneurial, and community leaders throughout Silicon Valley; and **PARTNERED WITH MOUNT VERNON INSTITUTE FOR INNOVATION IN ATLANTA** to see how schools across the country could work together to introduce social entrepreneurship into the K-12 space.

ATTRACT, RETAIN, AND ENGAGE LATINO FAMILIES

- ▶ In order to better meet our vision of being an intentionally diverse community, we are seeking to **BETTER UNDERSTAND THE EXPERIENCES OF UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS**. This year, focus groups will connect to Latino families, the least represented community at independent schools in Silicon Valley.

IMPLEMENTATION

- ▶ Start with your “why”, and then keep reminding people of the “why.”
- ▶ “Culture eats strategy for lunch.” Strategic plans are helpful, but only in the context of a culture that embraces growth and change.
- ▶ Clarify who you are—and who you aren’t—and fight the urge to compromise too quickly when faced with setbacks.
- ▶ Sit with ambiguity. Do not rush to resolve tensions that can lead to productive change and unexpected learnings.
- ▶ Embrace questioning and a bias toward starting.
- ▶ Build structures and systems to nurture, sustain, and transmit culture, knowing that the school is always evolving and that the most important role for a leadership team is to ensure that people understand the why and the how.