Cari Amici,

As my 10th year at La Scuola comes to an end, I continue to marvel every day at how much La Scuola has grown and continues to grow. I feel privileged to be part of this growth. There is an energy and vitality at La Scuola every day that is contagious. This past school year, we engaged in strategic planning, started the Middle School, became an IB MYP (International Baccalaureate for the Middle Years) candidate school, and completed the application process to become a Scuola Parificata, an Italian School accredited by the Italian government.

We continue to believe in educating children to become caring individuals, problem solvers, innovative thinkers, and happy and engaged global citizens who will make the world a better place.

Thanks to your support, our Annual Fund and La Dolce Vita gala were once again successful and allowed us to raise our tuition assistance budget allocation to 13% of our annual net tuition revenue and to offer it to 27% of our families. Our diversity and inclusion goals are ambitious, but with your help we can get there. Thank you for supporting La Scuola on our journey from a small Italian language playgroup into a PreK-8 Reggio-inspired, IB, and Italian immersion independent international school!

None of the rich and complex educational experiences that we offer could happen without our world-class, committed, and hardworking teachers, dedicated leadership, and administration team, our vibrant community of parents and friends of La Scuola, and our curious, creative, and capable students.

In the words of Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the Reggio Emilia approach, “All of this is a great forest. Inside the forest is the child. The forest is beautiful, fascinating, green, and full of hopes; there are no paths. Although it isn’t easy, we have to make our own paths, as teachers and children and families, in the forest. Sometimes we find ourselves together within the forest, sometimes we may get lost from each other, sometimes we’ll greet each other from far away across the forest; but it’s living together in this forest that is important.”

We hope that you will enjoy this glimpse into the hundred languages of children and adults that we explore every day at La Scuola!

Nothing Without Joy! Niente Senza Gioia!

Con Stima,

VALENTINA IMBENI, PH.D.
Head of School
THERE ARE MANY images of the child, and many images of childhood. We need only think of psychoanalysis or the various branches of psychology and sociology. Though these theories are quite different, they tend to have one recurring aspect in common: the deterministic identification of the child as a weak subject, a person with needs rather than rights. The image of the child is above all a cultural, and therefore social and political convention that makes it possible to recognize, or not, certain qualities and potential in children, and to construe expectations and contexts that give value to such qualities and potential or, on the contrary, to negate them. What we believe about children thus becomes a determining factor in defining their social and ethical identity, their rights and the educational and life context offered to them. Our image at La Scuola, views children as strong, powerful, and rich in potential and resources, right from the moment of birth. As Loris Malaguzzi wrote, “it is the image of the child who, from the moment of birth, is so engaged in developing a relationship with the world, and intent on experiencing the world that he or she develops a complex system of abilities, learning strategies and ways of organising relationships." In this sense, we share the values and meaning of the constructivist and social constructivist approaches. We see a child who is driven by the enormous energy potential of a hundred billion neurons, and by the incredible curiosity that makes the child search for reasons for everything, and who has all the strength and potential that comes from the ability to wonder and to be amazed. A child is powerful from the moment of birth because of being open to the world, and capable of constructing his or her own knowledge.

LA SCUOLA’S BOARD OF DIRECTORS appreciates your investment in La Scuola and with your investment La Scuola continues to Inspire Brave Learners to Shape the Future. This year the board underwent the strategic planning process, completed a campaign feasibility study and searched for a new building for our elementary and middle school campus. All of these efforts required the community’s time and energy to attend strategic planning sessions, participate in interviews or suggest property locations. The investment of the community’s time and energy demonstrate its dedication to La Scuola’s growth. Furthermore, parents, grandparents, friends and community organizations invested the funds necessary to provide our students, faculty and administration with the resources necessary to fulfill our mission. Most importantly, at La Dolce Vita, the community renewed its commitment to sharing La Scuola through our tuition assistance program. Grazie mille for joining us as we continue to create an incredible school.

SERRA FALK GOLDMAN
La Scuola Board Co-Chair

REGGIO EMILIA PHILOSOPHY

WHAT IS OUR IMAGE OF THE CHILD AND CHILDHOOD?

“The ‘Reggio Approach’ in other parts of the world, outside Reggio Emilia only makes sense if we are capable of re-inventing it, if we are capable of understanding the context we work in, the values in which each culture believes, and then compare these with what Reggio has been capable of creating in its own specific context, and with its own resources.”

Howard Gardner 2012
I celebrate your growth this year.
I have an image of you in my mind at Caritas Creek. On tall grass by the bank was a dragonfly completing its metamorphosis into full maturity by shedding its youthful skin right in front of our eyes!
You, young scholars, have experienced similar metamorphoses this year.

DOUGLAS LOWNEY
IB PYP/MYP Coordinator and Curriculum Director
During the Summer of 2017, La Scuola’s Board of Directors reviewed its achievements against the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan and began the process of assembling a steering committee to lead the school community in the creation of the next strategic plan for 2018-2023. Led by Trustees Lama Nachman and Claudia Volpi, and independent consultant Judith Glickman, the committee, made up of faculty, administrators and parents, designed a process and timeline for the community to discuss the opportunities and challenges facing the school over the next five years.

Focus groups were held at both campuses throughout the Fall, culminating in a large strategic planning retreat on November 4th, where teams worked on discussing the feedback that emerged from the focus groups to articulate the new strategic plan goals.

This Spring, task forces have been looking deeper into certain topics: how to meaningfully attract and retain our educators; how to engage within our campuses and our local community to affect our diversity and inclusion goals; how to think out of the box as an independent school to ensure that we can thrive financially. This work will culminate this summer with the writing of La Scuola’s strategic plan for 2018-2023. Yet, as is typical for La Scuola, our teams are already hard at work to achieve our new dreams: the facilities committee is actively working to secure a permanent home for our K8 campus; our Middle Years Program candidacy is filed with the IB Organization and the 5/6 graders are already developing the skills they need to transition into this new curriculum framework and our Diversity and Inclusion committee is preparing a community-wide survey for Fall 2018 to benchmark our progress over the next five years.

To learn more or to get involved, contact development@lascuolasf.org.

Claudia Volpi
Strategic Planning Committee Co-Chair,
La Scuola Board Member

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1. **Permanence**
To build a place that furthers the magic of our community, spaces and programs

2. **Nurture + Grow**
To nurture the professional growth of our team and continue to attract and retain the best educators

3. **Heart + Mind**
To integrate the richness and strength of the IB framework with the intentionality and creativity of the Rggio Emilia Pedagogy to ensure that our students understand the world and create their

4. **Community**
To preserve our unique multiculturalism and further diversity, inclusivity and equity within our community

5. **Thriveability**
To transition from sustainability to thriveability
PRESCHOOL

WITH REGARD TO the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum this year, the teachers were looking for new spaces and possibilities for dialogue to support a vision for a better and more peaceful world that is grounded in an intercultural understanding. The interdisciplinary approach at the preschool embraces the challenge of uncertainty and accepts the complexity brought by the wealth of knowledge each child has. We are able to see the agency in learning within the group dynamic through our documentation.

The following are the contributions from the Piccoli, Grandi Azzurri, Grandi Arancioni, Grandi Verdi, Grandissimi Arancioni, and Grandissimi Verdi classes. These six contributions reflect six different experiences motivated by the desire to know each other and identify ourselves as a community, as children, and as human beings. Every day we are listening to one another, playing with words, and engaging through action to find out what possible outcomes can be found.

MASSIMO FERRARI
Grandissimi Arancioni Head Teacher and IB Coordinator for the Early Years

PICCOLI

Piccoli’s moon project has evolved throughout the school year: it began as an exploration of the colors black and white using different tools that allowed the children to experiment and really enjoy the sensory learning process. From these two colors, the children moved naturally to the concept of dark and light and a new exploration began. They used cloths to create dark spaces within the classroom and flashlights to explore them, as well as books and storytelling in the dark in order for them to fully experience and deepen the understanding of these concepts. Some of the books sparked the interest of the children for two new concepts: day and night (which derive from both the black and white and dark and light dichotomy). The children were particularly interested in the moon, its shape, color and phases so the teachers supported this new path by offering books, videos, pictures and also having guests talk about the moon during Assemblea. We learned that the moon doesn’t change its shape but it appears different because of the light that comes from the sun, that it can have many colors and that there are craters on it, so it’s not a perfect circle.

Piccoli decided to dedicate a corner of the classroom to the night sky: they chose the colors of the sky and hung the sky on the wall. They also decided to make moons at first with clay, then they used plaster to make bigger and tridimensional ones, painting them with the colors so we could study and observe during our Assemblea. One of our books also gave Piccoli the idea to build a VERY BIG REAL ladder in order for them to reach the moon. Thanks to the help from some of our parents, we managed all together to build a real ladder out of wood and to paint it light purple (which is the color that they voted for by raising their hands during Assemblea). Piccoli are now working on reaching their moons with their ladder.

GRANDI AZZURRI

Grandi Azzurri began the school year with an inquiry into the concept of identity, approached mainly from two perspectives: the identity of the individual and that of the group, a group made up of individuals who bring their own competencies to be shared with the others. Within our class we identified four main groups: gardeners, builders, artists, and musicians, from which emerged a reflection on how it may be possible to circulate our knowledge. The project of the Forest Song all began from the group of musicians who decided to create a song for the entire class. This idea was developed by involving all of the competencies and languages that children are familiar with and was subsequently divided into five phases. The children began by putting the first notes and words together, transforming a story into a song. To then give form to the story, characters and the forest
GRANDI ARANCIONI

At the beginning of the year, the children explored the concept of identity through the story. The class has shared a story daily that has been graphically represented in a notebook that, over time, has become the book of the Grandi Arancioni. During the project for the annual exhibit, the children created dialogues between the shapes of the leaves and the materials, between their identity and nature, and between the colors and the seasons, through an always active dialogue and research. We supported their positive attitude by offering them new challenging materials, such as different kind of papers, wires, glass, plaster, clay, wood, and fabrics.

Toward the end of the year, with the introduction of the sign in and the calendar created by the children, the class took its first steps towards new skills, writing and reading.

GRANDI VERDI

Grandi Verdi have been exploring the diversity among our families, the different languages we speak and the different places that our families come from. In Assemblea, we asked the children to pick a word that could represent us, comprising all of our differences. The children, by raising their hand, voted to use the word “bambino.” Using this as the foundation for our learning, we sought to discover the cultural and linguistic differences in our communities.

With the generous help of our families, parents visited the classroom to share their cultures with us. Our exploration focused on language and culture, told through the stories, typical products, music, and food from their home countries. By learning about our diverse backgrounds, the children have developed both an understanding of and an appreciation for the communities that we come from. At La Scuola, we celebrate our unique differences and believe that our diversity enhances school life for both individuals and groups.

GRANDISSIMI ARANCIONI

Grandissimi Arancioni explored family dynamics, roles and responsibilities by building the appropriate setting for dramatic play and inventing stories: a house. During the first months of the school year, the children transformed our classroom into a home with characteristic rooms and elements: a washing machine, a patchwork blanket, a garden, a kitchen and much more. The Grandissimi Arancioni were the architects and interior designers, as well as members of many diverse families they created together. The children interacted in a fully functional setting every day at school and analyzed relationships, diversities, and interactions by making personal connections to their lives; ultimately setting a facilitated path for conscious social-emotional growth.

GRANDISSIMI VERDI

Imagine bering on a spaceship that travels through the black outer
KINDERGARTEN

Five-year-olds at La Scuola understand that Art can be used to communicate & express ideas and feelings. Through sight, sound and touch they notice what the artist may want others to experience. Through provocation and dialogue, and many opportunities for creating, Kindergarteners developed their knowledge about Art during their How We Express Ourselves transdisciplinary unit: Read me a picture, Draw me a song. Their early ideas include one students description, “Art is designed to express something like a feeling.” As they developed their inquiry, they moved into the role of the artist and what does a masterpiece mean; one student shares, “It’s me and I am flying, it makes me feel like I am moving a lot.”

1ST GRADE


“It’s a bit rough. It’s a bit smooth. There’s a cut. There are dots. There is a hole. It is cold. It is lightweight. I think it is one of the things used outdoors to lock a door.” Mackenzie and her 1st grade classmates are finding out about properties of materials experiences, in their final personal expression of Art - rich of emotion, for others to experience and understand, “It’s me and I am flying, it makes me feel like I am moving a lot.”

2ND GRADE

Four images: seashells, an Inca coin, a Euro coin and an American dollar. What do you see, think, wonder? Grade 2 students launch their inquiry into exchange through a Thinking Routine, developed through Project Zero at Harvard University. Thinking routines foster the 100 Languages, and inspire students to voice prior knowledge, make connections and comparisons - and wonder.
In their transdisciplinary inquiry, *How We Organize Ourselves*, students in La Scuola’s second grade classroom learn how people exchange goods and services based on their needs and values. Further into the unit inquiry, captivating conversations unfold, fostered by adult educators sharing real life stories in our local and global communities. Let’s listen to our students: Voice 1, “I think everyone should be paid equally, it doesn’t matter what kind of job they do. Equal pay is the fair thing to do.” Voice 2, “Well, but people who do easy jobs should not get paid the same as who does a very difficult job. I think that if you put more effort and choose to do something difficult, you should be paid more.” Voice 3, “I think that we should work to pay for the things we need and then donate the extra to those who don’t have all they need to live and be healthy.” Their inquiry led to their design of a fundraiser (trading hygiene accessories for baked goods); after which they organized hand-sewn bags chock full of accessories, and donated to a local family support center. IB learners taking action.

**3RD-4TH GRADES**

You know you’ve walked into a Grade 3-4 inquiry, observing students research and unpack the central idea, Indigenous peoples develop identities through beliefs, customs, and various traditions. Tuning into the inquiry, students record words and sentences that came to mind when thinking of ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Culture,’ two very important concepts that are explored. There is discussion of colonization and research into historical timelines, always with a focus on Indigenous peoples. Tinkering with tule and other natural materials, students create boats - for their field trip to Coyote Hills - to see if they float in a marsh surrounded by cattails and Tule! They left the classroom behind, for Coyote Hills Regional Park, to learn the history of the Ohlone peoples. “We walked along a boardwalk through a marsh of Tule and cattails! I felt like I was discovering something new!” “We explored a village where Ohlone people lived and were buried. I was surprised to see that shells brought by the Ohlone were still on that territory!” The inquiry deepens fully through rich and lively stories about elders, and students make connections to their highly respected older members in their family and communities. Reflective and Caring IB Learners!

**FROM PAGE 7**

space... silence and darkness is all around you. At some point, on the horizon you begin to see a small group of stars: you decide to approach. The closer you get, the more you realize that it’s a galaxy, a group of stars and planets that flow in the universe according to a pre-established order. Fascinated by its elements, you decide to enter. Now, you see countless bright stars of different shapes and colors. Along with the stars, there are some planets that revolve around the brightest star: the Sun. Among all the planets, you see one in particular, it’s a blue one. It seems that there is water on it, as well as a variety of landscapes. Here you are! This is our destination, this is the Earth!

Once you land on the Earth and have secured the spaceship, you want to go for an adventure, you are about to discover deserts, forests, mountains, the Poles, until you see the only artificial landscape: the city. Each and every building has similar traits and characteristics due to the needs of its inhabitants who live there.

Finally, after years of exploration, you find the city that reflects your needs: Montacqua. Montacqua, named for its geographical features: the mighty river, and the majestic mountain. This small city is known for its curious and creative inhabitants who have created a small piece of paradise thanks to their spirit of observation, their way of planning and their development of scientific-mathematical concepts. In the city of Montacqua you can play, work, and study in order to become an inhabitant of the Future World.

This is the story of our class, of how we have grown over time by collaborating, adapting, sharing our needs and thoughts with one another. This is how the World works according to the Grandissimi Verdi.
La Scuola’s pioneer class of 2020 proudly celebrates the completion of our first year of Middle School. Key accomplishments include participating in a new independent school athletic league, launching a drama program, publicly presenting student-led independent inquiry in our PYP Exhibition, and engaging in five days of experiential learning in field science and personal development during our final PYP inquiry. This year, La Scuola applied for and was granted candidacy to launch the **IB Middle Years Program (MYP)** in September 2018. We currently offer San Francisco’s only IB Primary Years Program. In the fall, we will begin implementation as the city’s only MYP school. The IB Middle Years Program will extend our commitment to engage in constructivist inquiry-based learning and develop students’ transdisciplinary learning skills. One significant difference between PYP and MYP is that from next September Middle School students will follow discipline-specific courses. The eight required MYP courses are: Language and Literature (Italian and English), Acquired Languages (Italian and Spanish), Individuals and Societies, Mathematics, Sciences, Arts, P.E. and Health, and Design. We have designed English Language and Literature and Individuals and Societies as a single interdisciplinary Humanities course.

"... I FELT LIKE I WAS DISCOVERING SOMETHING NEW!"
K-8 ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

FIELD TRIPS throughout the year get us out and about to a variety of habitats in the greater Bay Area. In addition, as we grow our on-site Environmental Studies program, we are starting to bring animal visitors to the school. This school year, a visiting bat with NorCalBats helped students understand echolocation, a rescued owl with the Hungry Owl Project helped unpack animal nocturnal adaptations, and an exciting live honeybee demonstration hive from the SF Beekeepers Association engaged students in learning about insect cooperation. We hope these experiences (and more in the future!) will continue to develop our students’ ecoliteracy, while also inspiring them to find ways to better care for our planet.

PRESCHOOL GARDEN

GRANDI ARANCIONI spent a good part of the year studying leaves and trees. In the garden we explored all of the kinds of leaves that we can eat - kale, lettuce, mint, oregano, rosemary and sage. We studied many different types of leaves and discussed their similarities and differences. The children also reflected on what kind of leaf they might be - if they were a leaf. We then began looking at trees - specifically, the fruit trees at La Scuola. We have plum, pear, apple, cherry, apricot, persimmon, lemon, and fig trees in our yard and garden! The children observed that most of the fruit trees had lost their leaves, which led to a month-long inquiry into the seasonal cycle of a fruit tree. Our inquiry began in winter, when the trees had lost their leaves, but spring was coming soon, and some of the trees had begun to bud and blossom. We studied the branches of these trees, and eventually decided to make our own book about a cherry tree. The children created each unique page that chronicled its life from tiny seed, to tree, then buds, blossoms, leaves, and finally fruit - eating the fruit - and finding the seed inside to plant again. The children’s year culminated with a field trip to Flora Grubb nursery, where the children voted on a fruit tree to purchase and take back to La Scuola to plant. We looked at all of the trees available - some which we already had at La Scuola - and it came down to a calamondin tree and a dragonfruit tree. The children voted on the calamondin tree (similar fruit to kumquats), which we brought back and planted into the soil. It is growing just outside their classroom for next year next to the Grandissimi mini playground.
Our Tinkering Studio offers students the chance to celebrate the wonder of learning through constructionist (hands-on) inquiry-based activities.

**TASKS AND CHALLENGES** assigned to students are planned with intentionality in mind as they have a purpose and are connected to units of focus. Our Tinkering program is premised upon innovation and creation and honors the Reggio Emilia approach of recognizing the environment as a ‘third teacher’. We view Tinkering as a pedagogy, not just an activity. It activates student enthusiasm and enables students to be active participants in their learning in new and exciting ways. Tinkering also honors our transdisciplinary approach to learning as it can be incorporated into any discipline of focus. A Tinkering project that was born out of student-initiated action carried out by our 3/4’s involved the creation of games (using recycled materials) that could be played in our La Scuola arcade.

In their final unit of the school year, the Grade 3-4 class created string instruments from scratch using recycled and non-recycled materials for their final Tinkering project. They sanded and drilled into the necks of their instruments and then attached them to recycled boxes that served as their resonators. After adding frets and strings to their instruments they recorded their own pieces of music using the instruments they created.
TINKERING IN PRESCHOOL

THIS YEAR we began to introduce the idea of tinkering within our school curriculum. In some classes, teachers started experimenting with tinkering projects (building a scribbling machine and an airport) in collaboration with the children to discover their theories and interests.

But what does “tinkering” mean?

Tinkering is an approach to learning, a laboratory, an environment, a way of experimenting. To tinker is to construct meaning by engaging in activities that value creativity and exploration based on the abilities and knowledge of everyone involved.

One thing that makes tinkering so unique is that it lies at the intersection of science, art, and technology. By actively building, observing, and experimenting, children are confronted with physical phenomena and scientific concepts such as mass, force, balance, speed, electrical conductivity, rotations and oscillations. Children have the opportunity to deepen and link concepts connected to the IB units of inquiry, while at the same time are using their imaginations to create original inventions that both they and their teachers are very proud of!

“A Scribbling Machine is a motorized contraption that moves in unusual ways and leaves a mark to trace its path. Through this activity, children tried to understand the relationship between the concepts of speed and circular movements together.”

“Creating some paper airplanes, children decided to create a landing line and the control tower with simple materials. After thinking of the form of the tower, they began to build it using the concepts of length, height and thickness in relation with the landing line.”
Diversity is a tricky business, especially at an independent school with a European language immersion program. However, just because things might be challenging, like we ask our children, we lean into this challenge with conscious bravery. The good news is that every year La Scuola is becoming more and more diverse. For example, last year we had 29 languages spoken in the homes of La Scuola families. Next year, that number has increased to 33 languages. This is exciting news and only supports the fact that diversity is baked into our very DNA. What a wonderful gift that each of these families bring, not just with the unique languages they bring, but with the rich cultural experiences that accompany language and diverse lens in which to see the world. Additionally, with regards to economic diversity, that number is increasing as well. Last year, 21% of families were receiving tuition assistance, while next year it is projected that 27% of families will receive some tuition assistance. While not a perfect measure, economic diversity does help to add to the richness of experiences and the complexity of how we navigate our world. Once again, the trajectory of both these factors indicate an upward trend, one that is aligned with our values of diversity and inclusivity. Sexual Orientation and Family structure seem to have plateaued at the moment, with children coming from LGBTQ families increasing to 4% (from 3%) and single parent households still hovering around 1%. Of course these numbers are small, but they help in an important way with classroom discussions about the diversity of how we organize ourselves and the rights of self-determination, both of which are La Scuola values. The ethnicity numbers are still being calculated at the time of this article, but last year, the self-reported persons of color percentage was 21% (non-Caucasian). Simply stated, we are not satisfied with this baseline number. In response, the diversity committee in conjunction with the Admissions Office has some preliminary work on outreach to specific communities of color and we are optimistic that over time this number will increase as well. We are even planning a comprehensive climate survey and diversity self-assessment in the Fall to help guide us in our endeavors. So thank you to all of you, as you bring your unique personal experiences to La Scuola and help us to make our community a more thoughtful and inclusive place in which we all can learn together. Buon estate!

Richard Barghetto
Diversity and Inclusion Committee Co-Chair, La Scuola Board Member

"... Next year it is projected that 27% of families will receive some tuition assistance."
94,500
ORGANIC MEALS SERVED FROM SCRATCH AT THE PRESCHOOL

487
BOOKS DONATED TO OUR LIBRARIES

200+
SEEDLINGS STARTED IN THE K-8 GARDEN

100+
LEMON VERBENA LEAVES SNIFFED

$70,000
SPENT ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR STAFF

29
LANGUAGES SPOKEN
MEGAN REED
GRANDISSIMI ARANCIONI TEACHER

I will never forget the moment I discovered my fascination and love for the Italian language. On my first trip to Europe when I was twelve, my family spent a week in Tuscany. I was nothing short of star struck when I heard my friend’s dad joking around in Italian with some friendly locals. So, many years later when I went to college and was choosing a foreign language, the choice was obvious. My desire for an authentic study abroad experience lead me to the charming town of Ferrara where I lived and breathed everything Italian. I will always remember the meandering bike rides on top of the medieval city wall, the exquisite capellacci di zucca, and the initially challenging but ultimately delightful experience of living in a small town in Italy. Fast forward to the spring of my graduation year – an unbelievably serendipitous conversation with a stranger on an airplane lead me to learn about the Reggio Approach, and shortly thereafter, discover La Scuola. Now in my third year as a teacher here, I am inspired by the daily commitment to innovation and creativity. I cherish the unique opportunity to grow as a teacher alongside curious, caring, and reflective students and colleagues. During my professional development week in Reggio Emilia last spring, I remember a pedagogista saying that nature is such a powerful and reoccurring theme in the city’s preschools because it is one of the few things that children are eternally fascinated by. It is ever changing, full of surprises and wonder—both beautifully simple and extraordinarily complex at the same time. As an enthusiast of the outdoors myself, it has been my focus and commitment to bring the natural world into the classroom. Bringing these ideas to life motivates and inspires me to cultivate a love of learning alongside my students day after day.

MELINA MADRIGAL
GRADE 3-4 ITALIAN LANGUAGE TEACHER and
GRADE 5-6 HUMANITIES TEACHER

A native of Los Angeles, Melina first began studying Italian at university and as resident nerd-alert, has never stopped studying it. She first went to Italy with the EAP study abroad program and instantly felt at home and happy adopting the European way of life for the year abroad. She then pursued her Ph.D. in Italian at UCLA and upon earning it, immediately set out for a much needed year of rest, relaxation, fun, and exploration. Melina traveled for an entire year, trekking across Nepal, India, and Sri Lanka before tackling South America, where she never thought it was possible to eat so much chiccharon and dance so much cumbia. While traveling, she would occasionally check her bank account and after an initial scream would ponder how exactly she was going to replenish it after a year of international travel. She had always wanted to live in San Francisco and began investigating what beautiful career opportunities awaited her there. A Ph.D. colleague had introduced her to La Scuola and Melina was immediately attracted to the school as it seemed a perfect fit for her background and aspirations. The opportunity to work in such a unique environment, one that combines Reggio and the IB, fascinated Melina, as well as the ability to keep teaching in Italian. It was also such an extremely different pedagogical system from the one in which she was instructed, and she was excited at the prospect of being a part of it. At the time, she was in Milano for the Fiera, where the fabulous Federica Lentini happened to be. She was invited to an interview and was elated to later be offered a position. Melina is now set to begin her fourth year at La Scuola and looks forward to growing the middle school program and another year with her Grade 4-5 students!
VISITING REGGIO EMILIA

MATTHEW SAVERENO, VALENTINA ZERBINI, MICHAEL-JAMES PALAZZO, BEATRICE PENNI

THIS YEAR we had the amazing opportunity to visit Reggio Emilia, Italy and participate in the International Study Group that is hosted once a year at the Loris Malaguzzi International Centre for Learning. Alongside educators from 47 different countries, we spent the week deepening our understanding of the approach practiced in the schools of Reggio Emilia, a philosophy that not only is found in the schools, but within the culture and people of Reggio Emilia itself. We participated in hands-on workshops such as "Living Organism," which focused on the observation of natural objects, in different stages of their lives, and how they can inspire a further inquiry into other contexts (art, math, science)., "Shapes of Clay," which expanded one’s vision on how clay can be used in various contexts, and "Digital Landscapes," which opened up a world of light and digital instruments to be used inside the classroom. We were also able to go out into the schools, each of us seeing four different schools during our week, allowing us to collectively experience 16 schools and their practices. We also participated in numerous lectures from Pedagogisti and Atelieristi from the many schools in Reggio. We even had the pleasure and honor of meeting the President of Reggio Children, Claudia Giudici, who believes in what we are doing here at La Scuola and greatly appreciates our participation and voice in the study group each year. We also met with Madalenna Tedeschi, pedagogista of the PreK-5Th grade school at Scuola Al Centro Malaguzzi.

We wish to thank everyone who helps make these opportunities for professional development possible for La Scuola Teachers!
FAMILY HIGHLIGHTS

LA SCUOLA FAMILIES

GILES BAKER and HEATHER DOLAN with BEATRIX (Kindergarten) and NATASHA (Piccoli)

AS A FAMILY, we enjoy music, architecture, food, travel, and spending time outdoors. La Scuola is a great fit for our interests, but we were drawn to it for two primary reasons: the Reggio Emilia approach and language immersion.

We wanted a child-centered and constructivist preschool. In La Scuola, we found one with strong visual arts, music, healthy food, and a beautiful garden all of which enhance play and learning. We loved the idea of young children working in small groups and thought it was a wonderful opportunity for children to practice listening to, respecting, and building on other people’s ideas in a mediated environment. We also liked the school’s design and architecture. Light is maximized and the spaces are playful, but uncluttered and well-curated. They are productive intentional spaces for playing and learning.

Language immersion is important to us because we speak only English fluently. We wanted our children to learn a second language while they were young and the learning was easier, and to benefit from the support for broader cognitive processes bilingualism provides. It is fascinating watching both children learning not only Italian, but also developing an understanding of language conceptually. They are both wonderful and patient teachers as their parents work to learn Italian too.

Natasha is finishing up her Piccoli year. She has really enjoyed her first year of independent preschool. Her self-stated highlights include the garden (especially le lumache!) and painting. Beatrix is just finishing Kindergarten. She loved and enjoyed teacher Adam’s stories and Arte with Sylvia. We are grateful they spend their days in a beautiful environment with such talented and caring teachers.

ANTONIO RUGGERO and JESSICA VO with MASSIMO (Grandissimi Arancioni) and ALEZIO (Piccoli)
WHEN Joseph Schadler and Melinda Winter were deciding on a preschool for their son Duncan last year they focused their efforts on finding a place where community was at the heart. They chose La Scuola for just this reason and liked the idea of shared responsibility at the school through volunteering. Since starting at the school last fall, they have both dived into a multitude of volunteer roles – Joseph in the library every Wednesday morning, Melinda with setup for events, and both have been weeding and watering the beloved Dogpatch garden.

“We see volunteering at the school as a way to be involved in Duncan’s education,” Joseph said. “We recognize the school has a lot of moving parts that all need to function for the children to have the best educational experience possible. By volunteering we feel we can be a part of keeping everything working together. We also see volunteering as a way to deepen our connection to the school community. Volunteering makes it possible to meet other families from different classes and grades we would otherwise not have the chance to get to know.”

Starting next year, Joseph will be volunteering as the preschool library lead. Make sure to introduce yourself if you stop by the library to check out a book or two!

"WE RECOGNIZE THE SCHOOL HAS A LOT OF MOVING PARTS THAT ALL NEED TO FUNCTION FOR THE CHILDREN TO HAVE THE BEST EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE POSSIBLE."

"WE ARE GRATEFUL THEY SPEND THEIR DAYS IN A BEAUTIFUL ENVIRONMENT WITH SUCH TALENTED AND CARING TEACHERS."
HOLLY HIRSHFIELD AND ALAN PETERSON are parents to two children at La Scuola, Emma, in 2nd grade, and Kai, who is graduating from Grandissimi Arancioni. Alan is also one-half of the famed musical duo Niente Senza Ukelele that has performed to the masses at Dogpatch on a few occasions this year much to everyone’s delight. Holly and Alan have also been avid supporters of La Scuola’s Annual Fund and the multiple efforts it supports at the school. Here Holly shares her thoughts on the importance of Annual Fund and where she enjoys to see the most impact from their contribution.

How long has your family been with La Scuola?
We joined La Scuola in 2012, when my older daughter was 2. She joined the Piccolissimi class, that year. And I had no idea the school was going to expand into a K-8, then.

What compelled you to join La Scuola?
I’d heard of La Scuola and as a lover of Italian language and culture, I thought it would be fun to share that with my child in a preschool setting. Then, when I toured schools, I found that La Scuola was the most articulate and detailed in conveying its understanding and use of Reggio-Emilia, a philosophy I admire and embrace. So La Scuola became my top choice as soon as I attended the open house. The beautiful campus and warm, loving teachers were and are a huge draw for us, as well.

What aspect of the school inspires you to give?
There are really so many ways! The school works so hard to create a space that the kids want to be in, every day. My daughter and son have both loved the garden program, in particular. Emma loves carrots that still have ‘un po di terra’ - a little dirt on them, as a result of her years spent with Ayesha. Both my kids love snagging a mint leaf in the garden and they constantly teach me about bugs, butterflies, and other garden creatures.

The art and digital ateliers are also hugely important for my creative kids. But as a teacher, myself, I have to say that the amount of time the faculty and staff spend on professional development is crucial. I love seeing Bolletino articles about what our teachers are learning and how they’re engaging with the larger community of educators in the Bay Area. It feels really great when administrators or teachers from other schools learn my kids are at La Scuola - they inevitably smile and say something complimentary about our teachers or the school and it’s programs.

Finally, I am proud of La Scuola’s tuition-assistance program. It’s an intentional commitment the school makes to open its doors a bit wider to our community and I value that immensely.

Do you feel it’s important for the larger school community to give? If so, why?
A new school has to rely on the generosity of it’s community to grow since, unlike the older, established schools in the area, we don’t have an endowment on which to rely. So the school will grow as much as its community will invest in it. It’s a great opportunity - to be part of building a newer school. I like to project 20 years from now and think of the future La Scuola - thriving, established, and always innovative. I know my family will be proud to have been part of the school’s early years and to have committed to helping it grow.

What do your children love most about La Scuola and what memories do you think they will carry with them about their experience here?
My kids love their teachers and their friends at La Scuola. During school vacations, they miss their teachers and friends - they often talk about funny things their teachers did or said. And they bring up moments when their group or class had to work as a team - like the spaghetti challenge the kids in 2nd grade recently did or building Robottino in last year’s Grandissimi East class. And they have so many memories of pure fun at school: Emma often brings up one of the greatest days of her school-life: the day Adam and Beatrice set up a water balloon fight for the kindergarteners. Peak Kinder experience. >>
**LA SCUOLA** recently received the John C. Riccio grant for $20,000 from Italian Community Services to support our Italian education program. This grant was several years in the making and with the help of ICS Board members Pietro Bonanno, Ilia Salmone-Smith, and La Scuola Board member Grazia Bennett, this new funding source came to fruition.

La Scuola sat down with Pietro Bonanno to talk about this partnership between the two organizations and its significance in the Italian community in San Francisco.

**How did the relationship between ICS and La Scuola begin?**
**Pietro:** The initial seed was planted by Grazia Bennett, La Scuola board member. In the last year La Scuola has been discussed more and more within our community. We are delighted to have made it to this point and look forward to a growing relationship between the two organizations.

**What is ICS’s mission? When was the organization founded?**
**Pietro:** In 1916, leading members of the San Francisco Italian community, such as A.P. Giannini (Founder of Bank of America), Marco Fontana and Andrea Sbarboro, established the Italian-American Community Services Agency. They had a dream. Successful in their own lives, these leaders wanted to help their Italian brethren. This is the oldest organization of its kind in the United States. Today, Italian Community Services provides Bay Area Italian-American individuals and families with trusted resources to help them live healthy, independent and productive lives. We are committed to honoring and preserving the Italian language and culture with an emphasis on the strength and support that comes from family, community, education and goodwill.

**Can you explain what the John C. Riccio grant supports and why was La Scuola selected as the recipient this year?**
**Pietro:** The John C. Riccio grant supports Italian Language programs throughout the Bay Area. La Scuola is the best example of Italy, Italian Language and modern Italian culture in California. For this reason, we have decided to put attention and resources on La Scuola’s mission and future.

**Why do you think that this support of La Scuola is significant for the Italian community?**
**Pietro:** La Scuola represents the future generation of all things Italian, for this reason Italian Community Services is dedicated to making La Scuola an established force for years to come.
IN MEMORY OF OUR BELOVED MARIE GOLDMAN
Renowned chef, author, and food activist Alice Waters and Fedele Bauccio, CEO of Bon Appetit visited La Scuola's preschool.
THIS YEAR’S LA DOLCE VITA GALA and fundraiser was a record-breaker. The event drew more than 450 people (nearly 100 more attendees than last year) and brought in close to $470,000 in gross revenue to support La Scuola’s tuition assistance and educational programs. Lots of fun items were on auction for the taking! The event would not have been possible without all of the wonderful donations from our families and community as well as the dozens of La Scuola parent volunteers who stepped up to help in the days leading up to the event. Above all, La Scuola would like to thank the LDV Committee Chairs who brought this amazing night to fruition – Megan Storti, Jen DiZio, Stephanie Franco, Kate Delimitros, Sarah Davis, Margaret Lilani, and Isabella Weiss Di Valbranca.
La Scuola Exhibit
INSIEME / TRACES

THIS MAY, La Suola opened INSIEME/TRACES, an art exhibition showcasing all of our students’ final works for the year reflecting their varied voices and ways of thinking.

The event drew together parents, friends, and art lovers to the Minnesota Street Project gallery for a truly special evening.
San Francisco's first IB Reggio Italian Language Immersion School