

Alvarado Elementary School

Frequently Asked Questions

What kind of school is Alvarado?

Alvarado is a dual-immersion TK–5th grade school with 526 students in four programs: Transitional Kindergarten (TK), General Education (GE), Spanish Immersion (SI) and Special Education. GE and SI each has two classes for K through 3rd grade; a 4th grade, a 5th grade, and a 4th-5th split class. GE also has one TK class. The curriculums mirror each other and are based on Macmillan/McGraw Hill for social studies and language arts (Treasures); Common Core for mathematics; and Full Option Science System (FOSS) for science. Both programs also provide daily instruction in English Language Development. Admission to Alvarado's GE and SI programs are handled separately by San Francisco Unified School District.

How does Spanish Immersion work throughout SFUSD, including Alvarado?

Kindergarteners enrolled in our SI track are taught in Spanish 90 percent of the day. The amount of Spanish spoken in the classroom decreases by 10 percent each year, so by 4th grade students are taught in equal parts English and Spanish. SFUSD ideally divides each immersion class into one-third native Spanish speakers, one-third English-only speakers, and one-third bilingual speakers.

What distinguishes Alvarado from other San Francisco schools?

We prioritize literacy, smaller class sizes and science throughout our school experience. Alvarado has a strong Latin American and multi-cultural identity that is felt throughout the school – from the art decking our hallways to our annual festivals. Our children enjoy a well-rounded education that includes lab science, studio art, physical education, music, environmental education and technology instruction. Many of our staff, parent volunteers and extracurricular instructors speak English and Spanish, among many other languages.

What is a typical school day like?

We offer a morning curbside drop-off supervised by volunteer parents and older students. Our school day begins at 7:50 a.m. when students, parents and staff gather on our upper yard. On Mondays and Fridays, our new Principal Ms. Jennifer Kuhr Butterfoss and new Vice Principal Mr. Noah Ingber, lead school announcements, songs and recognize students' achievements including acts of kindness (SHINE Award), and cleanliness (Golden Dustpan Award). The students then enter their classrooms with their teacher. The school day ends at 1:50 p.m.

What are the options for after school care?

The Alvarado After School Program runs from 1:50 p.m. to 6 p.m. Growth Learning Opportunities (GLO) and Bay Area Community Resources (BACR) jointly run the onsite program – the largest of its kind in San Francisco. All Alvarado students are eligible, and scholarships are available for students who qualify financially or academically. Other children walk or take a school bus to locations outside Alvarado.

What does a kindergartener's typical day look like?

Kindergarteners are kept apart from our other students for much of their day, so they can ease into our grade school. There are bathrooms and drinking fountains inside each kindergarten classroom, and our kindergarteners have their own lunchtime and designated

recess yard. In general, Alvarado's kindergarteners start the day working on the calendar and the weather. Each class may work as a whole or split into groups for listening, reading/phonics, writing and art centers. Each of our four kinder teachers work with small groups on reading skills. Children take turns learning responsibilities like line leader, office messenger and recycler. Outside the classroom, they rotate through more focused enrichment programs throughout the year. (More details in chart.) Each student takes home a book bag each week and writes (and/or draws) a book report. Alvarado also has a Book Buddies program, in which 5th graders partner up with a kindergartener and read to them once a week.

What is Transitional Kindergarten (TK)?

Designed as the first year of a 2-year kindergarten program, TK is taught by a credentialed teacher and offers a modified curriculum based on the California Preschool Learning Foundation and the Kindergarten Common Core Standards. Children who turn 5 between September 2 and December 2 of a given school year are eligible for the program. Alvarado has 22, General Education TK students and is one of seven schools in SFUSD taking part in the new program. While admission into Alvarado's TK does not guarantee admission into our kindergarten, it is considered a tiebreaker in the district's enrollment process.

What does Alvarado offer for Special Education and Inclusion students?

Alvarado includes children with disabilities within the general population in a manner that is fair and appropriate as determined by a child's family and SFUSD. Special Education also has two, dedicated special day classes: K-2 and 3-5th grades. Onsite resources include a fulltime inclusion specialist, a social worker, paraprofessionals, American Disabilities Act upgrades (including an elevator), and a parent-run Inclusive Schools Committee. A number of specialists – including occupational, physical and speech therapists – also work with students who have an Individual Education Program (IEP), in and out of the classroom.

How can parents get involved at Alvarado?

Every classroom has opportunities for parents to volunteer during the school day (assisting with small group work or activities, field trips, etc.) or at home helping our teachers with prep work. We have an active PTA and School Site Council (SSC) – elected parents and staff who make decisions regarding our curriculum and how we spend our budget. We also have many parent committees for the arts, literacy, math, science, the environment, inclusion and English learners (English Learner Advisory Committee or ELAC), among others. Parents and teachers work together to plan events like our new Harvest Festival and Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) workshop, book fairs, math festivals and Science Nights featuring everything from robots to bats.

How much money does the PTA raise and how is it used?

Our PTA budget for the 2014-2015 school year is \$415,000 – raised in large part through our annual auction, parent contributions and grants. The majority of the money pays for our PE coaches, art and music teachers, science programs (including a science lab teacher and an Education Outside instructor), math tutors, art and school supplies and literacy programs. Money raised this school year will fund next year's programs. The PTA also works with the SSC, which receives discretionary funds from SFUSD that it uses to pay for a full-time computer teacher, a classroom size-reduction teacher, a community-advocate and two literacy specialists. A copy of our budget can be found on our website – www.alvaradoschool.net.

What are Alvarado's enrichment programs?

Our diversity and breadth of enrichment opportunities sets us apart from other schools.

Area	Grade	Frequency	Features
Art	K-5th	Once a week, 16 weeks	Art projects reinforce classroom curriculum and are taught in our studio by a resident artist – a model created at Alvarado in 1968 by Ruth Asawa, a nationally renowned artist + education activist.
Music	K-5th	Once a week, 10 weeks	Orff-based music curriculum. Third graders learn to play the recorder. Optional instrumental music for grades 4th and 5th.
Science	K-2nd	Once a week, 10 weeks	FOSS-based science curriculum is taught in all of our classrooms. Students also take science in our laboratory with a certified science specialist. K-1st graders are assigned weekly Science Sacks filled with experiments to do at home. Science fieldtrips and Science Nights are held throughout the year.
	3rd-5th	Once a week, 14 weeks	
Outdoor Education	All	Once a week, 10-14 weeks	Our bilingual Education Outside coordinator teaches hands-on lessons in two gardens equipped with a cistern, edible plants, a fish pond, reading nooks and an outdoor kitchen.
Library	All	Once every other week, all year	Bilingual librarian. Our library is undergoing a remodel, which will be completed in summer, 2015.
Literacy	1st		Two specialists focus on 1 st grade and coordinate the program along with four tutors. Lower grades take home Book Bags once 9a week filled with Spanish or English books.
	K + 2nd -5th		Three tutors work with 42 students after school. Reading Partners (a PTA and city funded program) provides tutoring for another 50 students.
Math	K-3rd		Part-time math specialists assist teachers in class and conduct after-school tutoring for about 85 students. We also sponsor an annual Math Festival for students.
Motor Skills + PE	K-2nd	Once a week, all year	We have a dedicated PE teacher for all grades. In addition to teacher-led exercise, two yard coaches also teach Motor Skills.
Physical Education (PE)	3rd-5th	100 minutes per week, all year	Our Playworks program, meantime, facilitates a sport of the week and conflict resolution during recess. Generally, there are 5-6 staff supervising recess.
Computers + Technology	All	Once a week, all year	A bilingual instructor teaches in our computer lab. Each classroom is set up with 2-6 computers. ELMO projectors and mobile computing devices are available to our teachers. In addition, some students are assigned tablets as part of a new, district-run Special Education Services program.

For more information visit www.alvaradoschool.net