

# BERKWOOD HEDGE SCHOOL



Cultivating Creativity and Intellectual Curiosity



# Welcome

## Berkwood Hedge School

*When students feel they have the ability to help bring about meaningful change, their learning environment is enriched by an increased investment and belief in their own abilities.*

*-Love Weinstock, Head of School*

More than fourteen years into the 21st Century, education is at a crossroads. Knowledge is essential, but knowledge alone will not prepare students for success in life. But even though traditional careers are evolving or disappearing entirely and new careers are emerging, the qualities of lifelong learners continue to be the ability to communicate, to collaborate, to create, to adapt, to think critically and to problem solve.

Berkwood Hedge has intuitively known this for almost 70 years, educating students to practice making thoughtful and just choices, to discover their passions, and to nurture meaningful relationships, all the while stretching academically and social-emotionally, all in preparation for life.

Berkwood Hedge School is a special learning community. Our dynamic curriculum, skillfully implemented by our talented and passionate teachers, cultivates creativity and intellectual curiosity. Spend time on our campus and in our classrooms and you will notice the thoughtful and purposeful instruction and the enthusiastic and engaged learning.

Every child makes a special contribution here, and our small community allows each child to be seen as a unique, whole person, with his or her own learning style and pattern of growth and development. Berkwood Hedge School has a diverse student, family, teacher, and staff population that reflects the community in which we live. We welcome children of all cultures, races, ethnicities, family structures, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Social Justice is at the core of our program. We support our students to be decision-makers in their own lives and to become active participants in the world guided by principles of equity, integrity, and empathy. Student activism manifests locally, when our children raise issues of fairness on the schoolyard, in our care for ourselves and for each other, and in our social -emotional learning program: The ToolBox Project, and; more globally by participating in service learning projects, during our annual teach-in, and in our core belief that everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

A vibrant enrichment program enhances our core academics. Starting in kindergarten, all children take Spanish, music, art, environmental science, and physical education classes. Dance is taught weekly to K - 3rd graders, and drama is taught weekly in the 4th and 5th grades. All of our students take field trips to museums, parks, and live performances to further enhance their academic study and exposure to the arts.

At Berkwood Hedge children come to school excited about learning. We nurture this energy and enthusiasm throughout their journey here, and our children graduate with a strong academic foundation, a joy of learning, and a connection to community.

## Our Mission

Berkwood Hedge School provides a hands-on developmental curriculum that promotes deep and intuitive learning. Students achieve academic excellence by becoming critical thinkers and creative problem solvers. Our teachers meet the needs of every child, inspiring a joy of learning, academic success, intellectual excitement, emotional well-being, and creativity. Students leave Berkwood Hedge prepared for success in middle school and beyond.

Our small cooperative community of students, families, and educators shares a commitment to preserving the environment and promoting social justice within both the school culture and the larger community. We are committed to strengthening diversity of all types, including cultural, ethnic, racial, learning style, economic, gender, and family structure.



# Our Approach

## Constructivism

At Berkwood Hedge School, children's academic, social, physical, and emotional needs provide the foundation on which we build our approach to teaching. At each grade level the academic program is informed by both the understanding and the learning style that our students bring to the subject matter. Our curriculum is innovative, relevant, and intellectually challenging. Teachers establish clear academic expectations, and support students to develop the skills they need to thrive. At the core of our excellent program is an inquiry based approach to teaching and learning that inspires us to hold ourselves in a constant state



of questioning—real life sets the context of our personalized, project-based, collaborative curriculum. When you visit our classrooms you see our students and our experienced teachers asking and answering questions. Together they strive towards increased student engagement, critical thinking, and creative and courageous discourse.

*Giving children room to reinvent is the spark that lights their creativity and engagement in math. The work of the teacher in this is to provide a realistic context in which the children can immerse themselves and to know the landscape of learning with enough depth that they are able to get underneath each child's current understanding, recognize the big ideas that are emerging and scaffold their growth to the next level.*

*-Elisa Edwards, 2nd grade Teacher*

## Our Community

### How We Learn

With care and intention, we have worked together to create a small, inclusive environment, valuing each individual member of our community—children, staff, parents, and friends—as significant contributors to our school. Together, we embrace the unique qualities that each of us brings to the group, across a spectrum of skin color, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, educational background, family structure, and strengths and challenges. In addition, we explore, with a sense of joy and discovery, the rich mix of family cultures, traditions, values, and beliefs represented among us.



Through meaningful activities such as the weekly Community Meeting, the annual Teach-In, and a supportive web of buddy systems, parent committees, and volunteer activities, we cultivate our sense of community on many different levels. Understanding our cultural and personal differences and connections, we gain a profound sense of our individual identities. At the same time, our commitment to learning about one another—respecting and celebrating our separate experiences, yet also seeing the many ways in which our lives overlap—unites us as a healthy and vibrant community.



<div><div></div><div>Berkwood Hedge School</div></div>							
K		1		2		3	
SPIRIT		WOOD		EARTH		AIR	
4		5		6		7	
WATER		FIRE		8		9	
READING	At Berkwood Hedge School students become lifelong readers who engage with literature and develop a passion for reading and learning. At every grade level, read-alouds provide a joyful language experience. Emphasis is placed on deeply understanding all forms of reading. Our students “read to learn” in every class, just as they continue to strengthen their reading fluency and comprehension throughout the grades.	Building on the young child’s appreciation for reading and listening to stories, children practice comprehension strategies such as retelling a story, asking questions, and making connections to their own lives and to other books they know. Studying the work of authors such as Eric Carle and Brian and Andrea Pinkney helps students begin to notice writing style and content variations. Language skills are taught in context and include concepts about print, letter recognition, and phonemic awareness.	Development of comprehension strategies continues, as picture books, easy readers, and beginning chapter books provide opportunities for students to share text-to-text and self-to-text connections. Buddy reading, guided reading, and oral reading experiences strengthen reading fluency, and students learn to select “just right books” for independent reading. Studying authors such as Brian Wildsmith provides a model as students write and illustrate their own stories. Phonemic awareness skills are taught through individual, mini-and whole class lessons.	Students add making inferences, summarizing, and critical thinking to their growing repertoire of comprehension strategies. Increasingly independent, second graders transition from picture books to chapter books as a rich classroom library provides a wide range of reading choices. Read-alouds help build oral fluency, while experiencing poetry, descriptive writing, non-fiction, and memoir strengthen breadth. Author studies of Patricia Polacco and Faith Ringgold provide interdisciplinary opportunities to integrate art activities and thoughtful conversations about community and social justice into the curriculum.	The emphasis for these firmly independent readers is now on in-depth sharing of thoughts, ideas, and opinions about literature. In book groups and full-class discussions, students call on a range of comprehension strategies, including inference and synthesis, and develop the skills and vocabulary to discuss their reading.	Through reading longer and more complex chapter books, students begin to understand how story elements like setting, characters, and plot contribute to the meaning of the text. They solidify the use of comprehension strategies to help critically interpret texts. Student-led book clubs foster a love for reading and provide an opportunity to share and to discuss books with a reading community of peers.	In conjunction with developing research skills, students focus on comprehension strategies for understanding informational text. They learn to draw interpretations from text and support their conclusions with textual evidence. Using guided and free choice reading selections, students reflect on their own experiences with characters in a variety of literary genres. Oral reading experiences continue to strengthen comprehension and help students to hear and to develop the natural rhythm and cadence of language.
	The writing program at Berkwood Hedge emphasizes the process of writing and builds upon the students’ own abilities to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and observations. Inspired by literature, our young writers study the craft of writing as well as the lives of authors. At every grade level students discuss their own work as serious writers with members of their classroom.	Writer’s Workshop is introduced as a special time for exploring ideas and words through drawing and writing. Inspired by their own lives, as well as favorite authors, students begin to understand the craft of writing. They develop confidence as they write, illustrate, and share their thinking and stories. Letter/ sound knowledge and phonemic awareness develop as children write daily. Letter formation and beginning spelling skills are taught as individual and small group lessons in the context of Writer’s Workshop.	Daily writing experiences in first grade continue to build students’ confidence and ability to communicate as writers. Mentor texts provide inspiration, and students share their writing in small groups. Regular publishing provides a wider audience for writing. First graders build their vocabulary with word lists, acquire spelling strategies, and learn the spelling of frequently used words. Regular handwriting practice continues.	Students continue to deepen their understanding of the writing process. They begin to write for a larger audience and develop increased fluency. The concepts of revision and editing are further developed as second graders prepare poetry, fiction, and non-fiction pieces for publication. Students use individual spelling dictionaries and make use of the word wall for spelling of commonly used words. Handwriting practice continues.	Continuing to develop a sense of themselves as thoughtful writers and members of a responsive, literate community, students learn to write with a sense of purpose and begin to use writing as a tool for thinking. Students present their writing to their families and friends in quarterly publishing parties. Cursive writing is introduced.	Taking inspiration from literature, students explore various ways to write about the same topic, becoming more sophisticated editors and publishing their writing in a variety of genres. In studying the craft of authors such as Cynthia Rylant, Jacqueline Woodson, and Seymour Simon, students learn to “read as writers” and use mentor texts as models for their own writing. Cursive practice continues.	In preparation for middle school, students learn writing formats that are used in higher education. Expository writing is the focus, with three research reports providing exposure and practice. Research methods are introduced, providing students with the tools to write a paper based on the findings of others. The Writer’s Notebook is used to explore topics of personal interest, memoir and poetry. Students continue to develop vocabulary and spelling through writing experiences and the use of the Wordly Wise program.
	Mathematical learning integrate a wide variety of constructivist-based activities that emphasize discovery, strong development of mathematical reasoning, problem solving, collaboration, and communication skills, in addition to computational strategies. The program is differentiated, designed to meet the individual learning needs of each student. Mathematical thinking is integrated into many content strands so children experience math in real life contexts. Our program is as linguistically, visually, and kinesthetically rich as it is mathematically powerful.	Mathematics is exciting, tactile, and integrated into real life with questions such as, “How do we divide snack equally among 20 children?” or “How many students are there in the kindergarten and first grade combined?” In their study of penguins, students measure, count, sort, estimate, and solve penguin family story problems. Tools like the Math Rack counting frame encourage children to work with the structure of five and ten for addition and subtraction and help build strong number sense.	Continuing to connect math to real-life situations and other classroom content, first-graders explore math concepts of compensation and equivalency using a variety of visual models. Children investigate multiplication while playing dice games and building multiplication arrays. Number sense is strengthened as students put together and take apart numbers to 120, as well as count by 2s, 5s, and 10s. They begin to solve double-digit addition and subtraction problems, use non-standard units to measure length and weight, and identify and compare geometric shapes. Building a variety of strategies and articulating mathematical thinking is modeled, developed, and encouraged.	Using their variety of problem solving strategies, students begin to choose efficient math strategies based on a specific problem’s requirements. They continue to focus on articulating their thinking, as well as mapping out their thinking on paper while solving real-life problems. An annual “Bike to School Day” lends itself to surveys, data collection, and analysis. Students delve deeper into double-digit addition and subtraction and read, write, and order numbers to at least 1000. They explore geometry concepts through creating patch- work quilt blocks. Through money students are introduced to big ideas and strategies in algebra thinking.	Students develop a solid understanding of multiplication, division, and developing strategies within 100, understanding of fractions, area and perimeter, and describing and analyzing properties of 3-D shapes. Students also focus on place value and continue to learn how to decide which strategy is most efficient when solving a math problem. Working in small groups, students create an imaginary village populated by centimeter tall creatures. Together they build an understanding of area, perimeter, multiplication, estimation, and measurement. A strong number sense supports their development of computational fluency with addition and subtraction facts. They read, write, order, and compare numbers to 1000. Students develop and use multiplication facts up to 12x12.	Using both written and mental strategies, skills, and concepts to solve problems, students work independently and collaboratively, and take risks as mathematicians. Working in groups, they solve problems and share their thinking with the whole class during math congresses. They create illustrative posters to explain their mathematical thinking. Computation fluency grows out of an established number sense. Based on a strong conceptual understanding of fractions, students add and subtract fractions, and learn to convert simple fractions into decimals and percents, tying into probability. At this level students know that math is about patterns and relationships to be explored, using a variety of strategies, skills, and concepts. Math activities often integrate science and engineering.	One of the highlights of the year is the Fudge Factory Adventure Project, focusing on 2- and 3-dimensional models and incorporating problem solving, spatial reasoning, arithmetic with decimal numbers, art, and presentation skills. By the completion of fifth grade, students are proficient using addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division algorithms with whole numbers, decimals, and fractions. They apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to solve problems arising from a variety of situations with confidence and persistence, and they are thinking algebraically. Berkwood Hedge students are well prepared for middle school Math classes.
	We integrate many aspects of the curriculum, inviting learners to explore content in a variety of ways, defining and investigating problems important to them and to their communities. As children move through the grades, their investigations grow both geographically and sequentially with their own expanding understanding of the world and their place in it. Students learn to know and value themselves as individuals and as members of a group in which each person’s voice is valued and respected.	Students explore the rich diversity of the world by sharing their home cultures with classmates. Stories, discussions, and playtime help develop an understanding of friendship and peaceful conflict resolution and build the skills of empathy and understanding. During a major interdisciplinary study of animals, kindergartners draw habitats, count and group animals, take out-door field trips, and develop “green” environmental practice and awareness.	The concept of community grows as students examine Berkwood Hedge, our immediate neighborhood, the Bay Area, and the larger world. They begin to develop an understanding of interconnections, and their own personal roles and responsibilities as members of various communities, including the natural world. Jobs are introduced in the Fall as students learn the concept and roles of different jobs in the world and community. In the Spring, the Woodworkers begin applying for classroom jobs. As stewards of their own classroom and schoolyard, first graders provide school leadership for clean-up and recycling projects and assist the Air students in stewardship of the side yard picking up micro trash.	The theme of change drives the social studies curriculum with children looking inward first, reflecting on personal growth and ways they continue to grow and change. They then study the changes in our school, cover it’s history, conduct interviews with family members, visits local historical sites, and interview members of the community. Earthlings develop an understanding of geography as we study maps of our neighborhood and how land use has shifted. Reading biographies of people who have worked to make a difference in their communities inspires the children to look for ways they can impact their own communities in positive ways.	A study of the life of Cesar Chavez provides the context for an understanding of labor history and civil rights. A field trip to an organic farm provides an opportunity to understand how food is grown in a sustainable manner and the importance of farms to our society. Involvement with a local Food Security Project helps students reflect on their own contributions toward environmental and world stewardship. Geography studies cover mapping skills with a focus on local and world geography.	Themes of power and conflict emerge as students study the history and geography of California, beginning with Native Californians, through Spanish colonization, to the Gold Rush and immigration. They analyze history and current events through the interaction of culture, power, environment, and diversity using primary sources, historical fiction, local field trips, and an extended Living History field trip. Students also consider different perspectives of Californians involved in water rights issues. California geography comes to life in a relief map-making project.	American history, from the earliest settlements to the Age of Exploration and colonization, is examined through the issues that brought people to this continent and led them to stay; the problems, both racial and economic, that divided our nation, and the resulting course that the United States took in national and international matters. Students make connections between the issues that confronted this nation then and now. The research process is taught through the lens of the social studies curriculum.
SCIENCE PROGRAM	Our program develops a passion for science and taps into children’s natural curiosity about how things work—Children explore the world, ask questions, and discover answers to their investigations. Our program is a methodical introduction to core ideas in science with opportunities for children to explore their own emerging scientific interests. From the earliest grades, children take up “big ideas” in science and design, carry out, and share the results from investigations. By the upper grades, they are able to engage in long-term inquiry, engage in scientific argumentation, critique ideas based on evidence, and apply scientific practices to current environmental and societal issues.	LIFE SCIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Five Senses</li><li>•Physical Characteristics of Animals</li><li>•Habitats</li><li>•Life Cycles (Plants, Animals)</li><li>•Worm Composting</li><li>•Egg/Chick Development</li></ul> EARTH SCIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Weather</li></ul> PHYSICAL SCIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Magnetism</li><li>•Buoyancy</li><li>•Water</li><li>•Matter: Solids, Liquids, and Gases</li></ul>	LIFE SCIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Five Senses</li><li>•Life Cycles (Insects, Amphibians)</li><li>•Animal Predator/Prey Relationships</li><li>•Birds</li><li>•Animal Adaptations</li><li>•Food Chains and Food Webs</li><li>•Trees</li></ul> EARTH SCIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Weather</li><li>•Rocks</li></ul> PHYSICAL SCIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Matter: Solids, Liquids, and Gases</li></ul>	LIFE SCIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Animal Migration</li><li>•Life Cycles</li><li>•Symbiotic Relationships: Ants/Aphids</li><li>•Frogs</li><li>•Seed Germination and Growth</li></ul> EARTH SCIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Soil Science: Composition and Properties of Soil Types</li><li>•Fossils and Bones</li></ul> PHYSICAL SCIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Flight</li><li>•Sound</li><li>•Solutions</li><li>•Evaporation</li></ul>	LIFE SCIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Organisms and Adaptation</li><li>•Environmental Changes</li></ul> EARTH SCIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Natural Resources: Renewable and Non Renewable</li><li>•Recycling</li></ul> PHYSICAL SCIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Measurement (Metric System)</li><li>•Energy: Forms and Transformations</li><li>•Alternative Energy: Wind and Solar Energy</li><li>•Sound</li></ul>	LIFE SCIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Microscope Investigations</li><li>•Native Plants</li><li>•Marsh Habitats</li></ul> EARTH SCIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Watersheds and Pollution</li><li>•Water Cycle and Properties of Water</li><li>•Solar System</li></ul> PHYSICAL SCIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Electricity and Magnetism</li></ul> SCIENTIFIC METHOD <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Designing Experiments Using Dependent and Independent Variables</li></ul> HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Human Anatomy</li><li>•Puberty and Human Reproduction</li></ul>	LIFE SCIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Cellular Structures and Systems</li><li>•The Human Body</li><li>•Pollution and Bioaccumulation</li></ul> EARTH SCIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Water and Weather</li><li>•Wetlands: Environmental Role, Restoration and Development</li></ul> PHYSICAL SCIENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Atoms, Molecules, Periodic Table</li><li>•Heat and Convection</li><li>•Alternative Energy</li></ul> SCIENTIFIC METHOD <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Research &amp; Controlled Experiments</li></ul> HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Human Anatomy</li><li>•Puberty and Human Reproduction</li></ul>



# Enrichment

## Movement Language Performing Arts

### MUSIC

The Berkwood Hedge music program is based on the philosophy of Zoltan Kodály, a Hungarian composer and music educator. Children learn the fundamentals of music through singing games that allow them to explore and enjoy music. Musical concepts, such as beat, rhythm, melody, and in-tune singing, are learned through songs and games. The kindergarten year focuses on learning songs, encouraging creativity in games and dances, singing in tune, and understanding the concepts of beat and rhythm. Beginning in first grade and continuing through fifth, students perform, read and write music, and explore composition. Drums, hand percussion, tone bells, Orff instruments, and recorders are used throughout the grades to practice the musical concepts students are learning. Fifth graders learn to play the ukelele.

### VISUAL ARTS

At Berkwood Hedge the visual arts are integrated into the curriculum at every grade level. In the classrooms children have ready access to paper and drawing materials. Every class meets with an art specialist once a week to explore a variety of media and artistic styles. The art specialists at Berkwood Hedge are passionate about art and strive to instill in every student a love and appreciation of visual art—allowing children the time and space to explore their own artistic expression and nurturing artistic confidence, so every child is able to create art using his or her own individual visual vocabulary.

Ceramic work is an important part of the art program at Berkwood Hedge. The school has a kiln and students work with clay regularly. An unstructured “Open Art Studio” is available to all students twice weekly during lunchtime, and each spring a school-wide art show is held for the community.

### SPANISH

Beginning in kindergarten, children are exposed to the cadence of the Spanish language through songs and games. Simple vocabulary, including greetings, colors, numbers, items in the classroom, the human body, clothing, friends, animals, and verbs, is introduced gradually in the lower grades, using the Total Physical Response approach. Language study becomes more formal in the upper grades as students engage in simple and more complex dialogues, study grammar, and begin to read and write in Spanish.

### DANCE

Our movement program is holistic, engaging a students’ mind, body, and spirit while nurturing the physical imagination. Students experience body awareness and in doing so, they find their voice. We provide students with a safe environment in which they take part in the joy of moving. The students learn the basic elements of dance: body, space, time, and force. Explorations of these elements lead students to develop their artistic expression and to create choreography. We also use movement to investigate and deepen the students’ understanding of their classroom’s academic curriculum. Every student is kinesthetically inspired and supported.

### DRAMA

In the early grades, dramatic art is integrated into classroom life. Activities include improvisation, skits, puppet play, and adaptations of stories, myths, and fairytales. Fourth and fifth grade students have weekly drama classes taught by a professional teaching artist. Students become comfortable on-stage, play theater games, improvise, practice physical comedy, and strengthen their voice projection ability. During the school year, fifth graders collaborate to create an original play, and perform it for the school and larger community in the spring.

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Athletic skills, fitness, cooperative games, and teamwork are the foundation of the Berkwood Hedge physical education program. Through team and individual activities, students build physical skills related to coordination, strength, flexibility, and endurance. During twice-weekly PE classes, children play sports and games and learn how the body works during exercise. They learn to play by the rules, be supportive team members, and graceful winners and losers. Each day students spend time outside at recess and lunchtime, with the opportunity to run and play on our “big yard,” explore the climbing equipment, or dig in the sand yard. Roller-blading and a voluntary sports league are available during lunchtime.





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