

Diablo Valley School



THE SKILLS YOU NEED FOR THE LIFE YOU WANT

A Sudbury School
Serving students age 5 to 19 since 1997

Students Say



“Being able to explore any subject, learn any skill, without the pressure of grades or competition is an amazing, rare thing.”

Sarah, graduate



“There's something about the atmosphere at DVS that makes you want to do what's most challenging.”

Alyssa, graduate



“When you have personal freedom given to you at such a young age, you actually know what to do with it when you are older and have more options.”

Gareth, graduate

“This school taught me how to learn on my own and helped me become something I didn't know I could be.”

Shalyn, graduate

Parents Say

“I take great pleasure watching my son developing the wherewithal to take care of whatever Life presents as he goes along.”

Connie, parent

“What I saw that evening was a young person with enough serious desire to learn that she had become her own teacher.”

Evelyn, parent

“After about a month at DVS, I saw the child I recognized as mine emerge again. This is what I was looking for in a school: a place where he could blossom and learn by following his passions.”

Trish, parent



Fast Facts

School Year:

September to June.
Closed for winter break (December), mid-winter break (February), spring break (April), and major holidays.

Hours: We are open Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.



Attendance Requirement: Minimum of four hours per day; three hours for kindergarten age students.

Ages Served: Students ages 5 to 19 can attend.

Application: Applications for admission are accepted year-round. After completing the admissions process, students can enroll any time during the school year, provided space is available.

Tuition: At Diablo Valley School, we believe that financial circumstances should not prevent a child from getting the best education available and will try to meet the specific needs of your family. We offer sibling discounts, monthly payment plans, and a sliding-scale tuition program. Please see our web site – www.diablovalleyschool.org – or contact the school for the current tuition figures.

Parent Involvement: Parents are welcome – but not required -- to volunteer their time and talents at the school through our formal volunteer program. Parents are involved in the Assembly, which votes on large-scale decisions such as annual budget and candidates for graduation.

The Basics



At Diablo Valley School, real life is the curriculum. Students learn life's most valuable skills: self confidence, concentration, problem-solving, decision-making, academics, personal responsibility and respect for others. By making choices and learning to live with the consequences, students experience the challenges, responsibilities and freedoms of real life while in a caring and supportive environment.

At Diablo Valley School, each person is responsible for deciding how to use their time all day, every day. Students are free to concentrate on what they choose for as long as they desire. All types of activities are equally valued. Activities vary with the natural flow of the curiosity that inspires them. Individual creativity and self-expression are appreciated.

Mutual respect develops in an atmosphere where each person is valued for who they are. Students and staff members each have an equal vote in how the school functions, and they run the school together through school meetings. Students discover that being a valued part of the community is a satisfying experience. By practicing democracy on a regular basis, students learn to be articulate, persuasive, considerate and fair.

By taking responsibility for choosing how to spend their time, students develop insight into their strengths and passions. They apply this knowledge when selecting future education and work opportunities. With students who started with us at age 5 or 6, as well as students who joined us at older ages, we see them develop as happy, relaxed, confident and responsible people pursuing their personal goals in life, careers, and further education.

Philosophy



Our philosophy is based on the fact that children naturally want to learn the skills needed to grow into capable adults. And just like grownups, they want to be free to choose how they will become successful. At Diablo Valley School, we take this natural desire for self-direction seriously, allowing it to propel children into independent adulthood.

Given the freedom to pursue their interests for as long as the interest lasts, and the structure to ensure their activities are neither infringed upon nor infringe on the rights of others, children learn what they need.

At Diablo Valley School, we have more than a decade of experience seeing the successful outcome of our respect for children's natural desire to learn and their drive to become capable in the world.





All of us are learning every day

Valley School learn about life in many varied ways: by talking with other children and adults, by taking risks and learning new skills, by participating in a democratic community and by having the time and the space to really get to know themselves.

All of our students learn to read, write, and do math when they feel that it is vital to do so. These skills develop organically, not necessarily through a planned process. The school provides a setting in which knowledge is useful. For example, the written word is everywhere at the school: in books lining the walls, on rules posted for computer equipment, and on agendas relating to the school democracy. Sooner or later, every student recognizes the usefulness of learning to read. All skills are learned in the same fashion.

Classes are conducted by mutual agreement of a student and another person from whom the student wishes to learn. Upon student request, staff members are available to conduct classes and to assist students in finding outside resources to learn subjects not available within the school. Many students find that they do not need a class to learn something, but can better meet their goals through exploration, self-directed reading, or informal conversation.

All activities and modes of learning are equally valued at Diablo Valley School. Every interaction we have with another human being or object in our environment teaches us something about the world or ourselves.

Students at Diablo

Structure



The structure of our school is based on democracy, not academic activity. Students are free to do anything they find interesting as long as the activities do not infringe on the rights of others or endanger the school. Students and staff have an equal vote in all matters, from writing and enforcing rules, to purchasing supplies, to the annual staff elections.

All rules are written and enforced democratically, giving students a sense of ownership over the rules and the school itself. There are rules regarding behavior at school and the functioning of the school, rules about using certain items (e.g., computer, art, and kitchen equipment), and a judicial system to take care of rule infractions.

All students are free to participate in the weekly School Meeting, which makes the rules. All students serve periodic terms on the student/staff Judicial Committee, which deals with rule violations. With this structure in place, students have the respect and freedom that they need to carry out whatever activities they see as beneficial to their lives at any given time. This structure builds responsibility and prepares students for citizenship in the larger democracy.

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What kind of child thrives at this school?

A wide variety of children flourish at Diablo Valley School. The physically active child can move freely. Academically gifted and creative children can delve into their interests as deeply as they wish. The verbal or social child can befriend and converse with people of all ages. The quiet child can join in at her own pace. The individualistic child can be respected for who he is. Our graduates have said that the diversity of our school community was one of the most valuable aspects of their Diablo Valley School education.

How does the school make sure students become well rounded?

We don't believe that every student needs to be exposed to or taught the same things. Each student is an individual, and the school and staff don't presume to know what is best for the students to learn. Exploration of many different subjects is allowed in our school without the constraints of time. When a strong interest is discovered by a student, it may be pursued for a week, a month or all year long.

How do the different age groups mix?

Wonderfully. More often than not, when young children need to learn a particular skill - physical, social or otherwise - they best learn that skill from someone who is just slightly older than they are. The younger children learn many skills from the older ones, and the older ones are reminded how to play and see the world anew from the younger ones as well.





But if I let them, won't my kids just play all day?

We recognize that through play, children are learning how they will relate to their world as young people and as adults. At Diablo Valley School, we have great respect for play. It is through play that students learn to concentrate, imagine, and communicate; through play that they learn what their aptitudes and affinities are; and through play that they acquire skills they need to be successful.

How do they get a job or get into college?

Our students may choose several paths to get into college or the workforce, depending on what their personal goals are upon graduation. While attending Diablo Valley School, they may begin working at a job or internship, take the California high school proficiency exam (CHSPE), prepare to take the SAT, attend community college, or apply to the four-year college of their choice. When the need arises, the staff is available to assist students with these options. Because our students have had the time and space to reflect on their interests and to make meaningful decisions, they are well prepared to choose educational and work opportunities suited to their goals.

Diablo Valley School enrolls students age 5 to 19 who do not require intense supervision and do not have severe disabilities that the staff is not equipped to handle. Space permitting, students can enroll and begin attending school after successfully completing the admissions process.

Five steps to enrollment

1. Learn about how our educational model works. We encourage you to read articles on our website at www.diablovalleyschool.org/resources; read publications of the Sudbury Valley School – www.sudval.org – on which we are modeled; or attend an Open House.
2. Schedule a family admissions visit (\$25 fee) during school hours.
3. Sign up for a visiting week for your child (\$100).
4. After the visiting week is complete, attend a second family admissions visit (no charge).
5. If all goes well during the visiting week and admissions visits, and if everyone agrees that enrollment is appropriate, the enrollment packet can be filled out and returned to the school with the initial tuition payment.

Tuition payment is prorated based on the annual amount and the time of year the student enrolls.

On occasion, the Admissions Committee or the prospective student's family may request additional visiting weeks, \$100 per week, before enrollment is discussed at the second family interview.

Diablo Valley School admits students of any race, color, gender, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin to all rights and privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students and staff at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin in administration of its school administered programs.

Because...

- ★ Creativity can't be scheduled
- ★ Democracy must be practiced
- ★ People flourish in freedom



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