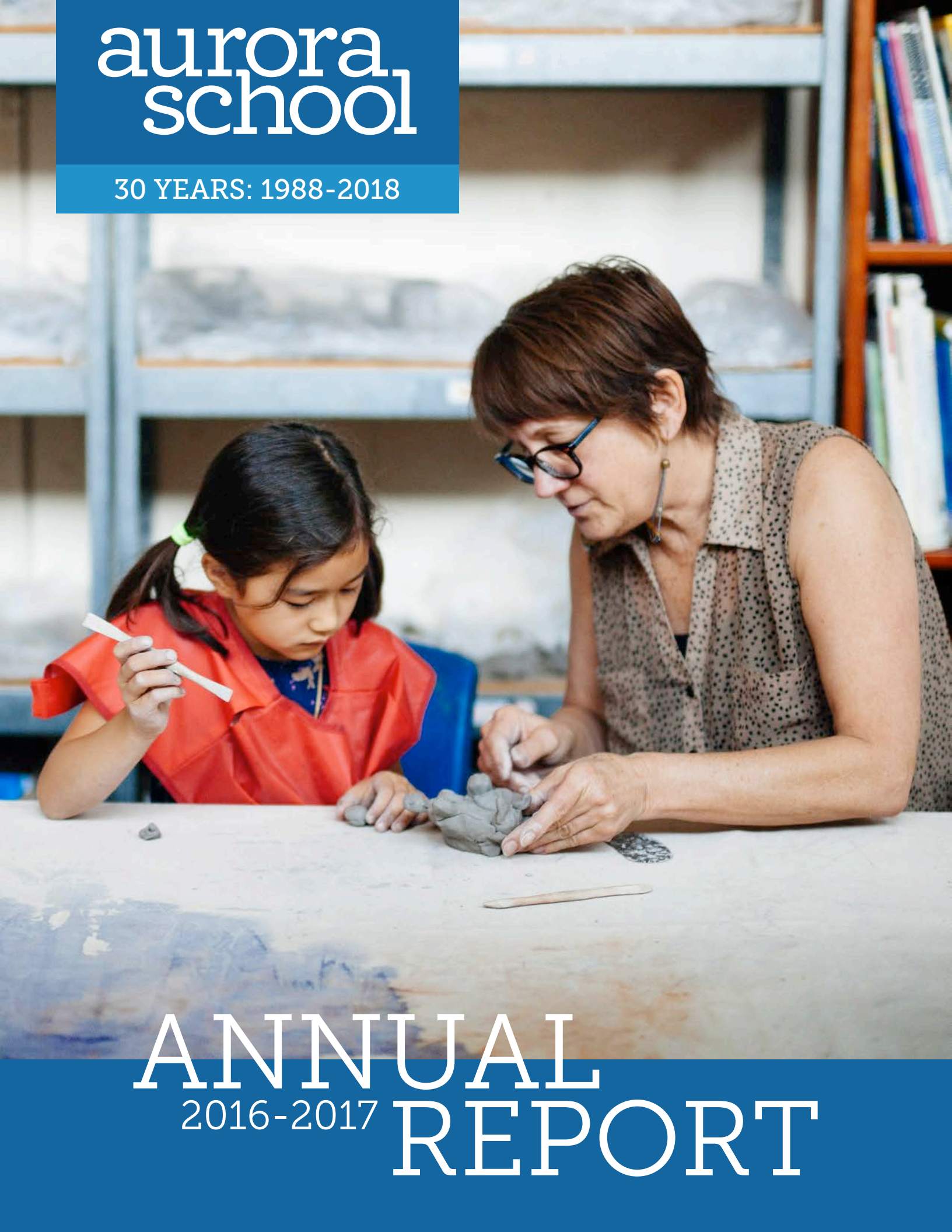


aurora school

30 YEARS: 1988-2018



ANNUAL 2016-2017 REPORT

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aurora
school

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the power of small

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Letter from the Head of School

As we enter our thirtieth year, we have a tremendous amount to be proud of. Middle schools anecdotally report that Aurora students have a deeper mathematical understanding and are more flexible thinkers when compared to their peers. Aurora students are known for being critical thinkers, problem solvers, and kind and empathetic leaders—all key twenty-first century skills.

In the fall of 2016, Aurora piloted its K-5 woodshop program. Now, students of all ages get to problem solve, design, build, and utilize their math and physics skills in the Aurora woodshop.

Over the summer of 2017, Aurora's art room got a makeover thanks to a generous donor. The new and improved art room provides our students with greater space, easier access to materials, and an easier clean up!

In addition to the challenging academic program we provide, Aurora students continue to receive a rich, well-rounded curriculum. Aurora boasts one of the largest and most diverse elementary school libraries in the area with over 12,000 books! And, our new, innovative STEM collaboration with Project Lead the Way brings real-world learning in science, technology, engineering, and math to our students.

The combination of our small school and our attentive teachers helps our students develop into self-aware, compassionate lifelong learners. Across curriculum, teachers encourage students to ask important questions and remain open to multiple perspectives while they build the necessary academic skills to make positive change. Teachers foster skills that extend beyond the classroom and encourage Aurora students to be active citizens.

Aurora graduates are kind, empathetic leaders who have strong twenty-first century skills, including collaborative problem solving and critical thinking skills. Whether they head to a small, independent school or a large, public middle school, Aurora graduates shine as a result of their strong academic abilities, curiosity, and love of learning.

Year after year, families continue to choose Aurora for our emphasis on strong academics coupled with our attention to the social-emotional growth of each child. We celebrate being a small community where every child is seen and heard. We thank you all for being a part of our family over the past three decades, where children are at the heart and center of everything we do.



Abbie Koss
Head of School



“The combination of our small school and our attentive teachers helps our students develop into self-aware, compassionate lifelong learners.”



STUDENTS

AURORA MAKES THE GRADE!



91%

are likely/extremely likely to **recommend Aurora School** to another family



93%

feel the **overall value** of an Aurora education, based on tuition and fees paid, is Good to Excellent



98%

agree/strongly agree that Aurora School has a **caring community environment**



80%

agree/strongly agree that Aurora fosters a sense of **racial belonging and acceptance**



89%

agree/strongly agree that **Aurora volunteers** are adequately appreciated

Source:
Aurora 2017 Family Survey

Tinker Faire

Every fall the Aurora community comes together for a school-wide community-building event. For years, this event has been the Fall Festival. In 2017, we thought we would try something new...the Tinker Faire!

As a progressive school where students learn through inquiry and engagement, we wanted our families and the greater community to experience the kind of learning that takes place at Aurora every day.

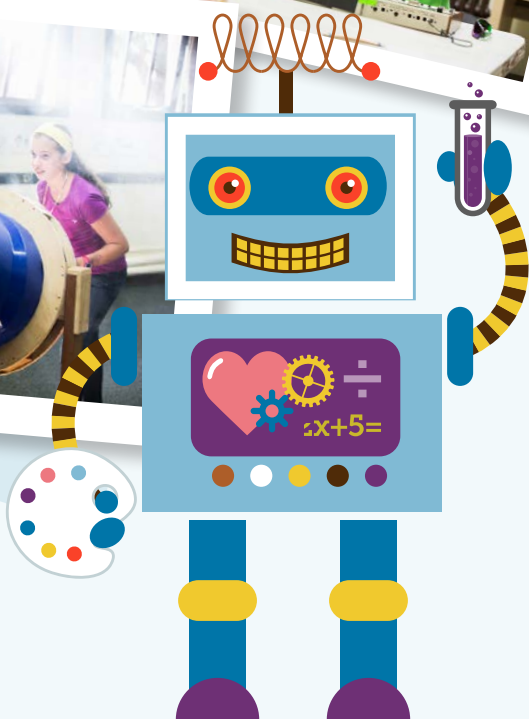
Aurora parents and staff who consider themselves "makers" participated in meetings and brainstorming sessions to generate ideas and work through logistics for this exciting event.

During the Tinker Faire, parents, staff, and students created and explored side by side, while participating in Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, and Art activities. Parents lead a range of activities for all to enjoy: junk art-making (an all-time Aurora favorite), vortex canon launch, open woodshop exploration, GAK Ball making, rope making, burglar laser trap, solar printing, circuit building, string art installation, musical instrument making, mini rocket

launching, block art making, and the very popular children's artisan faire. What better way to build community than to learn, build, problem-solve, and create together!

Approximately 175 Aurora community members, friends, and neighborhood children attended our inaugural event. The success of the Tinker Faire was due in large part to our supportive and incredibly talented community of parents. We'd like to express a big THANK YOU to our Tinker Faire volunteers!

We look forward to having you join us at the 2018 Tinker Faire, which will be open to Aurora students, staff, alumni and the general public!



CONGRATULATIONS

2018 Graduates!



Samuel Brechtel



Logan Chan



Elliot Choate



Ani Delaplane-Yusem



Nicholas DiMaria



Cayden Feely



Atticus Figgins



Sabrina Garcia-Gentry



Vaughn Khoury



Aubriel Lemberger



Emily Mansfield



Augden (Augie) Nice



Jonah Rossiter



Halina Sindt



Nathaniel (Nate) Sommer



Calum Ward

DIVERSITY AT AURORA

FAMILIAL DIVERSITY

10%

Multilingual households

8%

Two household families

6%

Families formed through adoption

4%

LGBTQQ

2%

Single parent families

ECONOMIC DIVERSITY

42%

students receiving financial aid

20%

revenue allocated to financial aid

ETHNIC DIVERSITY



42% students of color | 58% caucasian students

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Aurora alumni have paved a broad path for future generations of Aurora graduates. Our alumni are positive role models and leaders in their middle schools and beyond.

Middle schools attended by the Aurora School classes of 2012-2016 include:

Bancroft Middle School	Edna Brewer Middle School	San Carlos Middle School
Beacon Day School	Head-Royce School	St. Elizabeth School
Bentley School	Julia Morgan School for Girls	St. Lawrence O'Toole Catholic School
Black Pine Circle	Montera Middle School	St. Paul's Episcopal School
Canyon Elementary School	Oakland School for the Arts	Tehiyah Day School
Claremont Middle School	Park Day School	The Athenian School
Contra Costa Jewish Day School	Prospect Sierra School	The Berkeley School
East Bay Innovation Academy	Raskob Learning Institute	
East Bay School for Boys	Redwood Day School	



FACULTY

At the core of every great school are the teachers, for it is the teachers who nurture and grow our students each and every day. For this reason, Aurora is committed to hiring faculty who are lifelong learners driven to continue developing as professionals, including reflecting on best teaching practices and knowing their students well.

With your support, Aurora invests in professional development for our faculty, including sending our teachers to esteemed institutes such as Teachers College, Columbia University. We also provide on-site weekly professional development lead by Aurora's Assistant Head of School, Tony Cifra.

Aurora selects faculty that are in full alignment with Aurora's mission and core values. This is to ensure that our students experience a consistent and cohesive learning experience that is forward thinking and focused on both the academic and

social/emotional growth of each child. Our faculty and administration model the joy of lifelong learning as well as the importance of collaboration for our students.

In addition to being some of the top educators in the Bay Area, our teachers boast a wide range of talents that enrich their time with Aurora students. Amongst our faculty we have a voice actor, a front woman of a local band, an attorney, dharma teachers, an interior designer, a painter, a performance artist, and a singer/songwriter.

The Aurora faculty is a talented bunch. We're amazed each and every day by their dedication and their skillful interactions with their students. It is with great pride that we introduce to you Aurora's dedicated team who nurture our students into becoming the heart-smart and head-smart leaders of the future.

AURORA'S STAFF...BY THE NUMBERS!

Aurora is a community that actively works to be inclusive. We are strongly committed to ethnic, racial, cultural, economic, individual, and familial diversity.

Longevity



40%

of staff have been at Aurora for 5 or more years

Experience



8 Years

average **experience** for Lead Teachers and Specialists



Student/Staff Ratios



8-10

students for every classroom teacher

3.4

students for every staff member

Ethnicity



63%
caucasian

37%
of color



100% bachelor's degree

67% advanced degree

83% teaching credentials

Education



Q&A with Kathy Shepler, Aurora Librarian

Saying farewell after 20 great years!

“ I believe strongly in a concept called ‘Mirrors and Windows.’ Every child deserves to see him or herself mirrored in books. ”

What is your professional background?

Before I came to Aurora, I was a systems project Vice President for Bank of America for 20 years. I worked on projects such as the very first ATM, called the “Versateller.” (Remember when you had to get your cash out on Friday afternoon or go without all weekend?) I graduated from UC Berkeley and majored in...wait for it: Asian Art Studies.

When did you join Aurora?

In 1998, I had just taken a severance package from Bank of America, and I was at a bit of a loss for what to do with myself. So, I threw myself into volunteering at Aurora. I had been involved in children’s literature for decades already so I found it easy to get involved in the Aurora library. Two years later, my own children began attending Aurora, with my youngest graduating in 2000.

How are you involved in library sciences outside of Aurora?

I teach bookmaking classes and a program called “The History of the Book,” which covers lessons in ancient book forms and in the development of the Western codex book form. I’ve also taught adults at the University of Utah, at state professional conferences for librarians and teachers, and at local middle schools in Oakland and

in San Francisco. I am active in many national, state and local librarian organizations. I was elected and served on the American Library Association 2011 Newbery Award Committee. I am the co-chair of the Distinguished Books Committee for the Association of Children’s Librarians of Northern/Central CA. I’ve been a member of the USBBY Committee of Outstanding Books for Youth with Disabilities, and I am also very active in the Northern CA Independent Children’s Booksellers Organization.

How has the Aurora library changed over time?

When I began, the library at Aurora was very small. All of our titles (about 4,000) fit in the shelves located in the small staff room where we eat lunch today. Under the leadership of Susie Goodin and Stella Goodwin, we expanded the library to its current size and location. In 1998, Bob Whitlow approached me and said I should work in the library at Aurora because I was volunteering there all the time anyway! And, so it began.

My biggest challenge was growing the collection. I spent a lot of time shopping at used bookshops to attain new titles and stretch the purchasing budget as far as it would go. I especially concentrated on building the non-fiction section. Eventually we built the collection to nearly 14,000 books!

About nine years ago, I started researching the installation of a collection management system at Aurora. It took many years to see the system fully implemented, but eventually we hired someone who could concentrate on the work of cataloguing our collection. We now have an automated system of collection and circulation management, which greatly eases our administrative work and allows the collection to be searched by topic and title.

What do you think is Aurora library's greatest strength or achievement?

I think the major strength of our library program has been offering a rich and diverse collection of books to our kids. My goal was to compile a range of books at different reading levels to engage the newest reader to the most advanced reader; provide a diversity of genres and formats to meet our students' wide range of tastes and strengthen their interest in pleasure reading; offer diversity in school curriculum related topics; and offer diversity in cultures/families/economics presented in our books. I believe strongly in a concept called "Mirrors and Windows." Every child deserves to see him or herself mirrored in books.

What are you most proud of from your tenure as Aurora's librarian?

I am most proud of the strong collection of books we have at Aurora. It is a carefully curated collection. Statistics indicate there should be at least a 100 volumes per student in a strong school library. I'll leave it to you to do the math!

What is your favorite book/author, and why?

That is like asking a parent to name their favorite child! I am especially interested in books from other countries and try to make sure we have a great collection of children's books in translation in the Aurora library. I love Newbery Award books (a national award for the best book). Fourteen years ago, I organized a book group that still meets at Aurora once a month to read and select a Mock Newbery title each year. Last, but not least, I love picture books with smashing beautiful and unique illustrations. Oh, I love it all!

What fostered your love for reading?

I have always loved children's book illustrations. In fact, I found an old high school paper in which I chose to write on that topic (I got an "A", by the way). I have been associated with the Independent Children's Booksellers Association of California for many decades. I love everything about the industry and have made many wonderful friendships with authors, illustrators, publishers, and booksellers of youth literature.

What will you miss the most about Aurora after you retire?

I will miss so much about Aurora—but the kids I will miss most of all. They are such a delight to me every day. I will miss searching the newest books for the gems that will make our library even richer. I will miss the teachers and staff. We have a great family of educators, and I will miss learning from them. And, I will miss my personal 'shopping' for new books for Aurora. I love getting titles at conferences, author events and after reading professional review journals. It is quite an addiction—as my husband will attest.

What are your plans for retirement?

I will work in children's literature, even after I retire. I will still work with Children's Librarians Association and other organizations. My husband and I love to travel and often go on organized children's literature tours of other countries - reading their literature and meeting authors, illustrators and publishers in country. Two summers ago we visited the Balkans, and last summer we went to Scandinavia. I'll continue to do as much of that as I can.

Any words of advice for Aurora students?

Discover what you love to read and find all the books in the library that fit this interest. Then, stretch your literary wings by trying new things, too. Keep reading!



WHY WE LOVE AURORA

Alexa Eurich

K/1 Lead Teacher

"After teaching many grade levels at several schools —both public and independent—teaching at Aurora feels like home to me. I feel very lucky to be able to work at Aurora in a joyful, developmentally appropriate, academically strong program where I am encouraged to grow and learn myself!"



Adrian Herrera

K/1 Teaching Assistant

"What I love most about Aurora is our community. I feel it's important for kids to understand that it's okay to be who they are, and I appreciate that at Aurora, I am encouraged to model this by being my own quirky self."



Annalyse Sheppard

K/1 Lead Teacher

"Aurora inspires our students to take learning into their own hands and become the captains of their own ships. I love watching students have that "ah-ha" moment when the joy of knowledge spreads across their face. My goal as a teacher at Aurora is to provide students with a safe, joyful environment where they can soar."



Kaiya Hatcher

K/1 Teaching Assistant

"I love Aurora's commitment to developing the whole child, especially our work around social-emotional learning and social justice. It is a truly exciting feeling knowing that I am helping to cultivate these values within our community, and in turn spreading kindness, open mindedness, and compassion throughout our world."



Caitlin Kenney

2/3 Lead Teacher

"I became an educator to contribute to our global quota of intelligent, kind, and engaged humans, and Aurora allows me to do this in my own energetic, humorous way. Aurora is a family that thoughtfully balances supporting kids being kids and kids being active and aware members of the world."



Niki Rouda

2/3 Teaching Assistant

"I love the sense of community at Aurora, from the songs we sing during Tuesday assembly to Partner Pals. Aurora is a safe place where kids (and adults!) can feel free to be themselves."



Regina Sorey

2/3 Lead Teacher

"Building relationships with students and truly knowing who they are as people is a cornerstone to being able to impact their lives. I love the close community at Aurora; the school is like a giant family and that makes it a place I love to come to each day."



Michelle Tiamiyu

2/3 Teaching Assistant

"What I love most about Aurora School is its commitment to diversity and inclusion. After eight years of working at larger schools, I appreciate the small class sizes and all the love and attention we can give to students."



Nicole Thomas

4/5 Lead Teacher

"Aurora is a place where no matter what is happening in the outside world, I can walk through the door and find kindness and inclusivity. My students have infinite hearts and endless wells of creativity that give me great hope for the future. I feel it's my role as a teacher to provide a space for kids to grow as kind and generous community members."



Denise Townsend

4/5 Lead Teacher

"What I love most about Aurora is that we foster an incredible love of learning in the children we serve by stimulating their sense of wonder and curiosity about life and the world in which we live. I feel honored to help our children grow as leaders, mindfully and with heart. Creative collaboration is at the core of what we do."



Siena Meeks

4/5 Teaching Assistant

"I love how Aurora embodies partnership. Teacher to teacher, kid to kid, kid to teacher, across administrators, specialists—we are one big team truly getting things done together. This collaborative approach to learning teaches our kids the importance of listening to each other and working with and for each other, and empowers them to be active problem solvers."



Aisha Carabello

Yoga Grades K/1 Specialist

"What I love most about Aurora is its conscious community that puts children first with a whole-child, social-emotional approach to learning. It's my goal for my students to feel safe, valued, respected, and seen in class, as well as to learn what it means to be mindful and pay full attention with their hearts, bodies, and minds."



Eve Decker

Music Specialist

"What I love most about teaching is the sincerity, creativity, and sacredness of every child. I became a teacher because I understand that bringing love and joy to children dwells among the world's most important jobs. A teacher can be a model of generosity, patience, and love that a child will never forget."



Julie Pollack

Art Teacher

"As an Art teacher, I am able to give children a creative outlet and expose them to different ways of seeing the world and expressing themselves. My favorite teaching moments are when kids succeed despite their own expectations. I love the small class sizes, the creativity, and the feeling of a warm hug when I walk through the doors."



Kathy Shepler

Librarian

"I love the joy and the eagerness Aurora children have about books and reading. I especially enjoy teaching a diverse Library Sciences curriculum. My goal as a librarian at Aurora is to provide a rich and diverse library collection for students and staff to use."



Scott Thompson

PE & STEM Specialist

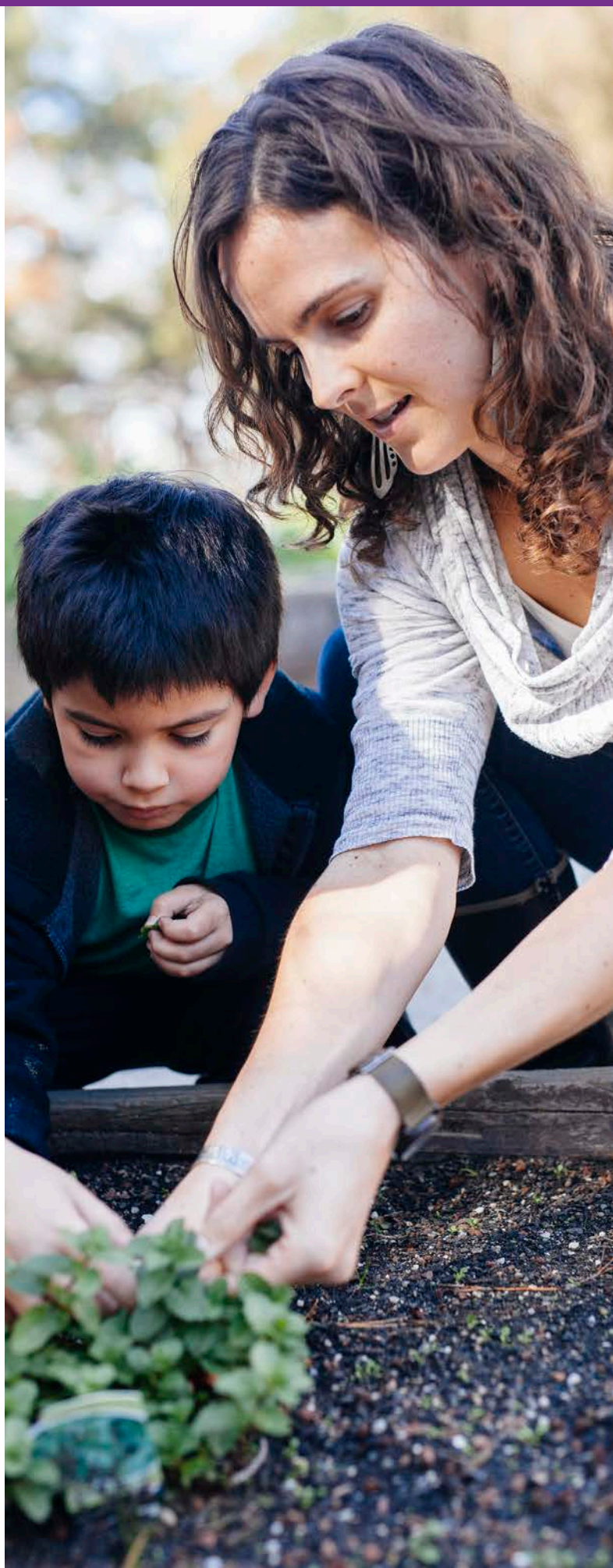
"The greatest gift a teacher can give is setting an example as a positive role model. I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to teach kids how to play, cooperate, and resolve conflict during PE, and ignite the spark of engineering and problem solving during STEM class."



Taylor Gersbach

Woodshop Specialist

"I became a teacher to share my passion for the arts with children so they will continue the important legacy of supporting this field. As a teacher, I enjoy offering support to each and every child, and holding the students' best interests at heart."





ALUMNI PROFILES

Gemma Baumer

2006 Alumna

Middle School:
Julia Morgan School for Girls

High School:
Bay School

College:
Lewis & Clark College

I graduated magna cum laude from Lewis and Clark College in May 2017 with a degree in psychology. After graduating, I decided to take a year to work, volunteer and live in Portland, Oregon before applying to graduate school where I plan

to pursue a master's degree in counseling.

Currently, I volunteer for the Dougy Center, where we facilitate grief groups for children who have lost a parent. I feel passionate about my work with the Dougy Center because it connects to my own personal story; my father died in 2001, right before I started first grade at Aurora. I find that working around the subject of grief helps me to understand not only about how humans view death, but also how they approach life.

I also work as a volunteer with the Heroic Imagination Project (HIP). This organization uses a positive psychological approach to teaching everyday heroism, providing people with the tools and understanding to enable them to step up in challenging situations.

My time as a student at Aurora taught me to love learning, advocate for myself, seek out my teachers for help, follow my passions, and be organized. It provided me with an environment where learning was fun, and history and social studies were approached thoughtfully rather than just teaching us rote facts. I still remember songs from Aurora school plays and maintain contact with several of my most beloved teachers.

Aurora prepared me for life after elementary school by helping me become a lifelong learner. Aurora prepared me beyond just academics; I was exposed to the values of taking care of my friends, my neighbors, and the world. As a student at Aurora, I felt enmeshed in a community, one that still stands out to me more than any other school I have attended. Even as a young person, it was evident to me that my teachers at Aurora cared deeply about their students and each other. Aurora is a place that celebrates individuality and kindness, values I hold dearly to this day.



After graduating Aurora, I attended the East Bay Center of Performing Art's "Young Artist Diploma Program" (EBCPA), a four-year course of study designed to provide students in the arts with a critical set of skills and to enable students to discover their unique gifts and path. As a graduate of the program, I continue to serve as a youth ambassador for the East Bay Center and as one of the main vocal leads in the Center's Resident Singing Ensemble, "Voices of Reason". In addition, I am the Founder/Producer/Performer of "806" —a youth urban music collective.

At Saint Mary's College High School, I was selected by the administration to participate as a student leader in a social advocacy program called the "Lasallian Youth Assembly." The program focused on advocacy training and provided in-depth studies on social justice concerns and issues, while providing a forum for developing programs to support incarcerated youth.

The thing I enjoyed most about Aurora was its strong sense of community. The multi-grade classrooms provide a strong sense of community by allowing older kids the opportunity to mentor younger kids. This ability to act as a mentor helped me to develop leadership skills earlier than many of my peers.

Aurora teachers spend the time to get to know each student and make positive, lifelong connections. This made a big impact on me and taught me the importance of developing

strong relationships. The teachers create an environment that accepts diverse perspectives and treats people with respect. They make learning fun and interesting through the use of plays, performances, and presentations. They even allowed students such as myself to share our musical gifts with the school community by performing during weekly school assemblies, something I really appreciated.

Transferring to Aurora in the second grade was challenging because I had to meet and be accepted by an entirely new group of people. Fortunately, the Aurora community fully embraced me, which made my family's transition a smooth one. I have really good memories about my time at Aurora and it all comes back to the people. I have always felt comfortable at Aurora—it feels like home—and we will always stay in touch.

Jonathan York

2012 Alumnus

Middle School:
Prospect Sierra Middle School

High School:
Saint Mary's College High School

Ben Sommer

2014 Alumnus

Middle School:
Black Pine Circle

High School:
Oakland Technical High School

Since graduating from Aurora, I have gotten involved in my community and my school in a variety of ways. I loved middle school and enjoyed being involved in student activities there, including running the talent show, participating on student panels, leading student assemblies, participating on the Debate Team and in Improv Club, teaching STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) to younger kids, and presenting paper circuits, a cardboard arcade, and other projects at the Bay Area Maker Faire with the Black Pine Circle Maker Club. In high school, I joined the "Tech Techies"—an afterschool program where I am learning production design for school theatre performances (set design, lighting, audio, etc.).

Every summer, I volunteer with Community Reading Buddies, part of the Aspire Education Project. I mentor pre-K through 3rd graders from Oakland who participate in a summer literacy program. I love working with younger kids and helping them learn to read and discover books.

One of the things I loved most about my time at Aurora was the close relationships I had with my teachers. Each one of them was an important person in my life, and I am still in touch with them. I was so inspired by my teachers that I am considering becoming a teacher myself!



I entered Aurora shy and reserved, and I graduated from Aurora feeling more confident about sharing my thoughts and ideas. I was encouraged to think critically and look at issues from many different perspectives, so that way of learning comes naturally to me now. Maybe most importantly, Aurora taught me the importance of being nice to everyone. At my current school, I am one of many Aurora graduates. Though we've grown in different directions, we all still radiate the same kindness, helpfulness, and general magnanimity. Being a part of Aurora School was something very special in my life.



Marisol Rojas-Cheatham

2015 Alumna

Middle School:
Julia Morgan School for Girls

One of the things I enjoyed most about my time at Aurora was being part of the Philanthropy Club. As a member of this club, I helped fundraise for people in need, which gave me more empathy for others, showed me how much I loved helping others, and inspired me to help others more often.

Aurora taught me the importance of kindness and respect for differences. Each teacher provided different points of view and perspectives that helped shape who I am today. Aurora also taught me how to create positive relationships with my teachers, navigate conflict resolution, and the importance of having a good, strong community.

Since graduating Aurora, I have participated in organizing and leading the Women of Courage Panel at the Julia Morgan School for Girls. This was an inspiring event for me to be a part of because I had the opportunity to meet so many accomplished women. In my free time, I have traveled to Quebec and Montreal where I enjoyed participating in another culture. I also went on a backpacking trip with my family to the Grand Tetons where I got to see and experience the amazing beauty of nature.



ANNUAL REPORT

Aurora Board of Directors

John Brown, *President*
Peter Seibel, *Vice President*
Elayne Chou, *Secretary*
Byron Kennedy, *Treasurer*
John Barrie

Brian Boero
Evan Gilbert
Rhonda Gillenwaters
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Julian Whitaker

Letter from the Treasurer

Investing in the power of small

Aurora School is financially healthy and maintaining that financial health is key to our long-term success. We budget conservatively and have increased our reserve and rebalanced our investments to responsibly align with our socially conscious philosophy. We continue to explore additional ways to invest in Aurora and our community, in order to provide an excellent educational experience for our students while keeping tuition affordable for our families. With the support of Aurora board members, parents, staff, and alumni, the 2016-2017 Annual Fund had the greatest yield in the history of our school!

Tuition provides the largest portion of Aurora School's operating budget. Other support is derived from non-curriculum programs, such as our highly successful summer camp; tax-deductible contributions, such as gifts to the Annual Fund and special fundraising events; and earnings on investments. Aurora continues to provide generous tuition assistance, which enriches diversity throughout the school.

Aurora School is investing in facility improvements; over the summer we refreshed the building with new paint, carpets, and new classroom furniture. We have more improvements planned for the upcoming year, including possibilities for an addition of new green space. We are continually investing in our teachers, curriculum, and the enrichment courses that are a key component of the unique Aurora experience.

As Aurora looks to the future, we envision an amazing middle school program, which will greatly benefit our community and our unique mission to educate both head-smart and heart-smart young citizens. We also feel this program will complement the school's long-term financial health goals.

Thank you for your commitment to sustaining our school, giving generously to the Aurora Annual Fund, and for all that you do.



Byron D. Kennedy

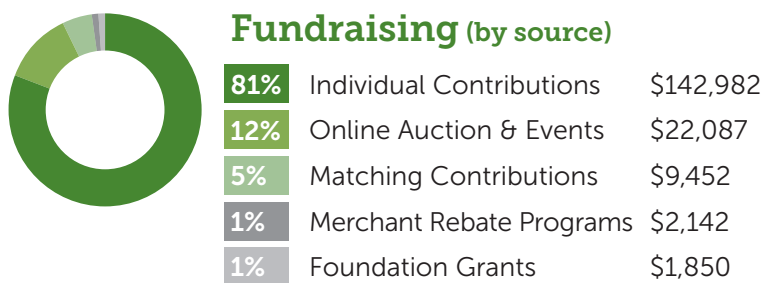
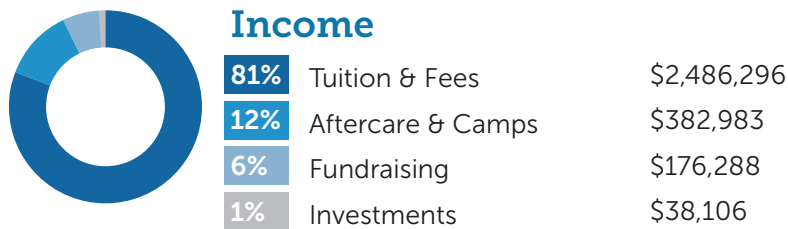
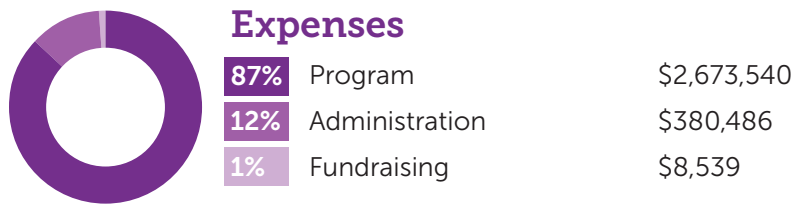
Treasurer, Board of Directors



“ We are continually investing in our teachers, curriculum, and the enrichment courses that are a key component of the unique Aurora experience. ”



2016–2017 At a Glance



Investing in the Future

In 2016-2017, we spent
\$502,791 on financial assistance
\$75,503 on facility improvements
\$65,455 on specialist/classroom supplies
\$22,712 on staff development

Financial Aid at Aurora

20%

of Aurora's revenue is dedicated to financial aid

37%

Aurora has the highest percentage of families awarded Financial Aid, when compared to similar local schools

\$25,000

Aurora's tuition is less than the average (\$25,673), when compared to similar local schools

\$11,700

average dollar amount of financial assistance received by families

42%

of our students receive a financial aid award

\$1,100-\$20,000

Range of financial aid awarded

DONOR 2016–2017 ROLL



INDIVIDUAL SPONSORS

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DONOR PROFILES



Emily Merideth & Ken Sommer

Parents of Ben (Alumnus 2014) and Nate (5th grade)

We donate to Aurora because we believe so strongly in its mission of progressive education. Now, more than ever,

we need to educate our children and ourselves to think critically so that we can all become active and informed participants in the democratic process. But even more than the “what” of education at Aurora, it is the “how” that touches us deeply. The focus on igniting curiosity through hands-on learning and the invitation for

children to bring their inner lives into the classroom through social-emotional learning means that Aurora is a warm, nurturing, and safe place for our children to take risks and explore themselves, their relationships, and their world.

By donating to Aurora, we help ensure that this vibrant and caring community thrives and continues to nurture compassionate and committed leaders. We see it as a way of investing in our child’s future and also putting our beliefs into action.

Carol & Richard Nitz

Parents of Sara (Alumna 1999)

In 1993 we made our decision to send Sara to Aurora. Why Aurora? We wanted a school that honored all of Sara. Sure, we wanted a huge helping of reading, writing, and arithmetic, but more importantly we wanted to make sure her unique light was not diminished. We wanted Sara stretched to become her very best self, surrounded with friends, teachers, and great adventures while in school. The foundation that has supported Sara’s growth to the successful 29-year-old she is today, was built during her six years at Aurora.

Even though it has been 18 years since Sara left Aurora, Richard and I donate annually to the school. We do it to honor Sara. We do it to honor the teachers and

administrators who guided her. We do it because we owe the same wonderful experience to any child who applies and whose parents cannot afford the tuition. We do it for the future that our daughter will live in. We do it because we believe in Aurora and wish for other children the great start in life that it gave our daughter. We have many fond memories of Aurora that are still very precious to us all these many years later. Won’t you consider donating to Aurora, so your child and the Aurora children of the future will have such a grand start in life?





Sheila & Nahum Schneidermann

Grandparents of Ariela (1st Grade)

When someone asks us why we donate to Aurora, our unequivocal answer is: "for selfish reasons." We feel

incredibly blessed with the gift of Ariela as a grandchild. Every Monday when we pick Ariela up from school, she emerges from the building with a great smile, surrounded by friends, and exuding a sense of exuberance.

We could say that having a joyful and happy grandchild who loves school is a good reason to donate. This, however, is only one reason we support Aurora. Promoting academic achievement, enthusiastic learning, and widened horizons are other reasons we give. The ability to instill in a child the love for learning is the hallmark of a great school.

We've observed that Aurora parents are, alongside their kids, completely engaged and involved, and this makes Aurora not only a school, but also a community. At the Tinker Faire, as we watched parents excitedly participating, exploring, and laughing side by side with their children, we were reminded again of how Aurora brings students, parents, teachers, and administrators together to create a larger Aurora family.

When our children were young and still viewed their parents as very wise and knowing, we kept repeating a message, a mantra of sorts: "material things come and go, but experiences stay with you, always." The experience of being an Aurora student and part of the Aurora community is unforgettable. We encourage potential donors to give whole-heartedly, and make it a gift that keeps on giving.

Rina Ayuyang & Ken McCarty

Parents of Finn (2nd Grade)

We consider ourselves lucky that we found Aurora School. Our son loves going to school every day, and I think it's because Aurora teachers and staff respect him as the person he is, always encouraging him to express himself, nurturing his creativity, and embracing his uniqueness.

Aurora is one of the few educational institutions that focus on each child and their individual learning style and needs. The school gives students the tools to succeed academically and become socially engaged and empowered individuals.

Our family gives to Aurora because we want to do our part to help the school continue its mission of providing a positive and welcoming environment for students to grow academically, socially, and emotionally.

We also give because we understand the value of an Aurora education. Aurora provides children a rewarding and enriching experience, a gift that not every child is afforded and something that we didn't personally have growing up. Donating to Aurora is one way we invest in the success of our son's future.

Whether it's improving the facilities and classrooms, expanding afterschool programs and summer camps, nurturing the staff's professional development, or continuing to provide a unique and progressive curriculum, it feels good to know that our gifts to Aurora are helping create a better future for all.





GIVING

Aurora is a small school with big dreams. As a nonprofit educational institution, one of the challenges we face is that we cannot survive on tuition income alone. To continue to deliver the Aurora mission, we need the financial support of families like yours.

When you give to Aurora, you're supporting:



Our new innovative **STEM Collaboration** with Project Lead the Way, which brings real-world learning in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math



Professional development programs and events for our faculty, such as the Columbia Teachers College Reading and Writing Institute and the People of Color Conference



Facility upgrades like our recently installed classroom carpet and furniture



Need-based scholarships, which ensure socio-economic diversity in our community



Larger school enhancement projects, such as the addition of green space

Every dollar counts, no matter how large or how small the donation. Please commit today to a gift—at whatever level is right for you. Thank you in advance for your generous support of Aurora School.

WAYS TO GIVE



The Fund for Aurora

The Fund for Aurora is our school's main fundraising campaign that helps equip our classrooms, support professional development, provide upgrades to our facilities, and support need-based scholarships, which ensure socio-economic diversity amongst our student body.



The Bob Whitlow Fund

The Bob Whitlow Professional Development & School Culture Fund was established in 2012 to continue the significant legacy of our beloved former Head of School, Bob Whitlow. This fund helps to support the ongoing professional development of Aurora's faculty and staff, as well as ensure continued economic diversity at Aurora School.



Online Auction

Our annual Online Auction raises funds to support technology, classroom materials, and supplies for art, woodshop, music, yoga, and PE. Hosting an auction online allows us to invite not only parents and staff, but also alumni, family, friends, and the general public.



Merchant Rebate Programs

Amazon.com

When you shop via Aurora's affiliate link on Amazon (auroraschool.org/amazon-link), up to 10% of all eligible proceeds will be donated to Aurora School.

Sports Basement

When you shop at Sports Basement and mention Aurora School at checkout, they will apply a 10% discount to your purchase AND donate 10% of your purchase to Aurora School.

eScrip

When you register your credit or debit cards with eScrip and use these cards for purchases, a percentage of your purchase cost will be donated to Aurora School.

HOW CAN I CONTRIBUTE?

Donating is easy and can be done in a number of ways:

MAIL

Return your tax-deductible gift via check or credit card to us at 40 Dulwich Road Oakland, CA 94618. Please make a note in the memo that you are contributing to the Fund for Aurora.

ONLINE

Visit the Aurora website at auroraschool.org/give and click the DONATE button.

PLEDGE

Make a pledge now and work out a payment plan by sending an email to our Finance Manager at erina@mosscca.com.

EMPLOYEE MATCH

Double the impact of your gift! Many area employers are eager to help by matching your gift to education. Just ask your HR Manager for a matching gift form.

Are my gifts to Aurora tax-deductible?

YES! Aurora is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation. Our Federal Tax ID Number is 94-3080476.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



VOLUNTEER PROFILES



Lily Huang

Parent of: Amelia (class of 2017) and Tabby (2nd grade)

Volunteer Since: 2011

Where I Volunteer: work parties, field trips, book fair, staff appreciation lunch, school tours, and classroom parent

In the time our family has been part of the Aurora community, I've had the opportunity to wear many different hats as a parent volunteer. I love any excuse to spend time at Aurora—it is always fulfilling to be able to contribute to such a loving and inclusive community.

I've enjoyed each volunteer opportunity I've had at Aurora because each one has shown me a new facet of Aurora's special nature. Helping with work parties at the beginning of the year gave me insight into how much work and thoughtfulness go into the school's facilities. Helping out in the classrooms and on field trips let me witness firsthand the loving care and all-around wonderfulness of the Aurora teaching staff. It taught me about Aurora's teaching philosophy, its inclusivity, its holistic approach to teaching and learning, and its overall kindness towards

everyone in our community. Helping with the book fair has given me a glimpse into the magic of our unparalleled library program. Volunteering as a parent ambassador and tour docent has let me see inside all of the classrooms and learn even more about how every part of the school works. Speaking to prospective parents has been one of my favorite volunteer roles. I love to talk about how awesome Aurora is!

We never expected a school community to bring so much to our family, but Aurora has turned out to be a magical place full of kind, thoughtful, and intentional people. I feel fortunate to have been able to contribute and participate in so many different ways while supporting this wonderful community.



Jordan Gimbel

Parent of: Eloise a.k.a. “LouLou” (1st grade)

Volunteer Since: 2015

Where I Volunteer: classroom parent, snack provider, admissions event representative, and Tinker Faire organizer

When thinking about my daughter’s transition to Aurora, I knew that I wanted to volunteer in ways that would allow me to participate with the community, witness my daughter’s environment, and, generally speaking, contribute to the positive energy at the school. However, volunteering during the day presented challenges due to my schedule.

Fortunately, there are many ways to volunteer at Aurora! This year, I jumped at the opportunity to participate on the Tinker Faire planning committee. I craved an experience that would allow me to engage with the community at Aurora in a way that would have a lasting impact. Tinker Faire intrigued me because of my prior experience working with an art gallery in Los Angeles, which programmed all-day events. I grew excited to bring that experience to Aurora’s Tinker Faire.

Despite the challenges that come with planning any inaugural event, the Aurora community made our aspirations a reality. I was blown away by the range of talent and interest of Aurora parents—they led activities in everything from rope making, sun prints, and LED experiments to crafting junk art and Gak balls. The parents’ passion became contagious as the kids darted between activities, consuming the experience.

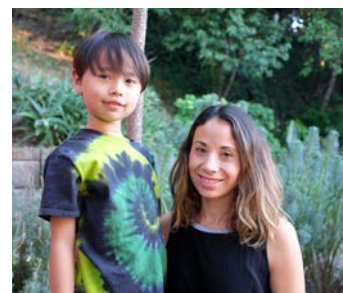
Volunteering at Aurora provides many returns. It has allowed me to meet other parents and enjoy witnessing the way the Tinker Faire unlocked the passion of the parents and kids in our community. When parents volunteer, our time and effort supports the learning and inclusive sanctuary that the teachers, staff and others at Aurora work so hard to provide for our kids.

Carmela Carvajal

Parent of: Dustin (2nd grade)

Volunteer Since: 2016

Where I Volunteer: field trip driver, snack provider, classroom parent, facilities, and community event representative



Aurora offers many ways to volunteer, so it’s easy to say yes! The opportunities are well publicized and organized. There is something for everyone to choose from that fits their interests and schedule.

I love being able to volunteer while the school day is underway. It’s fun to get to experience a little part of what the kids do in a typical day at Aurora. Chaperoning field trips is especially fun because I get to experience something new and exciting right along with Dustin and his class. Representing Aurora at community events has also been rewarding because I get to share with prospective parents exactly what’s made Aurora such an amazing school for us.

When we started at Aurora in the middle of the school year, we were not only new to the school but also new to Oakland. Volunteering helped me get acquainted with the rhythms of Aurora and with teachers, other parents, and the kids. I think it also helped Dustin feel like it wasn’t just him taking on a brand new adventure and challenge, but that we were doing it as a family. Now it feels like we are rooted in the community around us, and as we draw on its many amazing people and resources for support, it feels great to find ways to give back.

7 REASONS why it's great to be a VOLUNTEER

The ongoing success of our kids relies heavily on the amazing network of families who volunteer at Aurora. To continue to deliver the quality education Aurora is known for, we need the donation of time from families like yours.



It takes a village

Faculty and administrators spend much of their time focusing on providing enriching academics and professional support for your children, but there is so much more to Aurora. Planning events, organizing fundraisers, beautifying the campus, and using professional and personal connections to benefit the school takes some serious people power!



A little goes a long way

When it comes to helping out, a little can really go a long way. Only available on the weekends? Prefer to volunteer off-campus? Looking for a short-term project? No problem. Aurora has plenty of opportunities to accommodate most parents' interests and availability.



Everyone has something to offer

You don't need to be expert in order to donate your time to Aurora. There's a lot of behind-the-scenes work to be done that doesn't require anything other than a true willingness to give your time and energy. Everyone is good at something, which means everyone has a talent to offer!



Your child will benefit

Things like field trips, book fairs, classroom plays, the online auction, Tinker Faire, and other special events rely heavily on volunteers. When you help to oversee some of these projects, your child will have a more meaningful school experience.



It's good for you

Studies show that when you stop thinking about yourself and focus on someone else, your stress levels start to decrease, your immune system is strengthened, your mood improves, and your overall sense of life satisfaction increases. Not only will your efforts enhance your child's experience at school, you'll feel pretty good too!



You'll gain a sense of community

Volunteering lets you meet people from all walks of life and broaden your social circle. Meeting new people at community events like our annual picnic or room potlucks gives you, and your children, the chance to form real relationships that can last a lifetime.



It's fun!

Need we say more?



SAVE THE DATE!



Aurora's thirty-year anniversary is just around the corner! We hope you will join us on June 3, 2018 to celebrate. In addition to celebrating our wonderful community and many milestones, we will also honor Librarian Kathy Shepler who will be retiring after 25 years of service at Aurora.

In 2017, Aurora received a new and improved art room thanks to a generous donor and to our art teacher, Julie Pollack. Aurora also kicked off our first ever Science, Technology, Engineering, and

Mathematics (STEM) program for our 2nd-5th grade students. Aurora continues to remain the only elementary school in the East Bay with a woodshop, and we are proud to now offer woodshop classes to students of all ages during the school day.

After thirty years, Aurora remains one of the few K-5 independent schools in the East Bay, where students learn in multi-age classrooms by design, and experience a holistic education that values both academic and social-emotional success.

Join us in celebrating Aurora on June 3, 2018!



40 Dulwich Road | Oakland, CA 94618

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the power of small



Aurora School's mission

is to nurture children's love of learning by cultivating
academic excellence, **emotional** intelligence,
and **social** engagement.