GIVE THEM THE TOOLS

PROSPECT SIERRA
An Independent K-8 School
El Cerrito, California
GIVE THEM THE TOOLS

FOR TRUE UNDERSTANDING

What’s in your child’s toolbox?

When we welcome students to Prospect Sierra, we embrace that each child brings distinct talents and offers infinite potential. Here, students learn to think deeply, know themselves, and care for others. By equipping students with the tools to leverage strengths and overcome challenges, they leave Prospect Sierra prepared to succeed.
An entirely new set of skills is required of our children to be successful in the world. Prospect Sierra is leading the conversation nationally about how schools of the 21st century must powerfully balance academics and ethics. Every moment at Prospect Sierra will further your child’s skills as they:

- Understand their impact in a local and global community
- Build on a diversity of ideas
- Experiment, create, and embrace setbacks
- Recognize their emotional, social, and learning needs

With these tools our students are prepared to thrive and make change in an ever-evolving world.
GIVE THEM THE TOOLS

FOR SEIZING OPPORTUNITY

Every year counts.

We invest our time, energy, and resources to make sure that each of your child’s elementary and middle school years is meaningful. From one grade to the next, we instill in students a passion for learning, a sense of community, and a feeling of purpose that extends well beyond their formative years. In high school, our alumni stand out as leaders and innovators for social change and meet with great success in college and beyond.

What better testament to the value of a Prospect Sierra education than to know that the groundwork established at an early age really does make a long-term impact.

CLOSER THAN YOU THINK

Our school draws families from 18 different cities, including Berkeley, El Cerrito, Albany, Richmond, Oakland, and El Sobrante. Parents tell us that just one look made all the difference in how they imagined the potential of a Prospect Sierra education for their children.

Bus transportation is available.

www.prospectsierra.org

K–4 Admissions: (510) 809-9018
5–8 Admissions: (510) 809-9025
Curiosity lives in every child.

At Prospect Sierra we give our students opportunities to apply their curiosity to everything they encounter. From prototyping 3D models, to understanding new perspectives through literature, to identifying how emotions impact academic success, our students embody a sense of discovery. This encourages students to integrate academic disciplines. When it comes time to demonstrate their learning, students practice, combine, and polish multiple tools that show mastery and allow for technological, creative, and practical expression.

We dedicate a lot of time and energy at this school to developing empathy in students. Books and stories are by their nature empathy machines, and by reading about others, and not just reading but feeling for others, we grow ourselves. It is how many of us become ourselves.

— Jeff Chang, Middle School Librarian
A highlight of sixth grade is the annual study trip to Live Power Farm. Preceded not just by lessons on agriculture, food security, and water rights, but also by discussions about what it’s like to be a modern day farmer, students and teachers engage in conversations about facing discomfort, from what it will be like to live away from parents and technology, to contemplating the absence of a flushable toilet.

Students process their experiences through in-depth writing exercises while at the farm, and come back with a deeper understanding of how their food is grown and the interconnectedness of agriculture, health, and the environment.
GIVE THEM THE TOOLS
FOR INNOVATION

Learn by doing.

We believe in the value of making, building, creating, and understanding the impact of our efforts. Prospect Sierra students craft, tinker, construct, and problem solve in our maker spaces. Housed on our elementary and middle school campuses, our “colabs” are collaborative spaces for hands-on learning of all types. Step inside and you’ll hear the whir of a drill, the hum of a sewing machine, the clicking of a keyboard, or the sound of a laser cutter in action.

In addition to these fluid spaces, we’ve constructed flexible 21st century classrooms, equipped with movable chairs, tables, and walls, designed to support the bodies and minds of all of our students. Further, our expansive arts spaces are abuzz with student practice, creativity, newly acquired skills, and inspiration.
Prospect Sierra fifth graders use the colab to build their Automata projects. These “self-operating machines” combine geometry and physics concepts such as ratios, gears, and measurement, with intricate decorations that our art teacher helps students realize. After designing, cutting, and much trial and error, the result is an elaborate and beautiful collection of crank-driven sculptures that feature dancers spinning at various speeds, dolphins jumping in the ocean, and basketball players slam dunking the ball.
Tools in action:

WHAT DO YOU STAND FOR?

We invest deeply in creating an identity-safe school. In the classroom, teachers share examples of how identity intersects with culture and history, helping students realize the active role—and power—that every person has in the evolution of humanity. In eighth grade, this takes the shape of interview projects. Students connect with someone who lived through World War II—be it a soldier, a factory worker, or a Japanese-American survivor of an internment camp—and write oral histories based on extensive interviews. Students see first-hand how identity and history intersect and inform the lives of their interviewees and of themselves.
GIVE THEM THE INSPIRATION

INTRIGUED? VISIT TO LEARN MORE!

We hear time and time again from families that they fell in love with Prospect Sierra during their first visit to campus. If you want an educational experience with a neighborhood feel, you’ll be pleasantly surprised by what you find when you visit Prospect Sierra.

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GIVE THEM THE COURAGE
Changing the world begins with understanding your point of view.

At Prospect Sierra, we recognize that children need guided experiences to help them build values, develop perspectives, and grow in confidence. Our innovative educational approach balances academic and ethical inquiry through projects, study trips, service, and more.

Through intellectual engagement, self-knowledge, and care for others, we equip Prospect Sierra students to solve the problems of today and identify the problems of tomorrow. They graduate as self-aware, kind, whole thinkers who know how to learn, and who are ready to navigate complexity and uncertainty. They are inspired and prepared to build a better world, knowing that it takes a diversity of thinkers to create change.
GIVE THEM THE COURAGE

TO BE INDEPENDENT

We do more than speak to our values—we instill them.

I say this with all my heart: if I could go back in time I would have enrolled both my children in Prospect Sierra from kindergarten on. I’ve seen the positive impact it’s had on my son and how happy he is. He’s a better person for it. I’m grateful for that.

— Rosa Chavarria, Prospect Sierra parent
Some people perceive independent schools to have an ethos of entitlement or to be elitist. From the moment families first step on campus, they are surprised to find that in fact, Prospect Sierra is a welcoming, down-to-earth East Bay community.

While families are attracted to the benefits of an independent education, they enroll their students because they recognize that ours is also a community of shared values. We believe that an education can only be complete when our students acquire both academic intelligence and social and emotional intelligence.

Families who take the time to explore our school find that Prospect Sierra offers something distinctive for their children. Your child will be known at Prospect Sierra. Every day they will interact with extraordinary teachers who will support them in their practice of academic inquiry and excellence. The result is Prospect Sierra alumni who engage with the world to make it better.
Learning shouldn’t start over every year.

With curriculum designed to help students integrate learning within each year and across their elementary and middle school years, student engagement with subject matter deepens over time. At Prospect Sierra, we encourage students to make connections between their learning at school and their growing awareness of the outside world.

We prepare students with 21st century skills by emphasizing hands-on experiences, critical thinking, and creative collaboration. From a study trip to Los Angeles to examine power and privilege with people experiencing homelessness, to a school-wide basketball tournament to combat poverty in Guatemala, Prospect Sierra teachers and students design activities that challenge, inspire, and build upon previous experiences. Students achieve a deeper understanding of classroom concepts and their own abilities to envision and drive change.

Courage in action:

IT ALL ADDS UP

Even in seemingly straightforward subjects like second grade math, we place academic skills within a deeper discussion of ideals, care for others, and community. Students interact with math manipulatives so that they can see and understand why an answer is correct, and work with peers of varying strengths and talents so that they learn how to collaborate with—and learn from—those who have different learning styles. When we engage in this “math discourse,” we model empathy by giving every member of the group the time to come to their own conclusions.
GIVE THEM THE COURAGE
TO KNOW THEMSELVES

Start within.

“This amazing learning environment helps develop an internal compass. A lot of grown ups don’t have that—they end up being focused on external things like the most prestigious school or job. They forget about developing their internal selves.”

— Sandra Collins, Prospect Sierra parent
How do you act when you feel unsure of yourself? When you feel ecstatic? Or embarrassed? When the pressure is on, do you cave to doubt, or do you make a plan to achieve your goal and feel good in your journey toward it?

When students are in touch with their emotions and are able to communicate them to others, they can truly be fulfilled. Just as important is being able to recognize and respond to the emotions that others bring to a situation. Prospect Sierra uses proven emotional learning tools to help students understand, cope with, and even regulate their emotions.
Every student should be known, seen, recognized, and valued.

At Prospect Sierra, we greet each other by name. We carve space out of our day for sharing. We create places for groups to discuss perspectives and initiate dialogue. Our nurturing school climate is one in which we care deeply for our students, and they care genuinely for one another. We work to interrupt bias and build a microcosm of the world we wish to see. In the middle school years, this means examining the “unspoken rules” of cultures. Students identify, sort, and label different cultural norms at Prospect Sierra that are barriers to inclusivity, then decide on a plan of action. From eliminating gender segregation at lunch to campaigning for the freedom to “Dare to Wear” the clothes that fit your personality, they learn what it takes to analyze and work to solve a challenge.

Courage in action:

PEACEFUL CHANGEMAKERS

Every child has the capacity to change the world, and we emphasize and nurture the multiple ways that students can approach challenges. Starting in kindergarten, we share stories not just of famous figures, but also of the everyday people who are forces for change. We celebrate when alumni champion Prospect Sierra ideals long after graduation day, each year honoring two young alums who are working for change—in their neighborhoods and around the world.
Prospect Sierra gives students 
THE TOOLS TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD
by integrating rigorous academics with
a deep understanding of human emotions.

Every day our talented teachers help students connect academic experiences with ideals like ethics and empathy. The result is deeper intellectual engagement, greater self-knowledge, and compassionate relationships. Prospect Sierra students emerge with the courage to be great people, not just great students.