

SAN FRANCISCO WALDORF HIGH SCHOOL BEGINS 2011-2012 ACADEMIC YEAR WITH MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT

FIRST SCHOOL IN SAN FRANCISCO TO RECEIVE LEED GOLD CERTIFICATION

SAN FRANCISCO – September 16, 2011— As the first school in San Francisco to be awarded the coveted LEED Gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council, San Francisco Waldorf High School begins the 2011-12 academic year with a tremendous accomplishment to celebrate. The award was received for San Francisco Waldorf's new 1.7 acre high school campus in West Portal, located in what was formerly a Pacific Bell call center. The centerpiece of the project, led by David Bushnell of the San Francisco based 450 architects, involved the conversion of a 1970s-era 23,000-square-foot concrete structure into a sustainable learning environment featuring classrooms, science labs, art studios, a library, and administrative spaces. This marks the first time that a school in San Francisco has obtained LEED Gold certification.



The overall goal of the project was to create an environment that is in harmony with the philosophy of Waldorf Education. Perhaps the greatest reflection of this success is the fact that the building itself will be incorporated into the curriculum as an educational resource for environmental studies. The principals of the Waldorf philosophy and the actual building serve as a teaching tool for students, demonstrating how to become actively involved in today's social issues.

In order to achieve the LEED Gold designation, the design team sought improvements that not only make the school environmentally friendly, but also have a positive impact on the daily lives of the students, faculty, and staff. The architects designed Waldorf High School to connect the students to their environment by visually integrating the building with the surrounding eucalyptus grove. In addition to reducing water usage, increasing energy efficiency, and using a high percentage of recycled and repurposed materials, the architects of the project created better air and light quality that are conducive to learning. To that end, they installed a state-of-the-art HVAC system that monitors and controls the level of carbon dioxide in the classrooms, as CO2 levels are known to directly affect brain function. They also replaced the existing fixed windows with operable wood windows to provide fresh air and give the learning spaces a connection to nature. One teacher remarked that the quality of the light and air was so refreshing that she felt like she was outside.



The Waldorf curriculum is designed to help students achieve their full potential. Every aspect of the high school experience, from the science lab to the playing field, to internships and community service, is viewed not only from the standpoint of academic preparation, but also from its contribution to the student's developing sense of self. Through its emphasis on ethical values and social responsibility, Waldorf education helps students become a force for transformation in the world. Studies have found that Waldorf students have a tremendous degree of social responsibility and are unusually oriented towards improving social conditions.

“The reaction to the new campus has been tremendously positive,” said 450 architects principal David Bushnell, AIA. “With one daughter a recent graduate and one a current student, I have a unique insight into how the facility is meeting the needs of our young people. And what I’ve seen continues to amaze me. The school’s main goals are to provide our students the basis on which to develop into free, morally responsible, and integrated individuals and I can’t think of a better way to do this than to demonstrate our commitment through putting into practice these philosophies in a concrete building project. They are inspired by what we’ve done and are now coming forward with projects that build upon lessons learned from our project.”



Founded by Bushnell and his partner, Richard Lee Parker, 450 architects has a common vision that architecture is an art that can be formed as well as give form to who we are and how we feel, both in the present and for generations to come. The studio exemplifies dedication to the client and attention to detail, while being fully committed to green building principles and embracing a spirit of advocacy and activism. The firm has worked on a variety of projects including (we chose these from the website/can be edited by Bushnell) The Argonne Child Development Center, Japanese Weekend commercial building, and residences extending from Sonoma County to Europe.

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Media Contact:

David Bushnell

450 architects

415-546-0450

<http://david@450architects.com>

Mitch Mitchell

San Francisco Waldorf School

415-931-2750

<http://mmitchell@sfwaldorf.org>