

BUILDING SKILLS THAT MAKE US HUMAN

Exponential advances in digital technologies are reshaping the ways people work, creating uncertainty about how best to prepare learners for the future.

Andrea Saveri, a Prospect Sierra parent and futurist partnering with KnowledgeWorks, is helping to bring direction and insight to our school community. "We owe it to current and future students to reframe our approach to readiness," she says. Andrea points out that the skills students will need going forward are those that can't be easily replicated by robots or algorithms. "Curiosity, creativity, passion, intuition, persuasion, spontaneity—those are hard to code," says Andrea. Rather than fear the rise of better, faster machines, we "need to build better humans who can thrive in the machine age, those with a strong self-concept, self-knowledge, social-emotional skills, and coping mechanisms." Fortunately, Prospect Sierra's curriculum is set up to teach these very skills. In fourth grade, for example, students embark on a month-long project as they prepare for their adventure to Fort Ross. For the first time they are given an assignment that can't be accomplished in one sitting. They learn to manage their time and learn planning skills, and experience the discomfort of uncertainty while taking steps to achieve their goal. In sixth grade, students transition from researching and reporting concrete data to generating abstract ideas and creating original thesis statements—a major cognitive shift and opportunity for independence as a creative thinker. In eighth grade, students travel to L.A. to help underserved communities, an experience that opens their eyes to a world outside their bubble and inspires both self-reflection and compassion for others. By the time students graduate, they are able to easily adapt to their learning environments, not only because they're academically prepared, but also because of the very qualities that make us human.

“My colleagues and students amaze and inspire me every day. I have never before worked with a group of people who care so deeply. Each decision that my colleagues make, no matter how small it might seem, is made with incredible thoughtfulness. My colleagues bring their best selves every day, and they bring out the best of those around them. While I work in a middle school and there is no denying that adolescence can be rough, I am reminded on a daily basis just how kind Prospect Sierra students are.”

— Beth Alsberg,
8th Grade math teacher

