



Day-McKellar Preparatory School

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What distinguishes Day-McKellar Preparatory School from other top private schools in San Diego?** The teacher-student ratio we maintain is unmatched in San Diego, and extraordinarily rare nationwide. Our 1:8 teacher-to-student ratio insures that each child receives an education tailored to his or her multiple intelligences, pace of learning, and developmental growth. Having so many professional educators engaged, we get a very clear picture of each child's needs and can respond with customized strategies and lessons.

At Day-McKellar, students construct their own knowledge—writing and publishing their own social studies books, for example. Students learn to gather, mold and synthesize information at every turn, rather than reading a text and regurgitating meaningless facts. Indeed, we are not a “worksheet” school, nor do we rely heavily on textbooks for lessons, since books today are often outdated as quickly as they are published. Instead, our teachers draw on multiple resources, appropriate to this information age, and follow up on lessons with thought-provoking and fun tools.

At our school, physical education and the arts are not after-thoughts. We believe daily P.E. is critical to brain development, and that creative play is inexorably linked to developing focus and other executive thinking skills.

Perhaps the telltale difference between our students and others is written all over their faces. Day-McKellar Prep students are happy kids. The respect and love we exhibit brings out the best in everyone. The smallness of our community makes it a safe place to try new things, make mistakes, and master skills. And our students are not confined to their chairs but encouraged to move their bodies and become hands-on learners.

2. **Where is Day-McKellar Prep located?** The school is in Alpine, just beyond El Cajon in east San Diego County. Our students come from all over San Diego County – from Point Loma and La Jolla, from the Poway school district, and East County. Our founder and her children live downtown and make the 30-minute drive to Alpine each day. It's actually a beautiful, painless drive, and many of our families and faculty members carpool.

Our campus features classrooms that are specially designed for the optimal teaching of each subject matter. An Old World library lines the walls of the Reading/Writing room, with a computer lab around the corner from a carpeted, comfy chair reading area. The Warren L. Densley Science Room is home to a giant mural of the planets, with counters lined with microscopes. Students get their daily workouts in the indoor soccer field, next to a state-of-the-art fitness center. A performing arts room features a stage with performance seating for 75.

3. **What kind of school is it?** Day-McKellar Prep is an independent, private, college preparatory school. We are a non-religious school, and we are coeducational. Our students span from Kindergarten through 12th grade, and from day one, we teach them how to take tests and master knowledge so they will excel at college entrance exams and have all the skills they need to complete college and graduate school degrees.

We are a best-practice school and borrow the best, and most proven methods, from a variety of visionary educators and results-based programs. So no, we are not a Montessori school, though we espouse multi-age learning and remove barriers. So, for example, sixth graders with an aptitude can pursue Algebra, a subject traditionally taught in eighth or ninth grade.

No, we are not a Waldorf school, though we place a heavy emphasis on health and nutrition and discourage excessive screen time at home. We are fans of Sudbury Valley Schools and self-constructed knowledge but we also teach to the California grade-level standards, which Sudbury schools eschew. Although our promotion of family life and our belief in protecting the innocence of children lends us a traditional bent, we are not a religious school.

We *are* a school defined by our core beliefs, which are detailed next.

4. **What are the school's core beliefs?** At Day-McKellar Preparatory, we believe that students thrive when they come boldly, confidently, and eagerly to the learning. Teachers do not put "learning" onto them, rather students are inspired to fervently begin doing what they need to do. As a staff, we actively foster a sense of inner competence within *each* child, honoring each child's unique gifts and abilities. Whether

bound for Harvard, business ownership, a creative path, a life of service or of physical prowess, all students gain the awareness, knowledge, skills and tools they need to live with enthusiasm and delight according to their own personal legends.

5. **Who are the Day-McKellars?** Cara Day-McKellar is a nationally recognized teacher, parenting expert and reading specialist, whose teaching methods were adopted by the world's third largest literacy organization in the world. She's also the mother of four with a keen understanding of the challenges that today's families experience as they seek to create a rich family culture.

Mrs. Day-McKellar founded the school in 2008 with her husband, Marc McKellar. Marc is a former professional soccer player, a tri-athlete, personal trainer and wellness coach. The school is infused with the McKellars' love and commitment to a balance of mind, body and spirit. The McKellars are family owners of the La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club, and are known in San Diego for their philanthropy and civic mindedness.

6. **What kind of student thrives at Day-McKellar?** Day-McKellar boasts a socio-economically diverse student body. We attract advanced learners because our curricula and activities are designed without a ceiling. We also attract students with untapped potential, whose intelligences are not recognized in traditional learning environments.

Most of all, we attract families who place a high value on lifelong learning. And who want their children to learn the two skills most desired by CEOs today--how to think and how to self-assess. Our students do not look for the teacher's star at the top of their paper. Rather, they are taught how to continually self-evaluate. Students complete their own 25-page self-assessment report three times per year, in addition to receiving progress reports from teachers every six weeks.

7. Are the teachers experienced and well trained? At Day-McKellar Prep, we call our teachers "Superstars." Indeed, gifted teachers are the most important ingredient of our school, and research consistently shows the quality of the instructor is pivotal, even in classrooms employing the best materials and methods.

At Day-McKellar Prep, our students work with highly-educated, credentialed teacher-scholars who are uniquely qualified to meet the needs of students. Rather than teaching 13 different subjects each, our professional educators teach to their passions and specialties. The faculty and staff strive to live the mission of the school and to model balance in mind, body and spirit. They receive paid training and on-going professional development that many teachers have to initiate on their own. None of the teachers have tenure; the work they perform every day is their job security. This is foundational to the school.

Each Superstar at our school was selected in part because they view teaching as a life service and mission that is deeply and personally fulfilling. This shows in everything they do.

8. How do you meet the needs of students with different learning styles? How do you address the needs of low or high performers? At Day-McKellar Prep, all students receive personal instruction at their present levels. Our high performing students are inspired to new levels, concretely challenged, and their unique abilities are fostered. Students who need extra time or assistance are not dumbed down or labeled. Multiple intelligences are recognized and because of our low ratio, we don't have dogmatic or bureaucratic groupings for students. We're free to offer an ideal placement for each student in each subject.

Day-McKellar teachers employ an award-winning Language Arts curricula that provides for guided reading through all the grades, rather than stopping at grade one or two. All reading and writing instruction is provided by a seasoned Master Teacher of Literacy who is personally responsible for the reading and writing growth of every child in our school. The engaging, in-depth reading workshops introduce students to a host of classic literature novels and create critical, passionate, and habitual readers. Science is hands-on which allows students to grasp insights at their own speed. Students grow as mathematicians, again with the support of the low student-to-teacher ratio.

9. How does the school's small size contribute to its success? Studies show that students who attend schools with smaller student bodies (150 students or less) have higher levels of self-respect, better social skills and higher academic achievement. They experience a greater sense of belonging, or a lower level of alienation, than students at larger schools. Parent participation is also greater at small schools. With 100 students, Day-McKellar maintains a very strong sense of community, and a close relationship between students, families and staff. Each family knows our founder/head of school well and communicates with her frequently. Each teacher in our school teaches *every* student in their given subject and therefore knows *every* child's family. In an increasingly fragmented society, Day-McKellar's closeness enables us to teach manners and communication, to model ways of resolving conflict, forgiving others, and working at healthy relationships.

10. Does Day-McKellar Preparatory teach more than just academics? Yes! At Day-McKellar Preparatory, we teach children to become strong, confident, caring people who have the drive, skills and ability to be leaders. Teachers foster self-awareness and

personal accountability in an environment in which children are safe to learn and grow. We achieve this with our Happy Kids curriculum, Seva program and Honor Code.

Seva is an ancient word that means “selfless service.” Students and their families develop a service orientation toward themselves as individuals, their siblings, their families, their communities and beyond. Day-McKellar Preparatory students organize and implement local, state and worldwide service projects. The non-profit organization Seva Children is designed to assist our school with teaching these values and finding opportunities for growth. Students learn to advocate for ideals to make the world a better place for all.

Day-McKellar Preparatory School’s Honor Code is a way of living that both students and faculty cherish. Although an abstract concept, the Honor Code is experienced in real, daily, concrete ways. Students learn that having personal integrity and honor means doing the right thing even when no one is watching. Our students are never told to “be honest” or treated in a way that could imply that they could be dishonest or untrustworthy. Personal property that has been left on a table will still be there when the student looks to retrieve it. Students are trusted simply to sign out the library materials they need without supervision. The teachers implicitly trust the children and when they do make mistakes, they learn how to take full responsibility for their choices.

Day McKellar Preparatory believes that through Seva and the Honor code, students become stronger people and have a better foundation for their future. When business leaders talk about what they need from new recruits, they hardly mention computer skills or specific knowledge from a textbook. Employers are most interested in what are sometimes called “soft” skills: a deep knowledge base and the ability to listen and communicate; to think critically and imaginatively; to read, write and figure, and other capabilities that are increasingly neglected. These skills are gained naturally through experiences at Day-McKellar Prep.

11. What does the physical education program involve at Day-McKellar Preparatory?

Our students experience a rich cardiovascular and skill-building physical education program on a daily basis. This is unique to our school. Rarely is physical education made a priority in primary education. At Day-McKellar Preparatory the students experience high-quality indoor and outdoor circuit training and games on a daily basis. Heart rate monitoring, strength, endurance and cardiovascular training are integrated through our math, science and physical education curriculum. This allows the students to not only experience the physical activity, but to come to an understanding of the value of moving your body on a daily basis. Day-McKellar

Preparatory also offers several seasonal recreational sport activities, such as soccer and swim teams. The students may also be involved with a private gym and receive personal athletic skill building. The goal is to teach the students about sports, health and body, while having fun and staying fit. Furthermore, a nutritional curriculum and school practices are in place so that students understand how the food they eat, affects their bodies growth, development and abilities.

12. What are Excursions and how do they work?

Day-McKellar Preparatory took the traditional field trips to a new level, evolving these outings into excursions opportunities. These events are held off campus, usually 4 – 8 hours, with behind-the-scenes opportunities. The rich learning experiences are integrated with the school curriculum and allow students to have experiential learning. Excursions include opportunities for local and state history exploration, science and social science exploration, Seva works, adventure races, participation and spectator sports, geo-caching, letterboxing, leisure opportunities, and cultural plunges. Excursions are unique because parents and multi-age student body are invited to attend. Specific excursions are created based on student interest and curriculum. In-line with the philosophy of Day-McKellar Preparatory, families are encouraged to share in these unique events. By design, families will create lasting memories, become familiar with their children's friends, and gain a strong sense of community. Several overnight excursions are offered as well, such as Sleep Over on the Star of India and an all school one-week encampment in the Cuyamacas each year.

Some excursions have a fee, ranging between \$5-\$20. When the excursion requires greater funding, advanced notice is given and fund-raising opportunities are provided. Interested families choose to participate in the excursions that serve them best. All excursions are optional. Private transportation is used for these off campus events.

13. Is there a school lunch option?

Day-McKellar Preparatory offers a gourmet lunch service provided by our neighboring Kinder Academy (Monday through Wednesday) and Alpine Lunch Bunch (Thursday and Friday). This program was developed by Sue Cozart, R.N. Food is prepared fresh on a daily basis and served on campus. The lunch program only utilizes the finest ingredients, with a sandwich, salad and fruit buffet Monday through Wednesday and a hot lunch option on Thursday and Friday. In line with school philosophy, nutritional education and experience is integrated into the lunch program. Students and faculty may purchase lunch on a daily or a sporadic basis. Parents on campus during lunch time, may also purchase a meal. This gourmet lunch service is key to student achievement, which has at its core solid daily exercise, sound sleep and excellent nutrition. You may learn more about this service by visiting www.AlpineLunchBunch.com

14. What about homework?

Day-McKellar Preparatory does not assign traditional homework. Research indicates that for grades K - 8, there is no correlation between homework completion and academic achievement. As students find joy in learning, they are encouraged to take projects home that inspire them. Periodic optional family homework is offered to engage families in learning and playing together. This may be in the form of meaningful science activities, family traditions, as well as school directed excursions. It is always the choice of the family. Instead of having students independently working on homework, families at Day-McKellar Preparatory are encouraged to strengthen and bind the family by increasing meaningful activities. This unique family emphasis is a foundation of our school.

Furthermore, fostering a love of being outdoors is central to the philosophy of Day-McKellar Preparatory School. A shorter school day coupled with no homework allows students to spend considerably more time moving their bodies and exploring the “out of doors” than the national average. The average person is under the roof of his or her home, school or car for 97 percent of their living moments. Allowing families to be together, sharing a relaxed family meal, and enjoying each others company, indoors and out, is imperative to the healthy development of all children.

15. How are health issues handled?

Upon admission, all students fill out a health report. Any special circumstances are individually arranged and safely implemented. Our school nurse, Sue Cozart, R.N., maintains all health records, performs as needed hearing and vision screening and all required health checks. Nurse Cozart provides on-going support for all aspects of health within our school community and acts as a resource for curriculum development.

16. What is the dress code?

Day-McKellar Preparatory has elegant blue and tan uniforms, which the students may mix and match to their liking. Uniforms are purchased through Sue Mills Wear, which can be accessed on line or at the Mission Valley Retail Store. Following the basic shoe guidelines, shoes may be purchased at any store. The students also wear PE uniforms, a simple navy blue athletic short and light blue t-shirt. These will also be purchased thru Sue Mills Wear. Non-character athletic shoes are worn for PE.

17. What is the “Choice Chart”?

One priority at Day-McKellar Preparatory is to teach children how to make good choices in school, at home, and in life. This is actively taught in the academic environment by the implementation of the Choice Chart System. This system helps

children choose a positive life path, gain self control and become a helpful part of the family. In addition to the intrinsically inspirational methods used in instruction and discipline, the choice chart also offers an extrinsic reward that is a useful part of the program. This choice chart system is used by the teachers to reward students for making the choice to be a helpful part of our educational community.

Parents and extended family members have an opportunity to reward students for good choices by making deposits to a student savings account. The maintenance and growth of these accounts is integrated into the mathematics curriculum. This program not only fosters good choices by students, but also creates a variety of curriculum about money management and wealth development. This is a critical skill, since many talented people who earn sizable incomes experience significant stress and hardship due to an inability to properly manage and invest their earnings.

18. How can parents be involved at Day-McKellar Preparatory?

Parents have the opportunity to be closely involved in many workings of the school. Day-McKellar Preparatory has an open-door policy throughout the school day, which means parents are welcome at all times, to help, observe or participate as appropriate. Parents are asked to participate in excursions, come to class events and join in special activities.--with 80 hours of volunteer time per school year (or to "buy out" of volunteer time with an equivalent monetary gift.) Parents are invited to join teams and committees regarding a variety of topics. If a parent has a unique talent or a specific skill to share with our students, we look for opportunities to utilize them. Day-McKellar Preparatory is open to all wishes of our students' parents in relation to every area of the social and academic curriculum. In addition, we have a parent network through which we share resources with one another which furthers each parent's personal and professional development.

19. What are the costs of the Day-McKellar Preparatory School?

The annual tuition at Day-McKellar Preparatory School is \$13,125. There is a non-refundable \$150 application fee. Uniforms are bought off campus at Sue Mills Wear. Families will have optional excursions, some of which will have a cost. Opportunities to buy school photos, annual year books, logo sweatshirts and similar items will occur during the year. The school lunch option may be utilized for a fee or students may bring sack lunches to school.

20. What are the procedures for admission?

Families are invited to attend a small group or private tour of the facility. At that time, any additional questions will be answered by the Head of School, Cara Day-McKellar. When ready to submit an application, please download the document from www.Day-McKellar.com and provide it to the school with the non-refundable \$150 application

fee. Your child will then have an individual assessment, followed by a family interview. Once accepted, a non-refundable \$1500 deposit is required to secure a place in the school. This initial deposit is part of the tuition and is taken off the total tuition balance. The remaining balance is divided into 9 equal payments, payable on the first of each month from September to June. For further details on the application process, please contact our office by phone 619-722-6976 or email info@day-mckellar.com.