ATHENA ACADEMY
Exceptional Education for Dyslexic Children

Annual Report
2017-2018 Academic Year
Mission and Vision

OUR MISSION
Athena Academy educates first to eighth grade dyslexic children with compassion and expertise. We nurture the visual-spatial abilities and inherent strengths of students with dyslexia. Our students develop self-advocacy skills, open-mindedness, and creative problem-solving strategies. Athena Academy graduates are ready to take risks, collaborate, and be changemakers in the world.

We accomplish this through:
- Small class sizes and project based curriculum, which allow for individualized instruction
- Incorporation of the innovative neuroscience and educational research
- Our customized social emotional learning program
- A focus on cognitive skills and learning strategies

OUR VISION
Athena Academy’s vision is to become a leading institution for the teaching of dyslexic students. We will achieve this vision by developing, applying, and validating innovative teaching methods based on scientific research, and then share these methods with others with the goal of serving as many dyslexic students as possible.

Message from the Head of School

THE 2017-2018 SCHOOL YEAR WAS A YEAR FULL OF GREAT MILESTONES FOR ATHENA ACADEMY!

These milestones included our first financial audit, our largest student body to date and the achievement of full accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC) through June 2024.

ACS WASC accreditation signifies that Athena Academy has demonstrated the capacity, commitment, and competence to support high-quality student learning and ongoing school improvement.

Achieving accreditation was a multi-year undertaking that culminated with the completion of a comprehensive self-study of every aspect of our school, from academics to our business practices, and a four-day on-site visit from ACS WASC. The visiting committee was extremely complimentary of the quality of our program and processes, particularly given what a relatively young school we are.

The following were highlighted as our main areas of strength:
- The deep connection of the teachers and staff with the students allow for laser focused individualization on each student’s needs, and creates a community of inclusiveness and trust.
- The collaborative, problem-solving, out-of-the box approach to curriculum which incorporates a variety of research-based strategies.
- The focus on teaching skills and strategies to allow students to find success in any situation.
- The continuous and thoughtful professional development for all teachers and staff.
- The clear vision our well-rounded board has for where the school is headed.

As part of the accreditation process we looked at what kind of non-academic skills (our values) we want our students to have when they graduate. From our discussions we determined the following.

ATHENA ACADEMY GRADUATES WILL:

- Demonstrate Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy Skills
- Approach Life with Flexibility, Compassion, and a Growth Mindset
- Be Effective Communicators
- Be Problem-Solvers

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Message from the Board of Trustees

2017-2018 was a year of remarkable achievement for Athena Academy, and the members of the Board of Trustees were honored to be a part of the growth and successes of the school. The board’s roles are to focus on long-term strategy and plan, maintain the vision and mission, and provide fiscal oversight and responsibility. The Head of School is responsible for the day-to-day decision making and management of the school. This year we supported the school through its first WASC accreditation and were delighted that the accrediting committee cited the board as one of the strengths of the school in its report. Athena Academy’s board takes its fiduciary responsibility seriously and we work hard to ensure the financial stability of the school. This year the school completed its first independent audit, which is generally challenging for such a new institution. The audit was very successful and the school obtained a clean audit letter. Athena enters the 2018-19 academic year in its best financial position ever. As with all private schools, Athena still depends on, and is most grateful to, current families, alumni families, and the community’s generous contributions to annual giving. The Board of Trustees sincerely thanks retiring board members, Teresa Bailey, PhD., PhD., and Ritu Goswamy for their service to Athena Academy. We solidified the school’s financial position and established a formal long-range plan for the first time in the school’s six year history.

In the creation of the long range plan, specific goals were laid out for the next five academic years. The plan addresses how the school will fulfill its mission by serving as many dyslexic students as possible, develop a facilities plan, maintain proper governance, and continually improve its financial situation. This year the school completed its first independent audit, which is generally challenging for such a new institution. The audit was very successful and the school obtained a clean audit letter. Athena enters the 2018-19 academic year in its best financial position ever. As with all private schools, Athena still depends on, and is most grateful to, current families, alumni families, and the community’s generous contributions to annual giving.

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2017-2018 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Carla Rayacich, Founder and Vice-President
Matthew Duncan
Diana Ungerma
Dr. Teresa Bailey
Steven Montoya
Muna Abbas
Brian Kocsy
Ritu Goswamy
Taimur Shaikh
Brian Miller
Douglas Thompson
Cristina Moustirats
Brian Miller
Matthew Duncan
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Victor Berdoulay
Class of 2017
Portrait of a Graduate

In retrospect, we first noticed something was amiss in preschool. Was Victor a lefty or a righty? He seemed to use both sides to write but both seemed equally laborious. In Kindergarten, he stayed with the left side so we encouraged it with left pencil grips and lefty scissors and assumed his awkward writing as just a handedness issue and would improve with practice. He kept up with classwork and was engaged and participated in the classroom until third grade, when the writing expectation increased in both volume and content. Tests were taking a long time to complete and homework was difficult.

The way teachers at Athena teach, I felt I was actually learning instead of sitting and struggling.

We began the process of testing and ultimately Victor was diagnosed with receptive/expressive language disorder, dysgraphia and dyslexia. It was frustrating for him to be in a classroom all day being taught in one way, only to come home to relearn the material in a way that he could comprehend. It was labor intensive, and was a big focus for our whole family, but we kept it up as it got him through 4th and 5th grade. Middle school loomed. Our prior strategies were not going to be enough and we knew we could not sustain the pace and keep up.

Thankfully, Victor’s developmental pediatrician suggested Athena Academy. Victor shadowed for 2 days and came home excited, comfortable and relaxed.

Not only Victor but our whole family underwent a transformation we could not have anticipated.

Tumultuous start to puberty was smoothed out with open communication and the ability to listen and feel understood. Today Victor is a freshman at our local high school. Athena Academy prepared him for this transition very well, from communication regarding accommodations, testing for appropriate class placement, and by giving him the strategies he needs to advocate for himself and being able to explain his learning differences to others. He is working at grade level for math and English with an English support class. Victor is joyfully playing the baritone saxophone in the marching band and is relating to his peers and teachers with a sense of ease. We are thankful Victor was able to attend a school that met him where he was and helped elevate his educational experience. We would hope every child have the same opportunity.

Victor was at Athena Academy for all 3 years of middle school. For Victor, the anxiety and frustration of not understanding and being
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This year, a popular middle school project was the study of dystopian narratives. Students read a dystopian narrative (The Unwanteds or Animal Farm) and participated in a variety of activities to better comprehend the novel and recognize its dystopian elements. Each week, students prepared questions and discussed issues related to the book in literature circles. This was a rich opportunity to develop academic conversation skills, and students reflected that it was important to prepare questions that would sustain a discussion for 15-20 minutes. To conclude the unit, students imagined their own dystopian society based on a current world issue and wrote a scene or short story that took place in that society.

Language Arts in the elementary school is driven by inquiry questions which the children explore independently or in small groups. One project this year asked “Why is historical fiction unique?” Students each selected a historical fiction text as the basis for this project. Students identified factual and fictitious information from the text. Using this information and online research, students generated a 3D model of their historical event, wrote facts about the event, and created a diary of a character who survived the event. Students chose historical events such as 9/11, The Bombing of Pearl Harbor, The First Olympic Games, The San Francisco Earthquake of 1906 and the Sinking of the Titanic.

Athena Academy Math Classes emphasize thinking creatively, being flexible problem solvers, and building number sense. Many students enjoy the engaging guiding questions presented in Math Class like:

- How does Geometry make the world more fun?
- What makes money valuable?
- How do graphs tell a story?

In exploring these questions, students work together to give, receive, and use feedback to improve projects. The projects are focused on student learning goals, including standards-based content, critical thinking skills, problem-solving strategies, communication of understanding, and self-management.

One Elementary Math class explored the question, “What makes money valuable?” Students investigated this question by learning about currency from around the world, as well as thinking about exchange rates, basic economics, and budgeting. After studying money from around the world, students created products inspired by various foreign currencies to sell to the Middle School students. In April, the Middle School classes visited our bank and currency exchange, to buy homemade goods like Chinese paper lanterns, Costa Rican animal masks, Indian kites, Mexican sombreros, Norwegian flags, and more!
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Middle School math classes at Athena Academy focus on building abstract thinking, using mathematical vocabulary, and practicing how to find solutions in a variety of ways. Students appreciate the relevant lessons and creativity that Project Based Learning allows.

One of our Middle School Math classes explored the question “How does math make the world more fun?” Students tackled geometry games such as air hockey tables, pool tables, and miniature golf holes. They worked on area, perimeter, angles, how to get “holes in one,” or “how to get the pool ball into a specific pocket.” Students converted measurements from inches to feet or vice versa.

We continue to integrate technology throughout all of our school programs, as it is a game changer for our dyslexic learners. We made the shift to Chromebooks and upgraded much of our infrastructure in order to streamline and improve the use of technology in the classrooms for our students and teachers.

The students enjoyed the opportunity to explore and express their learning through Scratch, Minecraft, Explain Everything, Osmo, Desmos, and 3D printing technologies. They learned more about JSON, XML, basic programming concepts, app and website creation, and the essential life skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and teamwork.
Social Emotional Learning

Research has shown that EQ (emotional intelligence) is as essential as IQ for success. Having an awareness and the ability to recognize and manage our emotional life, make positive connections with those we interact with daily and find tools that help us manage inevitable stress, are life long skills that are crucial for our happiness, well-being and overall success. Neuroscience also sheds light into the workings of our brain — when we are in our primal, emotional brain, we cannot access our thinking brain. When we support the inner life of our students and provide them with tools to identify and manage their difficult emotions (and relationships!), they can get back to their thinking brain — and learn!

During our weekly Changemaker classes students at Athena build growth mindsets while sharing authentically what is happening in their world. These interactive sessions include topics such as mindfulness, compassion, gratitude, positive self talk, self advocacy skills, emotions and triggers. After checking in, students role play real life situations and problem solve to find Win/Win solutions.

Our Staff is trained and present outside on the playground every day to help students as they learn to navigate friendships and problem solve in kind and compassionate ways. The students learn to speak assertively about their needs and advocate for those needs both outside and in the classroom. At Athena, Social Emotional Learning is at the core of who we are and how we connect with each other.

When asked to describe Athena Academy, our parents responded with these words reflecting how our SEL program is woven throughout our entire program.

Fun Stats

101 Number of times Coach retrieved a ball from the roof
71 Students
1347 Number of times students asked “where’s my water bottle?”
8 Number of graduates
106 miles Longest daily commute

362 Collective years of teaching experience
8:1 Student teacher ratio in Middle School
6:1 Student teacher ratio in Elementary School

SEL Focused Creative Specialized Caring Learning
Flexible Accepting Individualized

Teachers Safe Loving Inclusive Learning Effective
Nurturing Child Environment Innovative
Small Class Encouraging

Safe Environment Happy Comforting Nurturing
Adaptive Caring Dyslexia School Experiential
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Our Social Emotional Learning program, Changemakers is a school wide customized program based on the 5 core SEL competencies as outlined by CASEL (the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) including self awareness, self management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making.
Deep within the forest, 100 acres of beautiful redwood forest to be exact, lies Camp Monte Toyon. Located in Aptos and near California’s central coast it is a beautiful hideaway of wonder and excitement. It was here that we picked up our hiking sticks, stepped out of our comfort zone, and officially became adventurers!

Our Elementary School students, nine to eleven years old traveled to Monte Toyon to take part in the fun and challenging Web of Life Field (WOLF) School. The camp included an outdoor amphitheater, climbing/ropes challenge courses, miles of scenic hiking trails, a wide array of sports and many other stimulating options.

For many of our students, this was their first time away from home without their parents. It was the perfect way to stretch ourselves and bond as a group. In fact one of the main attractions of this trip was the opportunity to build community between students and teachers; problem solving and trust exercises were one of many ways we accomplished this. Students also embraced the outdoor classroom, with curriculum designed to enhance and support class instruction, by studying redwoods (including world famous albino redwoods!), insects, wildlife and some amazing flora. The best part was interacting with all of the banana slugs and even holding a newt!

Night hiking, a talent show, games and even dance parties filled our evenings. One of the most tangible experiences was our quest to reduce food waste. At the end of each meal students were tasked with clearing the table themselves. Working together and being efficient with their time, because after all the faster the table was cleaned the sooner students could begin the next activity, were excellent skills to practice and ones that we honed during our stay. Leftover food would then be weighed, measured and graphed. The objective was to consistently reduce our total waste from one meal to the next, with students embracing the challenge and accomplishing their goal in the end.

We loved embracing all that Monte Toyon had to offer! It was a wonderful experience and something students and teachers alike will remember forever.

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Middle School Drama

Elementary Overnight Adventure

Athena in a statewide acting competition and earned medals in their categories, with one student earning a gold medal in the monologue category. For the class play students rehearsed and performed one act plays for their school community. Being part of a play helps middle schoolers work toward a common goal, build confidence, and use their visual-spatial strengths to develop stage presence. We also focus on demonstrating Changemakers attributes while rehearsing the play by giving special acknowledgement to students who go above and beyond, demonstrating perseverance, supporting others, having a positive mindset, and showing willingness to take risks on stage.

Some Middle School students also participated in Speech & Debate. Students in this class created their own slam poems, attended a Bay Area slam poem competition, wrote persuasive speeches on a cause that was important to them, and participated in class debates. Students enjoyed developing thoughtful arguments to defend their stance and hearing different perspectives.

Drama at Athena Academy is an integral part of our curriculum and is enjoyed by both our elementary and middle school classes.

Elementary School Drama focuses on improvisation, which is the foundation for all performance skills. Practicing improv supports our dyslexic students in a variety of ways. Scripts are never used which allows students to have fun and participate without being required to read anything. It also supports our students visual-spatial strengths and problem solving skills. Students play improv games to develop skills like, using facial expressions, physicality, and vocal inflection. Classes also focus on developing life skills, such as teamwork/collaboration, non-verbal communication, conflict resolution and problem-solving.

Some of the classes offered this year in Middle School included scenes & monologues and a class play. Scenes & monologues taught students how to properly practice and perform a monologue. Several students represented
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We loved embracing all that Monte Toyon had to offer! It was a wonderful experience and something students and teachers alike will remember forever.

Athena in a statewide acting competition and earned medals in their categories, with one student earning a gold medal in the monologue category! For the play class, students rehearsed and performed one act plays for their school community. Being part of a play helps middle schoolers work toward a common goal, build confidence, and use their visual-spatial strengths to develop stage presence. We also focus on demonstrating Changemakers attributes while rehearsing the play by giving special acknowledgement to students who go above and beyond, demonstrating perseverance, supporting others, having a positive mindset, and showing willingness to take risks on stage.

Some Middle School students also participated in Speech & Debate. Students in this class created their own slam poems, attended the Bay Area Slam competition, wrote persuasive speeches on a cause that was important to them, and participated in class debates. Students enjoyed developing thoughtful arguments to defend their stance and hearing different perspectives.
Thoughts from Mrs. Siegel
Lead Teacher, Middle School

“Tell me about your job.”
“Tell me about your job.”

“Tell me about your job.”
“Tell me about your job.”

Actually... it’s the best job I’ve ever had. Athena’s Middle School is a place where love and kindness are constantly nurtured, and creativity and uniqueness are allowed to bud and blossom. I appreciate the opportunity to teach middle school students because they are striving to become independent young adults, yet they don’t lose sight of what really matters in life: doing what is fun, funny and fantastic! Some of the most fun, funny and fantastic moments that have happened in my classroom over the years include:

Comfy Spaces
The class lounge with oversized chairs and benches encourages students to get comfortable to do classwork or read the fifth book in a series they can’t put down

Tea Time
This tradition on Thursdays includes a variety of flavors and personalized cups... although the Queen has not yet made an appearance, we could be ready...

Funny Friday
A tradition that I inherited when I joined Athena, this weekly occurrence helps us end the week on a high note

Read Alouds
During “chill time” this is a chance for student Read Alouds

Puzzle Parties
It’s always rewarding to celebrate the accomplishment of a class goal symbolized by the completion of a puzzle. Individual successes contribute to a collaborative accomplishment, and we celebrate as a community of like-minded learners.

Quote Posters
These decorate the wall in our lounge and remind me of family photos in someone’s home; this symbolizes how we are a family for the year in our homeroom together. Students customize their portraits with a meaningful quote and a word to describe themselves, and I always gain insight into these thoughtful human beings when I see their choices.

Learning should be challenging, but it shouldn’t feel that way. I hope my students look back with the feeling that they were a part of a fun, funny, fantastic family in my classroom. Athena is certainly such a place for me.

Thank You for Your Support!

DEAR ATHENA ACADEMY SUPPORTERS,

On behalf of our community of young learners, thank you so much for your generosity! During our sixth year, the school’s accomplishments were remarkable. In addition to accreditation by WASC, we also attained a record number of donors participating in Annual Giving.

One hundred percent of faculty, staff, and Trustees donated in support of our mission and vision. We attained high levels of campaign participation from current and alumni families, grandparents, extended families, corporate matching, donor advised fund grants, corporate foundation grants, payroll deductions, peer to peer online fundraising, and monthly donations.

Your contributions assist in funding our mission-driven budget. Your generosity allows us to provide a continually-improving academic program for our dyslexic students, to hire and retain expert faculty and staff, to provide ongoing professional development, and to offer tuition assistance to qualified families so that no child who needs us is lost. Thank you so much.

With sincere appreciation,

[Signature]

Carla Rayacich, Founder Athena Academy, Vice President, Board of Trustees

WAYS OF GIVING

Online Giving
Make a gift online at www.athenaacademy.org/give. All major credit cards are accepted.

Pledge to Give
A pledge shows you intend to make (a) donation(s) on (a) convenient date(s), it gives you complete flexibility to make payments for any amount. Families are counted in the Per Cent Participation when a pledge is made.

Stock/Securities
Do you own marketable securities such as stocks, bonds, or mutual fund shares that have appreciated in value and you’re ready to sell? If you have owned the securities for at least one year, you can donate them to us and earn a tax-deductible donation equal to the full current market value. You won’t pay capital gains taxes on the appreciation over your basis price. If this giving option works for you, please contact your financial advisor for advice specific to your situation, then contact Director of Development, Sandra Gresham for instructions.

Matching Gifts
You can easily double or even triple your contribution by taking advantage of corporate matching.

Planned Gifts
A planned gift is a donation from your estate. It is a lasting legacy on behalf of our students. Planned gifts may be simple bequests, transfers of cash or securities, a percent remainder of your estate, or you designating Athena Academy as the beneficiary of a retirement account or life insurance policy. For more information or sample bequest language, please contact Sandra Gresham. If you have included Athena Academy in your estate plans, please let us know so we can than you and be certain we understand your wishes.

Athena Academy is a not for profit 501-C3 organization, EIN # 45-2888305. All contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. We gratefully acknowledge all donations made July 1, 2016-June 30, 2017. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy. If you see an error, please accept our sincere apologies and contact Sandra@athenaacademy.org, so our records can be corrected. Thank you!
Thoughts from Mrs. Siegel
Lead Teacher, Middle School

“Tell me about your job.”
“I’m a middle school teacher.”
“Oh, that must be tough!”

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Read Alouds
During “chill time” this is a chance for student and teacher voices to take us to different worlds as we settle our energy after recess.

“Grossical”
One of several words my class invented to describe something that is inspiring and magical, even though it might also be a bit gross.

Puzzle Parties
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Plan your giving of stocks, bonds, or mutual fund shares.

Planned Gifts
A planned gift is a donation from your estate. It is a lasting legacy on behalf of our students. Planned gifts may be simple bequests, transfers of cash or securities, a percent remainder of your estate, or you designating Athena Academy as the beneficiary of a retirement account or life insurance policy. For more information or sample bequest language, please contact Sandra Gresham. If you have included Athena Academy in your estate plans, please let us know so we can thank you and be certain we understand your wishes.

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Honor Roll of Donors 2017-2018

We are grateful to the following individual donors for their generous contributions:

We are also grateful for the following Corporate and Foundation Supporters for their generous contributions:

### Financial Report

**Revenue in the fiscal year 2017-2018 totaled approximately $2,650,000. While the majority of the revenue comes from tuition, a significant portion comes from generous donations and matching gifts to the Annual Giving Campaign. Modest contributions are also made by foundations and corporations.**

**InCOME**

- Donations 4.81%
- Foundation Funding 1.01%
- Summer Program 1%
- Administration, Overhead, Physical Plant 14%

**EXPENSES**

- Corporate Support 0.9%
- Sublease and other 3.86%
- Tuition and Fees 89.42%
- Program Costs 86%
Financial Report

OPERATING REVENUE
Revenue in the fiscal year 2017-2018 totaled approximately $2,650,000. While the majority of the revenue comes from tuition, a significant portion comes from generous donations and matching gifts to the Annual Giving Campaign. Modest contributions are also made by foundations and corporations.

OPERATING EXPENSE
Educational program expenses account for the greatest part of Athena Academy’s expenditures (81%). General Administration (19%) includes all overhead and physical plant costs such as rent, utilities, maintenance, campus improvements and fundraising. $194,115 in financial aid was awarded to qualifying families.

INCOME

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<tr>
<th>Donations</th>
<th>Foundation Funding</th>
<th>Sublease and other</th>
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EXPENSES

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<tr>
<th>Summer Program</th>
<th>Administration, Overhead, Physical Plant</th>
<th>Corporate Support</th>
<th>Fundraising</th>
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<tr>
<td>1%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Tuition and Fees 89.42%

We are grateful for the following Corporate and Foundation Supporters for their generous contributions:

Apple, Inc. • Bright Funds Foundation • Electronic Arts • Ernst & Young U.S., LLP • Facebook Social Media Fundraising • Fiduciary Charitable • Google, Inc. • Intel Foundation • Kaiser Permanente Employee Giving • LinkedIn Corporation • Macy’s Matching Gift Program • Netflix • Qualcomm Charitable Matching Program • San Carlos Children’s Theatre • Schwab Charitable • Silicon Valley Community Foundation Donor Advised Funds • VMware Foundation • Wells Fargo Community Support Campaign • Xilinx Matching Gift Program

We are also grateful for the following individual donors for their generous contributions:

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