

Rooted  
Kindness

GOLESTAN  
MAGAZINE

WINTER  
2023/4

# Going Back to our Roots



Dear community,

It is a not-so-well-kept secret that aside from my family, one of the brightest lights in my life is Golestan. The joy of the children, the love and innovation of the teachers, the beauty of the space, the wonderful community of parents... every child should have access to a school like this.

This is exactly how the Colab came to be. When we, as a small group of young parents, decided to start our own Persian language immersion preschool (the first of its kind in the country) we made the commitment to help others wanting to do the same.

No charge. No strings attached. Just pay it forward.

Through the years, this work has evolved to cross cultures, languages, and borders. We only work with people who come to us. We have worked with a small local Amharic immersion preschool, large public school districts across the US, three after-school programs in Nepal, a preschool in Nairobi, and the list goes on.

As people come to us from all walks of life (and the globe!), we never forget our roots.

Back in 2008, we began the Colab with the mission to work with communities wanting to connect children of Iranian heritage with their culture and language. As you'll see in this issue of Rooted Kindness, these communities are now thriving on their own merit.

In this issue, we highlight three Persian language schools in the Bay Area that have had a close relationship with the Colab for over a decade. It has been a joy to partner with these wonderful schools and to witness how with dedication and hard work, each has grown, shifted, and changed through the years.

It has been an honor to partner with these inspiring educators that have been committed to exposing children in their communities to their heritage languages and cultures in ways that they otherwise wouldn't be able to access. These children have a sense of community and belonging that they will cherish for their entire lives. In turn, they will create it for their own children, not just because they speak the language or feel a connection with their heritage, but because their memories of these experiences are joyful - the bar has been set high.

Enjoy this jam packed issue that highlights real people doing real good work!

In community,

Yalda

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a large 'Y.' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

**Yalda Modabber**  
Golestan Education  
Founding Parent + Executive Director



**Creativity can solve almost any problem. The creative act, the defeat of habit by originality, overcomes everything.**

— George Lois

# THE GOLESTAN COLAB (ESTABLISHED JULY 2008)

## OUR MISSION & GOAL

Golestan School was developed, not only to create a rich natural and cultural learning environment, but also to serve as an incubator, model, and resource for new approaches in education through the **Golestan Colab**. The Colab is a pro-bono consultancy that supports and collaborates with communities across North America—and around the world. It empowers and supports educators, parents, and community leaders to create their ideal learning environment for children.

The Colab **produces teaching materials** modeled after Golestan's own program curriculum. It researches best practices in **bilingualism & child development** and offers **pro-bono consulting** to individuals and schools either wanting to enhance their current programs or develop experiential programs for children in the following areas:

- The integration and application of hands-on and **experiential learning practices & approaches**
- **Language immersion & cultural education**
- Developing **natural playscapes & calm, beautiful learning environments**
- Setting up **COVID-safe schools & campuses**



# SOWING THE SEEDS OF COLLABORATION



**The Golestan Colab** has collaborated with and supported over 1,200 schools, impacting 150,000+ students, 6,000+ teachers in local public schools—and over 10,000 educators worldwide.

We believe that every child deserves a Golestan experience - an education that is child-focused and inquiry based, and that allows children to experience, learn, grow, and thrive.

That's why we've developed all our systems and materials in a sharable format so that we can work with educators all over the world. We promote a culture of giving by providing hands-on support and resources, all pro-bono. **The only requirement is that participants pay it forward by supporting other educators and communities.**



**The level of our success is limited only by our imagination and no act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted.**

— Acsop

# LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

## BALEEN B. SHEMIRANI OF BOOSTAN KIDS (ESTABLISHED APRIL 2013)



Golestan's Emma Parandvash spoke with **Baleen B. Shemirani, Founder of Boostan Kids (Belmont, CA)** about starting a Persian immersion preschool program. For more information about Boostan kids, [click here](#).

**EP: How did you decide to start a Persian school? What made you realize that this was something that the community needed and that you would be able to organize?**

**BS:** So it's actually kind of a fun story. Yalda and my husband grew up together, so we knew each other socially. And then I got pregnant. My family is in the East Bay, so I would visit the area often, even though I lived in Fremont. And when I was nine months pregnant, I ended up visiting the original Golestan campus in Berkeley. And it was just heaven. It was just so beautiful – the smells, the sounds, all of it. I said, "oh, this is what childhood should be – this is what preschool can be and what it should be." So I talked with Yalda, and she asked if I was going to apply, and I said I wished – but we lived so far away. I actually am a school psychologist by trade, but I had taken time off to help my husband get his practices going, and I had the luxury of being able to stay home with my first child. And I said, kind of jokingly, I said, Well, you know, I should just do it myself. And she just looked me dead in the face. And she said "Baleen, you should and we will help you."

And that was it – that planted the seed of the idea. Months went by, but it was always in the back of my mind. My sister, Shabnam Bahmanian, who is the co-founder, had also worked at Golestan before we had kids. So as my daughter got older, and really needed to be out and about and in preschool, I enlisted my sister and said let's do this. My background is as a school psychologist, and my sister is a teacher and an amazing artist, so we were lucky to have both the background and the passion to set up a school. I have always had a deep love and passion and excitement for working with kids, and I've always been drawn back to working in education. We were so lucky that we had the right background at the right time to create the school we wanted for our kids. And Yalda and the Golestan Colab truly have been with us every step of the way – they really taught us what the meaning of collaboration is. They just handed us their curriculum, trained us, and answered all of our questions with open arms. So we opened our doors in April 2013.



## EP: How has your mission grown and changed along the way? And what are some things you didn't anticipate?

**BS:** Wow, that's a really great question. And I reflect on it a lot because of COVID. Initially the school started because I was a mom who wanted a good preschool and to support my kids learning the Persian language. And as soon as I reached out, I had a waiting list, because it turned out there were lots of parents right around me looking for the same thing. It was a bit hard to adjust to running my own business, but Yalda would say that the right families will find you, and that was true - we really built a beautiful community and it grew from there.

And then COVID hit. I don't know if it's just COVID, but certainly, I would say that was the big turning point. There's so much learning loss and regression and social and emotional things that we're seeing as a result of COVID. We were really, really lucky because of our community. I think we were a micro school before COVID, and now we're even smaller, since during COVID the only way to really survive was to just have a tiny bubble - so now we feel like a nano school. But I've also seen so much damage as a result of having to go online. We were so small, we were able to reopen pretty quickly and prevent COVID from spreading in the school, because we were a tiny, vigilant community in close communication with each other - a beautiful little bubble.



But what was devastating was the screens. We can see language delays, the speech delays, the social emotional stuff that we're seeing in our school but also in my older kids' classrooms - every single developmental group was impacted, including us as adults. But of course, we have tools to help.

So I would say in the last two years the collaborative piece has become more important because we're constantly wanting to stay in communication with families, so that we can identify the challenges that we're all having. I don't even think it's appropriate to say that a child has a 'language delay' anymore. We're seeing the impact of Covid where all of our milestones have now moved, because so many children really missed out on interpersonal skills and interaction during the pandemic, and spent time with screens instead.

Post-pandemic we're now doing a lot of intensive work, building back time for interpersonal skills and social development. We have re-started a Persian storytime at the San Mateo Public Library, and we're trying to get back to the way we would celebrate holidays and traditions, gathering and cooking together, in the way we used to before COVID. So I definitely am seeing the kids thriving more and more as we get back to that, but everything still feels like it has changed.

**EP: Can you tell me more about the curriculum?**

**BS:** The curriculum is Golestan's curriculum, so we have the monthly themes that all of the activities and lessons and meals revolve around. We do gardening, storytelling, cooking, and lots of arts and crafts, with a big emphasis on using nature in our projects, and giving back to the earth. Food plays a huge part in the curriculum – we talk about food as fuel and medicine, and we sit down family style for meals, and we sometimes prepare food together as a project. And we learn poetry and music for the themes, holidays, and seasons.



© Boostan Kids 2023

In 2013, when we opened, Golestan was the only school I knew that was talking about orienting preschool around nature and the outdoors, eating whole foods, and no screens. I loved it, and so we were able to really take our curriculum and philosophy from Golestan. Looking back, I realize how wise and deep and rich the curriculum really, truly is, after having lived through and survived a pandemic. And truly the reason we were able to stay open and still, you know, have some semblance of normalcy really is because of the foundation of that curriculum.

## EP: What is your long-term vision for the program?

**BS:** In some ways, I feel that after COVID, I don't have long-term plans for anything anymore. I love what I'm able to do, running the school – I don't even consider it work. It's a part of my life. And I feel very fortunate that I can be present to raise my kids and do this meaningful work and include them in it. We have slowly re-started our after-school program, and we have a little art studio that's starting to grow. Just before the pandemic happened, we were working on transitioning to an official nonprofit status – we've always operated like one, but we never filed all the official paperwork. I started Boostan with a home daycare license, mostly because honestly, I didn't start it as a business to make money – I just wanted to create this environment for my children. We didn't have much space to grow, so we were working towards registering as a nonprofit to do that. But then the pandemic happened, and now, honestly, I don't know that growth is what we really want – there are so many benefits of having a small school. So instead we are focusing on growing the after-school program, we have also added a small art studio, because my sister is my co-founder, and she is an incredibly talented artist.

It's been wonderful to be able to bring my older children to the after-school program. They really need that social emotional education, which is very lacking in our schools right now. There's so much pressure, especially from social media, and it's so nice for them to have this space that they get to just create, whether it's cooking, ceramics, or something like collage. They made greeting cards last week! And so, I guess, I will just keep pivoting. There was a period where it was hard to sustain, and it still is challenging from a cost perspective – the Bay Area is very expensive, particularly where we are on the peninsula. But there is a community of people that need this kind of school and support it, so we are making it work.





# LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

## BAHAR ORTAKAND OF BAHARESTAN KIDS (ESTABLISHED JAN 2013)



Golestan's Emma Parandvash spoke with **Bahar Ortakand, Founder of Baharestan Kids (Mountain View, CA)** about starting a Persian immersion preschool program. For more information about Baharestan Kids, [click here](#).

**EP: How did you decide to start a Persian school? What made you realize that this was something that the community needed and that you would be able to organize?**

**JS:** When my daughter (currently graduating from high school) was born, I got a job working at the preschool she attended, called Children's House of Los Altos. During my time there, I connected with a lot of kind and supportive Persian families. When my daughter left that preschool to go to public kindergarten, I also decided to leave. The Persian parents I knew encouraged me to use this opportunity to go on my own and to teach children the Persian language, reading and writing.

I started Baharestan with writing and reading classes one hour a week. After four or five weeks, I realized that I wasn't satisfied with that and I wanted to do something bigger. I decided to get my home daycare license and set up a classroom. I connected with Yalda and presented my plans to her. She was supportive of the idea because I had a professional background in education, and I wanted to add the cultural immersion program. That was the whole package that I needed to start something on my own. In January 2013, Baharestan preschool was born – a Persian Immersion Program. We started with four students, two days a week, from morning until noon.



**At Baharestan, our child found more than just a place to learn and play; it's a nurturing garden where rooted kindness blossoms, fostering growth and joy in our toddler's journey. We are grateful everyday for finding such an incredible place.**

-Baharestan Parent

**EP: How has your mission grown and changed along the way, from concept to reality? What are some things you didn't anticipate?**

**BO:** There were a lot of challenges and a learning curve. I had a background in administration, but I had never run a business before. I had a lot of experience with kids, but not as much experience with all the other moving parts of running a business.

My first Baharestan families were Feher and Ghahremani, whom I still have a relationship with now. Both families were amazingly supportive. We started half a day, two days a week. After requests from the families for expansion to a full-time program, I started Monday through Friday 8:30 to 5:30. Since then, I've been working hard.



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I love my job and I know it makes me stronger. The passion which I have for the kids and my culture is coming from my heart. I have a long waiting list, and the families in the program are really supportive and wonderful. I see the value of creating a cultural program, especially for the new generation, who didn't have that opportunity when they were young.

Additionally, Baharestan is very fortunate to be a part of Golestan Colab. They have continuously supported us with advice, feedback, and support. In the beginning, working with the families was a learning process, and Yalda always was there to help me. Without the Golestan Colab, it would have been much more challenging

**EP: Could you share a little bit more about the program and the curriculum?**

**BO:** We follow a monthly program, like Golestan. That is our root. But you know, each branch from the root is a little different! Right now at Baharestan we are learning three Persian songs each month. We do cooking, baking and gardening. This year we had a huge batch of cucumbers. Our students watered and took care of baby cucumbers, and then we would count how many we could pick and eat each day to compile in our newsletter for parents. We ended up with 53 cucumbers for the year! It was amazing! Now we're growing cauliflower and broccoli for our winter garden.

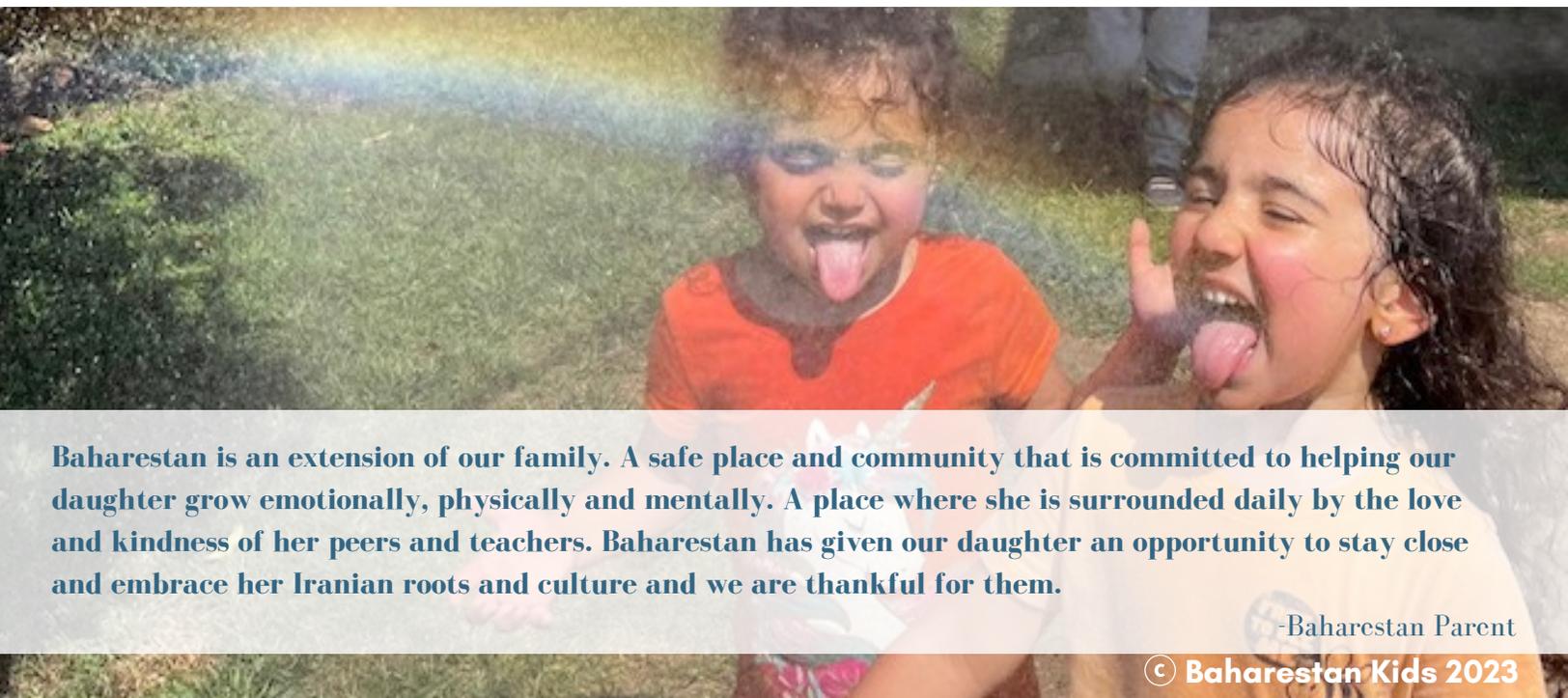
My philosophy is very much founded on Reggio Emilia, which I love because it gives children the freedom to grow by themselves and explore with a lot of new things. Baharestan is a full Persian language immersion preschool. Each day we sing a welcome song together in Persian and have circle time. We also have a lot of hands-on puppet shows, and we read books related to our monthly theme. Each day we have an activity, such as crafting, cooking, baking, and practical life. We also have a lot of time for art and outside activities. We provide healthy organic snacks and lunch. When children get up from their afternoon nap, they have free time to explore their own interests and choose their own activities.

### **EP: What is your long term vision for Baharestan?**

**BO:** I always want to improve, and do more. I'm thinking of expanding the preschool, because I have a long waiting list. There are a lot of families who would love to be able to send their children here. Right now I only have a small home daycare, so we can only take 6-8 children between me and one other teacher.

Another mission I have considered is providing coaching for parents. I studied and have experience in child development, and want to share this knowledge and support to my Baharestan families. I know that I can assist them with proper mentoring and coaching for both them and their children, as they prepare the next step to start school. Lastly, if I have time, I would love to have weekly Farsi classes in writing and reading. I love my job and my culture. They are both very important to me.

As the first generation of immigrants, I feel that I have a big responsibility to transfer our values, culture and language to our new generation and society. The kids who grow up with a strong sense of their culture are able to understand and appreciate their cultural uniqueness and not feel left behind, shy or ashamed about their identity. That makes me so happy and keeps me going.



**Baharestan is an extension of our family. A safe place and community that is committed to helping our daughter grow emotionally, physically and mentally. A place where she is surrounded daily by the love and kindness of her peers and teachers. Baharestan has given our daughter an opportunity to stay close and embrace her Iranian roots and culture and we are thankful for them.**

-Baharestan Parent



# LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

## NEGAR BAHARLOU OF SHADI KIDS (ESTABLISHED FEB 2013)



Golestan's Emma Parandvash spoke with **Negar Baharlou, former Golestan Board member and Founder of Shadi Kids (Sausalito, CA)** about starting a Persian language school. For more information about Shadi Kids, [click here](#).

### **EP: How did you decide to start a Persian school?**

**NB:** Initially, when Yalda was first starting Golestan, I met her at the Persian Center in Berkeley, and she told me about the school she had just started. I thought it was such a wonderful thing she was doing for the community. I loved the idea of a Persian immersion school, and I told her that I wanted to be involved and help her in any way I could.

I watched Yalda, who is such a creative, visionary person, come up with all kinds of solutions for every hurdle that came up in the process. Golestan started from nothing, and Yalda just figured out how to get it done, and I watched her intense dedication and passion in the way she set up the school and over the years it just grew and grew. I wanted to be more involved, but I had a full time job, and I couldn't leave it to go work at Golestan. But I thought "I have my weekends, I can do something on weekends."

So I started a school in Marin County because I was living there at the time. And really, the idea came to me from Yalda, because a mom from Marin had reached out to her and was interested in a program like Golestan for her kids, but it was too far for her to commute. And she had said that if there was an interest for someone to start a similar program in Marin, she would want to be involved. So I had coffee with her, the two of us talked, and she said I'm willing to do whatever it takes to help you get something going, even if it's just on weekends.

I found a school in Marin that was available on weekends for me to rent, and started the program there. I didn't have the credentials to teach, so I took online classes at night and got my early childhood certificate from UCLA; I also spent some days at Golestan to observe and learn and prepare myself. And I also was fortunate enough to have some teachers from Golestan join me and teach classes; without them I could have never done it. I myself learned a lot from them.

It was really great to be able to serve the Iranian and Iranian-American community in Marin with Saturday morning classes.



**EP: How did your mission grow and change along the way from the concept to reality? What were some things you didn't anticipate?**

**NB:** I think the biggest challenge for me was that I had a weekend-only program versus the daily immersion program that Golestan is. The kids that came to my program were speaking and hearing English at school and at home. If you only meet once a week, it is really difficult to try to teach a language to a child since they don't get the full immersion experience. So the biggest challenge for me was just grappling with the fact that I had to keep going, and be persistent, and just repeat the curriculum over and over again. The kids needed that repetition, because they weren't hearing Persian day in and day out. That was a major evolution - I wasn't progressing as fast as I would have liked. My initial goal was to try to teach kids to speak Farsi and also immerse themselves in the culture. And it sort of turned more into an introduction to their culture and language.

I ended up being very proud of that in itself, because I was introducing them to the Iranian culture and language, and that stays with them forever. So that ended up really being my goal. Parents also saw how engaged the kids were in our classes and appreciated that.

I also learned how to understand and meet parent's expectations. Some parents wanted their kids to start speaking Farsi, and for some, just the exposure was sufficient. So I learned to have an open communication with parents so that they knew what to expect.

**EP: How did you transition Shadi kids to the new director when it was time for you to move on?**

**NB:** I had been running Shadi Kids for four years, and I decided to transfer it to a new person because honestly, I was exhausted. I was working full time, and it just ended up being too much for me with my regular work hours. I also just felt I wasn't doing as great of a job as I would have liked, because I couldn't dedicate more time. And so I asked Yalda if one of the Golestan teachers would be interested, because I thought that would be a perfect transition, and she told me about Michka having an interest. She was ready to take it on, so I introduced her to all the parents, and she sat in on some classes, so the kids got to know her. It really felt like a seamless transition, and for me, it felt really good to pass on the program to someone that I thought would be very passionate and also very knowledgeable and experienced. I don't think I would have walked away until I found someone that I thought was perfect for it. When she took over, it felt like I was enabling the program to grow to the next level.

**EP: What was the role of the Golestan Colab when you were setting up Shadi Kids?**

**NB:** Yalda was a huge support. The Golestan Colab has a lot of information that they share with new programs, so she shared a lot of literature with me, the curriculum, and the monthly themes that they use throughout the year. So I based all of my curriculum throughout the year on Golestan's. I followed everything that they did, except at a more basic level because we only had classes one day a week. The Colab really helped structure my program and enrich the curriculum - I would never have had the time or expertise to develop that structure on my own.

Starting the school was a lot of work, and it definitely required a high level of dedication, but it was great having the Golestan example because it helped me understand what I was looking for and guided me in setting it up in a way that felt like an extension of Golestan. Also, just being affiliated with a school gave me some credibility, which was very helpful. It was hard, but it was also really amazing and rewarding, and I enjoyed every minute of it.





# LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

## MICHKA DELAVARIAN OF SHADI KIDS (ACQUIRED DECEMBER 2017)



Golestan's Emma Parandvash spoke with **Michka Delavarian, full time preschool teacher at Golestan and Director of Shadi Kids (Sausalito, CA)**, about running a Persian language school. For more information about Shadi Kids, [click here](#).

### **EP: How did you take over as the head of Shadi Kids?**

**MD:** I have a background in child psychology in Iran. And in 2012, I came here with my dad, initially just to visit - I didn't know I was going to stay here and change my life forever!

At that time, I had a vision of going back to Iran and opening a preschool there. At a party, one of my aunt's friends told me that her grandchild was going to one of the best preschools in the world, called Golestan Kids, with a Persian immersion program. And I thought that I would love to see that place. So I sent an email to Yalda because I had a plan to come and visit my friends in the Bay area, and I also visited Golestan. And I loved it so much, I ended up getting a job as an after-school teacher and staying for a few months. I did go back to Iran, and eventually I came back to the Bay Area, studied art therapy, and ended up as a full-time teacher at Golestan. But it was always in my mind, the desire to start my own school.

And then, Yalda let me know that there was an opportunity to take over a program, called Shadi Kids. Initially I really wasn't sure about it, because it wasn't my program, or the original vision I had. But Yalda was very encouraging, saying that it was a good start and that together, we could change it to really be what I wanted to do. So Yalda gave me Negar's number, and I went there to see the program. And she showed me what she was doing, I helped out on some Saturdays, and in December 2017 I officially took over Shadi Kids. There were lots of ups and downs, and Yalda was so kind and really guided me through all of the steps.

I was so excited for the opportunity to teach more kids about Persian culture. Golestan has such a long waitlist, and there was really no option for other kids. And there is a large community of Persians, many of them second generation, living in San Francisco, who really want that opportunity for their children. And these parents were all super kind and welcoming to me, and they accepted me into the community.

**EP: How did your mission grow and change along the way from the concept to reality? What were some things you didn't anticipate?**



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**EP: How did your mission grow and change along the way from the concept to reality? What were some things you didn't anticipate?**

**MD:** At first I really wanted to stick to all the things Golestan does, in style and philosophy, but after a few years, I realized that Golestan is an every day school, but Shadi only meets one day a week. So it's completely different. So instead, I try to pick some of the best parts of Golestan, and some of my own vision, to continue Shadi Kids. I focus more on cultural things and language, and less on the art and nature projects that we do at Golestan.

**EP: Can you tell me a bit more about the curriculum?**

**MD:** During most of the year, we meet for one and a half hours, and we offer two classes, one from 9 to 10:30, and one from 11 to 12:30. So we accept kids from 2 years to 15 years old. I usually have five to six teachers. Two or three of them work with the older kids on literacy, reading and writing about Persian culture. And for the smaller kids, we offer something like mini Golestan. We have 10-15 minutes of play in the morning, and then we have circle time, which is the most important part of our program, and we sing songs, and tell stories. And repetition is really the key to learning.

We have a theme for each semester that I focus on, and a story I will tell about that theme. I repeat all of the story every week, and each week I add a little bit to the story. That way they know what's going on in the story, and that is why they learn the words and the vocabulary - they're hearing it over and over again each week. I also share the music we use with the parents, because they learn from the music easily, compared to just talking. Most of the kids do understand, but it's hard for them to speak. So just being in an environment where all the kids are speaking Farsi makes them empowered to speak with us with more confidence.

Another issue is getting the kids to speak more at home with their parents. We have prepared some literature to pass to the parents, explaining that they can't just bring their kids in one day a week and expect them to learn the Persian language - it really requires work from the parents to make it happen. So we try to give them the same tools that we use to practice at home. An example is the 'sandwich method' for kids who don't understand, where you say a phrase in Farsi, and then in English, and then Farsi again, so that they understand and also hear it in both languages. But also repeating the same story over and over again, the way we do at school. And I see that the kids do understand, even if they don't speak.



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**EP: What is your long term vision for the program? Is there anything you want to do in the future?**

**MD:** Yes, after eight years, I think it's time to change some of my points of view and offer something more. And there are Persian immersion language programs around the country, especially in the Bay Area, and I get new ideas from them too. I'd like to offer different classes, like music classes, that students can register for separately, because right now I offer everything at the same time.

I would like to offer adult classes too, for the parents who would love to learn reading and writing — a lot of them have requested it. But it's tricky, because it all has to fit into the weekend, and it is kind of difficult to schedule. In summer, we have more time. That's really helpful — being able to spend 3-4 hours in class, instead of 1.5 hours, is very good, and allows us to do more.



**In the sweetness of friendship let there be laughter, and sharing of pleasures. For in the dew of little things the heart finds its morning and is refreshed.**

— Khalil Gibran

# JOIN THE MOVEMENT!

TOGETHER, LET'S SET A NEW STANDARD FOR EDUCATION!

**The Golestan Colab offers pro-bono support to educators and communities** in the form of workshops or one-on-one consultations in these and other areas:

- **Long-term Planning & Visioning**
- **Transformation of Space: Indoors & Outdoors**
- **Financial Modeling**
- **Teacher Training**
  - How to integrate nature into the curriculum
  - Hands-on & heuristic approaches to learning
  - How to develop & transition into a holistic approach to teaching
  - Language & cultural immersion



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**You can play a role** in the continued growth of Golestan and the communities it supports by clicking [here](#). We welcome your contributions to:

- **Golestan's Annual Fund:** This supports the school so that the model we use for The Colab is sustainable and of the highest quality.
- **Tuition Assistance Fund:** Help make Golestan School accessible to children of all backgrounds, resources, and privilege.
- **The Golestan Colab:** Supporting the Colab enables us to continue this work near and far.



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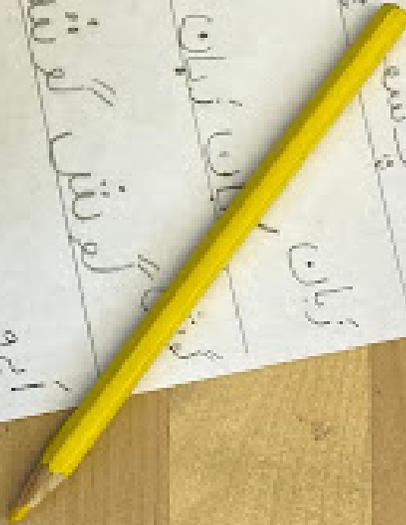
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# GOLESTAN IN THE NEWS

We are thrilled that our work continues to be recognized as part of a variety of important conversations. Click the links below to learn more.

**09.30.23 El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce:** Golestan is voted Best Independent School.

**06.12.23 Parents Press:** Golestan is voted Top Five 2023 Parents Press "Best of" in the categories:

1. Bilingual Preschool
2. Private Independent Elementary School
3. Progressive Elementary School
4. Bilingual Elementary School
5. Alternative Learning Styles Elementary School in Contra Costa County.

**02.22.23 Governing:** The Future of Community Design - Reimagining Schoolyards to Improve Health and Learning.

**10.04.22 Living Schoolyards Act:** Golestan's campus redesign featured in Fact Sheet for Senate Bill: Living Schoolyards Act

**07.01.22 Parents Press:** Golestan is voted 2022 Parents Press "Best of" in the category of Top 5 Elementary Schools in the Bay Area.

**09.24.21 Knowable Magazine:** Delta: Rethinking Risks for Kids and Schools

**06.18.21 Architizer:** Stromberg Architecture is a 2021 Architizer A+ Award Finalist (Kindergarten Category for Golestan School)

**05.22.21 Archinect:** Schools Turn to Architects as the Pandemic Mandates Collaboration With Long-Term Impacts

**05.09.21 L'interlude Podcast** with Great Teacher Steve (18 Episodes)

**04.30.21 Green Schools Catalyst Quarterly:** Overcoming 'Green Fears' - Strategies for Safe and Joyful Learning in Outdoor Classrooms

**03.22.21 Best of Berkeley:** Golestan School Selected as Best Non-Profit in 2021

**03.20.21 NPR/KQED:** Celebrating Persian New Year Amid A Pandemic

**03.14.21 CBS News:** Schools Without Walls: Lessons in Outdoor Education

**12.16.20 La Cantina:** Featured Projects - Golestan School

**12.08.20 NPR/KQED:** Korean, Swedish and Persian Dishes for Winter Solstice

**11.17.20 Teach For America:** Three Schools Reimagining What a School Building Can Be

**11.12.20 American Institute of Architects:** People's Choice Award for Design Excellence; Selected as Top Three Finalist: Design Excellence in Change and Resources

**10.28.20 Architizer:** Competition Winners Announced! Best Commercial Project: Golestan School by Stromberg Architecture

**10.21.20 Berkeleyside:** Enrollment is Down 5% at Berkeley Unified as Some Parents Make Other Plans

**09.17.20 ABC News:** El Cerrito School Serves as a Model for Outdoor Learning Amid COVID-19

**09.07.20 BBC News Brasil:** Outdoor Schools that Inspire Returning to School in the Pandemic

**09.04.20 Patch:** 10 Contra Costa Schools Cleared To Open

## WITH GRATITUDE

We are deeply grateful for the ongoing efforts and energies of Golestan's Teachers & Staff; Golestan's Board; the Golestan Community Association (GCA); our generous Donors, Corporate & Community Partners; our tireless Volunteers; Class Room Parents; and our incredible families & children.

To find out about volunteer opportunities, [click here](#). To learn about many ways to support Golestan's School & Colab—including providing items from our wishlist or sponsoring students—[click here](#).

**It is because of your *rooted kindness* that we can continue to expand our school while creating positive change in the greater community. Thank you!**



**We are Kind**  
**We are Thoughtful**  
**We are Courageous**

