



## **Citizens of the World Charter Schools Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What are Citizens of the World schools?**

Citizens of the World (CWC) schools challenge students to realize their full potential and thrive in a diverse society. We are tuition-free schools open to all, committed to serving diverse communities in Los Angeles and Kansas City. We develop sophisticated thinkers who master content and have a courageous and compassionate sense of responsibility for themselves and all people.

### **Where are Citizens of the World schools located?**

CWC schools are located in communities where parents are demanding challenging and joyful learning environments that also reflect the full diversity of their neighborhoods. As of the 2017-18 school year, CWC has four schools – serving nearly 2,000 students. CWC Schools is comprised of the following:

- Three schools in Los Angeles serving 1,600 children across grades TK-8. (CWC Hollywood opened in 2010, CWC Silver Lake opened in 2012, and CWC Mar Vista in 2013).
- One school in Kansas City serving 230 children (CWC Kansas City opened in Midtown in 2016).

### **What results have you shown?**

CWC is in strong demand for our Los Angeles and Kansas City schools. Our school model is consistently outperforming other public schools in academics: for example, on the 2016-2017 California state assessment, the CWC Los Angeles region scored in the top 6% of district elementary schools in English Language Arts and in the top 7% in Math.

We are proud that nearly all of our schools have waiting lists and wish we could accommodate all of the interest.

### **What is the benefit of a diverse, integrated student learning model?**

[Studies](#) show that students in diverse, integrated learning environments have been found to have better critical thinking skills, academic achievement and opportunities in life. Positive experiences in racially integrated classrooms make it more likely for students to bring fewer stereotypes with them into the workplace, according to a University of Maryland study.<sup>1</sup> The University of Michigan found that students in ethnically diverse classrooms engaged the most in active thinking and had the greatest growth in intellectual engagement, motivation and academic skills.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See: [http://citizensoftheworld.org/files/amicus\\_parents\\_v\\_seattle.pdf](http://citizensoftheworld.org/files/amicus_parents_v_seattle.pdf), App. 24, pg. 43

<sup>2</sup> See: [http://citizensoftheworld.org/files/amicus\\_parents\\_v\\_seattle.pdf](http://citizensoftheworld.org/files/amicus_parents_v_seattle.pdf), App 12-13, pg. 31-32.

### **How does the Citizens of the World teaching and learning model work?**

Our small classrooms – typically 22-24 students – are led by two adults, one teacher and one teaching assistant.

Our classrooms are challenging – and joyful – learning environments that engage children through fun projects tailored to their personal experiences, strengths and needs. Our teachers take the time to get to know each child as an individual. We empower children to think critically *and* learn to engage respectfully and productively with fellow students by developing their capacity to enter into and understand the lives of others.

Our students:

1. Learn to think critically at high levels, mastering standards in reading, writing, math and science.
2. Learn how to engage respectfully and productively with others. Our students develop life skills such as debate, conflict resolution, personal self-reflection and independence. They learn to constructively collaborate and solve problems creatively with those who have different perspectives and backgrounds. Our children learn social and emotional tools many adults wish they had at a much earlier stage in life.
3. Learn in a personalized, meaningful, fun way. Children learn hands-on by partaking in practical activities that allow them to start thinking and talking about things they already relate to, and then build upon their own emerging theories to learn new skills and content. At CWC, student learning is not only enriched by – but meaningfully partnered with – explorations in music, visual and dramatic arts, physical education, technology, and library skills.

### **Could you provide some examples of what this model looks like in the classroom?**

Second graders may work together in small groups as if they are a family living on a farm, negotiating over whether they should stay on the farm, given negative health impacts occurring from pesticides, while weighing family salary needs and other working conditions. As they build skills to compromise, they learn how to analyze competing considerations, what is required to make change happen, and what is required to come to consensus – while also learning math, science, persuasive communication and writing, as well as creating art and music.

First graders learning about diversity, interdependence and science may create a “Fishbook” page (akin to Facebook) that allows them to map out various relationships and dependencies among animals in a coral reef in a fun, creative way.

Kindergarteners may learn to develop the skills to become writers (e.g. characters and plot development) by first developing puppets they are excited about and then acting out a play.

When students create their own learning adventures in these ways, they get very invested in and excited about learning. Further, our integrated approach to learning enhances projects and academic exploration not only because teachers can weave in content from one subject to the other to foster connections between them, but also

because students, as unique learners, can access natural cognitive processes through these activities.

For example, students studying the “blue note” in blues music begin to understand the historical and cultural beginnings of a genre of music, along with a meaningful exploration of how music taps into and expresses universal expressions of emotions. And children as young as Kindergarten explore the mathematical concept of multi-axis symmetry through the artistic exploration of cut paper snowflakes.

### **Who are your teachers? How are they recruited/trained?**

Our teachers:

- Are diverse, talented, caring adults who are given the flexibility to decide how to meet student needs while being expected to help all children learn to high levels.
- Meet all state and district employment, certification and security check requirements and have passed through a rigorous screening process.
- Regularly assess student progress and improve their teaching along the way.
- Know students have mastered a skill or ability when they have applied that skill or ability in a novel situation.
- Are afforded the room to create a teaching and learning experience that has meaning to them, within the boundaries of best practices.
- Are trained to guide children to develop within appropriate boundaries and treat them respectfully.

Our students get the benefit of many teachers’ minds because our teachers work closely together, being accountable to one another for meeting student needs.

### **How do you balance testing with creativity?**

We teach to the student, not to the test. Our goal is for student “success” to include mastery of both content and emotions, so that students can meaningfully connect with each other, be part of any community and courageously decide who they are in the world and how they want the world to be. We also regularly track student progress to identify when children need extra help or more challenging work. Children learn and develop along unique paths.

Assessments – like rubrics, diagnostic interviews and tests – help us communicate with parents about their child’s progress and empower students to self-reflect on their own learning. We believe that standardized tests provide part of the picture in determining student achievements, but students must have the time to experiment, make mistakes, and develop their own deep understanding, even if this means it takes them longer to pass a test.

### **Are students with special needs and English language learners welcome at Citizens of the World schools?**

Yes. We support children of all needs, including English language learners and those with special needs. Our teaching and learning model is particularly attractive to families of students with diverse needs because it includes hands-on instruction that is highly differentiated. Students automatically receive focused attention to their needs and

strengths, as teachers implement individualized instruction based on data-driven assessments. We have successfully transitioned students who used to attend schools with far more restrictive learning settings to CWC's general education setting and are proud that they are thriving because of our model.

### **How do you engage and partner with parents?**

We greatly value parent and community engagement. We work to create numerous opportunities for parents to be actively involved in our schools, including volunteer opportunities, parent surveys and community-building events. Each region decides how to best work with their parents. For example, CWC Los Angeles has a parent representative nominated to their regional board. CWC schools engage parents and communities in the schools through a variety of channels, including a formal Parent-Teacher Association for each campus, email and text messages, letters sent home, parent meetings and phone calls – and invite parents who are able to be active participants in additional school-level committees.

### **How are Citizens of the World schools funded?**

Like other public schools, Citizens of the World schools are funded by the district and state according to the number of students attending our schools. We are a nonprofit that does not compete with other public schools for resources - we instead receive the resources we need, given our number of children, as do all public schools. We seek to complement the work of other great public schools and applaud all schools that are helping a diverse array of children succeed.

### **Who started the Citizens of the World schools?**

Inspired by the potential of high-achieving diverse charter schools to dramatically enhance young people's lives, a community coalition of parents, educators and philanthropists, including successful film and television producer Mark Gordon and longtime educator [Kriste Dragon](#) – an early parent leader and board member of Larchmont Charter School, an integrated school that consistently ranks among the best schools academically in L.A. – came together to create CWC in Hollywood. From there, others, including CWC board members Chris Forman and Cam Starrett – longtime philanthropists and passionate advocates for strong public schools – joined to support the first school and help the model expand.

### **What is the Citizens of the World network?**

CWC Schools network is a nonprofit organization that enables individual CWC schools to access national resources and knowledge to supplement their good work. The network ensures schools adhere to CWC's purpose, mission, core values and academic model, which include immersing children in diverse and challenging learning environments, realizing human potential and developing true citizens of the world.

The CWC network ensures that each CWC school reflects its communities, parents, students and teachers. The network keeps significant decision-making at the school level, like curriculum, staffing, budgeting, school and classroom materials and professional development. As a result, each Citizens of the World school looks quite different because it reflects the values of its communities, parents, students and teachers.

At the same time, schools receive high-quality national network support and services that help free up local time, energy and resources to be focused on what really matters – educating children.

When new schools are created, network and school leaders work together to ensure that the locally-established academic model meets the high CWC quality bar. The network also provides schools with access to: a national “knowledge network” of CWC teachers and principals who can share best practices with one another, meaningful professional development opportunities and evaluation tools, student assessment tools and help tracking student achievement, training in school operations, interest-free start-up loans to help new schools get off the ground and long-term financial planning assistance and help resolving outstanding academic issues when requested by the school.

For more on network support and services, see [licensing agreement fact sheet](#).

### **What is CWC’s governance structure?**

Our national network is led by a highly accomplished board of directors committed to supporting far-reaching school reform designed to drastically improve public education. Each region has its own board of directors that have a broad range of relevant skills and expertise and reflect the diversity of the communities we serve.

The regional board of directors engages in strategic and long-term planning while working closely with network staff to ensure schools are adhering to CWC’s model, mission and vision. The regional board is also responsible for approving and monitoring annual budgets and audits, overseeing personnel decisions and assessing student achievement, among other functions. The executive director is responsible for the region’s business and operations and for hiring principal(s) to oversee instructional program and staff.

### **How does Citizens of the World decide where to expand?**

Across the country, there are communities that have expressed the desire for challenging and joyful schools that encourage students to realize their full potential and thrive in a diverse society. Since the first CWC school opened in 2010, many families outside the CWC community have also asked for the same option for their children. For example, the Midtown Community School Initiative, a group of parents and community members in Kansas City, chose CWC to bring schools to their historically segregated community that not only reflect the socioeconomic, racial and cultural diversity of their town, but also use that diversity to cultivate character and understanding in all of their students. We opened our first CWC school in Kansas City in 2016.

### **How does Citizens of the World recruit a diverse school population?**

CWC works hard to conduct community outreach – through holding meetings, attending community events, visiting community gathering places and distributing information by going door-to-door – to make sure that families from all walks of life in all parts of the community know that CWC is an available option. This outreach helps to ensure that parents of all backgrounds are aware of our schools and have the

opportunity to enroll their children. In addition, all of our materials are available in multiple languages to best fit the needs of the communities we serve.

In Los Angeles, for example, a [case study](#) of our schools showed that our efforts created campuses serving students that better mirrored the community when compared to other local public schools.

### **How does your model serve communities?**

Our students are being prepared to become future leaders who are able to solve problems and generate peace and prosperity. Our parents and teachers believe that peaceful, prosperous communities start with richly diverse classrooms that value critical thinking, creativity and human connection. We help our parents and communities unite around the mutual success of their children and seek themselves to be citizens of the world, such as through our community service learning and beautification projects. As our children learn together, all people can learn to live together.

### **What are charter schools?**

Charter schools are independent, tuition-free public schools that are able to be more autonomous in exchange for agreeing to be held accountable for student achievement. Like traditional schools, charter schools were created by states to serve the public. Charter schools are supervised and directed by, as well as accountable to, the public through charter authorizing agencies, according to federal regulations under the [Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#).

Charter schools are funded using tax dollars based on the number of children enrolled. The per-pupil funding follows the student, which means that public schools, whether charter or traditional, in most states receive equal resources per child.

Enrollment in charter schools has grown by 62 percent, according to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. In 43 states and DC, nearly 2.9 million students now attend charter schools— representing more than 6 percent of all public school students nationwide.

Charters are accountable to the public for producing strong student results: 15 out of 16 recent studies show charter school students are outperforming their traditional school peers and showing the strongest improvement levels for underserved student populations. For more information, check out the most recent study completed by [Stanford's Center for Research on Education Outcomes](#).

We are proud that our school model has a [demonstrated track record of academic success](#).

### **Is Citizens of the World financially healthy?**

CWC as a network and all of its schools are financially healthy. Here is the most recent [audit report](#) for the organization.

LAUSD's charter oversight division has rated the organization fiscally healthy every year. While all public schools in California have faced severe cuts in funding over the past

several years CWC Los Angeles schools have navigated these cuts through both effective management and significant parent fundraising.

**How do you feel about co-location with other schools?**

Space is at a premium in all urban areas. Certain city education authorities have required the [co-location](#) of a charter and tradition school so that resources will be used efficiently. Co-location, when [successfully implemented](#), allows both the charter and district to share best practices and collaborate in ways that benefit all students, which was the original intention behind laws creating public charter schools.

We simply want a great public school system that does right by students, families and the community. We want the best for our adjoining schools and all other neighborhood schools, and know our friends in other schools want the same. We are proud to have strong partnerships with our adjoining schools. Here is an [example](#).

**What is your long-term goal?**

Our vision is to generate a peaceful and prosperous society in which people are free of prejudice, reactivity and constraints, value the bonds among us, feel a sense of responsibility toward one another and think critically to solve problems. Our students are being prepared to become future leaders capable of generating peace and prosperity and solving problems because they are also skilled in these ways.

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