

Preparing kids to build a better world

In our increasingly complex world, Citizens of the World charter schools strive to prepare today's generation to help build a better tomorrow.

Part of a national network of schools, Citizens of the World charter schools (CWC) offer a compelling choice for parents seeking alternatives to their local public schools. At its three K-5 schools in Hollywood, Silver Lake and Mar Vista (a new middle school will open in Fall 2015), CWC goes beyond the three Rs.

"The way we're defining educational success is too narrow," says Krupa Desai, Chief Strategy Officer of CWC. "We care about testing and outcomes, but that's not enough. We're designing and developing an education that leads to graduates armed not with just facts and dates, but self-aware, compassionate individuals who are able to problem solve and operate in the larger world."



To achieve this, the schools emphasize social-emotional learning – helping students learn to manage their emotions – in addition to academics.

CWC classrooms host a "Peace Corner" where an emotionally anxious student might retreat and squeeze a ball or use other suggested techniques to calm down.

Other tools include giving students easy language to describe complicated situations; for example, a "red voice" is an aggressive voice, a "blue voice" is a

calm voice. Giving students the tools to master mindfulness and empower better choices is the guiding principle.

"At CWC we believe you need both: content mastery and social-emotional learning," says Desai. "This combination leads to stronger academic outcomes."

Results show she's right: "CWC Hollywood, our flagship school, ranks in the top 6% of all schools in LAUSD based on the last state exams," Desai reports.



CWC students work on group-based projects and in activity centers that reflect the Constructivism theory of learning, a guiding philosophy for the school that asserts students learn through direct experience.

There's less of teachers commanding and directing students, and more group work and communication. Students have to learn to share ideas respectfully and clearly to each other, says Desai.

Diversity, both racial and socio-economical, is another guiding principle for the schools. CWC strives to place its schools in diverse communities and match its surroundings.

Art, music, dance, and physical education, including yoga, are all valued at the schools.

"It's not pleasant to see what's happening on the news and across the world," says Desai. "People are hungry to create a different world, and at CWC we ask ourselves, 'How can we create schools that create a different reality from the one we have today?'"

