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, New York, and Kansas City. We develop sophisticated thinkers who master content and have a courageous and compassionate sense of responsibility for themselves and all people. Our schools are in strong demand: in 2015, we had 10 times more interest than space.

We are proud that all Citizens of the World Los Angeles schools outperformed schools across California in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math, on average, on the last state achievement tests.

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 2015-16 school year, CWC has five schools – three in Los Angeles and two in New York – serving over 1,800 students – with two schools set to open for the 2016-17 school year in Kansas City.

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 life opportunities. Schools must prepare students with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in our increasingly diverse society. This requires not just preparing students academically, but also promoting cross-racial understanding and tolerance among groups and improving life opportunities for all students.

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.

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.

Are students with special needs 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 special needs because it includes hands-on instruction that is highly differentiated.

How do you engage and partner with parents? We greatly value parent and community engagement. All CWC schools encourage parents to be engaged, but participation in the schools is not required. We work to create numerous opportunities for parents to be actively involved in the schools, including volunteer opportunities, parent surveys and community-building events. Each region decides how to best work with their parents.

How are Citizens of the World schools funded? Like other public schools, Citizens of the World schools are primarily funded by taxpayer dollars. We are a nonprofit.

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 long-time 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. In addition, the network ensures schools have control of decisions affecting students and adhere to fundamental CWC values: all students performing at high levels, children of all backgrounds learning together, and community building.

How does Citizens of the World decide where to expand? Our parents want 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. We plan to open two schools in Kansas City in the 2016-17 school year. 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.

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.