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 across the country. We develop sophisticated thinkers who master content and have a courageous and compassionate sense of responsibility for themselves and all people.

We are proud that the Citizens of the World Los Angeles region scored in the top 6% of district elementary schools on the state assessment in English Language Arts (ELA) and in the top 7% in math in the 2016-17 school year.

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 – three in Los Angeles and one in Kansas City – serving close to 2,000 students in grades TK-8.

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 that students will bring fewer stereotypes with them into the workplace, according to a University of Maryland study.¹ 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.²

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.

They 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.

¹ See: http://citizensoftheworld.org/files/amicus_parents_v_seattle.pdf, App. 24, pg. 43
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. 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 its parents.

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 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 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.

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.

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.