

A School Day in the Life of a 9th/10th Grader

Students at LCHS are on campus early. By 7:45 am students are already clustered around benches and tables on the quad comparing notes from yesterday's classes or last night's homework. Others enter the language lab where the teacher is streaming Spanish language morning news. Two students will be given extra credit for giving the day's weather report and a summary of the top news of the hour in Spanish to start the class.

At 8:10 the first bell rings and students move towards their geometry class. They enter the room to find the teacher has arranged the desks in a circle around a scaled model structure built out of balsa wood representing the downtown Disney Concert Hall. Their assignment: determine what 3 dimensional geometric shapes were used to create the unexpected combination of walls and ceiling that make up the hall's unique architecture. Using their knowledge of trigonometric functions and the relationship between three dimensional geometric shapes, they will then work to explain how the construction builders knew it was reliably sturdy and how the shape of the building affects the sound of the music played within.

The class begins with a lively discussion during which time some students search for information about architect Frank Gehry's past projects on class laptops and others share memories from a field trip to the concert hall taken in middle school. By 8:30 the real work has begun – students pull out measuring tape, sketch what they see on graph paper and compare notes from a prior lesson during which time the formulas for geometric shapes were introduced. The teacher circulates ensuring everyone's engaged, intervening when she sees a student get off track and pointing out when a student or group of students makes a noteworthy observation or conclusion. A team re-builds portions of the model in the back of the room with connecting rods and tests the pressure points on the shapes. Other students research the way sound travels and responds to a variety of configurations in concert halls around the world using the Berkeley School of Music website and links referenced by a PhD student for her research. Groups and individuals begin to form hypothesis that they'll present to the class in a closing discussion. Tomorrow's lesson will be in the form of a presentation facilitated by their teacher – giving answers to the questions posed above in the form of a response to the students' theories.

Block 2, English opens with a series of short monologues presented by members of the drama club. The focus of the day's lesson: *Articulate the relationship between the expressed purposes and the characteristics of different forms of dramatic literature (e.g., comedy, tragedy, drama, dramatic monologue)*. Students follow along with excerpts of the literature being read aloud making notes in the margins and highlighting evidence of the characteristics of each type of literature. Once the readings are complete, the performers facilitate small group discussions in which students first identify the characteristics of the different forms of literature and then apply their understanding by drawing

comparisons to another text in the same genre. The groups present their analysis to one another while the teacher captures their learning in a template on his computer projected on the Smartboard. At the end of the class the teacher prints and distributes the notes to the students along with 3 sample texts they'll analyze for homework.

The day continues for the students as they head to lunch and then their afternoon electives. In 9th grade they choose between Spanish and Chinese knowing that their choice will take them through 4 years of language classes with the expectation that they'll graduate sufficiently fluent to pass the AP exam in their language as well as travel independently in a country where the language is spoken. The Spanish teacher has taken the goals to heart and begins fundraising with her 9th graders for a graduation trip to Oaxaca. The Chinese teacher has organized a language exchange with foreign students attending Santa Monica City College and Los Angeles City College who are looking for Chinese-English conversation partners. Language classes are lively exchanges of conversation with ample opportunity to practice speaking aloud as well as rigorous computer-based assessments that measure the students' mastery of vocabulary and grammar rules.

A School Day in the Life of a 11th/12th Grader

As students at LCHS transition into 11th and 12th grades, the style and rigor of their day shifts to match that of a high quality liberal arts college. Teachers distribute a syllabus at the beginning of each quarter reflecting ample amounts of reading that is to be completed outside of class. Teachers expect their upperclassmen to be able to engage in lively discussion demonstrating their ability to internalize the material and apply critical thought that takes them beyond the CA State Standards and prepares them to compete for spots at top colleges and universities.

The day begins with traditional classes including 11th/12th grade English, and Math courses covering pre-calculus, calculus and AP calculus.

Setting apart the academic day of 11th and 12th graders as different from the 9th/10th grade experience, is their application of service-learning. Whereas in their first two years in high school the focus of their service-learning projects is on learning how to design a project and work together with a diverse group of participants and constituents to complete a project, their 11th and 12th grade years are focused on measurable outcomes. Upperclassmen are encouraged to get involved with local or international community based organizations to make a difference in the world around them. For example, following a disaster such as hurricane Katrina, a small group of 12th grade students may establish a facebook network of high school students working to provide outreach to college freshman from New Orleans. They may begin by contacting colleges and universities through a letter-writing and call banking campaign to identify students who may

have lost family support in the disaster. In an effort to ensure the students whose families were impacted by the disaster aren't forced to drop out of college, LCHS may raise funds, coordinate home stay options for students during holiday and summer breaks and establish a website publishing stories of these college goers affected by the disaster.

Another group of 11th graders may work alongside their math and science teacher to gather data about the pollution and littering affecting the Los Angeles River. They may organize groups of LCS students to conduct observations and measurements of the amount of trash in high traffic areas of the river gathering information that they may present to an LA Times staff writer and/or the City Council in open session. The focus of these projects is to illustrate the power that young people have to make a difference in the world while simultaneously guiding their exploration of potential areas of study in college.