

Manzanita School & Institute Champions Diverse, Whole-Child Development Through Experiential Learning



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Manzanita School & Institute, a WASC-accredited independent K–12 school nestled in the Santa Monica Mountains, is proud to stand out among [diverse and inclusive schools in Los Angeles](#) thanks to its deeply personalized, community-oriented model of education. At Manzanita, learning is not just academic — it's about nurturing the whole child through relationship, place, and purpose.

From its very foundation, Manzanita has prioritized **whole child development education**, with a philosophy that honors each student's intrinsic gifts, emotional well-being, and personal growth. The school's **six guiding principles** emphasize mentoring relationships, collective responsibility, interpersonal competence, and rigorous effort — all grounded in the belief that education must serve both mind and heart. Teachers act as mentors, building trusting connections through active listening and thoughtful guidance.

Manzanita also embraces **experiential learning** in a way few private schools in Los Angeles do. Its 21-acre campus is a living laboratory: students move between indoor classrooms and outdoor spaces, including gardens, a working permaculture farm, and wild chaparral terrain. At the heart of this is the Living Classroom, where students tend to plants and animals, compost, and learn about sustainable land stewardship.

Nature connection is a cornerstone of the program. Under the guidance of trained naturalists, students build deep bonds with the environment through activities like bird tracking, shelter-building, and ethical foraging. Meanwhile, the school's stewardship curriculum empowers students to work in cross-grade

teams to manage compost, grow food, care for animals, and restore native ecosystems. These experiences foster not only environmental literacy but also teamwork, resilience, and a sense of responsibility.

The school's commitment to belonging and inclusion is reflected in its community and leadership. Faculty and mentors support every student's identity, encouraging self-discovery and empathy. Diversity, equity, and nature-based exploration combine to create a space where all students feel seen, supported, and challenged.

Manzanita further distinguishes itself through its **expeditionary learning** program. Students from elementary through high school regularly embark on multi-day expeditions into wild settings surrounding Los Angeles. These trips are integrated into core science and humanities curricula, giving students first-hand experience in community building, leadership, and place-based inquiry.

"By blending rigorous academics, mentorship, and a deep relationship with the natural world, Manzanita nurtures students in every dimension — intellectually, emotionally, socially, and ethically," said a parent whose child thrives in the school's cross-grade, hands-on environment.

For families interested in diverse and inclusive schools in Los Angeles that embrace **whole-child education** and **experiential learning**, Manzanita School & Institute offers a welcoming and transformative path. Learn more at manzanitaschool.org.

Contact

For inquiries about admissions, curriculum, or philosophy, please visit manzanitaschool.org or connect with the Admissions Office via the website.

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