

The Magnet

CLEVELAND HIGH SCHOOL HUMANITIES MAGNET

Humanities Magnet Bucks Educational Trends: Program Turns Out Top Performers

Magnet reporters went inside the “core” of Cleveland Humanities Magnet High School for the true story of the LAUSD's top-performing Magnet program. Founder Neil Anstead, still tight-lipped about the upcoming year's essay questions(!), is proud that Cleveland Humanities Magnet High School is one of the highest performing educational programs in the country. It seems that the stars lined up in

the early 80's. Anstead told The Magnet this story:

In the early 80s, the Los Angeles Board of Education was under pressure to take meaningful steps to integrate students and developed the Magnet programs, which were designed to promote the integration of students from varied ethnic and racial groups and different socio-economic backgrounds. At that time, both the Rockefeller and Carnegie Foundations called for increased emphasis on humanities teaching. The Board of Education created two humanities programs, one at Cleveland High School in Reseda and the other at Hamilton High School in Los Angeles.

“Eleventh grade changed my life in a broad sense; my social interactions are far more different after a year of dealing with social injustice. Suddenly every casual talk about race and gender with my friends turns into a serious discussion of why we think the way we think, and I end up writing down book lists for everyone after we finish talking.”

- Claire Hummel, Class of '08, Rhode Island School of Design

The Cleveland administration, led then by Principal John Sanders and Assistant Principal Ruth Ross, was not only supportive but flexible and open-minded. They expected something very special at Cleveland. The program's early creators knew the program must be based on three critical characteristics, that it be thematic, writing based, and interdisciplinary. While many other Magnet programs tackle a narrowly defined area of study, the Cleveland Humanities Magnet education exposes students to broad experiences by addressing humankind: our development, our culture, our diversity, and our commonality.

Then came the teachers. Highly qualified, with knowledge of and experience in several humanities disciplines, they brought art, philosophy, literature, and social institutions, as well as a willingness to coordinate their subject matter in order to develop the interdisciplinary curriculum fundamental to the program. The program now serves nearly 900 students in all four grades, offering interdisciplinary classes, known as CORE classes, with an emphasis on history, philosophy, art, and literature. Teachers write the curriculum, and no textbooks are used, with a mandate that everything that is taught and everything they prepare must challenge and engage the students.

“I have a final that is composed of two in-class essays... prep for a week, etc. So my TA was giving everyone tips on how to write them... It was all I could do to keep from rolling my eyes and saying, ‘Honestly, dude, this is second nature to me.’”

- Lisa Dresser, Class of '10, UCLA

From grants to relationships between the Magnet and outside educational organizations, Cleveland Humanities Magnet grew. Initially, there was an honors contract between students and teachers, and later the entire Cleveland Humanities curriculum was declared an honors curriculum. Since then, the program has been further enhanced by requiring all 11th and 12th grade

“Plain and simple, I know how to write a really, really, really good essay! Now I know that I wasn't being told lies when teachers said that core made college easier.”

- Elizabeth Cobrin, Class of '04, CSUN

Magnet students take two Advanced Placement courses. In fact, often students take even more.

The interdisciplinary nature of the program breeds inquiry, sparks dialogue and debate, and helps develop critical thinking skills. Its subject matter encourages students to suspend their beliefs in order to better examine the rationale and support for those beliefs. Students take an interdisciplinary midterm and final examinations that ask them to bring together everything they have learned on a specific theme and portray it in a cogent manner, analyzing and critiquing abstract concepts, principles, and theories.

For college-bound students, a Cleveland Humanities Magnet education is a major asset, with a depth and breadth of learning atypical in other high schools. For many reasons, the Magnet has captured the attention of outside organizations that see the program as a standard bearer and model for other humanities programs. In fact, Cleveland Humanities Magnet is the founding school and model curriculum for the Humanitas program, created to promote the growth of interdisciplinary, thematic humanities instruction for urban students.

“It taught me how to think critically about the world around me. It taught me that I can't sit just sit like a sponge and absorb things, but I must question. It also taught how to write an essay even if I know nothing about the topic.”

- Stacey Klein, Class of '08, UCLA

FAQS

Cleveland Humanities Magnet High School

40% of our graduates attend UC schools straight out of high school (compared to much lower overall LAUSD rates)

In 2006:

42.3% attended UC schools

19% attended private and/or out-of-state schools

18% attended California State University schools

18% attended community colleges

2% attended vocational school

.05% went into the military



80% of our graduates attend four-year colleges straight out of high school

99% of our students pass the California High School Exit Examination on their first attempt

The program has a 90% pass rate in English for the California Standards test

The Magnet program serves as a Teacher Training Center for the Humanitas Program. Hundreds of teachers have come to Cleveland to attend Teacher Training Institutes, where they learn to develop thematic, interdisciplinary, and writing-based curricula.

CORE classes do not use textbooks:

all materials are written or assembled by the teachers

The Magnet program is likely the only high school in the country that requires that students take philosophy-let alone two years of it.



All CORE classes are designated Honors or Advanced Placement.

The Magnet has the highest participation rate of any other school in LAUSD in AP Literature and AP US History.

“Our Magnet program offers a space for students from different communities to interact, learning to live together by actually learning together. What better way to promote tolerance and appreciation of others than this.”

- Gabriel Lemmon, Magnet Coordinator

continued...



What goes into a CORE Education:

- Aboriginals
- Absurdity
- Aesthetics
- Africa
- "The Allegory of the Cave"
- The American Dream
- Are you smarter than (my dog) Willie?
- Aristotle
- Assemblage
- Australia
- Aztecs
- Baroque
- Bastardization
- Beauty and Sublime
- Being There
- Bless Me Ultima
- The Bible
- "The Book of Job"
- "The Book of Genesis"
- Boomerangs
- Breakfast of Champions
- Buddhism
- Can you think without language?
- CATHARSIS
- China
- Classical
- The Color of Fear
- Communism
- Critical Thinking
- The Cycle of Socialization
- Danto
- Darwin
- David
- "Death of a Salesman"
- The Death of Ivan Ilych
- Descartes
- Diamond
- Diskopolos
- Domination and Subordination
- Doric, Ionian or Corinthian?
- Doryphorus
- Dostoevsky
- Dream Journal
- Dubois Vs. Washington
- Empowerment
- Existentialism
- Expressionism
- Fatal Flaw
- "Fences"
- Fly in the Fly Bottle
- Foucault
- Freedom
- Freud
- Gender Unit
- "Good Will Hunting"
- The Great Gatsby
- Greece
- Greco-Roman
- "Hamlet"
- Hobbes
- Human Nature
- Human Rights
- The Iliad and the Odyssey
- isms
- Judy Chicago
- The Jungle
- Kant
- Kienholz
- LA Trip
- Language
- Les Blancs
- Locke
- MAKE THE CONNECTIONS
- Masks
- "The Matrix"
- MEMORIZING
- Mexico
- Michelangelo
- Modernism
- Multiple Intelligences
- Neoclassical
- Nietzsche
- Oppression
- Oral Vs. Literate Societies
- The Other
- The Painted Bird
- Paradise Lost
- Parthenon
- Pastoral
- "Phaedra"
- Philosophers of Taste
- Plato
- Poetics
- Pop Art
- Postmodernism
- Power Pyramid
- "Rabbit Proof Fence"
- Race Unit
- Racial Identity Development
- Raft of the Medusa
- RAPs, RAPs, RAPs
- Red Azalea
- Rise of Reason
- Rococo!
- Romantic Love
- Romanticism
- Romare Bearden
- Rome
- Rousseau
- Sartre
- The Self Made Man
- Schoenberg
- Schopenhauer
- Signs and Symbols
- Slater
- Sooo many maps
- The Spoken Words
- St. Augustine
- Stendhal and Crystallization
- Symposium
- Tai Chi
- The Tao of Pooh
- Taoism
- Task Groups
- The Stranger
- Todorov
- Tolstoy
- "Tristan and Isolde"
- UCLA Trip
- US History
- Vonnegut
- What is art?
- What is the point of existence?
- What is truth?
- White Man's Burden
- Who Is/Was Jesus?
- Wittgenstein



Staying true to its goal of integration, Cleveland Humanities Magnet takes it to the next level, by ensuring that the program and the curriculum also reflect the diversity of the population they serve. The program maximizes the ethnic and racial diversity of its student body by integrating it as part of the curriculum, respecting and addressing differences in lifestyle and outlook. This transcendence of ethnocentric attitudes is key to the study of the humanities since one must learn about other cultures and other people before learning about one's own culture.

"It's embarrassing to admit, but I'm pretty much majoring in CORE. I theme each semester (past themes have included 'Modernism' and 'Russia') and always make sure to include a philosophy, art history and literature component."

- Sarah Brin, Class of '08, Brandeis

According to Neil, with all of the changes that schools have experienced over the past 25+ years, Cleveland Humanities Magnet continues to maintain the program's integrity. "We know when we have succeeded: When the kids are happy and know they are getting something truly special; when our teachers are intellectually challenged and never stop learning themselves; and when the parents are happy. It can't get any better than that."

In the News...



The Daily News reported:

"Cleveland Humanities Magnet High School, on of the Los Angeles Unified School District's top performing Magnet programs, celebrated its 25th anniversary at a major gala event at Sportsmen's Lodge in Studio City. At the event, the school...was honored for creating a ground-breaking program that is now the standard bearer not only for Magnet programs, but for humanities programs across the United States."

The Studio City Sun reported:

"Cleveland Humanities Magnet High School celebrated its 25th anniversary with a gala June 3 at The Sportsmen's Lodge in Studio City, where the Reseda school was honored for creating one of LAUSD's top-performing Magnet programs."



Los Angeles County Supervisor and Board Chairman Zev Yaroslavsky presented honors to the school, which was also saluted by deputies representing State Senator Alex Padilla, Congressman Brad Sherman, Assembly member Lloyd Levine, City Councilman Dennis Zine, and LAUSD school board member Tamar Galatzan."

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger said this about Cleveland Humanities Magnet High School:

"California's future prosperity rests upon the investment we make in our children's education. Schools such as yours serve as the training ground for the next generation, and your work is vital to our continued success. For 25 years, you have provided young Californians with the tools they need to grow and lead purposeful lives. Thank you for your outstanding dedication to California's future leaders."

U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein said:



"Since its inception, Cleveland High School's Humanities Magnet Program has provided a high caliber education to children in Los Angeles from all backgrounds. Their curriculum is not only rigorous but promotes the critical thinking skills necessary for students to achieve future academic success as well as their life goals. I commend Cleveland...for its outstanding leadership and for taking an active role in nurturing America's greatest resource - young minds."

Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa said:

A good education is the most powerful tool we can provide our children as they grow to find their place in society. As a premier public school, Cleveland Humanities Magnet is a model for what we can accomplish in education through a thoughtful, rigorous, and interdisciplinary education."

County Board of Supervisors Chairman Zev Yaroslavsky said:

Cleveland Humanities Magnet High School offers a thematic blending of courses in philosophy, art, literature, and world history that serve as a model for programs throughout the Los Angeles Unified School District and beyond. Affording students the opportunity to cultivate the skills necessary to succeed in college and life beyond graduation, Cleveland presents an academic curriculum that by any measure ranks among the highest performing programs in the country."

