

Reflecting on 5 Years at Harvard-Westlake by Ethan Lachman

Description



We are excited to feature guest writer Ethan Lachman, who shares some of his experiences about being a student at Harvard-Westlake. We™re always interested in perspectives about the culture of L.A. private schools and we know you are too. Ethan is the incoming Editor-in-Chief of The Chronicle, the school™s student newspaper. He wrote about [recent student and alumni allegations of racism at Harvard-Westlake](#) and about his experience [quitting basketball](#). —Christina

After attending Wonderland Avenue Elementary School from kindergarten to fifth grade, my public school experience had essentially come to an end. My family and I had never explicitly decided to aim for Harvard-Westlake, yet there was an unspoken agreement that my future was there. As a result, we immediately set out to find a school for a single sixth grade year: we applied to The Center for Early Education (CEE).

As soon I met the then Director of Admissions Deedie Hudnut, the unrelenting positivity of what it is known as “The Center”™ drew me in. When I was luckily one of the two kids accepted for the sixth grade, I learned that the school was a substantial “feeder”™ to Harvard-Westlake, a secondary school that at that point, I still desperately wanted to attend. At the time, I was playing basketball very seriously and was involved with multiple AAU club teams, so after sitting in the bleachers of the Upper School™s seemingly transcendent Taper Gymnasium, I knew I wanted to be a part of the stellar athletic-academic combination.

After two years in a row of dreaded ISEE testing, I got into Harvard-Westlake, but my life both there and at The Center was not what I had expected. At The Center, the luxury of chilled milk perched on the playground tables at lunch astounded me. It was in stark contrast to the dirty bathrooms littered with toilet paper stuck to the ceiling that I had become accustomed to at Wonderland. At both The Center

and Harvard-Westlake, the work-load increased exponentially and things didn't come quite as easily to me. I realized that a public school ~4 for effort, the maximum possible grade, really meant nothing in these new, more rigorous academic environments that constantly looked towards the future, specifically college.

At Harvard-Westlake, the competition only increased. Although I continued to succeed in school, it took more of my time and I felt increased pressure. I remember that I even began feeling self-conscious about my basketball skills entering 7th grade at Harvard-Westlake because I was no longer the best player on a small playground.

Looking back, I think the transition to Harvard-Westlake was probably similar to what a transition would have been like at other schools. Despite the fact that I knew a lot of kids when I started seventh grade, it often felt that people had neither the time nor the energy to truly connect. Today, I no longer play basketball. Now, I'm a member of track and field, band and the school newspaper, opportunities I would have never taken advantage of without the school's encouragement to try new classes and activities.

Right before seventh grade began, Harvard-Westlake held a welcome barbeque, something they still do today to provide an effective opportunity for new students to get to know each other and learn about the school. Even so, the school's friendly admissions team, accepting and devoted faculty and seemingly never-ending stock of helpful resources could never completely prevent the inevitable feeling of uncomfortable change I experienced as I initially began middle school. As a rising senior, I now juggle a major workload, making it hard to find time for a personal life. Nevertheless, reflecting upon my time at Harvard-Westlake so far, I am confident I have taken a step forward in understanding my complete-self more fully, from the sometimes drained part to the unfailingly passionate part.

Ethan Lachman is a rising senior at Harvard-Westlake School. A student-journalist, Ethan is the incoming editor-in-chief of The Chronicle, Harvard-Westlake's school newspaper. He is passionate about sports and music and plays French Horn in the symphony. His favorite movie of all time is Forrest Gump.

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Date Created

July 1, 2020

Author

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