

Catalyst: A Learning Hub, New Private Middle School Opening Sept. 2019 in Agoura Hills

Description

Iâ€™m always excited to share information about new private schools. Hereâ€™s news from [Catalyst: A Learning Hub](#). â€”Christina



Revolutionary Independent Middle School Opens Its Doors to 6thâ€”8th Graders

From the founders of The Sycamore School in Malibu, an independent elementary school featuring a challenging curriculum rooted in collaboration, innovation, and learning through play and creativity, comes **CATALYST: A Learning Hub**, a revolutionary middle school based on the same foundational

belief that education must be humanized for the 21st Century. Assumptions of the industrial-age-model of schooling are no longer sufficient for children to thrive in the 21st Century. Students are given choice with the aim of becoming self-directed, autonomous problem solvers, who create meaning in the world around them. **CLH** will open in Agoura Hills in September, 2019. **CLH** is the realization of Los Angeles-based Catalyst Education's™ vision and philosophy and was founded on the belief that education must evolve to meet the needs of a connected and evolving world. Its three founders, Tedd Wakeman, AJ Webster, and Christy Durham, comprise the leadership team at The Sycamore School, founded in 2015 in Malibu. They bring their distinctive approach to learning and extensive experience to **CLH** as its founding Leadership Team.

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“We are very excited to bring an alternative option for middle school education to families from Malibu and the west valley. We are thrilled to be able to take this next step, building on our experiences, relevant research, and the latest brain science in education,” says Tedd Wakeman, Catalyst Learning Hub. “The world we live in now demands a different approach to education. Students need a learning experience that is engaging, continuous, and future focused, allowing them to thrive in a connected and evolving world.” CLH is located on the campus of the Gateway Foursquare

Church off Agoura Road, north of Kanan and west of the 101 Fwy. Three school buildings are surrounded by trees, grass and green flora, which also serve as outdoor learning spaces. On campus is a pool, gardens, open fields, a ropes course, hiking trails, sport courts, a kitchen, and much more. Beginning January 2019, the buildings will undergo renovations to prepare for a September opening.



STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The student experience at **CLH** will be guided by the question, “How will you affect the world?” We will help students develop the kind of entrepreneurial mindsets (collaborating, taking action, being adaptable, living imaginatively, and thinking critically) that will help them thrive in a world that demands agility and agency. Over the course of each year, students will be charged with developing “real world consumables.” This may take the form of an idea, a product, an organization, or a human experience. For example, they may choose to create effective portable water purifiers, publish a book of poetry, organize a 5K run for a cause, or start a movement to reduce homelessness. Identifying student passions and exploring ways in which to create something meaningful and tangible from them will be a central tenant of the school’s “10% Time” classes. In these classes, students will design and document their process in the development of these consumables.



CLH will also offer a relevant approach to traditional subject areas like English, History, and Math, allowing students to access knowledge in a manner that ignites curiosity. For example, Humanities will be approached from the perspective of “THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE” and will explore literature, history, geography, ethics, and empathy. Science will be explored through the lens of “EXPLANATORY PRINCIPLES,” helping students make sense of how and why our world works. Other courses include “QUANTITATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING,” a class designed to explore mathematical thinking from the perspective of relevant application, and “COMMUNICATION DESIGN,” where students make the shift toward becoming producers of various types of communication. In addition to these core classes, a variety of additional enrichment opportunities will be offered, including Latin and Linguistics, music appreciation and composition, maker and tech, and both the visual and performing arts. A beautiful physical environment coupled with an engaging approach enhance the student experience and ignite young minds.



CLH LEADERSHIP TEAM

Research shows that schools do better when educators are collaborative. To that end, **CLH** will not have a principal, per se. Instead, the three-member leadership team shares teaching and decision-making responsibilities and each governs a particular sphere of influence. AJ Webster oversees curriculum; Christy Durham, logistics and operations; Tedd Wakeman, community and outreach. In addition to the founding of the Sycamore School in Malibu in 2015, the LT brings varied and vast experience to the **CLH** community.

• **AJ Webster** has almost 20 years of classroom experience teaching science, Latin, language arts, math, and social science at schools including Buckley in Sherman Oaks and the PlayMaker program at New Roads in Santa Monica. He holds a Master's™ in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. He embraces the Maker Movement, in which students design, construct and think with their hands. Webster has conducted workshops for the national Game Learning Society and was the keynote speaker for the 2014 Milken Playful Learning Summit. His work with PlayMaker was featured on PBS NewsHour.

â€¢ **Christy Durham** also brings almost 20 years of elementary and middle school teaching experience. She holds a Masterâ€™s in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and was a sixth grade teacher at Buckley, where she orchestrated an outdoor educational program and created a diversity initiative round table for the faculty. In 2011 she was awarded the Buckley Schoolâ€™s Parentsâ€™ Association Award, which allowed her to study in Peru. She received the National Junior Honor Society Teacher of the Year Award in 2012. Durham left Buckley in 2012 to teach fourth and fifth grade at Los Encinos School in Encino, which embraces integrated, project-based learning. She has presented at the Archer School for Girls STEM conference and the Milken Community School Playful Learning Summit.

â€¢ **Tedd Wakeman** has been working with children in education, recreation, and research for more than 20 years. For 13 of those, he taught inner-city youth in LAUSD at the elementary level, concurrently traveling the country teaching and developing STEM curriculum for Nike/Eco Educators. He has taught extensively across the globe, working in the Republic of the Maldives teaching English to groups of adults from more than 25 different nations while diving the local coral reefs as a dive master. In Bali, he lived and worked with Indonesian rice farmers and taught local teenagers. He taught fourth and fifth grade for two years in Costa Rica, while exploring the local rainforest ecosystems. Wakeman then joined the GameDesk team in Los Angeles to open the revolutionary PlayMaker School, which has gained notoriety for its unique approach to 21st Century learning and game-based curriculum.

FUNDING AND HOW TO APPLY

Initial funding for Catalyst is provided by generous private donations. There is a one-time tuition reduction for the first year. Tuition will begin at \$20,000 for 2019/2020 and return to its normal rate of \$25,000 for 2020/2021. Need-based tuition assistance is available. Applications are due March 29, 2019.

For more details about Catalystâ€™s mission and educational philosophy, and to apply online, please visit www.catalyst-education.org.

Contact **Molly Ripton** at mripton@sycamore-school.org to set up interviews or a campus tour.

Category

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