

Leonardo School: From L.A. To Panama, A Unique Global School

Description

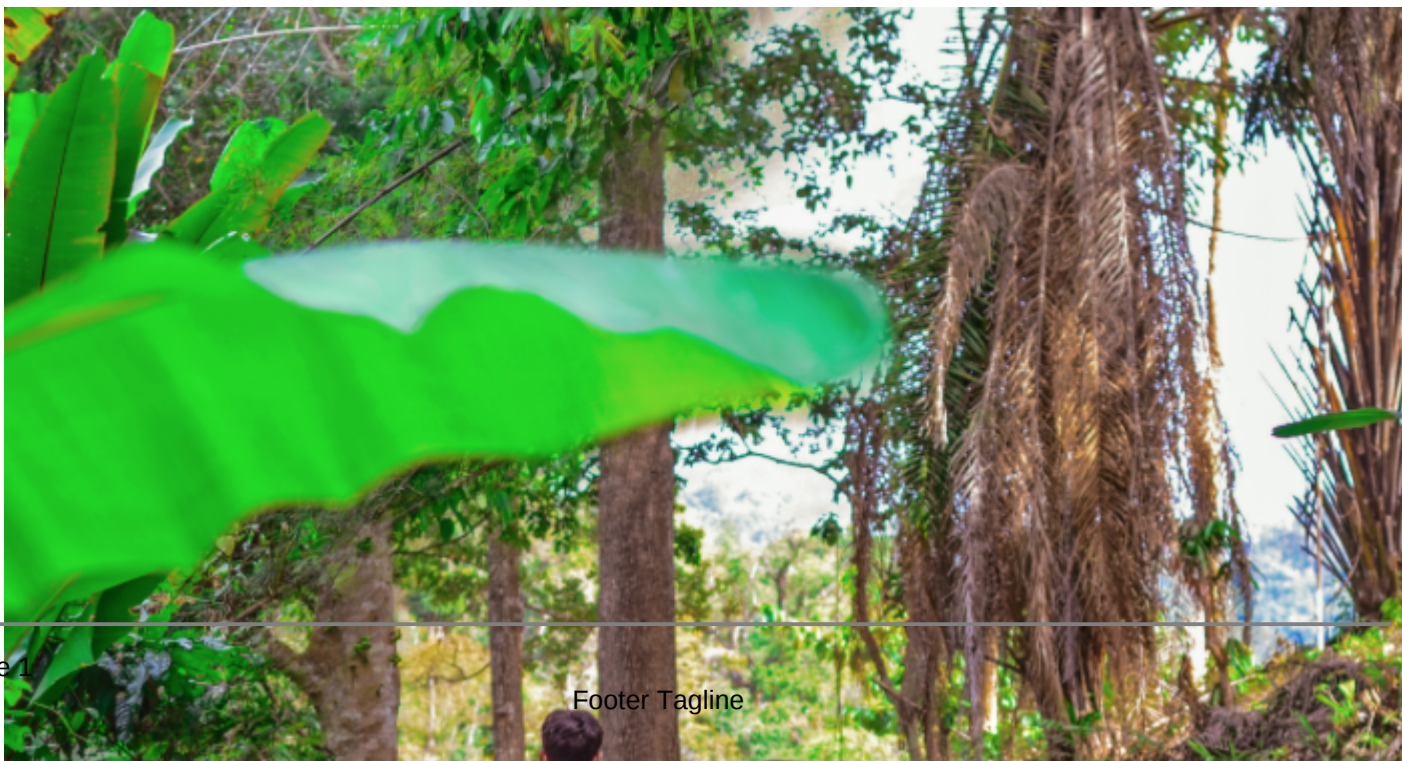


Jeff Guckert,
founding director of
Leonardo School

Please note: Leonardo School will be hosting an [information session on April 25th](#).

The other day I was having coffee with my friend [Lisa Marfisi](#) when she told me about a new school called Leonardo. This was news to me, but as soon as she described this exciting new venture, I knew I wanted to learn more about it. Lisa connected me with Leonardo's founding director, Jeff Guckert, who was gracious enough to take the time on Friday to speak with me on the phone about his new school.

Jeff explained that after leaving Crossroads School last June, where he was the assistant head of school, he planned to start a new school, one that brings new ideas to existing educational models. Jeff's vision for Leonardo School is the manifestation of his years of experience combined with a group of [impressive education professionals \(teachers, board members, advisors\)](#) who share the same excitement about a next generation school where the "campus is the world."



Panama, photo: Leonardo School

Notably, [Jeff has the ideal background](#) to serve as founder of a new school:

“After graduating from Stanford with a PhD in Chemistry, Jeff was looking for something meaningful to do with his life. Fortunately, he found teaching. For 21 years, at three renowned schools – The Bishops School (La Jolla, CA), Sidwell Friends School (Washington, DC) and Crossroads School for Arts & Sciences (Santa Monica, CA) – Jeff has developed his educational philosophy serving as science teacher for grades 6-12, department chair, academic dean, division director, dean of faculty, and assistant head of school.”

As Jeff explained to me, “At Leonardo School, we believe that the purpose of secondary school is to empower students to see the world for themselves and to be the change they want to see in the world, now and in the future.”



Photo: Leonardo School

Leonardo School, which will open in Fall 2017, starting with grades 6 and 7 and adding subsequent grades each year, will be located on the Westside of L.A., most likely in Culver City or Santa Monica. Currently, Jeff and his team are actively scouting sites.

Leonardo is intended to be a next-generation school where the classroom serves as a “base camp” for students as they learn in an environment which, according to Jeff, “Rethinks schooling in order to allow kids to see the world for themselves, not as adults tell them the world is or should be.” The school, says Jeff, “will encourage students to become change agents in our world. The entire curriculum will be purpose-based, rather than having a community service requirement to fulfill a certain amount of hours.”

Not only will students develop projects while exploring Los Angeles, in partnership with Earth Train and Geoversity, students will establish extended projects and relationships with the peoples, cultures, biomes, and more of this amazing country.



L.A. River Mural at The Village, Topanga

The most significant partnership Leonardo School has established is with the school's satellite campus in Panama. Students at the Los Angeles campus will travel to Panama as part of the curriculum and students from Panama will collaborate with students here in Los Angeles. Spanish will be taught in order for Leonardo School students to converse here in L.A. as they complete project-based learning around the city, speaking with street vendors for example, or students in Panama and other places around the world. "Ultimately, expansion to Mexico and other locations is envisioned," says Jeff.

One of the most fascinating elements of the school will be the non-traditional partnerships. Jeff is truly passionate about the early connections the school has developed with naturalists, a bamboo architect, musicians and other experts in their fields. If students are interested in outdoor education, he says, "It could take place in a course in the rainforest in Panama."



Photo: Trip Advisor

Ultimately, Leonardo School seeks to answer the question, “What does it mean for a student to be successful?” At the core of its mission is to help students develop these core principles:

- **Knowing yourself**
- **Empathy, Compassion: understanding, defining your role in groups, communities**
- **Evolution & Change, Equilibrium, Sustainability**
- **Connectedness of ideas, knowledge, skills, people**

Curriculum:

Each year of study is centered around a major element of global impact. Skills in traditionally-defined disciplines (e.g. social & emotional intelligence, arts, reading, writing, history, math) are covered through practical studies of each topic.

Year 1: Agriculture

Year 2: Cities

Year 3: Health/Wellness

Year 4: Environment

Year 5: Government Systems

Year 6: Economic Systems

Year 7: Belief Systems

Here are a few more details about Leonardo School:

- Applications are now being accepted for Fall 2017, grades 6 and 7. Note: if there are enough applications for grades 8 and 9, the school will consider adding those grades for 2017. The school plans to grow each year to become a 6-12th grade secondary school.
- The ISEE entrance exam is not required.
- Class size is expected to have between 10-20 students.
- Tuition will be approximately \$34,000 per year, with a 15% discount (\$28,900) for the first incoming class. Tuition is expected to increase by 2% each year. Some financial aid will be offered.
- On April 25, 2017, Jeff and his team will hold an information session for prospective families at 6 p.m. at the Boys and Girls Club in Venice. [See Leonardo’s website for more information and to RSVP.](#)

*Source: Leonardo School Website

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