Saint Markâ€™s Episcopal School: Timeless Tradition, Talented Teachers, And Tech Tools!

Description

Welcome!

Saint Markâ€™s Episcopal Schoolâ€™s front offices are housed in a stately, renovated home on a residential street in Altadena. It is private and welcoming, situated on a lovely campus. Located on several acres, the schoolâ€™s ambience is graceful and spacious.

I visited the school on a sunny morning earlier this week. As a first-time visitor to the school, Joscelle Shen,* the assistant head of school, greeted me at the front door. She exudes warmth and kindness and was extremely attentive throughout our meeting and tour. Joscelle is the mom of three kids and a parent at Saint Markâ€™s, so she is extremely well versed in every aspect of the school.

We started by watching a short parent-made video about the school. I mention that parents created the video because Saint Markâ€™s is a school where parent involvement is both encouraged and expected. Each parent is asked to commit to 25 hours per year to help the school with a variety of projects, from the book fair or library to creating the annual report and a wide range of other activities. My guess is that many parents exceed the 25 hours because they enjoy helping the school so much. One of the most impressive aspects of this school is its genuine sense of community. Saint Markâ€™s parents are a cohesive group of families who volunteer and worship together. A friendly, low-key

attitude defines this vibrant school. There is a marked lack of pretense and the solid foundation created by the schoolâ€™s 50 years of tradition is apparent.

Classrooms and a courtyard

Saint Markâ€™s is a traditional, preschool-6th school. Students wear uniforms and call teachers by their last names. It is an in-demand school, well respected for its extremely academic curriculum, which is a carefully constructed to focus on the whole child (academic, social, emotional and spiritual). The school has a quiet dignity about it. Nothing is chaotic or uncontrolled, either within the classroom or outside. The schoolâ€™s mission of academic excellence, respect for diversity, self-responsibility and spiritual growth informs and guides its daily work.

The art studio: A splendid space!

The academic curriculum at Saint Markâ€™s includes core classes and seven subject specialists for science, Spanish, music, art and other subjects. Respecting and building upon the schoolâ€™s history, the program is rigorous and cutting-edge. The director of the school, Doreen Oleson, Ed.D., has a consistent vision and the extensive educational experience to deliver upon the schoolâ€™s stated mission. And she does!

Young scientists learn here!

The multi-dimensional program is carefully constructed. As expected, it includes requirements like math, reading and other subjects. Students attend chapel twice per week. Science is taught with â€œhands and minds on,â€• Joscelle told me. Students learn through experiencing materials. Spanish is taught through reading and writing, and also cooking and art. Notably, incorporating current affairs like immigration issues happens in Spanish class.

The technology lab: So right now!

One of the most impressive parts of the school is the robust Tech Lab. Saint Markâ€™s is an extremely tech-savvy school! The Tech Lab is visited by students one hour each week, where they use a variety of programs to become proficient in PowerPoint, Excel, and Word. They also learn Google Sketch, Frames Amination, iMovie and more. Everything that happens in the Tech lab is integrated and coordinated with the kidsâ€™ classroom work. They arenâ€™t learning PowerPoint just to know it; they are using it in their assignments. The Lab has two staff, who work with the students. Technology extends beyond the Lab too, into the classrooms and studentsâ€™ hands. Every classroom at Saint Markâ€™s has a MondoPad, a very large iPad, at the front of the class. The 6th graders have their own iPads. Other grades share iPads with one other student. Saint Markâ€™s has made an investment in the latest technology and the staff has the skills to use it and teach with it. This is a standout program and it opens the world of technology to Saint Markâ€™s students in a meaningful way.

Kindergarten play area

Saint Markâ€™s has wonderful, authentic diversity in both its faculty and student body. There are students of virtually every ethnic background and one teacher in the video pointed out that many of his students are mixed-race, reflecting the local community.

One of two big kindergarten classrooms

The kindergarten classrooms at Saint Markâ€™s are very large, bright and welcoming. They are filled with colorful kidsâ€™ artwork, teacherâ€™s information and inspiration. Each class has 20 students and one teacher who is assisted by a teacher intern (in the process of getting their teaching credential). There are two classes per grade.

Another view of the kindergarten classroom

The school will break ground next summer on a new lush, green outdoor classroom next to the courtyard that is sure to excite everyone.

Sports field

When students apply to secondary schools, Saint Markâ€™s graduates go on to the following schools: Barnhardt, Chandler, Gooden, Flintridge Prep., Mayfield Junior School, Polytechnic, Westridge School For Girls and other private and local public schools.

Hoop it up!

There is an understated clarity of purpose at Saint Markâ€™s that is truly impressive. Parents, faculty and students alike embrace the schoolâ€™s tagline, â€œPassion For Learning, Compassion For The Worldâ€• and it is evident throughout this magnificent gem of a school.

Saint Markâ€™s is a sophisticated salute to past, present and future! If you are looking for a state-of-the-art, traditional school, you should definitely tour this Saint Markâ€™s. And when you do, ask for Joscelle!

* Sadly Joschelle Shen lost her battle with cancer in August 2016. In July 2017 Dan Hare assumed the title of Director of Enrollment Management.â€• He can be reached at danh at saint-marks dot org.

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