# Westridge School: Where Girls Are Unstoppable!

## Description

Welcome to Westridge School!

Arriving at Westridge School in Pasadena on a cloudy morning, I was immediately struck by the serene beauty of the school, which sits on a cul-de-sac on a quiet residential street. Westridge is an assemblage of a set of 17 graceful, elegant Craftsman style buildings, interspersed with mid-century modern structures. The 9.5 acre campus is filled with trees and has the feel of a small college campus, appropriately scaled for girls grades 4-12.

Helen Hopper, director of admissions and Monica Menez, the schoolâ€™s communications director, welcomed me graciously to the office where we talked before setting off on a campus tour. Helen has been with Westridge for 26 years and Monica joined the staff almost 10 years ago. They are both lovely. Helen is the type of administrator I immediately connected with. I trusted her invaluable experience. Sheâ€™s so friendly and articulate, with knowledge of both the big picture of the school and the tiniest detail. Monica is young and fun, a role model and someone the girls can identify with.

Craftsman inspired!

Sitting in Helenâ€™s office, I asked about the overall educational philosophy of the school, which Helen described as a â€œprogressive, college preparatory girls education.â€• Westridge begins in 4th grade because, as Helen explained, â€œResearch shows thatâ€™s the age when girls benefit from a single sex education.â€• Under the leadership of head of school, Elizabeth McGregor, Westridge will celebrate its Centennial next year, an amazing accomplishment.â€• Founded in 1913 by Mary Lowther Ranney, a noted architect and teacher who had been denied the right to vote, Ms. Ranney opened the school in her home so that girls would have the right to be fully educated. The school has based its programs on girlsâ€™ developmental stages of learning with qualities like confidence and critical thinking demonstrated by girls, for girls, forming the central tenet of the school. The rest is, quite literally, history, as the school enters its second century!

How cool!

Simply put, Westridge is astounding! The breath of programs and the warmth of the school are impossible to overlook. It boasts some formidable advantages, including very robust, state-of-the-art signature science and arts programs, a college preparatory curriculum, and top-tier faculty, many who have advanced degrees.

Lower School classroom

In the Lower School (Grades 4-6), there are about 100 girls. The language arts curriculum is integrated to connect the study units with what the students are leaning in science and other subjects. Math, performing arts and Spanish offer immersion into these subjects with a focus on collaboration, group work and hands on learning. This style of education underscores the schoolâ€™s progressive approach.

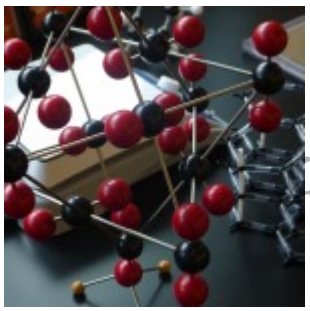
## The Sciences Are Front and Center

The Science and Math Building

As I walked around the campus, not really wanting to leave the quaint oasis, we entered the incredible new upper school science and math building, a 14,000 square foot, two story space where students â€œdo science, not just study it.â€• (Westridge School). It is filled with chemistry labs, math classrooms, physics labs, technology and a data center to support the schoolâ€™s 150 laptops. The eco-friendly quality of the building (it is a Platium LEED-certified project) allows for teaching about green technology and environmental education.

Girls and science go together!

Young scientists work here!



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**Art With Panache**

Equally as impressive as the schoolâ€™s science programs are its performing arts programs. In the Lower School, choral music in all three grades is emphasized, adding string instruments in 5th and 6th grades. Art, drawing, painting and mixed media are offered in all three grades and ceramics is added for 6th grade. The Performing Arts Center, a 600 seat, state-of-the-art theater is the home for numerous theatrical productions, concerts, dances and more.

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As Helen, Monica and I crisscrossed the courtyard to reach the Lower School, Helen stopped to ask a group of girls to chat about the school for a few minutes. Eager to share their Westridge experiences, the girls told me about the ease of making friends, the great teachers and their enthusiasm for coming to school every day. The quiet of the campus is filled with girlsâ€™ laughter, a lot of pink and purple backpacks and khaki-skirted uniforms. Helen pointed out that Westridge has human development programs, student council and a full-time nurse and counselor on staff, with courses to help girls navigate the social and health issues of tween/teen years in a safe, non-threatening place. Some of these life skills courses are offered in the after-school enrichment program for grades 4-8 that is included in the tuition. Clearly, Westridge has sharp insight into what girls want and need!

Lower School Spanish

According to Helen, the main entry points for admission are 4th, 6th, 7th and 9th grades. For 6th grade, the school adds between 8-10 students and about 1/3 of the students are admitted for 7th grade (about 20 new students). Incoming students are admitted from both public and private schools. Families from the San Gabriel Valley, Los Feliz, Silverlake, Atwater Village and other areas attend Westridge. The total enrollment, 4-12 grades is 480 students, with an average class size of 14 and a student/faculty ratio of 6:1. Tution for 2012-13 is $25,550 for grades 4-6. Financial aid is an important part of the schoolâ€™s mission, with approximately 1/3 of the current students receiving some financial aid. Awards range from a few hundred dollars to full tuition. Tours are ongoing by request.

**College matriculation**

Westridge is proud that in the past six years, it has produced 22 National Merit Scholarship finalists. The Class of 2012 gained admission to Brown, U.C. campuses, University of Chicago, Claremont McKenna College, Johns Hopkins, USC, Stanford, MIT and many more.

Athletics field

Westridge Schoolâ€™s past has informed its present in a remarkable way. Itâ€™s impossible to miss the impact and contributions of the schoolâ€™s founder and its alumna over the years. Yet, Westridge has embraced state-of-the-art science, art and technology in a truly modern way.

Westridge School is the belle of the ballâ€¦and of the world!

**www.westridge.org**

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