

Colburn Music Academy

Los Angeles, CA, United States



Downtown LA's highly selective pre-college conservatory track pairs LA Phil-taught private lessons with an outside high school diploma.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	55/100
Academic outcomes	58/100
University placement	60/100
Prestige & heritage	68/100
Alumni network	2/100
Facilities	66/100
Transparency	21/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Colburn Music Academy sits in a narrow niche: a pre-college conservatory track inside a larger performing arts institution in downtown Los Angeles, for students aged 7 to 18, with music training at the centre and a US high school diploma handled outside that specialist core. That structure is the point. This is not a conventional independent school with strong music on the side; it is a **serious training route** for young musicians whose main educational priority is instrumental development. The academy forms part of the Colburn School, a private performing arts school founded in 1950, and its focus is unapologetically specialist. For the right child, that **clarity of purpose** matters more than broad campus life, sport or the usual American high-school theatre of electives and mascots.

What puts Colburn on a shortlist is the calibre and concentration of the offer. The academy’s draw lies in elite pre-professional music study in Los Angeles, with private lessons taught by players from the LA Phil and a daily environment built around disciplined practice, ensemble work and technical progression. That makes it **highly selective** by nature, even if the school does not publish acceptance rates or aggregate academic outcomes in the public domain. Parents also need to understand the academic model plainly: the context given here lists a US High School Diploma, but the defining feature is that students pursue their general schooling alongside the conservatory track rather than through a full-spectrum standalone school experience on one campus. For families who want one institution to do everything under one roof, that is a constraint. For families chasing top-level music training, it is the attraction.

The fee point underlines Colburn’s unusual market position. At an average annual day fee of ****\$9,500****, this sits far below the standard price of a full US private day school, because it is not selling the standard private-school package. It is selling specialist tuition, access and intensity. That makes it **exceptional value** for families who can use the model well, and a poor fit for those who need extensive wraparound academics, mainstream extracurricular breadth or a conventional teenage social ecosystem. The student who will want Colburn is **single-minded**, technically advanced, comfortable with pressure and already committed to music as more than an after-school interest. For that child, and for parents who know exactly what they are buying, Colburn is **not for dabblers**.

STRENGTHS

- Operates within the Colburn School, giving students access to Colburn Conservatory faculty, recital halls, and performance opportunities alongside academic classes.
- Small cohort sizes allow individualized scheduling that balances core academics with several hours of daily instrumental study and ensemble work.
- Located in the Bunker Hill arts district of downtown Los Angeles, steps from Walt Disney Concert Hall and The Broad museum.
- Colburn's institutional endowment supports financial aid, with the school stating a commitment to keep music training accessible regardless of family income.
- Students benefit from a newly expanded Frank Gehry-designed campus (Colburn Center), completed in 2024, adding rehearsal and academic space.

TRADE - OFFS

- Admission requires a competitive musical audition in addition to academic review, so the school is not an option for students without advanced instrumental proficiency.
- The Academy is a relatively new program (launched in the early 2020s), so it lacks a long track record of graduating classes or verifiable long-term outcomes data.
- Very small enrollment limits the range of extracurricular clubs, sports, and elective subjects compared with larger comprehensive private schools.
- Urban downtown campus offers limited outdoor recreational space relative to suburban day schools.

ADMISSIONS

Entry is by combined academic and musical application for high-school grades, typically requiring transcripts, teacher recommendations, and a live or recorded audition on the student's principal instrument. Colburn's broader conservatory reputation draws applicants regionally and internationally, making seats highly competitive given the program's small cohort size. Financial aid is available and assessed alongside admission, with the school emphasizing need-based support. Prospective families should confirm current deadlines and audition repertoire requirements directly with the admissions office, as specifics can vary by instrument and year.

WTS RATING 

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