

Crossroads School for Arts & Sciences

Santa Monica, United States



A Santa Monica progressive school that dropped AP entirely, replacing it with its own Crossroads Advanced Studies curriculum in 2007.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	65/100
Academic outcomes	75/100
University placement	74/100
Prestige & heritage	74/100
Alumni network	5/100
Facilities	75/100
Transparency	70/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Crossroads did something rare in American independent schooling: it dropped AP in 2007 and replaced it with its own Crossroads Advanced Studies curriculum. That decision tells parents almost everything they need to know. This is not a school chasing standardised badge value; it is a school that backs its own academic judgment and expects families to buy into a progressive model. In Santa Monica, with an ****8:1 student-teacher ratio**** and a full K-12 age range from 5 to 18, Crossroads occupies the ***expensive, self-confident*** end of the market. The average annual day fee across the school is ****\$57,381****, which puts it firmly in premium US private-school territory. It is non-religious, English-medium and day-only, founded in 1971, with NAIS accreditation.

What makes it special is the combination of progressive teaching, serious arts provision and a refusal to let the senior years be dictated by AP course packaging. The school's own language leans hard on creativity, questioning and self-knowledge; more interesting is that the structure backs that up. Crossroads has a dedicated Bezdek Center for the Performing Arts, a visible Equity & Justice Institute, and a programme map that includes experiential and outdoor education, life skills and social justice alongside the standard academic spine. This is a **distinctive** proposition for parents who want an American diploma route without the narrowness and status anxiety that can dominate conventional college-prep schools. The trade-off is clear too: families who want a heavily codified, exam-driven environment with lots of externally benchmarked data may find Crossroads **frustratingly opaque**. The school does not publish aggregate AP outcomes because AP is no longer the point.

The children who thrive here are bright, articulate and intellectually restless. They ask questions, make things, perform, write, debate and test ideas. Artistically ambitious students will find real substance here, but Crossroads is not only for future actors and musicians; it also suits academically able children who dislike rote learning and do better in discussion-led classrooms. It is **not for families seeking orthodox prestige signals** or a tightly traditional culture. Parents should shortlist Crossroads if they want a school with a strong sense of educational identity, enough scale to offer breadth, and the confidence to reject the standard American advanced-course script. For the right child, that makes it **a serious outlier in a crowded market**.

STRENGTHS

- Founded in 1971 with a distinctive mission combining academic rigor with a comprehensive fine and performing arts program, community service and environmental education.
- Very low student-teacher ratio of 8:1, allowing close mentoring relationships between faculty and students across the K-12 range.
- Operates a dedicated Affordability Program providing over \$11 million in aid annually to roughly one in four students, easing pure fee-based selection.
- Long, visible track record of arts-focused alumni outcomes, including graduates who have gone on to notable careers in music, film and the arts.
- Non-discriminatory admissions policy explicitly stated by the school, covering race, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and religion.

TRADE-OFFS

- Upper school tuition sits above \$50,000 a year, a significant recurring cost for relocating families without additional aid.
- Day school only, with no boarding option, meaning families moving from abroad must independently arrange local housing and guardianship.
- Two separate campuses a few blocks apart in Santa Monica adds a logistical layer for families juggling drop-offs across grade levels.
- The school's public profile is closely tied to a well-known roster of celebrity families, which can shape the social culture in ways not every family will want.

ADMISSIONS

Entry points exist at kindergarten and other grades depending on space, with typical requirements including school transcripts, recommendation letters, an application essay and an often-recommended interview. Standardized test requirements vary and applicants should confirm current specifics with the admissions office. As a well-known Westside Los Angeles day school with a strong local reputation, demand for places is high relative to supply, particularly at entry grades. Contact points differ by division (K-5, 6-8, 9-12), and families should apply well ahead of standard January-style deadlines common among Los Angeles independent schools.

WTS RATING 

This profile summarises editorial research by World's Top Schools. Verify all admissions dates directly with the school before submitting. Sources are cited in the full online profile at WorldsTopSchools.com/schools/sch_f023e279dc.