

Choices and Challenges at Lakeside Middle School

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Ever since being founded in 1978, Lakeside Middle School has earned a stellar academic record. (Current API score = 917.) Part of this success is due to the fact that we think it's best to challenge all kids. We offer many enrichment opportunities within our regular school day as well as at lunch and after school. It's all part of living by our unofficial school motto, which is "**Doing What's Best for Kids.**" For us that means not treating all students alike, but rather offering choices.

Enrichment Opportunities at Lakeside Middle School:

Creativity and curiosity are two hallmarks of the middle school student. For many students the middle school years are the last chance to sample areas of interest before moving on to the rigorous college prep track followed by students aiming for the best universities. Lakeside Middle School offers students chances to **explore and develop their special interests and talents**. Offerings include such things as:

- **Participation in National History Day.** We have close to 100 students participating. We have an outstanding record at the county and state level, and have had the honor of sending students on to compete at the national level. Last year we sent 9 students to the state competition and 3 to the national competition in Maryland!
- **Additional writing and art challenges such as Red Ribbon Week and the Holocaust Writing and Art Contest sponsored by Chapman University.** Our students have had the privilege to learn of history first-hand through meeting survivors of the Holocaust. We have had many finalists and four winners of \$500 prizes for the best art and writing in Southern California.
- **Academic Pentathlon.** Each year we field a team of 7th graders and a team of 8th graders for this challenging and fun endeavor. Students are coached by faculty volunteers and put in many hours preparing for the March competition. They compete in the areas of science, history, essay, literature and mathematics. Last year in our division the 8th grade team won 1st place overall, and 7th grade won 5th place.
- **Extracurricular monthly book clubs and in-class literature circles.** Lakeside Book Club leaders choose six books each year. Students meet monthly to take a quiz and to discuss the themes of the works. Voluntary participation ranges from sixty to over one hundred students each month. The discussion circles are entirely led by student leaders.
- **Science Fair, Astounding Inventions, Toshiba Exploravision and the Sally Ride conference.** High achieving students are encouraged to participate in these events, which serve to prepare them for the challenges of the high school honors programs. Students learn how to think like scientists and carryout the scientific inquiry process.
- **Instrumental and choral music classes.** We offer a full-range of music classes (including jazz band) and are well-represented in the district honors groups.
- **Partnerships with UCI** such as Career Day and Engineering Week.
- The opportunity to take high school classes (**Spanish I and Geometry**, with teacher recommendation) while in the 8th grade.
- A **full elective program** (with classes such as drama, art, ceramics, home arts, public speech and debate, media literacy, yearbook, journalism and law and society) enables students to investigate their unique interests and talents.
- Providing extra service to the school while **exploring possible future careers** by serving as web masters, media aides, office aides and teacher assistants.
- **Leadership** class enables students to develop confidence and to serve the school through planning events such as dances, trivia bowl, elections and spirit competitions.
- **National Junior Honor Society** provides opportunities for leadership and service, such as tutoring in our afternoon homework help sessions.

In core curriculum Lakeside places students in **interdisciplinary language arts/social science classes**. The goal is for teachers to keep their students for two years. In addition, students are assigned in such a way that the classes can meet for an extended “double-block” of time whenever desired. All students will write four “anchor essays” in English and three in history during the course of the year. **Clusters of GATE/high achievers are placed in each block.** Students will be regrouped according to ability to participate in special units such as literature lab. During “lit lab” a third teacher works with the teams to create smaller classes for the study of high-interest novels or short stories. Our goal is not only to develop the skills of literary analysis, but also to promote the love of reading.

The ability to take classes such as Algebra, Geometry and Spanish I puts our students in a perfect position to get on board with high school Honors and Advanced Placement courses. **Math classes** are grouped according to test results so that students’ needs are met.

Our science program is highly interactive and challenges students to be independent thinkers and questioners. The team of five teachers works together to plan a comprehensive program that addresses all standards over a two-year period. Students are encouraged to become scientists, not just to read about science. Labs, hands-on projects and PowerPoint presentations are all part of the science experience at Lakeside Middle School.

Other arenas offer challenge as well. For example, our **physical education** teachers have developed units focused on twenty different sports/activities. Each year students experience ten. By the time the students leave Lakeside they will have had the opportunity to learn Frisbee golf and ping-pong and many other activities, as well as the more traditional sports. The PE program places great emphasis on personal fitness and healthy choices.

Lakeside also has implemented an **electronic learning program called SuccessMaker** from Pearson Digital Education Technologies. Although this program is aimed at struggling students, we sometimes find high-achieving students with “holes” in their basic skills. We are working to help our students remedy such deficits. We also offer an after school drop-in homework help program. Students receive help from high school and honor society tutors. A certificated staff member is also available to provide help.

The middle school years are truly a bridge between the more sheltered haven of elementary school and the bigger world of high school. Here at Lakeside we do our very best to always stay focused on our students as individuals. We challenge our students, but we also give them choices.

Although we are proud of our academic standing, we are more proud of the confident, happy and enthusiastic students we send on to high school. Our alumni look back with great fondness on their Lakeside Middle School years. **Wonderful parents, awesome students and dedicated staff members who go the extra mile in “Doing What’s Best for Kids” are the true ingredients of our success.**