

Khan Lab School Vision: 10th Anniversary Update

Learner-centered

Students are given the space and encouragement to take control of their own learning, acknowledging that each learner has a unique set of strengths and challenges. Teacher-guides create an environment conducive to student independence. They achieve this by nurturing student motivation, addressing academic and social-emotional obstacles, and facilitating student-driven active learning experiences. Instead of relying on traditional lectures, teacher-guides employ questioning techniques, offer prompts, and provide concise explanations when necessary, fostering a more engaging and personalized learning process.

Mastery learning

Students have ongoing opportunities and incentives to address learning gaps and demonstrate mastery. This approach solidifies foundational knowledge and minimizes the need for later remediation. Students can continually improve their academic standing, fostering a growth mindset and lifelong learning attitude. This system not only allows for grade improvement but, more importantly, ensures students build a robust and comprehensive academic foundation.

Personalization of Pace with High Expectations

Students can fill gaps, refresh knowledge, or advance at a pace suited to their individual needs, regardless of age. Through targeted use of technology and personalized approaches, students are empowered to achieve mastery at a higher level than in traditional settings. We embrace the concept of 'personal par,' recognizing that excellence manifests differently for each student. While we set ambitious target paces for most cases, we understand that progress varies. If a student falls behind these paces, the school collaborates with families to address concerns and provide additional support where possible.

Content Knowledge and 21st Century Skills Matter

Both skill development and content knowledge are crucial. Students with a solid foundation of knowledge will be more culturally literate and have a fact base from which to draw connections and develop higher order insights. We also emphasize critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills essential for success in the modern world.

Well-being, Independence, and Purpose

Social and emotional well-being and resilience are important for developing a healthy sense of self. Khan Lab School intentionally emphasizes student mindfulness, character development, and individual passions. We also believe that nurturing independence and personal responsibility is crucial for student growth, which is why we strive to offer students more freedom than typically found in traditional schools. This includes increased unstructured time and greater flexibility in and out of class, tailored to each student's readiness for independence.

Everyone's a student; everyone's a teacher

Students and teachers alike have opportunities to learn from and teach one another. Teacher-guides embrace learning and teaching new domains and create ways for students to step in as peer teachers. Likewise, students are encouraged to lead classes and initiatives both within the school and in the wider community.

Learning is not bound by time or space

Learning can take place at any time and in any place, including outdoor classrooms, field trips, internships, travel, or specialized off-campus programs in academics, arts, or sports. While not always feasible, the school aspires to this ideal and prioritizes flexibility in learning environments.

Students advance in their educational journeys as mastery allows

Students with a strong foundation can master college-level content while in high school, often learning and retaining the material more effectively than traditional college students. This achievement earns them dual high school and college credit, potentially allowing advanced placement upon college entry. Similarly, elementary and middle school students, when ready, can tackle and often earn credit for high school-level work.

Using online tools to unlock experiential learning

Leveraging online tools for core skill development and mastery, such as Khan Academy for STEM subjects, accelerates students' learning and frees more time in the school day for experiential learning. This approach, including peer-teaching, Socratic dialogues, games and simulations, allows students to build a portfolio of meaningful work, service, and experiences that complement their academic mastery.

Less is more

Khan Lab School classes focus on essential content and skills, creating time and flexibility for students to achieve core mastery and explore areas of personal interest. Essential skills are those crucial for success in college and the real world, assessed for admissions, or prerequisites for these.

While ensuring all students master these core skills, the School supports deeper exploration in individual areas of interest. For instance, while basic number theory concepts are essential, a deep dive into the subject would be supported only for interested students. Similarly, while a broad understanding of world history is crucial, in-depth study of specific events like the War of the Roses would only be encouraged for those passionate about it. This approach allows students to build a strong foundation while also pursuing their unique interests, whether through current coursework or future opportunities in entrepreneurship, research, or work experiences.

An affordable, replicable model

Khan Lab School avoids the inefficiencies that drive up costs in many private schools by being intentional about its focus. While supporting athletics and language learning, we don't offer extensive facilities or immersive programs in these areas. This focused approach allows us to offer high-quality education at a price point accessible to a broad range of families. We excel in our core priorities: academic mastery, character development, and supporting student passions.

Fostering Critical Thinking

We develop critical thinkers by fostering an environment where diverse viewpoints, both liberal and conservative, are welcomed and safely explored. Our school doesn't align with any particular political ideology. Our teachers engage with ideas from across the spectrum - left, center, and right - challenging students' thinking while remaining open to challenges themselves. This balanced approach makes it difficult for students to discern their teacher-guides' personal political leanings.