



Founded in 2001 by Herman Ohme, Ed.D & Jean Ohme

Principal

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Accredited by Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)

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2020 - 2021 School Profile

School for Independent Learners (SIL) is an independent comprehensive high school in Los Altos, California. We create individualized programs for students who seek intellectual freedom, flexible scheduling, and a nurturing learning environment.

In our mastery learning model we set rigorous learning outcomes and encourage teachers and students to customize the path each student takes towards achieving those goals. By allowing students to move through a course at their own pace -- and providing opportunities for students to address questions, work through confusions, explore connections, and produce authentic demonstrations of mastery -- we ensure that every student achieves meaningful understanding of every topic within a course.

Our rigorous college prep, honors, and Advanced Placement courses align with the Common Core Standards and are approved by the University of California High School Articulation Unit. Across disciplines our curriculum is designed to cultivate students who are self-aware, invested in their communities, and life-long learners. Our self-paced, one-to-one classroom offers tremendous opportunity for student-directed learning and accelerated progress. Students in our small group classes share ideas with one another in a supportive, hands-on environment. Even within the group context, teachers individualize each student's program, responsive to each student's interests, goals, and abilities.

We offer full-time and dual-enrollment programs. Some students graduate from SIL, while others take only one or two classes at SIL and transfer credit elsewhere. We work collaboratively with neighboring California schools to ensure that our curriculum complements theirs so that credit is easily transferred.

Graduates of SIL have been accepted to colleges within the University of California and California State University system, and have earned merit scholarships from highly selective colleges throughout the United States.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS To graduate from SIL, students must complete the following 210 credits of coursework. 5 credits = 1 semester, 10 credits = 2 semesters
HISTORY & SOCIAL STUDIES 6 semesters required, including 2 semesters of World History, 2 semesters of US History, 1 semester of Government, and 1 semester of Economics.
ENGLISH 8 semesters required.
MATHEMATICS 4 semesters required, including 2 semesters of Algebra 1.
LABORATORY SCIENCE 4 semesters required, including 2 semesters of Biology and 2 semesters of Chemistry OR Physics.
LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH 2 semesters required
VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS 2 semesters required
PHYSICAL EDUCATION 4 semesters required.
ELECTIVES 14 semesters required.

AVERAGE CLASS SIZE One Student, One Teacher
NO. OF TEACHERS 18
NO. OF FULL-TIME STUDENTS 20
NO. OF PART-TIME STUDENTS Approximately 125
NO. OF UC-APPROVED COURSES 15 ²
GRADING SCALE Weighted 4.0 scale with an extra grade point for honors, Advanced Placement, and accredited college coursework.
CLASS OF 2021 GPA RANGE 3.60 - 3.88

Features of Our Program

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING SIL students are scientists, musicians, athletes, visual and performing artists, writers, reformers, and entrepreneurs, and we encourage them to design projects that will give them a head start in pursuing specific college programs. That can mean anything from completing the senior project as an animated film to simply choosing to read one book over another in English class. An education at SIL is similar to what students will face in college -- self-directed learning towards unique goals.

SUPPORT OF STUDENT SUCCESS At our core, we are passionate educators who believe that the best approach is to adopt a new one for each student. We differentiate instruction and assessment to reach students who need extra attention and those who need an extra challenge. Our study hall is a space where students work individually and collaboratively, and get help from teachers and peers as needed. Our college guidance program matches students with colleges that are the best fit, not just the most exclusive. And faculty mentors assist students in the transition to a variety of college environments -- before, during, and beyond the first year of college.

COLLEGE PREP, HONORS, AND ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSES SIL offers 108 non-honors college prep courses, 13 honors courses, and 31 Advanced Placement courses. World Language options for students extend to French, German, Latin, Spanish and ASL; Math classes cover subjects beyond Calculus with 6 elective options furthering study in Multivariable Calculus, Differential Equations, Linear Algebra, and Real Analysis. And with additional electives offered in Robotics, Social Justice, Ancient History, and Astronomy the SIL student can follow their interests down a number of paths. We do not limit the number of honors or AP courses a student can take at one time or cumulatively; instead we work closely with each student to select coursework aligned with academic goals, interests, and abilities. We require all enrolled AP students to take the corresponding AP exam(s).

ONE-TO-ONE COURSES SIL is a year-round school. Students may begin coursework at any time, scheduling one-to-one classes at their convenience. Based on their instructional needs, students schedule recurring lessons -- meeting for class every day, a few times a week, or just once weekly -- or learn as independent study students, scheduling lessons only as needed. Credit is awarded by the semester, and each semester is designed to be completed within four months, although students may establish early or delayed deadlines. After an initial consultation between teacher and student, the teacher crafts a custom course plan with a timeline of assignment due dates, for which the student is held accountable. As our teachers have a philosophy of mastery learning, assignment parameters may be altered and due dates shifted, at the teacher's and department chair's discretion, to accommodate student needs.

SENIOR CAPSTONE PROJECT Students complete a Capstone project as a feature of their senior year. It offers the opportunity for students to pursue an academic or personal passion in depth and often involves an internship or service commitment. In addition to a written project of their research, the Senior Project culminates with a formal presentation from the student to the school community about not only their research but also what they learned along the way.

College Acceptances of SIL Graduates, 2011-2021

Antioch University
California College of the Arts
Carnegie Mellon University
Claremont McKenna College
Clarkson College
Cornell University
Curtis Institute of Music
De Anza College
Fordham University
James Madison University
Lafayette College
Louisiana State University
Loyola Marymount University
Manhattan School of Music
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Penn State University

Pepperdine University
Reed College
San Jose State University
Santa Barbara City College
Santa Clara University
Sarah Lawrence College
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Sonoma State University
St. Catherine's College, Oxford
Stanford University
Syracuse University
University of California, Berkeley
University of California, Davis
University of California, San Diego
University of California, Santa Cruz
University of Hawaii

University of Oregon
University of the Arts
University of the Pacific
University of San Francisco
University of Washington
Virginia Tech.
Visual College of Art and Design, Vancouver
Wesleyan University
Whittier College