

# AS SEEN IN VENTURA BLVD

ALL ABOUT KIDS 2021

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### VIEWPOINT SCHOOL

Founded in 1961, Viewpoint School offers an enriched K-12 college preparatory program on a 40-acre campus located in the scenic foothills of the Santa Monica Mountains. Under the leadership of head of school Mark McKee, Viewpoint's faculty and staff implement the school's mission: to inspire a love of learning and to develop qualities in the students that provide strength and direction for a lifetime. McKee answered some questions about Viewpoint's focus on cultivating a path to whole-life wellness and preparing its students to be world-ready.

#### TELL US ABOUT THE CULTURE OF VIEWPOINT SCHOOL.

"Viewpoint fosters a culture of innovation and continual improvement by building and refining programs that prepare students for lives of leadership, meaning and impact. This culture is powered by a faculty of the best teachers anywhere, who inspire students to 'go beyond' every day. Now more than ever, it's a priority for Viewpoint's teachers and staff to nurture the whole student, ensuring they receive the social, emotional and academic support they need to thrive as students in school and as adults in the world."

#### HOW DOES YOUR SCHOOL SUPPORT A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE FOR KIDS?

"Our program focuses on the whole child and includes 'Responsive Classroom' in the primary, lower and middle schools, which involves a daily emotional check-in with the students. In the upper school human development discussion groups, students engage in regular conversations on resilience, active listening, body positivity and mental health. Our students in all four divisions have access to caring counselors, learning specialists, deans, teachers and coaches who serve as trusted adults to the children in our community.

Viewpoint's wellness coordinator and senior associate director of college counseling Rebecca Heller adds, 'Wellness is a baseline for academic success and was a priority long before the pandemic struck. If our students

aren't healthy and well, they cannot succeed in the classroom. The wellness program at Viewpoint aims to help students develop well-being skills that will last a lifetime.'

In addition to ongoing programs, we have introduced a student wellness group that meets bimonthly with the school counselor and wellness coordinator. This group also partners with the student council, Challenge Success student club and the student honor committee to create resources for students and fun wellness challenges for students and faculty.

For the past five years, the middle and upper school students have led Diversity Leadership Day, where they present more than 40 workshops to their peers on a range of topics, offering students the opportunity to explore and discuss the issues that are of greatest concern to them.

In order to get the word out to our community, we have introduced @viewpointwellness on both Instagram and Facebook, offering empowering messages and ideas for self-care and for destigmatizing mental health issues. The Facebook page also offers articles and advice for parents and educators on navigating well-being during the pandemic.

At Viewpoint we care deeply for our students. As we continue to amplify and expand our wellness program, we want to give our students the tools to flourish at Viewpoint and beyond."

#### WHAT FEEDBACK DO YOU GET FROM YOUR STUDENTS?

"Viewpoint is in its third year of a partnership with Challenge Success, a nonprofit affiliated with the Stanford Graduate School of Education. Together, these two organizations implement a program dedicated to broadening the definition of success, using research-based strategies that promote student well-being and engagement with learning.

On an ongoing basis, faculty, students and parents participate in a variety of initiatives to better understand the student experience and to recommend potential changes and

refinements to the students' lives at school. These initiatives include shadow days where teachers and trustees follow a student for a school day, and fishbowl conversations where students are asked to share freely their thoughts and opinions about a variety of topics ranging from diversity and sleep patterns to homework and testing. This has been especially important this past year to ensure students are getting the personal and academic support they need to thrive in a remote learning environment."

#### WHAT DO YOU SEE KIDS DOING TO MAKE THIS WORLD A BETTER PLACE?

"Young people are eager to engage with the world and the challenges that we face now and will continue to be confronted by in the future. Despite the difficulty of volunteering in person, our students continue to engage in online community service activities with a focus on diversity, belonging, inclusion, and global and environmental awareness. The students are required to complete 40 hours of community service, which for many students is transformational—leading to a lifelong dedication to service.

As a school, we are committed to cultivating the essential skill set, mindset and resilient identity of each Viewpoint student. Leadership includes the concepts of listening, service, excellence, passion and a desire to contribute beyond oneself. I am proud to say that I see this kind of leadership in our students every day, and I am confident that they are ready to make a difference in the world."

Right: Viewpoint's Ring Family Field allowed the Class of 2020 to experience a socially distanced, in-person graduation ceremony.



PHOTOGRAPHED BY ADAM GROSSMAN & BILL YOUNGBLOOD