



## Frequently Asked Questions for Prospective Families New to Independent Schools

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## General Questions

### **Q: What is an independent school? What makes independent schools different from other types of private schools?**

**A:** From the NAIS article "[What are Independent Private Schools](#)":

Independent schools are close-knit communities that provide students with individualized attention. They challenge students to stretch their minds and go beyond academics to develop responsible, independent, and community-oriented students.

What makes independent schools *independent*? Independent schools are independent in:

- Philosophy: each is driven by a unique mission.
- The way they are managed and financed: each is governed by an independent board of trustees and each is primarily supported through tuition payments and charitable contributions.

Learn more about independent schools at the National Association of Independent School website: <https://parents.nais.org/learn/the-independent-school-advantage/> and the Independent Schools of the San Francisco Bay Area website: <https://www.issfba.org/why-choose-an-independent-school/>.

### **Q: How many students typically are enrolled in the 9th grade?**

**A:** Each year, LWHS endeavors to enroll roughly 140 students to the 9th grade. Total school enrollment is 560 students.

### **Q: Who makes up the Admissions Committee?**

**A:** The Admissions Committee consists of faculty, school administrators, and members of the Admissions team who read, discuss, and consider the viability of all prospective students.

### **Q: What makes LWHS different from other independent schools in the Bay Area?**

**A:** LWHS celebrates all types of diversity within our school community and is nationally recognized as the only independent school in the nation that offers students a rigorous college preparatory curriculum and unparalleled courses in the Technical Arts. Also, because of the school's commitment to an inclusive community, we budget Flexible Tuition grants exceeding \$7.5 million annually to ensure that the LWHS experience is truly accessible to students and families from all walks of life.

### **Q: How diverse is LWHS?**

**A:** At LWHS, we acknowledge and celebrate the uniqueness of all Bay Area families. We value the multiple perspectives, talents, and treasures that our students and families contribute to the fabric

of the school community. We define diversity through the lens of gender, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic circumstances, and geography, as well as, life experiences, interests, and values.

Our 560 students enroll at LWHS from 150+ different charter, independent, parochial, and public middle schools and 70+ different zip codes. They arrive at Ocean Avenue each day from the East Bay (14%), Peninsula and South Bay (17%), San Francisco (68%), and North Bay (1%). First generation college students typically make up between 7% to 14% of each class. The student body is 7% Middle Eastern & South Asian, 6% Southeast Asian, 18% Latinx, 9% African American, 29% East Asian, 71% White and part-White, and 40% White. Overall, 35% of the student body self-identifies as multi-ethnic, which explains why the sum of these percentages is more than 100%.

**Q: How does LWHS support Faculty and Staff in the continued learning surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion?**

**A:** LWHS is a member of the [National Association of Independent Schools](#) (NAIS). NAIS is dedicated to providing resources, conferences, and professional development opportunities for faculty, staff, and administrators to help improve their pedagogy and cultural competency with students from all walks of life.

At LWHS, we make it our mission to foster a community of adults who are inclusive, open-minded, and dedicated to fostering the well-being of their students. LWHS is committed to providing ongoing and varied opportunities for our adult professionals. Below is a snapshot of some of the many opportunities that community members have participated in:

- [California Teacher Development Collaborative](#) programming and workshops
- [Gender Spectrum](#) workshops
- [Leadership + Design](#) programming and workshops
- NAIS [People of Color Conference](#)
- National discipline-specific conferences
- [Northern California People of Color in Independent Schools](#) (POCIS) events
- [One Schoolhouse](#) programming and workshops
- The [White Privilege Conference](#)

**Q: Does LWHS offer College Board Advanced Placement (AP) classes?**

**A:** LWHS does not offer AP classes, however students are still able to take AP exams. For more information, please read: [LWHS Grows and Moves Beyond the APs](#).

**Q:** How does LWHS support neurodiverse learners?

**A:** The [Learning Strategies Center](#) offers a wide range of services that support students in maximizing their educational experiences, depending on their particular needs. Its overarching purpose is to empower students for a lifetime by helping them truly understand how they learn. To learn more about how LWHS supports our neurodiverse students and students who may need

academic support, please visit our [Learning Strategies](#) page or reach out to our Learning Strategies Director, Winifred Montgomery, at [wmontgomery@lwhs.org](mailto:wmontgomery@lwhs.org).

**Q: What is the relationship between student and teacher, and parent/guardian and the school?**

**A:** Students are able to schedule meetings with teachers, communicate via email, or attend office hours with their teacher. We encourage students to advocate for themselves when they need support. The main point of contact for parents/guardians and the school is through their child's advisor. Learn more about parent initiated communication with LWHS in the [Student Handbook](#) and [click here](#) to learn more about our advising program.

**Q: How does LWHS assist students and families with the college application process?**

**A:** The LWHS College Counseling team offers some optional events for underclassmen, before the formal college counseling process gets underway junior year. Our program is engaging, timely, comprehensive, and highly personalized, so we hope that students can rest easy during their first two years at LWHS knowing we will have you covered; there is no need to do anything before we start to counsel you, but always feel free to reach out with questions. For more information, please visit our [College Counseling webpage](#).

## Admissions Questions

**Q: What does Lick-Wilmerding High School look for in a student?**

**A:** We look for students who are active and dedicated learners, intellectually curious, and will thrive in a community that celebrates multiple perspectives and varied interests. LWHS students have a well-deserved reputation for being very friendly, altruistic, compassionate, and willing to try new things.

**Q: What is the basis for selection from all the applications you receive?**

**A:** The Admissions Committee takes into consideration every aspect of the student application including the personal essays, transcript, teacher recommendations, a Cub Conversation (aka student interview), and each applicant's affinity for the LWHS mission and educational philosophy. The Committee is charged with crafting a 9th grade class that is balanced in all forms of diversity, including gender, socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, geographic, and co-curricular interest.

Lick-Wilmerding High School is committed to fostering and sustaining a vibrant learning community and does not discriminate based on race, color, ancestry, national/ethnic origin, citizenship status, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. LWHS applies all legal non-discrimination standards in the administration of its educational policies, admission policies, financial aid, and in all school programs and activities.

**Q: How should I start the application process to LWHS?**

**A:** Whether you're looking for schools while your student is in 7th grade or it's December of your student's 8th grade year, it's not too late to start the application process! Begin by learning about our school on [our website](#), and then create an account on [Ravenna](#) to start the application. The best way to become acquainted with a school is to connect with a current student, faculty member, or Admissions Team member.

**Q:** How do I visit LWHS?

**A:** Please [click here](#) and review "Step 2: Register for Virtual Events" under the "Admissions Process" section for information about our events. All events are optional and require registration ahead of the event. All event registration takes place through Ravenna.

**Q:** Does LWHS offer financial assistance?

**A:** At LWHS we offer Flexible Tuition for families in need of financial assistance. Please visit our [Affording page](#) for more information regarding the Flexible Tuition program.

**Q: How much does it cost to apply to LWHS?**

**A:** The application fee is \$100. For more information about fees associated with applying to LWHS, [click here](#). Should the application fee be a hardship for your family, please [click here](#) for information about fee waivers.

**Q: Are interviews required of students applying to LWHS?**

**A:** Yes. At LWHS we call these events Cub Conversations. In a Cub Convo, two prospective students will have an informal conversation with one faculty or staff member. Cub Convos are an opportunity for our faculty or admissions staff members to learn more about the unique perspective you will bring to the LWHS community. No preparation is needed.

**Q: What are my chances of getting an offer of enrollment?**

**A:** Admission to LWHS is very competitive. For the last five years, we have received between 850-1,000 applicants for approximately 140 spots in the incoming 9th grade class. Unfortunately, we are not able to offer a spot to every student who we would like to see at Lick-Wilmerding High School. There are many great schools in the Bay Area, and we highly encourage you to explore your options and apply to multiple schools to give your family options for next year.

**Q: Are sibling and legacy applicants given priority in admissions?**

**A:** While we absolutely appreciate and value the sense of "family" that sibling and legacy applicants bring to the LWHS community, we cannot guarantee admission based on these associations alone. These prospective students must also demonstrate what we look for in every applicant: academic, leadership, interpersonal qualities and potential that will serve them well during their educational journey at LWHS.

**Q: Do you accept transfer students?**

**A:** LWHS is accepting applications for rising 10th and 11th graders. Due to the Technical Arts curriculum and graduation requirements, we are not able to enroll students into the 12th grade. Please email [admissions@lwhs.org](mailto:admissions@lwhs.org) for more information about the transfer process.

**Q: When will we be notified of the admissions decision?**

**A:** Families are notified of admission decisions in mid-March. Students who are offered enrollment will then have a week to make a decision about which high school they will attend.

Please note that we observe "Quiet Week" along with other Bay Area Independent High Schools, as outlined in our shared [Principles of Good Practice](#). This means that we will not initiate contact with families or hold recruiting events between the decision mailing date and the enrollment contract deadline. This is intended to provide students and their families undisturbed space and time to make their decision.

**Q: What happens if a student has been placed in the admissions waiting pool?**

**A:** If a student has been placed in the waiting pool, they have the opportunity to remain or forfeit their spot. If a student chooses to remain in the waiting pool, they will be notified in late March or early April if a space becomes available. Typically at LWHS, we do not take many students from the waiting pool, so we encourage waitlisted students to consider other options, and to notify us if their wish is to remain in the waiting pool through the summer months.

***Thank you for your interest in Lick-Wilmerding High School!***

*Please email us at [admissions@lwhs.org](mailto:admissions@lwhs.org) with any questions,  
we're here to support you through the application process.*