

# URBAN FOR A REASON









# URBAN



In the heart of San Francisco’s Haight Ashbury neighborhood, Urban School lives its name every day. We believe that **the city is more than our backdrop — it’s our classroom, our canvas, and our compass**, inspiring our students to become self-motivated, enthusiastic participants in their education — both in high school and beyond.

Our curriculum is shaped by the richness of life in a major urban center: from fieldwork in Golden Gate Park to immersive studies in the Bay Area’s diverse communities and world-class museums, we learn by doing, exploring, and critically examining the complexity all around us.

# FOR A REASON

# A SCHOOL DESIGNED FOR CURIOSITY

Established in 1966 by a visionary group of Bay Area parents, Urban was built on the belief that high school should be joyful, challenging, and grounded in the real world. Our founders imagined **an inclusive, close-knit community** where creative, idealistic teens could explore big questions, take real risks, and be known for who they are — not just how they perform on a test.

We believe that the most meaningful, vibrant, and lasting education occurs in a school community where students, faculty, staff, and families, across the spectrum of identities and backgrounds, teach and learn together. That vision still pulses through our halls and within our school culture today.



420

STUDENTS

49%

STUDENTS  
OF COLOR

86

MIDDLE SCHOOLS  
REPRESENTED



# ACADEMICS IN THE CITY

**At Urban, learning isn't confined to the classroom — and the classroom isn't confined to campus.**

Our curriculum emphasizes depth, relevance... and *excitement*. As students progress, much of their coursework is in our honors-level Urban Advanced Studies (UAS): challenging, Urban-faculty-designed classes that reflect our teachers' expertise (66% hold advanced degrees) in subject matter that stimulates young minds to dive deep, rather than memorize mindlessly. **Recognized by top colleges nationwide for their rigor, UAS courses stand out for how they empower students** intellectually and socially. Coursework is inspired by the vibrancy of life in the San Francisco Bay Area.

**By de-emphasizing teaching to a test, we cultivate deep thinkers and engaged citizens** — people who are curious, empathetic, imaginative, and determined to make a difference. Our community thrives on meaningful relationships between teachers and students, an environment of mutual respect and accountability, and the belief that learning should be rooted in passion.

*Like many independent schools, Urban does not offer AP courses, though we do support students interested in testing with prep and study resources.*

100+

FACULTY  
AND STAFF

46%

FACULTY & STAFF  
OF COLOR

19

AVERAGE YEARS  
FACULTY HAVE  
TAUGHT AT URBAN

# A UNIQUE SYSTEM FOR A UNIQUE SCHOOL



15

AVERAGE  
CLASS SIZE

1:10

FACULTY TO  
STUDENT

170+

COURSES,  
68 OF WHICH ARE  
HONORS-LEVEL

**So what makes Urban so special?** Our academic calendar is divided into three terms, with students taking four immersive classes per term. This format allows for:

**Longer class periods** that support in-depth projects — like developing original podcasts or doing college-level lab work in science — and off-campus community service that doesn't interrupt the school day.

**Field trips and time to explore** built into the curriculum — not as extras, but as essentials to understanding the world, and our place in it.

**Individualized, narrative feedback** throughout the term, with letter grades only at the end, to foster motivation and growth, decrease competition, and encourage meaningful relationships with our long-tenured faculty.

Students only take a few classes per day, diving deep into their studies (with plenty of breaks and time to connect as a community, of course!). With fewer classes to prepare for and the opportunity to complete homework in daily study halls, **students are encouraged to pursue their passions beyond the classroom.**

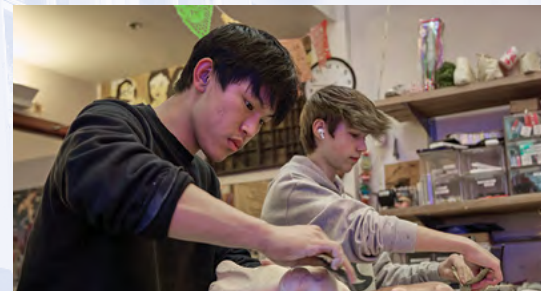
# WHERE SUBJECTS COLLIDE AND THE CITY COMES IN

While everyone takes English, History, Math, Science, Language, and Arts courses, Urban students dive deep into work that's as hands-on as it is mind-expanding.



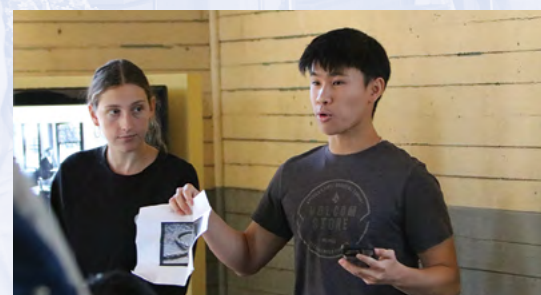
**UrbanX Labs** empower students to design and prototype, from robotics to architecture, with access to professional-grade tools and expert mentorship. XLabs is where advanced physics, computer science, and industrial design come to life.

**Project-Based Learning** like *California Studies*, *Infectious Diseases*, or *Homelands: Discovering Diaspora* blend history, environmental and social science, literature, and fieldwork, making learning tangible while highlighting the interconnectedness of today's most urgent issues.



**Science courses** often include real-time research trips into local ecosystems — whether tide pooling along the coast for *Marine Biology*, hiking overnight in the Sierras to examine the impact of *Climate Change*, or exploring sustainability efforts right in the city.

**Humanities** feature *Constitutional Law* students performing mock trials at the Federal Courthouse with Ninth Circuit judges; *Asian American History* classes ferrying to Angel Island to present archival research in the landmark Immigration Station; collaborations with Marin Shakespeare at San Quentin for *Voices of Incarceration*; and readings of Walt Whitman on sunny afternoons in Buena Vista Park.



*Urban's three-term schedule means students may not take math or language every term, but the school's time-tested concepts-based approach ensures continuous learning — and students place into advanced college classes or test out of requirements.*

**SCAN QR CODE FOR OUR CURRICULUM GUIDE**



# THE ARTS LIVE HERE



Students spend their days exploring what inspires them — performing, experimenting, and creating across disciplines with guidance from practicing artists who teach technique and encourage innovation. Whether grooving with the Jazz Band in our new Performing Arts and Community Center or stone-carving in sunlit studios, **every student develops their creative voice through immersive arts every year they're at Urban.**

Offerings include:



**Award-winning visual arts:** drawing, printmaking, painting, sculpture, digital media, and more, rounded out with studio and gallery visits to learn from professionals.

**Music with local legends,** from our Jazz bands, to our Chamber Orchestra, to the Urban Singers, any student can pick up an instrument, perform original compositions, and find themselves center stage — at Urban or at one of the many venues our student musicians perform at around the city!



**Drama and Theater Tech courses** emphasize creativity as a process of discovery, experimentation, self-expression, and confidence. With one-acts, plays, and musicals throughout the year, there's a role for everyone — whether you're lighting from our full-theater ceiling tension grid or shining in the spotlight.



# ROOTED IN JUSTICE, COMMITTED TO BELONGING

## Equity in Action

From its founding, Urban has pursued a bold commitment to equity and social justice. **Every student engages in service learning for four years**, with projects grounded in San Francisco and surrounding communities. Through this service, students find their voice, build coalitions within Urban and beyond, and understand the impact they can make.

Key to this is our Month of Understanding, an event series organized by student affinity groups and held every January, MOU invites our whole community into conversations about identity, equality, and cultural resilience. **Our work toward diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging will always be ongoing — and student-led.**

Whether mentoring in elementary schools, delivering essentials to homebound elders in the Tenderloin, or mulching in the Panhandle with Rec and Parks, what starts as service becomes a purpose.

*Programming led by our affinity and ally groups features lunchtime forums, films, panel discussions, guest speakers and celebrations at frequent All School Meetings.*

## AFFINITY GROUPS INCLUDE:

American-Born Confused  
Desis (ABCD)

Asian/Pacific Islander Group  
(API)

Anti Racist White Privilege  
Awareness (AWPA)

Black Student Union (BSU)

Financial Assistance and  
Socio-Economic Status  
(FASES)

Gender-Sexuality Alliance  
(GSA)

Jewish Student Union (JSU)

Kids of Immigrants (KOI)

Latinos Unidos (LU)

Learning Difference and  
Neurodiversity (LDNS)

Middle Eastern/North African  
(MENA)

Multi-Racial/Multi-Ethnic  
(MESH)

Students for Women's Equality  
and Rights (SWEAR)

Women of Color (WOC)









# LIFE BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

At Urban, students explore larger social issues with an immediate relevance that young people both crave and need as they mature into engaged citizens of the world.



## A Student-Led Culture

Urban students shape the school they want to be part of:

- Students lead **more than 40 clubs**.
- They serve as **essential members on key committees**, providing feedback on curriculum, programming, conduct, and even share ideas with the Board of Trustees.
- The school year is animated with student music performances, forums, community events, cultural celebrations, and spirited traditions. **The Halloween costume contest is the stuff of legend.** All school prom, Blues jams in the garden, breaking news with our paper, *the Urban Legend*, or celebrating a short story in our magazine, *the Yeti*.
- **Outdoor education** — including state-wide road trips, class days, and backpacking — along with **global trips** to Mississippi, France, Spain, and Taiwan, connect students with diverse communities.
- Class days every term **give teachers and students a chance to reconnect in nature** — or through a city adventure!

# WELLNESS, CONNECTION AND SUPPORT

We're serious about well-being — physical, mental, and emotional. Students benefit from:

- **Dedicated grade-level deans and advisors** who stay with each grade cohort for all four years, building an enduring, intimate, and experienced network of support, guidance, and mentorship.
- **A committed counseling team**, expert guidance for learning strategies, and a comprehensive health and wellness curriculum.
- Urban builds in time for both fun and support — from homework-free “U” periods (get it? For *you*) with activities like dorm cooking, meditation, pickleball, and even tarot, to tutorials, study halls, and peer tutoring. **It's all about balance.**



# URBAN ATHLETICS: BLUES PLAY WITH HEART



Urban athletes lead with effort, integrity, and team spirit — it's no wonder we've won the league spirit award more than any other school!

Whether they're Junior Olympians or new to the sport, our students build teamwork, grit, and fitness through their sports or a wide range of physical activity options — from yoga to rock climbing to strength training to sailing on the Bay.

**Students balance athletics with full participation in school life** — think newspaper editors who play soccer, or jazz drummers who run cross country. At Urban, everyone finds a way to move!

74%

**OF STUDENTS PLAY ON  
ATHLETIC TEAMS**

# COLLEGE-READY BY DESIGN, NOT BY DEFAULT

At Urban, college readiness isn't an outcome we chase — it's the outcome of a deeper, more enduring education. Our students graduate not just prepared for the best schools in the country, but practiced in the kind of independent thinking, authentic engagement, and self-direction that higher education demands.

With **an academic program modeled more like a liberal arts college than a conventional high school** — with deep-dives instead of checklists, fieldwork instead of rote work, and self-advocacy instead of grade-chasing — Urban students lead their own learning. They are at ease navigating complexity, communicating across difference, and contributing to communities far beyond the classroom: **Urban is an education for a lifetime.**



## 136

**COLLEGES ACROSS 33  
STATES AND SIX COUNTRIES**



*The college journey requires introspection and self-awareness, not just test prep. The first two years at Urban are about building those skills, transforming an often intense process into one that engages and supports students as full partners.*

**SCAN QR CODE FOR OUR MATRICULATING COLLEGES LIST**

# AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESS



Urban believes that the best education occurs in a school made up of students, teachers, and families drawn from many different backgrounds and perspectives. Urban provides over \$5.72 million in financial assistance, supporting tuition and non-tuition needs (transportation, trips, food, gear, and more). With 30% of families receiving financial assistance, we're committed to ensuring that every student, no matter where they come from, feels fully part of the Urban experience.

- Urban uses Clarity Tuition to evaluate a family's financial situation, considering income, expenses, assets and liabilities.
- Applicants are considered for admission regardless of a family's request for financial assistance. If accepted, details about your financial assistance package will accompany your letter of acceptance to Urban.
- Families reapply for assistance annually so that significant changes to a family's financial situation are reflected in the student's financial assistance package each year.

**\$271,500**

**AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD  
INCOME OF FINANCIAL  
ASSISTANCE RECIPIENT**

**\$43,700**

**AVERAGE FINANCIAL  
ASSISTANCE PACKAGE**

**SCAN QR CODE  
TO AFFORDING  
URBAN PAGE**





## HOW TO APPLY

**Ready to take the next step? Here's how:**

1. Create a Ravenna-Hub account at [urbanschool.org/admission/applying](https://urbanschool.org/admission/applying)
2. Explore our campus by signing up for admissions events on Ravenna, including Open House, student visits, Affinity Night, Uniquely Urban, Parent/Guardian Information Sessions, Financial Assistance Webinar, and optional virtual interviews. You're always welcome at our games, shows and productions, too (details will be sent throughout the fall)! Please reach out to us at any time for assistance.
3. Apply online by January 8, 2026. All components of the application, as well as recommendations and transcripts, are submitted through Ravenna. If applicable, preliminary Financial Assistance applications also must be submitted through Clarity by this date.

Questions? Reach us at [admissions@urbanschool.org](mailto:admissions@urbanschool.org)

Scan the QR code or visit [urbanschool.org](https://urbanschool.org) to learn more.





**Urban**

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