

For Immediate Release

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LAUSD CUTS THE RIBBON ON PREMIER ARTS HIGH SCHOOL IN
DOWNTOWN LA
*School for the Visual and Performing Arts will Provide In-Depth
Knowledge, Understanding of the Arts*

(Los Angeles, CA) Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) representatives today joined students, parents, community members and elected officials to cut the ribbon on Central Los Angeles High School #9 (CLAHS#9), LAUSD's new high school for the visual and performing arts. The new school opened its doors to more than 1,200 aspiring student artists on September 9, 2009.

LAUSD Superintendent Ramon C. Cortines, a lifelong lover of the arts, said, "I have always been a proponent of arts education because I understand that for many of our students the arts are essential to their academic persistence and success. Every student, however, should be exposed to the arts."

A model high school for the visual and performing arts, CLAHS#9 provides highly specialized training for students interested in careers in music, visual arts, drama and dance. CLAHS#9 teachers also provide rigorous instruction in the core academic subjects and use interdisciplinary approaches and assessments to teach math, science, language arts and history in accordance with state standards.

"This state-of-the-art visual and performing arts school will provide opportunities to long denied talented students who live near downtown Los Angeles and aspire to become actors, musicians and artists," LAUSD Board President Mónica García said. "There's no telling what greatness these students may go on to achieve, armed with a solid foundation in the creative field of their dreams."

"The newest addition to Los Angeles' educational landscape will quickly become an important pillar for the downtown community," California State Assemblymember Kevin de Leocuten said. "Central Los Angeles High School #9 is a first rate and high quality facility that invests in the educational success of our youth. The school will grow our economy, develop a competitive workforce and be a creative engine across the country."

CLAHS#9 is located on the north end of the downtown Los Angeles cultural corridor near the Walt Disney Concert Hall, the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. Its close proximity prepares students who want a career in the arts by accessing the rich cultural vibrancy of the area through partnerships with organizations such as the Los Angeles Opera, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Center Theatre Group, the Music Center, the Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater and the Colburn School.

"Today we are opening the doors to a school that will nurture the artists of tomorrow," Los Angeles City Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa said. "Central Los Angeles High School #9 will inspire its students through innovative teaching methods, dedicated teachers, and by tapping into all the creativity that Los Angeles has to offer through partnerships with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Opera, the Colburn School, and other similar organizations."

More than 70 percent of the students who attend the school are from surrounding neighborhoods. The school provides overcrowding relief to nearby Belmont High School, which last year began operating on a traditional, two-semester calendar for the first time in nearly 30 years. CLAHS#9 is part of the Belmont Zone of Choice, which provides students the opportunity to select the school that best fits their educational needs.

"From fashion to film, Los Angeles is a city that celebrates creativity. With this in mind, I am excited to open a new school in my district that empowers our youth through the visual and performing arts," Los Angeles City Councilmember Ed P. Reyes said. "The new high school is an architectural masterpiece that sets the stage for a cutting edge arts education to benefit students, their families and the community."

"When building this school and creating its vision, we fully expected that it would attract some of the best and brightest students interested in the arts," Los Angeles City Councilmember and former LAUSD School Board President Jos Huizar said. "I have no doubt that it will produce the next generation of great Los Angeles artists."

"A wonderful vision has become reality for students here at Central Los Angeles High School #9," LAUSD Interim Local District 4 Superintendent Byron J. Maltez said. "Our students now have the priceless opportunity to attend a top-notch arts school in their backyard."

The campus was designed with community access in mind. Gallery spaces featuring student art are open to the public. A state-of-the-art 950-seat theatre creates opportunities for joint student-community productions. A ceremonial entrance along Grand Avenue includes a grand staircase leading across the courtyard to a crystalline lobby, which serves as a theatre gateway and student exhibition space.

The campus is comprised of four academies. Each academy includes the appropriate facilities for dance, theatre, music, and visual arts education, including full preparation, instructional, rehearsal, and performance spaces. Facilities also include a library, a gymnasium, a multipurpose athletic field, basketball courts and a 25-meter swimming pool.

"This is the first time an arts specific high school is being provided in a historically underserved community," former LAUSD Local District 4 Superintendent Richard Alonzo said. "Traditionally, students with well rounded arts background are the only ones able to attend these types of schools. There are a lot of talented kids in this community that are now getting the chance to pursue their dreams."

"Our vision is to create a performing arts academy for local community students that offers the highest caliber academic and performing arts education, accessing the rich cultural vibrancy of Grand Avenue institutions," CLAHS#9 Principal Suzanne Blake said. "By building capacity for future audiences and artists, we aim to instill the essence of community and foster a lifelong appreciation and support of the arts."

"The arts are an essential component of education, and all children, not only those with specific artistic talent, benefit from an education in the arts including opportunities to create, perform, and communicate through various artistic media," CLAHS#9 Executive Director Rex O. Patton said. "For some students, the arts provide the impetus to stay in school until graduation, and for others, the inspiration to pursue college education. We have students that come from countries surrounding the Pacific Rim and success is our only option."

"Community involvement every step of the way was critical to the successful building of this extraordinary new school," LAUSD Interim Chief Facilities Executive James Sohn said. "The construction team including LAUSD project managers, PCL construction, HMC Architects and Coop Himmelblau did an outstanding job in designing and constructing this state-of-the-art school for the students of today and in the future."

"We welcome a new neighbor to the historic Downtown-Chinatown neighborhood, and are pleased that LAUSD is providing a dynamic opportunity for students to enrich their lives and to develop careers in the arts," President of the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California Gordon Hom said.

CLAHS #9 is part of the LAUSD's current \$20.1 billion New School Construction and Modernization Program. The goal of this program is to provide every student with the opportunity to attend a safe and healthy neighborhood school operating a traditional, two-semester calendar.

For more information, please visit www.laschools.org.

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