



**Manzanita School and Institute:**  
**How Our Mission Applies to Children, Families, and the Broader**  
**Community**

*Paul Astin*  
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At Manzanita School, we are committed to meeting the unique needs of adolescents. Spanning grades 4 through 12, we attend to this remarkable age of transition by:

1. Offering small classes (14 students) in which teachers form close relationships with students. Having a positive connection with one's teacher has been shown to support positive emotional and physical health in youth.
2. Guiding students to form a deep connection to nature. Through nature connection, students develop an empathic disposition, a commitment to service, emotional resilience, physical vitality, and a joyful demeanor. Students who feel connected to nature also form a strong ethic of earth stewardship.
3. Leveraging the power of mentoring in relationships. Adults at Manzanita are committed to spotting the 'gift' in each child, asking inspiring questions of each student based on those gifts, and promoting a student's engagement with their learning that will grow their innate genius into adult life.
4. Providing a "symbiotic learning" model. Our instruction emphasizes the interdependence of subject matter, and allows for a cyclical learning with alternating periods of deep focus and quiet reflection. Content is presented through the three learning domains of: (a) historical-cultural, (b) biological-evolutionary, and (c) aesthetic-numinous.
5. Building learning content with the goal of having students' answer three central questions about themselves: (a) Who am I? (b) Where have I come from? and (c) Where am I going? As students develop an active personal narrative in this process, instruction becomes valued as deeply relevant to the adolescent's growing sense that they are necessary participants in a remarkable and rapidly changing world.

Youth at the age of transition require rigorous challenges worthy of the inner greatness waiting to be born within them. We understand this need, and have created a school and curriculum that can attend to this remarkable age.

In addition, we have a strong focus on parent involvement and ongoing parent education. This is conducted through our school initiative called "The Manzanita Institute." We know that as our youth experience a

**MANZANITA SCHOOL**

1717 OLD TOPANGA CANYON ROAD, TOPANGA, CA 90290 • P 310.455.9700 • F 310.455.1151



transformative educational environment, our families must become a part of this process as active participants in this remarkable conversation. Regular classes and workshops will inspire parents in this journey towards building a resilient and effective community mentoring model centered on youth and their school programs.

Finally, at Manzanita we are committed to challenging the prevailing paradigms of both schooling and culture. We are committed to presenting new models for student learning, for parent involvement, and for community engagement.

Embedded in the bio-diverse setting of the undeveloped chaparral, beneath ancient oaks and a weathered rock face, the local ecosystem and unique geologic terrain will serve as a primary learning context for the study of science, natural history, and human ecology. The program will emphasize deep nature connection, personalization and a dedication to self-discovery, nurture intuitive and creative capacities, and engender a disciplined commitment to service and growing a sense of personal efficacy. Through new educational paradigms, we will foster the vitality of the human being, the welfare of humanity, and the long-term health of the living planet.