



Los Angeles Unified School District's Wilson High School driving life-ready workforce futures for its globally-minded students

**LAUSD Woodrow Wilson
High School**
Los Angeles, California, USA

www.ibwilsonmules.com

Number of students

1,516 Woodrow
911,650* LAUSD

Number of faculty and staff

136
60,191* LAUSD

Location

Los Angeles, United States, USA

Customer social sharing

[https://www.facebook.com/
LosAngelesSchools](https://www.facebook.com/LosAngelesSchools)

Product

Microsoft Imagine Academy
program
Microsoft Certifications (Microsoft
PowerPoint, Microsoft Excel,
Microsoft Word)
Microsoft Office 365

"Fostering creativity and cultivating learning using Microsoft Office is essential to preparing our students with 21st century skills."

Los Angeles Unified School District Wilson High School Principal, **Gilbert Martinez**

Executive summary

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) stretches across 720 square miles and includes the City of Los Angeles, parts of 31 municipalities and regions of Southern California. Serving more than 900,000 students and a combined faculty/staff of more than 60,000, LAUSD is a learning innovation powerhouse that is deeply rooted in cultivating globally-minded learning communities. The districts' Woodrow Wilson High School is one engine that drives student learning and future-ready skills opportunities with the help of its Microsoft Imagine Academy program and related industry certification programs.

Cultivating globally-minded life-long learners and next-generation leaders who can think critically, communicate effectively, and possess future-ready skills and resilience to tackle real-life challenges are key strategies for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). With a keen focus on educator professional development and readiness, LAUSD schools collectively enable their 26,500+ teachers district-wide to innovate and create even more dynamic, personalized, and high-quality learning experiences for the districts' more than 900,000 students. For LAUSD's Woodrow Wilson High School, providing access for students and educators to Microsoft resources through its Microsoft Imagine Academy program (MSIA) enables its educators to thrive in supporting the aspirations and dreams of its students by integrating Microsoft certifications in the curriculum to build mastery, validate skills, prepare students for workforce and further study futures, and most importantly, bolster student confidence.

Wilson High School's emphasis on nurturing global awareness, critical thinking, and a commitment to action and service help guide teachers and their commitment to high-quality learning for their students. Teachers facilitate an active learning environment and build learning experience around the students and their life goals. "One of the things I like to talk to the students about is 'what goals do you have in life?'" says LAUSD veteran teacher Amanda "Mandy" Fernandez.

With the future of work calling for more lifelong-learning minded professionals with skills gained from real-world experiences and based on industry demand for future talent, Wilson High School wanted to provide industry-recognized validation through certification to give students the distinction needed in an increasingly competitive global workforce. Wilson High School needed an out-of-the-box solution that provided the rigorous foundation that blends with its already student-centered curriculum. Teachers needed the resources to create the technological learning environment that enabled students to thrive.

*Based on 2016-17 school year data and includes students from its independent charter and adult schools.

Solution

The use of MSIA resources at Wilson High School has enabled educators and staff to help students be more creative and develop their skills by producing learning conditions that blend industry certification with essential skills like communication development. On many occasions, “students are not used to making presentations or getting up in front of the class. But now, with industry standard Microsoft PowerPoint tools available to them, students are enjoying the preparation process and it’s building their confidence,” says Fernandez.

“For students who are working towards earning their Microsoft certification, I’ve seen their confidence and leadership grow even more. The Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) certification and training validates what they know, and they can take those skills and credentials towards securing jobs or onto college,” says Fernandez. “Fostering creativity and cultivating learning using the Microsoft Office platform is essential in preparing our students with 21st Century Skills,” echoes Woodrow Wilson High School Principal Gilbert Martinez.

Wilson High School just recently began implementing its Microsoft Imagine Academy resources. “We’ve been able to get 7 students Microsoft certified within the first week we rolled out the program in the school, with 15 more anticipated by end of the academic term,” says Fernandez. “We teach life skills, not just certifications in itself – students are learning important soft skills such as communications and math and these workforce skills are enforced within the Microsoft platform that teach beyond what is on the screen.”

When asked which Microsoft resources she uses most, Fernandez says, “I use it all.” MSIA’s digital course materials are used extensively in classes, and most especially the use of Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Word, and Microsoft Excel. With students learning skills such as entrepreneurship in the context of marketing sales and services, Microsoft PowerPoint has been essential for students who are working on getting their business plan together. “I incorporated PowerPoint as one of their final things they had to do, and later students present their final slideshow to the class.”

Gaining confidence and industry validation

As students gain more confidence in presenting their ideas with the aid of Microsoft PowerPoint, they then take those ideas to the next level. “We begin discussing pop-up shops and the business ideas they may have. Students are chronicling those ideas using Microsoft Word. They later learn to make a budget using Microsoft Excel,” says Fernandez. Overall, the entire Microsoft Office suite is aligned to the Microsoft Imagine Academy curriculum, providing students with experiences that are meaningful and rigorous that teach students high-demand tech-savvy skills connected to business demands of the local Los Angeles area and the global workforce.

Eventually, students learn to validate their newfound skills through Microsoft industry-recognized certifications. “At first, students didn’t

feel ready to take the certification exams,” says Fernandez, “But after taking Microsoft courses, students were ready within a week”. To date, Wilson High School students are preparing for certification in Microsoft Excel, Word and PowerPoint. For schools in the US and worldwide, additional Microsoft certifications are available to offer across other Office applications including Access and Outlook as well as a range of Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA) and Fundamentals entry-level technical certifications featuring in-demand technology subjects and skills including data science, Azure cloud fundamentals, cybersecurity, networking and computer science.

Self-directed student learning thrives

At Woodrow Wilson and in LAUSD, integrating Microsoft Office in the curriculum has also enabled students to exercise self-directed learning by having access to Microsoft resources at their fingertips. Students are taking initiative by designing their own immersions in high-demand, Microsoft technology skills.

“Students are thriving creatively, and we are seeing them apply their newfound skills in maker spaces we have in our schools and produce what they need,” says Fernandez. Wilson High School also constantly encourages students learning from each other to reinforce the workforce skills they’re building upon.

Teachers mentor students and encourage their work skills progression, but ultimately “the learning activities are focused on what the students need and meeting them where they’re at to help them reach goals they’ve set for themselves,” says Fernandez.

Students are well-supported holistically at Wilson High School. “As a teacher, I start by understanding where students want to be and where they want to go,” says Fernandez.

“Students want to see things develop and transpire. They want to critique things and make it better. They want to see things now. So, I try to find out what they are passionate about. Students then self-select the resources they want to learn from the array of technology skills that Microsoft Imagine Academy has to offer.” With Microsoft curriculum online, students are free to generate their own ideas.

According to Fernandez, “we are able to do these things for our students because we have a principal and a district who supports us, who loves innovation and cultivating mastery, creativity and identity in students so that they can be well-prepared for college, career and life. We also have the support of our districts Career Technical Education program that provides academic, technical and soft skills to students so they can thoughtfully choose their pathway that leads to careers of their choice.” It also helps that Fernandez is a seasoned teacher in integrating Microsoft technologies in the classroom. She has led students from other LAUSD schools in earning their globally recognized certifications and she herself at one time helped earn the accolade of ‘most students certified’ in the district for her past work at RISE @ Augustus Hawkins High School in LAUSD where more than 120

students earned their certifications. And now at Wilson High School, Fernandez is just getting started by helping another group of motivated students achieve industry validation through certification.

Life-ready and career-ready

Building industry qualifications and readiness goes beyond certification acquisition at Wilson High School. According to Fernandez, it’s an essential life skill for students to connect their learning to workforce needs. “They are learning soft skills of communication, organization, along with technology mastery skills that are in the Microsoft platform that teach beyond what is on the screen. Understanding how to go from point 1 to project 6 our students need to have some kind of organization. They need to have some creativity and thought process. Microsoft is a platform, but it teaches you so much more—it’s life-building.”

And LAUSD students agree. For one recent LAUSD graduate Meybel Monge, the Microsoft Office skills she learned in high school have given her advantages for securing work opportunities. “As a high schooler, you don’t really quite know what you want to do and how to prepare for the job market,” says Monge. “Learning Microsoft Office not only gave me new skills and more insights on jobs I was qualified for, but with Microsoft certifications too, employers took notice.”

With earned certifications, many potential employers recognize the extra steps students took to get there. According to Monge, “being Microsoft Office certified has put me ahead of other applicants who were applying for the same job. Ultimately, I got the job.” Monge secured an entry-level position at LA Metro.

For LAUSD current students and alums like Monge, being Microsoft-certified opened workforce doors that they didn’t know were available.

“Don’t be afraid of change,” Fernandez encourages her students.

Fernandez further urges other Microsoft Imagine Academy program teachers in the district to take the risk, try something new for students and integrate the curriculum and resources into their classrooms. “If it doesn’t exist, lead the change. Bring that change into the classroom. Find out what your students are passionate about. The engagement and the outcome of what your students later accomplish in life is what matters.”

“One of the things I tell our students is that Microsoft is universal. I can probably go to any other country and pick one software (program) like Microsoft Word and be able to navigate the screen in another language. In many ways, Microsoft connects all of us together. That’s the beauty of it – we’re all connected in one way or another and it’s essential for the globally-minded students we are nurturing in our schools,” says Fernandez.

