We want to break the construct of high school as an isolated silo, and open school walls to incorporate college, industry, online and other holistic experiences. By providing hands-on, real world opportunities, students develop critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, and become more engaged, motivated, self-confident and successful in college and beyond.

Nicole Assisi, Da Vinci Schools

Da Vinci Schools aims to break down the walls of school, literally. Students will not simply “go” to school to have learning directed at them, but rather, school will exist in, around, and through them, without limitation of setting and time.

Da Vinci Communications launched in fall 2013 to serve racially and socio-economically diverse students in Los Angeles through a highly personalized, student-centered approach by integrating online learning (in a supervised campus lab or at home) and dynamic project-based classroom learning, college courses (online, brick-and-mortar, and blended), internships, and authentic “real world” experience. This is the CMO’s fourth school.

At its core, the model is designed around the student. Using a flipped model, students are introduced to new content online and then apply their learning and develop deeper understanding through hands on, inquiry-based exploration in the classroom. Depending on their proficiency level, passion, and needs, each student’s individualized learning plan will encompass targeted interventions and supports to ensure their success.

Throughout the day, students rotate between small group instruction, collaborative group work, online learning lab time, advisory, internships, project labs, and meetings with industry experts and lecturers. School space is practical and flexible with versatile furniture to maximize tinkering, small group instruction, and seminars.

Project based learning underpins Da Vinci’s model and much thought has been put into designing engaging and enriching activities. Collaborative teams develop interdisciplinary, real-world projects that bring professional practice into the classroom. Projects are planned by teams that may include Da Vinci faculty, industry experts, college faculty and students. Core curriculum and assessment is linked to the California college preparatory requirements and Common Core Standards. Da Vinci works with the Buck Institute for Education to train teachers to be facilitators of project-based learning, in addition

“Project based learning underpins Da Vinci’s model. Collaborative teams develop interdisciplinary, real-world projects that bring professional practice into the classroom. Projects will be planned by teams that may include Da Vinci faculty, industry experts, college faculty and students.”
to using its own project creation process developed in house.

Da Vinci Students are trained, taught, and assessed on 21st century skills in addition to content knowledge. Students complete projects in groups and work with industry experts to create meaningful products. In these environments, students receive grades and feedback on their collaboration and communication abilities and performance. Students reflect and present on these skills in addition to defending their learning from the semester’s projects in a formal 20 minute “Presentation of Learning.”

Da Vinci’s blended learning model represents a natural entry point for students to incorporate college courses into their high school program, all within the support and structure of a small high school environment. In partnership with California Community Colleges, Da Vinci is creating opportunities for Da Vinci students to earn college credits while they are still in high school, providing exposure, rigor, and a scaffold toward a pathway to success in higher education. Students benefit from easy access to college classes, extensive counseling and academic support, and a streamlined transfer process.

Da Vinci’s new model aims to transform public education by gradu-