

School Profile

Centro Educativo Costa Ballena International School

CECB Code: N/A

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Community

Centro Educativo Costa Ballena International School serves an area of approximately 45km along the pacific coast, stretching between Matapalo and Puerto Cortes, in the canton of Osa, Puntarenas province and including the canton of Aguirre in San Jose province of Costa Rica. This is a rural and yet rapidly developing region of Costa Rica known as the Southern Zone, in which many native Costa Ricans and expats from around the world reside.

There are several public schools in this region, all managed by Costa Rica's Ministerio de Educacion (MEP), as well as three other small private schools which are not accredited by the MEP. The student body of Centro Educativo Costa Ballena International School is extremely culturally diverse, including native Costa Ricans (roughly 55%) and students from around the world (including Italy, France, Belgium, Germany, U.S.A., Canada, Israel, Chile, the UK, Ukraine, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Argentina).

School

Centro Educativo Costa Ballena International School (CECB) is a private dual immersion (English and Spanish) school that includes three components: a pre-school/kindergarten in a separate campus located in Uvita (the Preescolar Costa Ballena), an elementary school located on the main campus, just south of Uvita (the Escuela Costa Ballena) and a secondary school, also located on the main campus (the Colegio Costa Ballena). CECB opened in 2007 and graduated its first senior class in December 2019. Escuela Costa Ballena has been MEP certified since 2012; the secondary school's MEP accreditation was granted in 2021. The secondary school does not currently hold membership in the College Board or the National Association for College Admission Counseling.

Curriculum of the Secondary School

Centro Educativo Costa Ballena's secondary school is a growing dual immersion secondary school, currently offering classes from the 7th through the 11th grade. CECB offers a biliterate program focused on providing our students with a solid foundation in Science, Mathematics, English and Spanish Language Arts to fully prepare them for work, university and/or technical schools. At CECB, Spanish Language Arts, Social Studies, Civics, Arts, Physical Education and Music are taught in Spanish. Math, Science, English Language Arts, Multimedia Arts and Design are all taught in English.

CECB allows students to study in one track of a two-track academic Spanish and English language program. Non-native level Spanish speakers take classes in Spanish in our Spanish as a Second Language Program, in turn students who do not speak fluent English have the opportunity to take our English as a Foreign Language program until they can integrate into the standard English Course, which follows US curriculum and the guidelines set by the MEP. With this two track Spanish and English language program and our excellent student to teacher ratio, we can accommodate the learning needs of a wide range of students from across the globe.

For all courses other than Mathematics and Spanish, students are currently blended in two grade groups as they move through their three or four years of high school in CECB: Grades 9 and 10, and Grades 11 and 12. This strategy is intentional on our part. It allows the CECB staff to offer a wider range of courses, including both core courses as well as specialized courses. This strategy also allows our students to work and interact with a new subset of CECB students each year in meaningful ways, both socially and academically. Moreover, it promotes and nurtures many of our pedagogical approaches to teaching, including peer teaching and collaboration, varied classrooms and project-based learning.

In all grade levels at the school, but particularly in the CECB, we emphasize independent learning. Our teachers approach teaching as facilitators of learning, and our students are expected to develop as independent, active learners who take responsibility for their own learning. Additionally, in an effort to prepare our students for a successful and productive life our teachers emphasize self-discipline, independent work, the development of problem-solving skills and the application of knowledge. Rote memorization and prescribed thought are minimized throughout our curriculum.

The CECB school year follows the calendar set by the Ministerio de Educacion of Costa Rica: classes begin in early February and end in mid-December. There are two semesters in each school year, each approximately 18-22 weeks long. Each class period is 40 minutes long, with many courses spanning two blocks within a given day. Students are in class for 6 hours each day, and they take the following set of courses throughout the school year:

Core Classes: English Language Arts (4 credits) follows the US Standards and uses the Great Minds curriculum guidelines. Mathematics (4 credits) follows the New York State Standards, using the Eureka Math/EngageNY Curriculum. Science courses (3 credits) are structured following the US Next Generation Science Standards, and they emphasize a hands-on experiential approach to learning science. Non-native level Spanish speakers take classes in Spanish in our Spanish as a Second Language Program (SSL), while non-native English speakers take classes in our English as a Foreign Language Program (EFL). The credits for SSL and EFL are considered part of the normal Spanish Language Arts and English Language Arts courses. Social Studies (2 credits) is taught in Spanish under the guidelines of the Ministry of Education of Costa Rica; emphasis is placed on Costa Rican and Latin American history.

Specialized courses: Civics (1 credit) is taught in Spanish under the guidelines of the Ministry of Education of Costa Rica. Arts (1.5 credits) encourages students' artistic voices while they acquire traditional art skills. Physical Education (1.5 credits) is taught three times a week, in Spanish. Music (1 credit) is taught twice a week. There are currently no AP or Honors courses offered in the CECB.

Requirements for High School Diploma

Centro Educativo Costa Ballena has established fundamental guidelines that are essential for a well-educated CECB graduate. To graduate from CECB, a student must complete grades 9 through 11 with a minimum of 66 credits as well as complete 30 hours of community service to be completed in the 11th grade. A full year's work in a course that meets 4 times per week (for 80 minutes) is worth 4 credits. One 40 minute period across an entire year is worth 0.5 credits. The minimum graduation requirements are as follows:

11th Grade Graduation Pathway

English	12 credits
Spanish	12 credits
Math	12 credits
Science	9 credits
Social Studies	6 credits
Civics	3 credits
Physical Education	4.5 credits
Arts	4.5 credits
Music	3 credits

Students also have the option of continuing on to the 12th year of study at CECB if they wish, however, many choose to proceed onto higher education immediately following the 11th year when the Costa Rican National exams are held. Currently, the Costa Rican National exams, Pruebas Nacionales Estandarizadas (PNE), are weighted at 40% of their final grades in Math, Science, Spanish, Social Studies and Civics, while the respective class grades are weighted at 60%. The percentages are determined by the Ministry of Education each year. Students and families are informed of the current percentages ahead of the National Exams. In addition, all 11th grade students must complete 30 hours of community service.

Language Exam - A language exam in English and/or French is also administered but only as Pass/Fail and not averaged into the overall final score. The Costa Rican Ministry of Education secondary school diploma requires a final averaged score (class 60% and PNE exam 40%) of 70% and above for each subject independently. This final score, in addition to university admission exams, determine which Costa Rican university a student will be eligible to attend.

12th Grade Graduation Pathway

To graduate from CECB via the 12th grade pathway, a student must complete grades 9 through 12 with a minimum of 88 credits and complete 30 hours of community service to complete 11th grade.

English	16 credits
Spanish	16 credits
Math	16 credits
Science	12 credits
Social Studies	8 credits
Civics	4 credits
Physical Education	6 credits
Arts	6 credits
Music	4 credits

Grading and Ranking in the Secondary School

Teachers in Centro Educativo Costa Ballena assign grades using percentages out of 100%. For student transcripts to countries that use a 4 point scale, each student's class average is converted to a GPA scale (0 – 4.00 scale) using the following scheme:

CECB does not rank students within any grade level.

Letter Grade	Percentage	GPA
A+	97-100%	4.33/4.00 or 4.00/4.00
A	93-96%	4.00/4.00
A-	90-92%	3.67/4.00
B+	87-89%	3.33/4.00
B	83-86%	3.00/4.00
B-	80-82%	2.67/4.00
C+	77-79%	2.33/4.00
C	73-76%	2.00/4.00
C-	70-72%	1.67/4.00
D+	67-69%	1.33/4.00
D	63-66%	1.00/4.00
D-	60-62%	0.67/4.00
F	0-59%	0.00/4.00

Calculation of Grade Point Average:

GPA is computed using a weighted average of the above quality points. Weighted GPA is calculated by multiplying the 0 – 4.00 grade score for each subject with its corresponding number of credits (the number of 40-minute periods that the subject is taught during each week). These weighted scores are then added together and divided by the total number of credits.

For example, if a student obtains a 90 in every class except English where they only got a 75, we would multiply 3.67 by the respective credits, and 2.0 for English;

- ELA: $2.0 \times 12 = 24$
- $3.67 \times 12 = 44.04$
- $3.67 \times 12 = 44.04$
- $3.67 \times 9 = 33.03$
- $3.67 \times 6 = 22.02$
- $3.67 \times 3 = 11.01$
- $3.67 \times 4.5 = 16.515$
- $3.67 \times 4.5 = 16.515$
- $3.67 \times 3 = 11.01$

These scores would then be summed; $24 + 44.04 + 44.04 + 33.03 + 22.02 + 11.01 + 16.515 + 16.515 + 11.01 = 222.15$

And then divided by the total number of credits: $222.15 / 66 = 3.366$

Giving us our final GPA of **3.37**

Beginning with grade nine, all subjects, whether passed or failed, are included in the computation. A minimum of 66 credits is required for graduation along the 11th grade pathway. A minimum of 88 credits is required for graduation along the 12th grade pathway.

Graduates

Centro Educativo Costa Ballena graduated its first group of 12th grade students in December 2020. The following years have graduated in 11th grade with their Costa Rican Bachillerato (high school diploma) but did not complete the 12th grade: 2019 (5), 2021 (3), 2022 (3), 2023 (6), 2024 (3), 2025 (6), 2026 (9) with the following GPA's rate:

- 0 earned a 4.0+
- 2 earned 3.5–3.99
- 0 earned 3.0–3.49
- 0 earned 2.50–2.99
- 0 earned 2.0–2.49
- 0 earned less than a 2.0

To date our graduates have gone on to fulfill their educational dreams at universities in the US, UK, Canada and within Costa Rica at the:

- University of California at Berkeley, USA,
- Western Washington University, USA
- University of California at Santa Cruz, USA
- Clemson University, USA
- Universidad de Costa Rica,
- Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica,
- Universidad Latina de Costa Rica,
- Universidad Latinoamericana de Ciencias y Tecnología, Costa Rica
- Escuela Veterinaria San Francisco de Asís, Costa Rica
- Universidad Técnica Nacional, Costa Rica
- Universidad Fidélitas and Universidad Ciencias Médicas (UCIMED), Costa Rica
- McGill University, Canada
- Aberystwyth University, Wales, UK