

Marin Academy

San Rafael, United States



No AP boxes to check here - just 75-minute blocks built for inquiry, plus a research collaborative that sends students into real labs across Marin County

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	72/100
Academic outcomes	75/100
University placement	73/100
Prestige & heritage	72/100
Alumni network	71/100
Facilities	73/100
Transparency	68/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Marin Academy has no interest in turning sixth form into an AP accumulation exercise. The distinctive feature here is the structure: long **75-minute** blocks, a college-preparatory programme that puts critical thinking at the centre, and an explicit commitment to experiential learning inside and beyond the classroom. That matters because it changes the rhythm of teaching. Short-period, test-prep schooling rewards compliance and speed; Marin Academy rewards depth, discussion and sustained inquiry. The school is small enough to make that credible, with a **1:8 student-teacher ratio** and an average class

size of **14**. Parents looking for tight pastoral oversight and teachers who know their students well will find that scale attractive.

This is a day school for ages 14 to 18 in San Rafael, founded in 1971, and it sits firmly in the expensive end of the US private-school market: the average annual day fee across the full ladder is **\$67,500**. The value proposition rests on intellectual culture, not facilities theatre or a glossy athletics brand. The mission language is heavy on questioning, creating and democratic responsibility, and the school’s non-religious stance and stated commitment to a diverse, equitable and just community give it a clear social philosophy. That will appeal to families who want a *deliberately progressive* high school, not a traditional, rules-first prep factory.

It should be on a shortlist for bright, articulate teenagers who enjoy argument, reflection and independent work, and who gain energy from teachers pressing them to think rather than feed them mark schemes. It suits students who want a *serious academic* environment without the social stiffness or competitive posturing that define parts of the Bay Area market. It does not suit teenagers who want a large-school experience, a broad boarding culture, or a narrow exam-driven track. Marin Academy’s strength lies in a *thoughtful, high-trust* model of secondary education: small classes, close adult attention, and a curriculum that treats adolescence as a time for *genuine intellectual formation*, not just credential collection.

STRENGTHS

- Small classes and an approximately 8:1 student-teacher ratio give students close contact with faculty across a 100-plus course catalogue.
- Substantial financial aid program: the school states it offers over 5 million dollars annually in tuition assistance to admitted families.
- Wide geographic reach for a day school - nearly 40% of students live outside Marin County and are served by dedicated bus routes from San Francisco, the East Bay and Novato.
- Broad co-curricular offering including 35 interscholastic athletic teams, an outdoor education program, and a science research collaborative (MARC) alongside a required experiential-education week.
- Long-described as one of the more competitive private high schools in the Bay Area, with historical acceptance rates around one in four applicants.

TRADE - OFFS

- Full tuition is high: listed at 67,500 dollars for the 2026-2027 school year, with additional annual charges of 600 to 1,200 dollars for books and incidentals.
- The school deliberately does not offer Advanced Placement courses, so families expecting an AP-heavy transcript for university applications will not find one here.
- Selective, single-point-of-entry admissions model (mainly grade 9) means transfer places in later years are limited and vary year to year, sometimes to as few as one student.
- A modest total enrollment of around 450 students narrows the elective and social breadth available compared with larger day schools in the region.

ADMISSIONS

Marin Academy is a day school for grades 9-12, with the main entry point at grade 9; transfer places in other grades exist but are limited and fluctuate year to year with attrition. The application process, common to new and transfer applicants, requires transcripts, recommendation letters, an essay, and an interview (often optional but recommended), with a regular deadline in early January. Historical data suggest a competitive process, with the school having accepted roughly one in four applicants in past cycles.

NOTABLE ALUMNI (9)

MUSIC: Rozzi Crane

DRAMA: Carré Otis, Dylan Penn

VISUAL_ARTS: Peter Som, Buck Ellison

LETTERS: Peter Som, Jason Rezaian

BUSINESS: Ruth Parasol

WTS RATING 

This profile summarises editorial research by World's Top Schools. Verify all admissions dates directly with the school before submitting. Sources are cited in the full online profile at WorldsTopSchools.com/schools/sch_44581e6552.