

The College Preparatory School

Oakland, United States



Seminar-style rigor in Rockridge, where an 8:1 ratio once helped earn a Wall Street Journal top-six national ranking

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	76/100
Academic outcomes	81/100
University placement	78/100
Prestige & heritage	73/100
Alumni network	72/100
Facilities	73/100
Transparency	75/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Rockridge is full of good schools; The College Preparatory School earns a place on a shortlist because it does something narrower and harder. It is a small, non-religious American day school for ages 14 to 18, founded in 1960, with an ****8:1 student-teacher ratio**** that supports the kind of seminar-style teaching many schools advertise and few sustain. The school’s own language is telling: students “engage deeply with big ideas and the craft of scholarship”, and conversations “spill over into the courtyard”. That can read like boilerplate elsewhere. Here, paired with the ratio and the school’s long-standing academic reputation, it points to a campus built around discussion, close reading, writing and intellectual confidence rather than scale, spectacle or varsity culture.

What is special about College Prep is the combination of **serious academic pressure** and an **informal, welcoming** social tone. Students arrive from over ****100 different middle schools****, which matters: this is not a monoculture feeding itself from one junior pipeline, but a high-attaining upper school that assembles a broad intake and expects them to learn from one another. The school is accredited by NEASC and NAIS, which gives it solid institutional standing, but the stronger signal is cultural. This is a place for pupils who want teachers to know them well, who enjoy ideas enough to keep talking about them after class, and who do not need hand-holding to value scholarship. Parents paying an average annual fee of ****\$62,760**** are buying access to that intensity.

This school is not for every bright teenager. It suits students who are **genuinely bookish**, verbally agile, self-motivated and comfortable in classrooms where participation carries weight. It will appeal to young people who want their peers to care about learning and who prefer depth over breadth in daily school life. Families looking for a sprawling campus, a softer academic pace or a more overtly branded “balanced” experience should look elsewhere. College Prep’s appeal is sharper than that: **high standards are the norm**, inquiry drives the culture, and the right student will find it **electrifying**.

STRENGTHS

- Very low student-to-faculty ratio of about 8:1, allowing close academic mentoring across a small student body of roughly 370.
- Niche ranks the school #1 among Best Private High Schools in California, reflecting strong outcomes and reviews.
- Compact five-acre campus set within the Oakland Hills in the Rockridge neighborhood, giving a close-knit, walkable community feel.
- Reported average academic profile is high, with a 3.74 average GPA, 1490 average SAT, and 100% graduation rate among Niche-surveyed students.
- Founded in 1960 with an established single-purpose mission -- a four-year, non-residential high school solely focused on college preparation.

TRADE-OFFS

- Annual day tuition is roughly \$60,050, plus an estimated \$1,200-\$1,500 a year in non-tuition costs such as books and a laptop.
- The school enrolls only grades 9-12 with no lower or middle school, so relocating families must secure separate schooling for younger children.
- Admission is competitive, with a reported acceptance rate around 30%, meaning places are not guaranteed even for strong applicants.
- The school does not offer ESL classes, so international applicants are expected to arrive with solid English proficiency already in place.

ADMISSIONS

Entry points are chiefly grade 9, with occasional openings in grades 10 and 11. The stated application deadline is January 8, and the process typically requires a school transcript, recommendation letters, an application essay, and an interview. Reported acceptance rates sit near 30%, indicating meaningful selectivity for a non-selective-by-lottery US day school. International applicants must demonstrate English proficiency, as the school does not run ESL classes, though it assists admitted international students with I-20 visa paperwork.

NOTABLE ALUMNI (22)

SPORT: Max McFadden

MUSIC: Johanna Fateman

DRAMA: Miranda July, Kat Foster, Chris Tashima, Anne Washburn, Chelsea Peretti

VISUAL_ARTS: Mark Cerny

LETTERS: Miranda July, Johanna Fateman, Anne Washburn, Edie Meidav, Romesh Ratnesar

POLITICS: Alice Buckley

SCIENCE: Ian Agol, Mark Cerny, Avrim Blum, Jeremiah B. Workman

BUSINESS: Cher Wang, David Marchick, Jonah Peretti, Justin Rosenstein

WTS RATING 

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