

Menlo School

Atherton, United States



A 1915 Atherton campus near Stanford where an 8:1 ratio lets students chart their own humanities, STEM, or arts path.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	76/100
Academic outcomes	79/100
University placement	77/100
Prestige & heritage	74/100
Alumni network	73/100
Facilities	76/100
Transparency	73/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

At Menlo, the useful starting point is the shape of the school: a non-religious American day school in Atherton for ages 11 to 18, founded in 1915, with a campus market position tied as much to geography as to programme. Atherton places it in the heart of the Peninsula, near Stanford and in the orbit of the Bay Area’s technology and venture economy. That matters, because Menlo’s offer is built around breadth with permission to specialise. The school advertises upper school pathways in computer science, applied science and engineering, media production, photography, studio art, vocal and instrumental music, drama and dance, alongside a full academic core. Add Global Learning, Catalyst Semester, MTerm and the Menlo IP Internship Program, and the picture is clear: this is a school for students who want an education with

range, not a narrow college-prep conveyor belt. The **1:8 student-teacher ratio** sharpens that promise. In a school of this type, that ratio gives pupils room to build a distinctive profile rather than disappear into a high-performing crowd.

Menlo belongs on a shortlist because it combines **serious academic infrastructure** with a conspicuous willingness to let teenagers test themselves outside the standard timetable. Plenty of American independents talk about interdisciplinarity; Menlo has named structures for it. The inclusion of AI at Menlo, an Innovation Lab, a 9th Grade Seminar, formal learning support and accommodation support points to a school that has paid attention to how students work now, not how schools worked twenty years ago. The athletics programme is also extensive, with a deep upper school roster and a proper middle school pipeline, which tells you sport is part of the institution rather than an ornamental extra. Accreditation by NEASC and NAIS gives parents the expected external reassurance, but the more important point is cultural: this is an **ambitious, high-functioning** school with enough scale to offer choice and enough intimacy to keep that choice usable.

The price matches that ambition. At an average annual day fee of **\$67,792**, Menlo sits in the **top tier** of the US private day market. Parents are paying for access, programme density and individual attention, not for old-world boarding-school theatre. That makes Menlo a strong fit for self-directed students who will exploit electives, arts, internships and advanced STEM options, and a weaker fit for children who need heavy institutional steering or a simpler, more traditional school structure. The ideal Menlo student is bright, organised and ready to make decisions early: humanities students who want serious writing and discussion, engineers who want applied work, artists who want real facilities, and athletes who value a **team-first** culture without surrendering academic ambition. The school's catalogue of **24 notable alumni** on Wikidata adds useful evidence of reach, but Menlo's real selling point is not celebrity output. It is a **high-agency** environment for students who want to do more than move neatly from class to class.

STRENGTHS

- Independent, coeducational day school in Atherton with a low student-to-teacher ratio of 8:1 in the upper school and 9:1 in the middle school.
- Long-established institution founded in 1915, giving it more than a century of operating history and alumni network in Silicon Valley.
- Broad co-curricular offering, including 14 interscholastic sports and a wide range of clubs and creative-arts programs alongside academics.
- Notable alumni include GoPro founder and CEO Nick Woodman, reflecting the school's presence in the technology and entrepreneurship sector.
- Located in the heart of Silicon Valley near Palo Alto and Menlo Park, giving families proximity to major technology employers and Stanford University.

TRADE-OFFS

- Annual tuition of \$64,718 for 2025-26 places it among the more expensive independent day schools in the United States, a significant and rising cost for relocating families.
- Admission is described by the school itself as highly selective, meaning places are not guaranteed even for well-qualified applicants.
- As a day school only, it offers no boarding option, so families must secure separate local housing in one of the most expensive real-estate markets in the country.
- Middle and upper school combined enrollment is modest at roughly 805 students, which limits elective breadth compared with much larger day schools.

ADMISSIONS

Menlo School enrolls students in grades 6-12 through a day-only admissions process; entry points typically occur at grade 6 and grade 9, with occasional openings in other years subject to space. The school states that admission is highly selective, with the process including transcripts, teacher recommendations, an application essay and an interview. Given Atherton's Silicon Valley location and the school's academic reputation, competition for places is expected to be significant, and families should apply well ahead of published deadlines, typically in early January.

NOTABLE ALUMNI (24)

SPORT: Glenn Layendecker, Greg Johnson

MUSIC: Robby Krieger, Bob Weir, Lane 8, Quadeca

DRAMA: Ahna O'Reilly, Chris Paine

LETTERS: Allison Brennan, John Matteson

SCIENCE: Jon Beekhuis

BUSINESS: Brad Greenspan, Nick Woodman, Dave Finocchio, Q81378261

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_d4cb30200e.