Want to learn Mandarin or study world music? Or maybe you’d like to team up with seniors on your freshman science project or go on a Vision Quest in the Sierras? How does job-shadowing one of the best neurosurgeons in the country sound? Ever think about studying abroad? How about spending part of a summer on a service-learning trip at a high school in Kenya? Want to become a research scientist studying triplefin fish in New Zealand, or someday write for a major news network, or design smart devices in Silicon Valley? Come to Marin Academy.

Here’s a school rich in possibilities that prepares you to lead a fulfilling life—now, in college, and beyond. At MA you’ll enjoy plenty of independence, both in and out of class, in a cooperative, compassionate, spirited atmosphere in which your contribution is essential. It’s an approach to learning that asks more of you and offers more in return. Here, you’re an integral part of something greater than yourself.

Marin Academy is a community that attracts remarkable students, teachers, artists, athletes, performers and thinkers—people who can inspire you in new directions and help you develop confidence, personal integrity and a dynamic relationship with the world at large. It’s a community that invites you to stretch yourself, and asks that you never lose sight of your role as a citizen of your country and your planet.

Many educators feel that high school may be more critical than college in preparing you for success. Where you go to high school is a big decision, so you want to do what’s best for you and choose a school that does the most for you. MA has it all. More important, a surprising thing happens while you’re here: you find that doing the best for yourself inspires you to do your best for and with others.
Our Mission: Think, Question, Create

I love our mission statement because it links reflection to action,” says Head of School Travis Brownley.

MA’s 80-minute classes lend themselves to hands-on investigations that often take directions spurred as much by students’ inquiries as by teachers’. Teachers share their knowledge in a symposium environment: students often break into smaller groups to explore ideas that most interest them. During these lively, intellectual discussions there’s room to agree or disagree with the teacher or other students. It’s competitive in a good way—a way that builds you up instead of breaking you down, because everyone is discovering things together. The deeper you wade into a subject, the more connections you start to make and the better you get at asking questions—the right questions.

Marin Academy asks every individual to think, question, and create in an environment of encouragement and compassion, and challenges each person to accept the responsibilities posed by education in a democratic society.
Meaningful Questions, Meaningful Connections

In 2010, as part of an ongoing endeavor to help students see how the literature and history of a culture are interrelated, MA English teachers changed the ninth-grade English curriculum to make the reading material more closely parallel the themes and questions guiding ninth-grade Modern World History. For instance, as students discussed colonialism in history, they read *The Tempest* in English class. Why? So they could see how 17th-century issues of power, race, and exclusion came to bear in Shakespeare’s play. “The English faculty wanted students to understand how a work of literature both reflects and helps shape the culture that produces it,” comments English teacher and Dean of Faculty Nicole Stanton. When ninth graders read Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*, juniors and seniors from AP Environmental Science gave a presentation about the importance of topsoil, helping everyone understand how the Dust Bowl, a manmade agricultural disaster, could have been avoided.

Bringing Science and Math to Life

From Algebra I to Multivariable Calculus, from Biology to Advanced Inorganic Chemistry, in math and science classes at MA you learn by doing —by looking for solutions to problems and to practical applications—and not just in the lab or classroom. In the course of doing a math or science project, you’re asked to formulate a question, then to investigate further to see where that question leads. You might find your initial question doesn’t take you far enough, and if that’s the case, you’ll have

A MA senior taking an English class called Why War wanted to know whether real-life experiences of war actually related to the literature he was reading in class—novels like *The Thin Red Line*, the nonfiction book *Dispatches*, and poems by the Trench Poets of World War I. To find out, he interviewed a Korean War veteran. “That interview convinced me that the authors I was reading really knew what they were talking about.”
the chance to design another investigation that takes you somewhere else. Most often, students work on projects with partners or in small groups, pushing one another further and benefiting from multiple perspectives and strengths. Learning how to work on a team and how to listen and negotiate are invaluable skills, and in the course of the work you naturally bond with your partner or partners—an extra benefit. By doing science this way you soon go beyond abstract concepts, to real-world applications. Recent math and science investigations have included an inquiry into the health and environmental issues surrounding ordinary household products, an analysis of the positioning of solar panels and a close look at the relationship between the rotating parts of car engines and sine curves. At the end of such projects, students reflect on their collaborations. You might be asked to identify the most valuable lesson of a project, or to comment on the way the group shared work. This critical thinking, paired with constructive reviews from peers, helps students improve research and presentation skills.

**Math Night—Standing Room Only**

**Math Night** is a popular annual event that attracts fans from across the entire MA community. The idea is to let students with a passion for math dive deeper into the subject and come up with a unique project interesting enough to present to an audience. It’s a great way to encourage independent pursuits. The competition to participate is intense; many students audition, but only five are chosen to present their ideas.

During Math Night 2011, Professor Ravi Vakil of Stanford University gave a talk called “Mathematics of Doodling,” and MA students gave several presentations. “The Dissemination of (Mis) Information” focused on how rumors spread, especially via social networks. Another presentation explored why Slytherins and Gryffindors were doomed not to get along.
MA propels students beyond facts and formulas. Here you become more than a critical thinker—you’re asked to question and synthesize what you’re reading and learning so that you see the big picture. Dynamic, interdisciplinary classes expand your interests and intellect, spurring explorations and connections that make knowledge more meaningful. You become a systemic thinker, which is what this fractured world needs more of—people who view things holistically and perceive vast possibilities. Dawud Lankford ’97 was drawn to MA’s strong performing arts program and was equally passionate about science. After graduation Dawud went to UC Berkeley, then attended Maharry Medical College, a predominately African American school in Nashville, Tennessee. While at Maharry, he became interested in making healthcare more accessible to the underinsured and uninsured. Taking a year off from his medical studies to return to UC Berkeley to earn a master’s degree in public health allowed Dawud to integrate his true goals more completely, an inclination he traces to his years at MA. Now a resident in urology at New York Medical College, Dawud believes that “in our current medical system, public health comes into play whenever you take care of a patient.” He feels that as a physician he has three responsibilities to a patient: “to take care of the patient’s health issue; to educate the patient about his health—about why he may have gotten sick and what he can do to prevent further problems; and to consider his abilities to follow through on my recommendations.” For Dawud, medicine means “serving people in their health so they can live more prosperous, more complete, more whole lives.”
While at Williams College majoring in International Relations, Molly Hunter ’05 got involved with Reclaim Childhood—a nongovernmental organization that empowers Iraqi girls through athletics—and after graduation, went to Jordan to serve as Reclaim Childhood’s Country Director. Molly’s interest in the Middle East began at MA, and over the years, she became focused on the fate of Iraqi refugees. How could young Iraqi girls find the confidence and skills to go back and contribute to their country? Sports. “You’re encouraged to try everything at MA. I loved the interdisciplinary approach, and found many of my history and English electives more interesting than some of my college courses. I loved writing for the school newspaper—but it was on the court and playing field that I gained the confidence to follow my passions.” In 2011, on the night that Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak resigned, Molly found herself 300 miles from Cairo, in Amman, Jordan, filming and interviewing for ABC News. “I felt like I was playing a small part in one of the most pivotal moments in recent history.” Although still on the board of Reclaim Childhood, Molly gave up her on-the-ground role to serve as an editor on ABC’s foreign desk in New York. It’s a young journalist’s dream job, but her experience working with young Iraqi refugees in Jordan has left Molly asking, “Is this enough? For now, I’m taking part in change in a different way, and I have to figure out if that’s truly enough for me.”

“What If”— A Shared Perspective

Teachers both within and across departments collaborate on curriculum; students get behind one another’s ideas and so do teachers, who guide students toward ideas with the best potential. MA teachers put their heads together to promote projects and ensure their success. At MA, Dhruv ’11 experienced science as pure intellectual joy. Whether he was studying

In one experiment called McDonald’s Lab,” says Dhruv, “we put a burger in a blender to simulate chewing then we take the burger and put it through tubes that represent the digestive system. It’s fun, informative, and just gross enough to get these younger kids to think about not eating fast food.”
biology or physics, he loved the deep-inquiry approach, and followed his curiosity wherever it took him. When he looked around at how many middle-school kids were experiencing science in the county, he asked: “How can I help these kids see the magic of science?” Dhruv translated that question into social action by approaching a number of teachers who collectively created buzz about his idea, then connected him with Next Generation Scholars, a nonprofit organization that brings about educational equity. Ultimately, Dhruv created a program of his own called Einstein Explorations, sharing his knowledge and excitement about science in classrooms all over the county.

More than Just the Game

Marin Academy’s sports teams bring community to the playing field. Being responsible to and for one another is what teamwork requires, and it’s an important life skill. Honoring the game means honoring opponents, referees, and spectators—and expecting that they do the same. Marin Academy’s athletic program prides itself on its partnership with the Positive Coaching Alliance, a nonprofit organization based at Stanford University, whose mission is “to transform youth sports so sports transform youth.” All of MA’s teams consistently compete for top positions in their leagues and frequently win championships. But whatever your sport, winning is never the greatest goal. At a school where stretching one’s self and one’s interests are primary objectives, it’s not surprising that everyone is encouraged to balance academic commitment with participation in athletics.
In the gym, in the pool, and on the playing field, athletes practice consideration and enjoy a competitive camaraderie that naturally spills into other pursuits. The concentrated effort it takes to master a sport pays off, just as tenacity and hard work do in the classroom.

**Seeing the World with Imagination**

Vibrant and provocative, the arts have enriched the academic program at Marin Academy since the school’s founding, in 1971. The creative process transfers naturally to any endeavor, leading one to dig into history, solve math equations, or tackle problems of social inequality with more imagination. MA art teachers are practicing artists who understand the deep joy that creative expression unlocks. For a student artist, having a role model who appreciates your art can inspire you for years.

Collaboration, imagination, and taking risks go hand in hand in the performing arts, and performing on MA’s stage gives you reason to believe that anything is possible. As a musician, dancer or actor, you spend hours in solo practice and have ample opportunity to play and rehearse with others, simultaneously getting good at the arts of inclusion, compromise, listening, and working alone. Visual artists find light-filled painting and ceramic studios, 18 digital workstations, and 14 wet darkrooms. That the bar of achievement is constantly being raised at MA is particularly clear in the wide choice of yearlong arts electives, and that the majority of students at MA study art for three or more years, though only two years are required. The art produced at MA reflects the profound changes that take place over the four years of high school.
Uniquely expressive work is made here that reflects the lives of young artists growing and changing and interpreting the world through their own individual sensibilities. Many graduates go on to have careers in the arts. Peter Som ’89 is renowned in the world of fashion design. Nancy Juvonen ’85 produced the film He’s Just Not That Into You, starring Jennifer Aniston and Ben Affleck. Owen Dalby ’02 just completed a fellowship at Julliard, and has performed in 25 concerts at Carnegie Hall; Matt Davidson ’04, who plays everything from guitar to saxophone, recently appeared on the Late Show with David Letterman with his band, The Low Anthem.

Evolving Together
Developmentally In Sync

Marin Academy is tuned in to the big changes that take place between fourteen and eighteen, and that awareness contributes to the joy of school. There’s time built into your daily schedule, especially as a freshman, to develop socially as well as intellectually. MA is a warm and inviting community with lots of places to connect on campus and a myriad of electives, clubs and special events where you can get together with students and teachers. Whether you’re into bouldering or soccer, political activism or songwriting, you’ll find your niche at MA or, more likely, niches. If you don’t find a club doing what you want to do, start one. It’s easy to get support for new ideas here. Just think, ask, and make it happen.
Katie’s Path

“I came to MA approaching everything I did—whether it was poetry or soccer—competitively. The most fiercely competitive thing I did was row, and I loved it. The summer following my sophomore year, I went on a month-long backpacking trip in the Sierras and woke up to another way of operating. I found myself embracing the confidence and peace that comes from supporting rather than competing with others—and everything changed. When I returned to school in the fall, I found myself looking around for things to do other than sports. I received so much encouragement and found so many role models who were ready to help me find my place. I started making things happen. I started writing for our student newspaper and, to no one’s surprise but my own, became editor-in-chief. With several other students, I started “Uncensored: Conversations We’re Not Having”—workshops where students talk about everything from religion in America to privacy issues on Facebook. During my last few months of school, I helped raise funds for, then design and build, a greenhouse for the MA garden with recycled materials. My relationship to the world has changed. In college, I’m going to focus on architecture. My hope is to provide beautiful, sustainable homes for families who never expected to have such a thing. The world is a small, difficult, and complex place, and the only way to turn it around is to solve its problems together.”
Social Equity and Social Justice

At MA, everyone is passionate about creating a more just and equitable world. In Culture of the Bay Area, two students studying the history of Angel Island were so moved by what they learned that they turned their inquiry into a larger investigation of how the U.S. treated Chinese immigrants in the 19th and 20th centuries, and ultimately made a compelling case about the need to change our current immigration policies. A number of student organizations, including Gay Straight Alliance, Latino Student Union and the Peace and Justice Coalition address issues of social justice. Other opportunities encourage students to care for the planet. The Outings Program is as much about environmental stewardship as adventure, while the Eco-Council promotes a sustainable way of life within the school and in neighboring communities.

Always expanding students’ horizons, the annual Literary Festival, Conference on Democracy and Thatcher Lecture Series bring literary and social game-changers to campus, such as Michael Chabon, Maxine Hong Kingston, Takashi Tanemori, Michael Pollan, Mark Mathabane, Angela Davis, and Elizabeth de la Vega. Far from home, Marin Academy focuses on educational equity through an uplifting relationship with Daraja Academy, a high school in Kenya that offers high-achieving girls a rare chance to escape poverty by continuing their education beyond primary school.
Accruing Confidence

When Head of School Travis Brownley asked parents of newly enrolled MA freshmen what quality they most wanted their children to gain in high school, their answer, almost unanimously, was confidence. It takes confidence to ask questions, to approach teachers and other adults. You gain that confidence here because everyone encourages questions. The atmosphere is inviting and nonjudgmental. Confidence also arises from competence. A great sense of self naturally comes with mastering a subject, a sport, or an art. "I think you see confidence in the way people walk through the halls, happy, with their heads up," says one student.

Putting It All Together

In many ways, the end-of-year culminating project, which replaces the spring semester final exam, is where every school year comes together. It's a rich and fulfilling experience. The junior project is called the Conference on American Possibilities. Students explore areas directly tied to the research papers they produced in their U.S. History class. They divide into groups of ten, with each group taking a position on a major concern or cause, such as climate change or world poverty. At the conclusion of the project, each group presents a resolution to a mock general assembly with every member of the assembly playing the role of a real-life representative. Without exception, students take their issues to heart because everyone wants to get his or her resolution adopted. Whether your issue concerns cyber-security regulations, repairing prison systems, protecting first amendment rights or foreign aid, such role-playing tests your abilities to work with a large group of people, articulate a viewpoint, and advocate for political change.
Better Together

One of the first things you learn at Marin Academy is that you’re a part of something bigger than yourself; that when you generously share your individual thoughts and talents, anything is possible. The interconnected, interrelated, interdependent education you receive here prepares you for all the unexpected directions life takes, and all the opportunities those directions offer. Now a product designer in Silicon Valley, Jeremy Franklin ’05 has a story about how working on teams at MA paid off for him in the hardest engineering class he took at MIT.

“Most of my college classmates were used to being at the top of their game and used to running solo. They achieved their objectives in high school, got great SAT scores and were valedictorians, so Thermal Fluids Engineering I and II, a yearlong class covering everything from hydroelectric dams to jet engines and refrigeration, was a shock. We had weeklong assignments that most of the class—including me—struggled with, receiving what would have been failing grades in high school. Then, one morning at 3 a.m., I’d done two of four problems when I called a friend who I knew was awake, too. Long story short: The two of us and another guy formed a study group, and from that night on we did those weekly assignments together. The professor was pleased and so was I, and not just because the three of us all got As in Thermal Fluids Engineering. Studying got fun again, just like it was at MA, which was where I learned that when you work together, things get a whole lot better.”
Marin Academy

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We’d love to meet you.

Come for a visit and see for yourself why we chose MA.

Marin Academy is committed to enrolling talented students with diverse backgrounds—racial, ethnic, geographic, and economic—and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sexual orientation or national, or ethnic origin.

Photography by Dan Babior. Additional photography by Peter Joseph (cover, swimming), Peter Poutiatine (outings), Mark Stefanski (Deraja Academy), Bill Reitzel ’80 (Travis), and Dominic Colacchio (dance).

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