

Upper School Profile 2025–2026

School

Since 1967, the Nueva School has delivered an innovative, award-winning learning experience designed to meet the needs of academically gifted learners.

Over the past 50 years we have become internationally recognized for our unique curricular approach, which inspires the passions, purpose, and potential in each student while igniting a lifelong love of learning.

Nueva's Upper School, launched in 2013, is a re-imagination of high school.

In many ways more like a university than a traditional high school, Nueva offers broad-based interdisciplinary studies coupled with deep explorations into specific areas of interest.

Nueva is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and is a member of the California Association of Independent Schools.

Students

Nueva attracts inquisitive, high-performing students from the greater San Francisco Bay Area who have been drawn to the possibilities and challenges of a young, innovative high school.

These socially minded intellectual entrepreneurs, researchers, and artists—a senior class of students who possess a high degree of agency and self-direction—enjoy hard problems, risk-taking, and peer-to-peer learning.

Advanced Curriculum

At the heart of Nueva's program is an advanced, interdisciplinary curriculum with significant emphasis on self-directed learning, collaboration, and primary research. A typical student course load is 7–8 classes per semester. Seniors typically take 7 classes.

In scope and depth, all courses offered range from college preparatory to college-level. The majority of core courses meet or exceed the rigor of Advanced Placement courses; Nueva does not designate Honors or AP courses.

The academic program builds a robust foundation in the major disciplines, supports deep inquiry into topics of individual interest, and provides explicit instruction in methods of thinking and reasoning. Advanced electives and independent courses of study allow students to move at an accelerated pace in the directions they choose.

Faculty

More than 80% of our Upper School faculty hold advanced degrees. Many have taught at the university level and have been recognized by local, state, and national organizations for leadership, excellence, and innovation in teaching.



Facts and Figures

Class of 2026 enrollment	113
Upper School enrollment	450
Student-to-faculty ratio	6:1
Average class size	16
Students of color	70%
Students receiving financial aid	21%
Admitted to four-year colleges	100%



National Merit

Class of 2025	
Semifinalists	23
Commended	34
Total	57
Total % of class	50%



Test Scores

Classes of 2025 and 2026

	mean	mid 50%
ACT	34	34–35
SAT		
EBRW	760	730–790
Math	770	740–780

Grading

Nueva intentionally discourages academic competition among our students. We do not calculate class rank and do not offer academic honors, prizes, or valedictorian status.

To facilitate meaningful assessment of students' skills against absolute benchmarks, students receive both standards-based grades and in-depth written narratives focused on core learning competencies. Nueva reinforces continuous feedback and recognizes the need for students to learn from their mistakes as they take risks and tackle difficult problems.

Grade 9 courses are Credit/No Credit.

In Grades 10–12, the highest grade is an A (no "A+" grades), which indicates the student has reached an Exemplary status with regard to the standards for that course; a "B" indicates Proficiency; and a "C" indicates a Foundational achievement of the standards.

We do not weight grades.

It is Nueva's policy to report disciplinary infractions; our expectation is that students will self-report any serious violations of school conduct policy. Nueva's college counseling office works with students to ensure they provide colleges with appropriate context for the students' decisions and their consequences.

Applied Learning

Nueva supports in-depth inquiry, research, and experimentation through programs that extend and deepen the core curriculum.

Quest Projects, an annual requirement, enable individual, mentored pursuits in areas of passionate interest. Recent projects include developing a public health initiative to address obesity in post-embargo Cuba, designing and building a jet-pack for human flight, and writing a screenplay adaptation of Hamlet.

The Global Citizenship Program

provides students with broadening academic and cultural perspectives. They have studied anthropology and history, land management, political caucuses, AIDS activism, and environmental sustainability from Alaska to New York, Japan to Greece, Canada to Argentina.

Intersession is a two-week intensive that allows students to work, think, experiment, and lead in courses taught by local and international experts in their fields. From surgical virtual reality to constitutional law and graffiti art, Nueva students describe this mid-year program as an "intellectual party."

Defining Elements of a Nueva Education

Design Thinking

Students learn and develop an approach to problem-solving in which they identify pressing and practical needs and problems, generate creative ideas, and introduce, test, and refine solutions under real-world conditions.

Social-emotional Learning

Students study foundational principles of psychology and neuroscience, developing fluency in social-emotional best practices through peer feedback and coaching.

What is a Nueva student?

In their free time, Nueva students write programs and poetry, create laboratories in their basements and other worlds in their journals, borrow quantum mechanics textbooks from their teachers, and stay up late debating Dante.

On a Friday evening, student-built robots cruise the halls, debates about global economics unfold at teachers' desks, and goggle-clad students pursue supervised but purely extracurricular research.

Upper School Course Offerings 2022–2026

● Math

3 years required

**Math 1, 2, and 3 is an integrated math sequence in which students learn geometry, algebra 2, trigonometry, pre-calculus, basic statistics, and functions.*

Math 1*
Math 2*
Math 3*
Calculus
Statistics and Probability

Post-Calculus Options

Complex Analysis
Differential Equations
Knot Theory (Intro/Adv.)
Linear Algebra
Mathematical Modeling
Multivariable Calculus
Number Theory
Quantum Information/
Computation

Electives

Cryptography

● Lab Science

3 years required

Required Courses

Biology
Chemistry

Electives

Advanced Biological Research
Methods
Applied Molecular Biology
Bioorganic Chemistry
Calculus-based Mechanics
Computational Biology
Drug Design
Experimental Biology
Mechanisms of Cancer
Modern Physics
Neuroscience of Addiction
Optics, Imaging and
Astrophysics
Physics
Physics Research
Sensory Neuroscience
Social Action Science Research
BRT: Experiment and
Research Team

Interdisciplinary Courses

Environmental & Earth Science

● History, Social Sciences, and Civics

3 years required

Required Courses

American History
Global History I
Global History II

Senior Seminars

American Government
International Relations
Religion in America

Electives

American Indian History
California History:
Foot, Hoof, Rail
Capitalism and the Apocalypse
Death and Life in Cities
Economic Inequality
Environmental Economics
50 Words for Snow:
Translation Theory
How Not to Think Wrong
Interpreting Religions
Japanamerica:
Japanese Pop Culture
Macroeconomics
Microeconomics
Philosophy of Consciousness
and Personhood
Post-Colonial Latin-American
History
Psychology
Senior Economic Thesis
Seminar
Steel, Telescopes and Trains:
Recreating Science and
Technology
Urban Studies

● World Languages

3 years required

Chinese 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Japanese 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Spanish 1, 2, 3, 4
Advanced Spanish Classes
Spanish Communication
Spanish Film & Culture
Spanish Literature
Advanced Chinese Classes
Chinese Communication
Chinese Culture & Society

● Design Thinking, Engineering, and Computer Science

3 years required

Advanced Programming
Workshop
Chemical Engineering
Computer and Digital Security
Computer Vision
Creature Comforts
Electric Bike Building
Functional Programming
I-Lab Engineering and
Fabrication Workshop
Intro to Computer Programming
Intro to Mechanical Engineering
Machine Learning (Intro/Adv)
Mobile App Design
Object-Oriented Programming
Product Design (Intro/Adv)
Programming and Data
Analytics
Software Engineering
Video Game Development

Independent and Collaborative Study

● Literature and Communications

4 years required

Required Courses

English 9: The Great Dialogue
English 10: Landscapes of Self
and Other
English 11: American Literature

Seminars

19th Century Adaptations
Adv. Literature Seminar
Afterlives of Classics
Memoir and Adaptation
Monstrosity
Shakespeare Ever After
Tie that Binds: Family Dynamics
Where It's At: Lit. & Location
Women in Literature

Electives

Journalism
Linguistics: Logic and Language
Speech and Debate
Yearbook and Online
Media Production

Independent and Collaborative Study

● Fine and Performing Arts

2 semesters required in the same subject

Performing Arts

Fall Play
Groove Workshop
Jazz Ensemble
Music Design and Production
(Intro/Adv)
Musical Theater
Sound Experience
Steel Drums

Fine Arts

Advanced Studio Art
Drawing (Intro/Adv)
Mixed Media (Intro/Adv)
Painting (Intro/Adv)
Photography (Intro/Adv)
Sculpture (Intro/Adv)

Interdisciplinary Arts

Fabricating Your Artistic Vision
(Intro/Adv)
Stained Glass
Yearbook and Online Media
Production

● Additional Requirements

Athletics and Wellness

8 seasons required

Interdisciplinary Studies

2 years required

Nueva Quest: Pursuit of In-depth Mastery

4 years required

Social-emotional Learning

4 years required

College Matriculations & Acceptances, 2021–2024

10 or more

Brown University
Carnegie Mellon University
Columbia University
Cornell University
Harvard University
Northeastern University
Northwestern University
Princeton University
Stanford University
University of California, Berkeley
University of Chicago
University of Pennsylvania

5 or more

Amherst College
California Institute of
Technology
Carleton College
Case Western Reserve University
Dartmouth College
Duke University
Massachusetts Institute of
Technology
New York University
Pomona College
Rice University
Tufts University
University of California, Los
Angeles
University of Illinois, Urbana-
Champaign
University of Michigan
University of Southern California
Washington University in St.
Louis
Wellesley College
Yale University

1 or more

Barnard College
Boston University
Bowdoin College
Brandeis University
Bryn Mawr College
California Institute of the Arts
California Polytechnic State
University, San Luis Obispo,
California State University, Long
Beach
Carleton College
City College of San Francisco

Claremont McKenna College
Colorado College
Colorado School of Mines
Connecticut College
Drexel University
Georgetown University
Harvey Mudd College
Haverford College
Johns Hopkins University
Lehigh University
Loyola Marymount University
Macalester College
Oberlin College
Occidental College
Olin College of Engineering
Pacific Northwest College of Art
at Willamette University
Penn State University
Pitzer College
Pratt Institute
Purdue University
Reed College
Rhode Island School of Design
San Jose State University
Santa Clara University
Sarah Lawrence College
School of Visual Arts
Scripps College
Skidmore College
Smith College
Southern Methodist University
St. John's College (Annapolis)
Swarthmore College
The University of Texas
at Austin
Trinity College Dublin
Tulane University
United States Naval Academy
University of British Columbia
University of California, Davis
University of California, Irvine
University of California, Riverside
University of California,
San Diego
University of California,
Santa Cruz
University of Maryland,
College Park
University of Miami
University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

University of St Andrews
University of Toronto
University of Utah
University of Vermont
University of Washington
University of Waterloo
University of Wisconsin,
Madison
Vassar College
Villanova University
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
Wesleyan University
Whitman College
Willamette University
William & Mary
Williams College
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Acceptances (partial list)

American University
Arizona State University
Bard College
Bates College
Boston College
Bucknell University
California State Polytechnic
University (Pomona)
Chapman University
Clemson University
Colby College
Colgate University
Davidson College
DePaul University
Dickinson College
Emerson College
Emory University
Fordham University
George Washington University
Grinnell College
Hamilton College
Indiana University, Bloomington
Kenyon College
King's College London
Lafayette College
Lake Forest College
Lawrence University
Lewis & Clark College
Michigan State University
Middlebury College
Mount Holyoke College
Muhlenberg College

Oregon State University
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Rhodes College
Rose-Hulman Institute of
Technology
Rutgers University, New
Brunswick
San Diego State University
San Francisco State University
San Jose State University
Syracuse University
Temple University
The Ohio State University
Trinity College
Union College
United States Air Force
Academy
University College London
University of Arizona
University of California, Merced
University of California,
Santa Barbara
University of Colorado Boulder
University of Connecticut
University of Denver
University of Hawaii at Manoa
University of Massachusetts
Amherst
University of Oregon
University of Pittsburgh
University of Portland
University of Richmond
University of San Diego
University of San Francisco
University of the Pacific
University of Washington
Wheaton College (MA)