

Find Your

Passion

Rancho Cordova's middle and high schools have what you're looking for



**LOOK
CLOSER**

**RANCHO CORDOVA HAS UPGRADED SCHOOLS, RICH ACADEMIC OPTIONS
AND PASSIONATE TEACHERS WHO HELP ALL STUDENTS SUCCEED.**

A Great Place to Live (and Learn)

Rancho Cordova is a 'hidden gem' —
and its schools only add to the sparkle

BY THEA MARIE ROOD

The city of Rancho Cordova is on the brink of its next boom, with a major master-planned community that will add 12,000 new homes, several business centers and nine new schools. It also prides itself on partnering with both its school district and its large employers to make education a cornerstone of the city's commitment to its residents — now and in the future — and to offer students local opportunities for internships, jobs and higher education.

In fact, Rancho Cordova schools have an enviable relationship with the city. "The community really supports our district," says Debbie Bettencourt, superintendent of Folsom Cordova Unified School District. "The voters have approved four separate bonds to improve and modernize Rancho schools. That's unheard of."

Voter-approved local tax measures — including four school bonds and the city's Community Enhancement Fund — have supported education in recent years. This has meant upgraded school buildings and sports fields, imbedded technology, creative writing programs, partnerships with the Crocker Art and Sacramento Children's museums, after-school programs, and STEM classroom experiences. It also funds school gardens (in conjunction with Soil Born Farms), playgrounds that are inclusive for children with special needs, and safety equipment like high-tech football helmets to protect against concussions.

The result: state-of-the-art campuses, a passionately committed staff, and a rich and interesting cultural diversity. "There are Smart Boards and iPads in every classroom," says Rachel Nguyen, International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme coordinator at Cordova High, whose 5- and 6-year-old children attend a Rancho Cordova magnet school. "I really appreciate the technology here — it allows me to teach what would be a dry lesson in a totally interactive way. And my kindergartener is using way more technology than most kids her age."

There is also the human touch, says Norma Trujillo, parent coordinator at Mills Middle School, and the mother of five — all at (or graduates of) Rancho Cordova schools. "Our principal stresses that our school community is a 'family,'" she says. "He urges staff to get to know the students, because they're not going to learn anything if they don't know you care."

Lastly, the community has grown to include an increasingly diverse population. "Rancho Cordova is really a 'hidden gem,'" says Emily Nielsen, broker/owner of Vista Oaks Realty. "It's really cool to have so many nationalities and religions here, people from all walks of life. It creates curiosity and an open-mindedness."

**"There
are Smart
Boards and
iPads in every
classroom."**

RACHEL NGUYEN
IB Programme
Coordinator

PHOTOS COURTESY
FCUSD



Shayla Nuttall joined the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme at Mitchell Middle School as an eighth-grader. She's continuing her IB path at Cordova High School.
PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES



Igniting Young Minds

Middle schools
challenge students with
IB and STEM programs

BY THEA MARIE ROOD

When Shayla Nuttall enrolled in the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme at Mitchell Middle School, she felt it was a perfect fit. “It was a great change for me,” says Shayla, now a junior at Cordova High. “It felt much more challenging and rigorous.”

She gives an example of a Spanish course at Mitchell, where they learned the language but also focused heavily on Spanish culture. “That was totally cool,” she says, adding as an international program, there is always a global perspective in IB work. But in Rancho Cordova, this perspective is intensified by the cultural diversity among her classmates: “It’s so interesting to walk around and see all cultures. And it will definitely help me go out to the workforce and work with people from different backgrounds.”

Shayla also feels her committed classmates add to the richness of the coursework. “What I find in IB is students are very engaged in their learning,” she says. “And you really

learn something because you are with other students who want to learn. It’s great to continue on with them.”

The other middle school in Rancho Cordova — Mills — offers another intriguing academic option: a special STEM Academy (science, technology, engineering and math). “This program is asking kids to embrace all the subjects all at one time in an investigative and exploratory manner,” says Mark Arnez, an eighth grade math teacher and the math division lead for STEM. “And what we find is the smartest kids — the straight-A kids — struggle with this. ‘What do I do? Where are the instructions?’ We tell them, ‘There aren’t any.’”

He contrasts this to traditional teaching, where kids learn, “But they don’t learn to think or get excited about innovation.” Once they get used to this new approach, “They really

“Students are
very engaged in
their learning.”

SHAYLA NUTTALL
Former Mitchell Middle School
student

come alive — from black and white to full color,” he says.

The STEM program also has an annual camping trip. Last year, 60 kids spent three days in Yosemite National Park. There were hours of activities, including teams charged with creating a Rube Goldberg project. “The goal of these contraptions was to release a ball at one end and pop a balloon at the other,” says Arnez. “They used electricity, Newton’s Laws, a chemical reaction. And they were jumping in the air, hugging each other, when it worked.”

“You are never going to see them doing that in a traditional setting,” he says.

THE SOCIAL NETWORK



Parents know the power that peer groups have on a young person’s education. Just ask Karma Nuttall, mother of 16-year-old Shayla.

“The IB program placed Shayla in a community with highly motivated students,” Nuttall says. “They really keep each other going.”

In fact, Nuttall feels that discussion-based learning with peers creates a level

of inquiry that makes students successful in school, and bodes well for their future. “They become (intellectual) risk-takers and very open-minded,” she says.

“These are the same traits they need as college students and just as people — mothers and fathers, employees and employers.”

She also appreciates the diversity of backgrounds in Rancho Cordova and

the resulting wide range of perspectives in an IB classroom. “Shayla has always been more naturally agreeable, but my younger son is a child that likes to be *right*,” she says with a laugh. “The Mitchell IB program helped him learn to work with others and respect others’ viewpoints. Both my kids gained skills they need for the future.”

PHOTO COURTESY FCUSD



Randy Moya, who spent years as a school resource officer in Rancho Cordova schools, says he wants to give students a positive impression of authorities.
PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES

Creating a *Safe* School Culture

Officer reflects on how district supports positive schools

BY THEA MARIE ROOD

CULTIVATING POSITIVE, SAFE CAMPUSES

Folsom Cordova Unified School District ensures that all students feel safe and supported. The district's Child Welfare Coordinator Scott Meyer oversees the programs that contribute to a positive culture at every school. These include:

PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Support)

Proactive teams of staff, parents and students address specific campus issues such as building relationships.

Professional emotional support

Professional therapists at each school site offer individual and group counseling (girl empowerment/anger management), as well as staff training.

Anti-bullying program

Includes online and anonymous reporting.

"Cool to Be Kind" Week

Each year, students, staff and families create weeklong character-building activities meant to support school climate. This year's theme was "Be a Superhero" and administrators on every campus wore capes.

In the years Randy Moya served as a school resource officer in Rancho Cordova schools, his patrol car always got a lot of attention when it was parked out in front of a school — but it usually wasn't there for the reason you may think.

Typically, Moya was just peeking in on classrooms, talking to staff about concerns or chatting with kids in the cafeteria during lunch.

"I'm just here to hang out with you guys," he would tell them.

School officers in Rancho Cordova schools make it a point to know students for the good things they do. It's just one example of the district's approach to creating a positive environment for students, one in which students know they are safe and cared for. Other examples include counselors that address social-emotional issues, students who stand up for their peers, and parents who make great efforts to get involved.

Norma Trujillo has five children who have attended Rancho Cordova schools. Her oldest, Seth, is now a freshman at UC Santa Barbara.

"When my kids were in elementary school, I volunteered for one hour a week in each of their classrooms," she says. "It helped the teachers, but it also let me see how they're doing, who they're hanging out with, how the teachers and staff interacted with the kids."

"I had no safety concerns — ever," she says.

In fact, she suggests that this is the best way for parents to evaluate where their children go to school. "We encourage [prospective and existing] parents to visit and stop by," says Trujillo, who is now the parent coordinator for Mills Middle School.

For Moya, the former school resource officer, creating safety on campus is all about relationships. The district's problem-oriented policing approach supports this by focusing on issues, as opposed to singling out a student for punishment. He knows the importance of this kind of positive interaction with authorities.

"In 1973, when I was 7 or 8, my older brother committed a crime in Elk Grove Park," he recalls. "An officer came to our house looking for him and I happened to open the door. 'You must be the good one,' he said to me. A couple of weeks later, he came by with a Sac County Sheriff's patch — I still have it."

Moya believes this is why he went into law enforcement — and he hopes to give other kids similar lifelong memories: For example, Moya met a boy on campus whose main transportation to school was his bike.

"I heard the bike got stolen, and I felt bad," he says. "So I took him to Wal-Mart and bought him a bike, a helmet and a lock. It's my way of giving back."

**"We
encourage
parents to visit
and stop by."**

NORMA TRUJILLO
Parent Coordinator

Cordova High School teacher Rachel Nguyen says she is constantly impressed by her students, who often overcome great challenges.
PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES

Giving *Credit* Where Due

Cordova High School teacher is amazed by her hard-working IB students

BY THEA MARIE ROOD

When Rachel Nguyen came to Cordova High School three years ago, it was because her new teaching job met both her criteria: a culturally diverse school and a newly-forming International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. At her interview, she told the assistant principal, "I'm hoping to build a program I can bring my own children to."

And in fact, her kindergartner and first grader are on track for their mother's high school: They attend a nearby elementary school. "I want my kids to grow up with students like I teach," she says.

It's safe to say that Nguyen is crazy about her students. "This is the most diverse school I've ever walked into," says Nguyen, who is the school's IB Diploma Programme Coordinator. "There are these rich heritages and this super community of learners. Every one of my classes is so interesting."

She also tells stories of the challenges her students face, which can easily bring her

to tears, but in the end, leave her even more impressed. One young woman in her class travels 40 minutes on public transportation to get to school every day. A young man works in a restaurant to help support his family — but snagged extra hours this summer so he could buy himself a laptop.

The rigorous IB program itself is daunting, Nguyen says. It includes coursework, a 4,000-word essay, prepping for the diploma exam and 150 hours of some type of service. "That's a lot — on top of three hours of homework every night," she says.

Many of her students also participate in demanding extracurriculars like student government, drama and media. "I see students working hard every day, wanting to improve themselves," Nguyen says.

But even at this exhausting pace, her students question and challenge, and discuss heady intellectual concepts, like the central question in her Theory of Knowledge course: How do we know what we know?

"They are brilliant, hard-working individuals ... and this is a beautiful, amazing group of people," Nguyen says. "There is strength and creativity and a sense of community here."

"It is a safe, beautiful, lush and friendly campus," she says.

"I see students working hard every day, wanting to improve themselves."

RACHEL NGUYEN
Cordova High School teacher/
IB Diploma Programme
Coordinator

WHAT SHOULD FAMILIES KNOW ABOUT THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL?



"Students have an opportunity to try out a career before they get out of high school so they can get their feet wet. We also have articulations for that, so they can get college credit for some of our courses and they have opportunities for mentoring or internships."

Faith Caplan
Cordova High School
engineering teacher



"There's a lot of cool clubs and academies that we have set up this year. I think we're up to 29 different clubs that we have on campus that range anywhere from guitar club to California Scholarship Federation to different ethnic clubs."

Michael Wegsteen
Cordova High School math teacher



"The art program is growing and it's definitely attracting families to our campus ... we actually do in-depth projects, which gives the students a chance to reflect on themselves and the world around them."

Natalie Eck
Mitchell Middle School
visual arts teacher



"If a student attends their local school they are more likely to participate in before- and after-school activities like clubs or sports. Also, students are able to more easily develop friendships with peers from their community while at school."

Zandi Llanos
Mitchell Middle School Spanish
language acquisition teacher

PHOTOS BY ANNE STOKES

Explore

Your Campuses

BY MATTHEW CRAGGS

A positive school atmosphere at Mills Middle School

Find out what's new and exciting at Folsom Cordova USD's middle and high schools



W.E. MITCHELL MIDDLE SCHOOL

2100 Zinfandel Drive, Rancho Cordova • 916-294-9050

Mascot: Marauder

Principal: Jim Huber

Academic Focus: International Baccalaureate Programme



ACADEMICS

International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme encourages collaborative learning while celebrating diversity and empowering students to solve problems.

Spanish and Mandarin **foreign language classes**.

Project Lead the Way has students writing code for **video game avatars!**

ARTS

Learn to prepare home-cooked meals or begin your career as a chef in the culinary arts program.

Expanded arts offerings includes Band, Choir and Orchestra.

FACILITIES

Recent **campus-wide modernization** upgraded the grounds, athletic fields, buildings, and furniture.

Interactive Smart Boards in every classroom.

A new robotics lab coming in 2017.

Two **computer labs** and hundreds of Chromebooks to research, complete, and submit homework electronically.

ETC.

Enjoy a before-school dance party during **Music Mondays** on the quad!

Clubs for all interests, including Drama, Science, Dance (and even **Harry Potter**).

Advisory Class at the beginning of each school day brings out the best in every student.

MILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL

10439 Coloma Road, Rancho Cordova • 916-294-9045

Mascot: Mustang

Principal: Peter Maroon

Academic Focus: STEM Academy

ACADEMICS

Schoolwide emphasis on **science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)** means hands-on projects and examining topics across multiple disciplines.

STEM Camp gets students outside — and geared up with tents and sleeping bags — in places such as Yosemite and Lake Natoma for field work, experiments and projects.

Take a college tour at CSU Sacramento, UC Davis and CSU Chico with chances to explore a college town atmosphere.

ARTS

Expanded music program, with provided instruments.

FACILITIES

A **complete 2010 remodel** upgraded buildings and filled classrooms with ergonomic furniture and interactive Smart Boards.

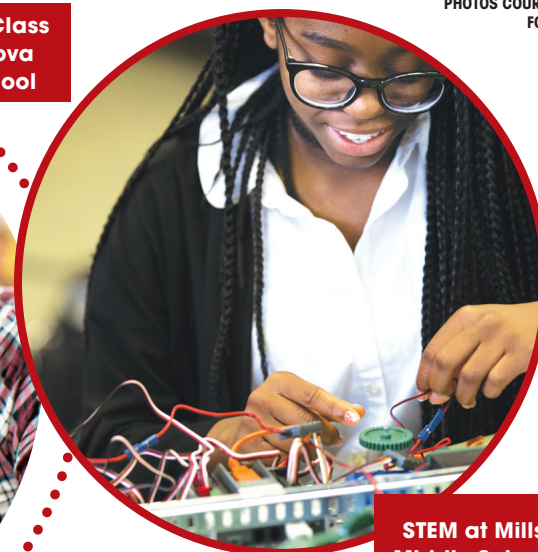
Students have **access to Chromebooks** for schoolwork and projects.

Free breakfasts and lunches for all students, thanks to a federal grant.

Music Class at
Mills Middle
School



Science Class
at Cordova
High School



STEM at Mills
Middle School

Music Class at
Cordova High
School



CORDOVA HIGH SCHOOL

2239 Chase Drive, Rancho Cordova • 916-294-2450

Principal: Dan Anklam

Mascot: Lancer

Academic Focus: International Baccalaureate Programme, Career Academies



ETC.

Annual **multicultural fair** with performances, food and activities draws nearly 600 community members.

Clubs for all interests (Bikes, Advertising, Garden, Disc Golf and Makers).

Cheer on your teachers in **staff cook-offs**.

Last year, **Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS)** helped cut the biggest disciplinary issues — tardiness and dress code violations — by 52 percent.

The **Boys To Men** program focuses on character building, life skills and etiquette through field trips and guest speakers.

On-site **guidance counselors** and a marriage family therapist.

ACADEMICS

The **International Baccalaureate Programme** offers a global perspective and cultivates alternative ways of thinking (and appeals to colleges).

Career Academies students gain real-world experiences in one of four pathways: engineering, business, agriculture and culinary arts.

The **College Career Center** helps students prepare for higher education, the workforce or the military.

The **Promise Program** guarantees all graduating seniors paid tuition for their first year at Folsom Lake College.

ARTS

The new **\$22 million Performing Arts Center** has dedicated Band and Drama classrooms, a black box theater, seating for 430, scene workshop, a choir room with stadium seating, two new grand pianos and dressing rooms.

Two large **art rooms** dedicated to ceramics, 3-D art, painting and drawing.

FACILITIES

The new, two-story, **LEED-certified Science building** with decked-out chemistry labs and microscopes will appeal to future innovators.

The **upgraded cafeteria** features new seating and two, 80-inch LCD screens for movies, music or news during lunch.

Close to **50 new light poles** illuminate the campus for after-school clubs and athletics.

In 2017, a **second gym** will open with locker rooms, field houses, and additional practice space.

ETC.

Sixteen athletics programs, many coed, and rugby, a joint venture with Rancho Cordova Recreation and Park District.

With a **sense of civic pride**, students are often found in the community, helping local businesses or reading at the elementary schools.

Restorative Justice policies emphasize repairing relationships and problem solving over discipline.



College Prep

Cordova High School grads are ready for higher learning

BY MATTHEW CRAGGS

Dozens of Cordova High grads, like the ones above showing off their college gear, moved on to four-year colleges in 2016.

PHOTO COURTESY FCUSD

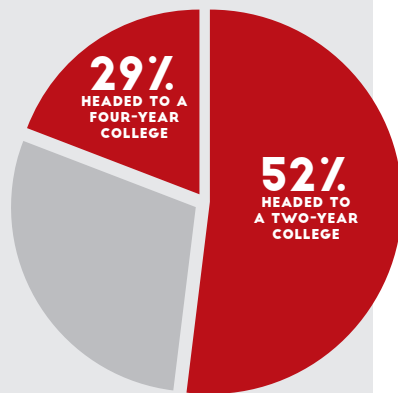
CHARTING A PATH TO COLLEGE

Cordova High School's College and Career Center is a one-stop shop for researching, selecting and applying to a two- or four-year college.

A source for college tours, community college nights, scholarship information, and free financial aid workshops, the staffed center also offers Naviance, a college- and career-planning software, which students have access to as early as 6th grade.

Of the close to 240 Cordova High seniors who used Naviance in 2015, 29 percent were headed to a four-year college and 52 percent were starting at a two-year college.

Many Cordova High students attend California State University, Sacramento, with IB students also enrolling at **Stanford University, UC campuses (Los Angeles, Santa Barbara and Merced), and additional CSUs** throughout the state.



High school can be many things for many different people, but for Anna Kucherova, Cordova High School was a rigorous academic stepping stone that offered her the opportunities to pursue higher education and remain close to her family.

"Neither of my parents were given the amazing chance to further their education and pursue initial career goals," Kucherova says. "I am receiving an education my parents never experienced."

The 2016 graduate credits Cordova High School's International Baccalaureate Programme (IB) — along with the school's sports, clubs and extracurricular activities — as a driving force that prepared her for her first semester at University of California, Merced, where she now majors in chemistry with a minor in applied mathematics.

"I will never encounter a more rigorous and eye-opening experience anywhere like I have in IB," Kucherova says. "Not only did the strenuous workload permit me to become accustomed to managing my time more critically, but every course motivated me to perceive matters in more than a single perspective."

As part of the first IB class at Cordova High School, Kucherova wasn't aware of the program before entering high school. However, once in IB, she found the demanding academic environment she needed.

"Had it not been [for] my journey through IB," Kucherova says, "high school would not have permitted me the challenge it is intended to offer every student."

And while the program was intense, Kucherova

found valuable resources in the Cordova High School staff that prepared her to apply for and attend UC Merced.

"[The staff] ensured that everyone had an equal chance to be successful, to be advised, and to be motivated," she says.

Teachers familiarized students with different types of college applications and helped with fine-tuning personal statements for UC applications. Counselors met one-on-one with students to discuss post-high school ambitions and assist with scholarships.

With financial aid secured, Kucherova chose UC Merced after a college tour provided a first-hand perspective.

"Being able to physically see, feel and participate in the atmosphere helped me to envision four years of my future on the campus."

In the newest UC campus, she appreciated the modern technology, relatively small student body and proximity to home — crucial for the 18-year-old who returns to Sacramento on the weekends to care for her grandparents.

With family at her core, she took advantage of the academic and extracurricular opportunities at Cordova High School. While following her own path, Kucherova never lost sight of her motivation.

"With my aspirations and ambitions," she says, "I intend to repay [my parents] for the mindset they have raised me in and the values they have implemented in me since birth."

"I am receiving an education my parents never experienced."

ANNA KUCHEROVA
Cordova High School
alumnus

Designing Her *Future*

Evelyn Delgado discovered her passion for structural design at Cordova High School's Engineering Polytechnical Academy. Today, she's an engineering major at California State University, Sacramento.

PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES



Cordova High School alumna designs a career in engineering

BY MATTHEW CRAGGS

Prior to entering Cordova High School, Evelyn Delgado's career blueprint was a work in progress.

"Ever since I was little, I loved drawing," Evelyn says. As a child, Evelyn stared at buildings, learning to sketch their architectural features. "I looked into becoming an architect, but I was always drawn to engineering."

At Cordova High School, Evelyn had the opportunity to explore engineering and, along the way, found a passion for a career and a muse in the Eiffel Tower.

Now, as a 19-year-old in her third semester at California State University, Sacramento (CSUS), Evelyn attributes Cordova High School's Engineering Polytechnical Academy with starting her on a career path.

Exposed to a variety of engineering disciplines — construction management, digital electronics, and civil engineering — Evelyn discovered a passion for the latter during a class project to design a truss bridge.

"What I loved about that project, yeah, it was applied physics, but it was all hands-on," she says. "We got balsa wood, built the bridges, and used a stress test machine to see where the bridge broke when applying force."

A few science fair projects followed and Evelyn joined the school's ACE Mentor Program, where she led her team in designing their own version of the Golden 1 Center. Through

the architecture, construction and engineering program, students were connected with relevant industry, community and business members to work through design challenges and learn about careers in their field. The team's completed design for the Golden 1 Center earned Evelyn college units toward her major.

After graduating from Cordova High School in 2015, Evelyn chose CSUS for its engineering program, proximity to her family and the campus diversity. Majoring in Civil Engineering, Evelyn discovered she was a step ahead in her engineering software skills.

"[In high school] we worked on Autodesk Inventor — software that creates 3-D versions of what we're designing — and it really helped the transition to AutoCAD the first year at Sac State."

While Cordova High School helped Evelyn explore her career options, find her passion, and equip her with applicable skills, it's what she plans to do with her experience that's the most structurally sound.

"I look forward to designing structures people can enjoy with their family," Evelyn says. "Bridges, things that everyone can enjoy walking or biking on."

As for the Eiffel Tower, the love that started it all, "I haven't had a chance to see it in person," Evelyn says. "But I plan to take French classes, become fluent and study abroad."

"I look forward to designing structures people can enjoy with their family."

EVELYN DELGADO
Cordova High School alumna

FOUR PATHWAYS, COUNTLESS JOURNEYS

Career academies offered at Cordova High School



Engineering Polytechnical Academy

From the metalwork that forms the buildings to the architectural designs guiding the soldered steel, shape tomorrow's skyline in civil engineering or construction management.



Business Technology Academy

Tackle the tech. Learn Photoshop, web design and the IT skills necessary to support the businesses of the future.



Agriculture Academy

Nurture the school's garden, study food sustainability and prepare floral arrangements for monthly orders from the community.



Culinary Academy

Budding chefs and restaurateurs study hospitality management and food service and safety, while running the school's catering company out of a professional kitchen.

Prepared for the Future

School district is ready to meet the needs of 6,452 new students with Rio del Oro community

BY THEA MARIE ROOD



An artist rendering of what a new junior high/high school campus could look like in Rancho Cordova. PHOTO COURTESY FCUSD

A STRONG PARTNERSHIP

are you dreaming of a place to put down roots, raise your children, walk to school, live near work? Rancho Cordova might be creating that very dream.

At build-out, Rio del Oro, Rancho Cordova's master-planned community at White Rock and Douglas roads, will have 12,000 new homes, six elementary schools, a middle/high school campus, parks and sports fields, and a large business hub. It will also be pedestrian-friendly, with convenient public transportation and "village centers" housing grocery stores and other retail.

"This is a big deal, not just a little subdivision," says Emily Nielsen, broker/owner of Vista Oaks Realty. "And it won't just be single-family homes, but also condos and apartments, all with different price points. So even if you're a first-time home buyer or a renter, there will be a lot of options."

This built-in economic range is by design. "There is a big push from the city to create and maintain diversity," says Matt Washburn, director of facilities and planning for FCUSD. "Both in the existing Rancho Cordova and the new."

Interestingly, Rio del Oro has been in the works since the early 2000s. "The project was moving along, but then the economy hit, so it was put on hold," says Washburn. Today,

with the economy picking up, Washburn predicts the development will break ground within the year.

The district anticipates 6,452 new students, and has created an elementary school "prototype" — able to be used many times over — that includes space for collaborative learning and special education. The shared junior high/high school campus is also being thoughtfully planned and will contain "joint use" facilities, such as athletic facilities and a library.

"There will be separation between the schools," says Washburn, "but there can be lots of sharing. The same counselors, for example; or middle school students who need to take a high school class easily can."

Rio del Oro is by far the most ambitious plan for Rancho Cordova, but isn't the only one. For instance, Westborough, a development by GenCorp being planned south of Folsom Boulevard, will add another 4,000 homes.

But what if you don't want to wait that long? "There are lots of popular [existing] neighborhoods for families," says Nielsen, who points to Stone Creek, Capital Village and Somerset Ranch for new homes and newly-built parks and recreation. "There are also pretty, older neighborhoods close to the river, tucked back in there by the bike trail, with mature shade trees."

"This is a big deal, not just a little subdivision."

EMILY NIELSEN
Broker/owner, Vista Oaks Realty

It is rare to find a city with a self-described "close relationship" with its school district — but Rancho Cordova is one of those rarities. "The community as a whole puts a focus on education to stay healthy, vibrant and safe," says City Manager Cyrus Abhar.

For example, the city created the Community Enhancement Fund with up to \$2.8 million in annual grants. In 2015-16, this meant:

- All third-graders went to the Effie Yeaw Nature Center
- All elementary school students experienced Crocker Art Museum's award-winning mobile "art ark"
- Cordova High's football team received high-tech helmets (the first U.S. city to offer this NFL-level of protection)
- Cordova High's Performing Arts Center received two grand pianos

The school district also recently announced a Promise Program — offering all high school graduates free tuition at Folsom Lake Community College — and a new partnership with a soon-to-be-announced major employer is aiming to provide entry-level jobs to Cordova High students, helping them launch their careers.

10 Reasons to Take a Closer Look

BY MATTHEW CRAGGS



1 THE ONLY IB PROGRAMMES IN THE DISTRICT

The world-renowned International Baccalaureate Programme (IB) offered at Mitchell Middle School and Cordova High School gives students a global view on education. Encouraging multiple approaches and ways of thinking, IB's rigorous academics prepare students for college, with some courses transferring for college credit.

2 STEM-FOCUSED MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

Who wouldn't love playing video games in school? The science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs at Mills Middle School and Cordova High School feature hands-on experiments, state-of-the-art labs, classes in robotics and yes, coding lessons that involve video games.

3 CAREER-ORIENTED PATHWAYS

Cordova High School's Academies — Engineering Polytechnical, Business Technology, Agriculture, and Culinary — provide a pathway to a wide-range of in-demand careers through hands-on experience, projects, field trips and internships with local employers including Aerojet and Intel.

4 UPGRADED FACILITIES

Recently remodeled campuses feature upgraded buildings, grounds and athletic fields with improved wi-fi and outdoor lighting. Updated classrooms feature interactive Smart Boards, Chromebooks, and ergonomic chairs and desks. Cordova High's new cafeteria and additional shaded seating make lunchtime more fun. And they're not done yet. More robotics labs, new gyms, and athletic field upgrades are coming soon.

5 THE COOLEST ARTS CENTER IN THE AREA

Drama nerds rejoice! Cordova High's new, 430-seat Performing Arts Center — complete with scene shop and dressing rooms — anchors a district-wide reinvigorated arts program with Drama, Visual Arts, Choir, and Band and Orchestra with district-provided instruments.

6 THE DIVERSE ATMOSPHERE

Dozens of languages are spoken across the campuses. Mills Middle School offers on-site interpreters. Schools reflect the rich diversity in the Rancho Cordova community, which gives students a chance to make friends and work alongside peers from different cultural and social backgrounds — just like they'll do in the real world.

7 A POSITIVE SCHOOL VIBE

Numerous activities contribute to the positive school culture at Cordova schools. Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) favors positive behavior in oneself and others through activities such as student-made films, Cool To Be Kind week, and daily affirmations. That positivity ripples out into the broader community, as students can often be found cleaning up their neighborhoods, reading at elementary schools and interning at local businesses.

8 FREE COLLEGE!

Free tuition for the first year at Folsom Lake College is guaranteed to all Rancho Cordova graduating seniors through the Promise Program. This innovative grant program was made possible when the Rancho Cordova City Council approved an allocation from a local sales tax measure. Promise Program is a commitment to the city's young people to help them attend college and achieve their academic goals.

9 ATHLETICS

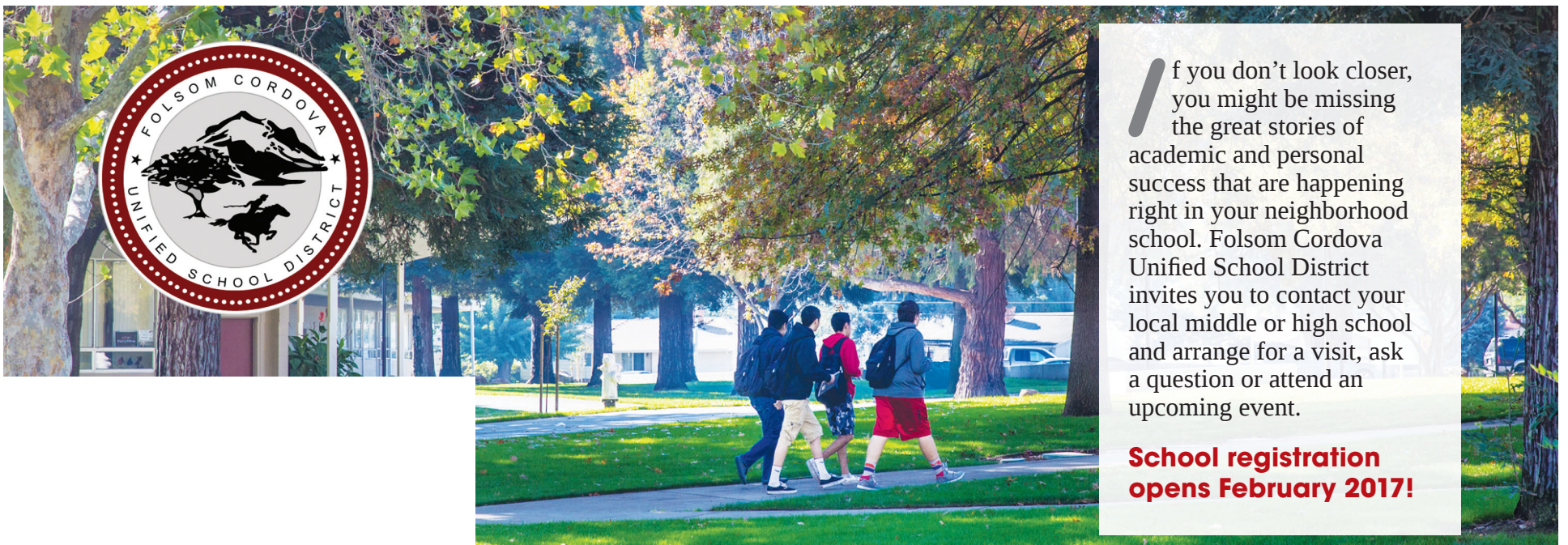
Coed sports — such as basketball, baseball, wrestling and swimming — for all interests and skill levels are offered in middle schools. And at Cordova High School, all football players are equipped with high-tech helmets that help prevent head injuries, thanks to a generous grant from the city.

10 HELP PLANNING THE FUTURE

The College and Career Center at Cordova High School is a one-stop resource for planning and executing a student's path to college, a career or the military.

Discover the *Opportunities*

See for yourself why Rancho Cordova schools are putting students on a path for success!



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