



Congratulations

Lamorinda Graduates of All Ages!

Graduating Kindergartner
Ryan Lenahan

Graduates of the Nurtury Preschool at Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church celebrate

School Transitions—Exciting and Scary at the Same Time

By Andrea A. Firth

It is graduation time, and students across Lamorinda are preparing for ceremonies and celebrations to mark their passage from one phase of learning to the next. Whether it is the bump from preschool to elementary school or the big move from high school to living and studying away at college, school transitions are challenging steps at every age.

Preschool to Elementary: "Children in preschool do feel the stress of moving on to kindergarten," states Dot Feist, who has been the Director of Joyful Beginnings Preschool in Lafayette for the past twenty years. Although the curriculum for preschool children has evolved to be more focused on reading and cognitive skills, strong self-esteem and socialization are the essential elements for success in kindergarten, according to Feist. "Kindergarten requires children to be more self-directed," she explains. "If the child is not socially and emotionally ready for kindergarten it will hinder his ability to learn."

5th Grade to Middle School: The transition to middle school in sixth grade represents the onset of the individuation process where children start to separate

from their parents, according to Heidi Felt, counselor at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School (JM). "It's a conflicting time," says Felt. "These students are caught between childhood and adulthood. They struggle between wanting to be independent and still needing their parents."

For sixth graders, Felt recommends that parents stay involved with checking homework and managing school progress. "We live under this false impression that if we give a middle school student an organizational planner and couple of binders that they will be organized," she says. "The task of organization is often greater than their ability. And let's face it, most adolescents are resistant to adult advice."

Felt suggests that parents slow down and explain things on a very basic level. It may be helpful for the parent to model behavior for the child. For example, if the child refuses to ask a teacher for help, the parent should have the child watch and listen as the parent contacts the teacher to request assistance.

"The goal of middle school is learning how to learn," says Felt. "That includes learning how to be or-

ganized, use time well, plan for long-term assignments and tests, employ resources, and ask for help.

8th Grade to High School: Irene Coleman, a marriage and family therapist with a practice in Lafayette, encourages parents and students to view the transition from eighth grade to high school as an opportunity to re-evaluate what is and isn't working in their lives. "It's a time to shape where you are going and to set goals," advises Coleman. "Students at this age have less resiliency as social groups shift and academic pressure increases."

One of Coleman's key recommendations to new high school students to help them to achieve success in ninth grade is to get enough sleep. "A study from the University of Minnesota has shown that high school students require 9 1/4 hours of sleep daily for their brains to function optimally," states Coleman. She recommends allowing children to catch up on sleep at the weekends. "It's better than having them function at a deficit all the time," she explains.

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As Gas Prices Change, So Do Some Lamorinda Residents' Daily Lives

By Jennifer Wake

For some Lamorinda residents, the recent spike in gas prices has not made much of a difference in their lives. They still cue up in the drive-thru lane at local fast food restaurants, car motors burning fuel as they wait to place their orders. For others, the spike is not only putting a dent in their pocket books, but is making them rethink how they accomplish daily tasks or even how they make a living.

One Lafayette mom has changed how she drives around town. Determined to cut down on fuel consumption, Joanne Tan maps out errands and child drop-offs so that she is making less stops.

"I combine chores and plan my driving route in the most efficient manner so that one trip will take care of multiple chores: dropping off my son for a piano lesson off of Mt. Diablo Blvd, then going to Trader Joes, then on the way back, dropping by Bank of the West, then picking up my boy," Tan says. "Planning ahead saves me gas and time."

Conrad Basset, who is the owner/managing partner of Outsource Relocation Partners in Moraga, is on the road a lot for business and has made a similar shift in how he schedules time on the road.

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