

### SCHOOL CALENDAR

#### School Governing Board Meetings

##### Acalanes Union

High School District  
Board Room AUHSD Office  
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lafayette  
Wednesday, Aug. 20 at 7:30 pm

##### Lafayette School District

LAFSD Office  
3477 School Street, Lafayette  
Monday, July 28 at 7:00 pm  
Monday, Aug. 25 at 7:00 pm

##### Moraga School District

Joaquin Moraga Intermediate  
School Auditorium  
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga  
Tuesday, Aug. 19 at 7:30 pm

##### Orinda Union School District

OUSD Office  
8 Altarinda Road, Orinda  
Monday, Aug. 25 at 4:00 pm

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www.lamorindaweekly.com

# Lamorinda Schools

## Lamorinda Families Host Spanish Exchange Students

By Jean Follmer



Spanish exchange students and Lamorinda hosts enjoying a Giants game

Photo provided

## Changing Times in College Admission

By Elizabeth La Scala, Ph.D.

As a college advisor, I am often asked the question "Why has getting into college become so stressful?" What was once simple and straight-forward is now more complex. What has changed? First, thanks to the Baby Boomer generation, there are greater numbers of high school graduates and more of them want to go to college. For many, a college degree has replaced the high school diploma as the minimum standard of educational achievement. In response to the greater demand for an undergraduate degree, colleges have escalated marketing efforts to attract qualified applicants. And, of course, technology makes it easier than ever to access college websites, take virtual tours and prepare college applications.

But this is only part of the answer. Digging a bit deeper, we see that more students are applying to the 100 most prestigious colleges and universities in the country. Simply put, more students are competing for the same number of spots at the most highly selective institutions. Heightened by media attention, it appears more difficult to gain college admission. The overall impact on students and parents is

stressful. The pressure mounts to take more challenging coursework, register for increasingly earlier test prep, and hire expensive consultants to help students "get into" the right college. With all the hype, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that it is the student who should be highly selective in the college he chooses.

My goal as a professional college advisor is to offer a few simple guidelines to help students and their families streamline the college admission process. First, control what you can control. This involves figuring out what's important to the student, her needs, interests, and academic aspirations. It also means taking an honest look at areas for improvement and focusing on these during the academic year. Next, plan ahead and start early. The senior year is far more fun and rewarding if you prepare the groundwork by doing what needs to be done in the sophomore and junior years. It is important to do a thorough college search, take the necessary tests, adhere to deadlines and prepare strong applications. No matter when you get started, the secret is good organization and planning, and applying to colleges that are a good match. It is

helpful to remember that a good, even a great education can be had at more than 2500 colleges nationwide, and most of these institutions accept 50% to 80% of their applicants.

My column will appear regularly through the college cycle from application to acceptance. Parents and students can look forward to a timeline of what needs to get done and when. The topics will include admission requirements, options for standardized testing and how to prepare, the college search, college applications, essays and personal statements, how and when to ask for teacher recommendations, college visits and financial aid. I will provide some practical guidance and suggest websites and other resources for more information. For now, enjoy the last few weeks of summer. In August we will get to work



Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D. works as an independent college advisor in Lafayette. Dr. LaScala draws on 20 years of experience in higher education and research to customize the college search and admission process for students and their families. She has 3 daughters—one a graduate of Cal Poly (San Luis Obispo), one a sophomore at MIT and the youngest, a junior in high school.

Dr. LaScala can be contacted at [elizabeth@doingcollege.com](mailto:elizabeth@doingcollege.com) or (925) 891-4491.

Several Lamorinda families are hosting students from the Basque region of Spain this summer. The exchange program is managed by Edu-Culture International (ECI), a non-profit organization based in Berkeley.

Local ECI Leader Ken Beatus said the students are engaged in Bay Area activities during the day. Outings have included visits to the Golden Gate Bridge, UC Berkeley, Golden Gate Park, Union Square and the fortune cookie factory. The students also partook in a scavenger hunt in downtown Lafayette. During the hunt, they visited the Soccer Post and Take One Video before heading to Trader Joe's to find a product made in Spain. Beatus said they also "went to the beautiful Lafayette Reservoir and played soccer there." When Ken spoke to the Lamorinda Weekly, the students were busy learning about Thanksgiving at the Orinda Community Church; in addition to learning about Plymouth Rock and the pilgrims, they made and enjoyed an entire Thanksgiving Feast.

Teacher Aitzier Goicuria traveled to the United States with the students. She said her students are benefiting greatly from the experience: "The relationship between the students and the (host) families has been great. We really appreciate the generosity of the American people. This is a way to grow in our mind and think...to take time to know other people and their cultures." Beatus agreed saying "I'm really impressed by the generosity of the Lamorinda families."

Moraga resident Bonnie MacNab and husband Steve Hanna have been thrilled with their experience as host parents. MacNab said "We had not done it (hosted) before, but would do it again in a heartbeat. Our Jon is absolutely delightful...he's a wonderful guy." MacNab said her son, Ryan Hanna, and Jon have developed a great friendship this summer. She said "Ryan went to Spain this summer with ECI. He loved it. He'll be a junior next year and he'll absolutely go again next year." MacNab's experience with ECI "has been top notch. It's a first class operation."

The Caronna family of Orinda is hosting Aitor this summer. As the parents of two daughters, John Caronna said they thought it would be fun to host a boy. Caronna said "It's been a good experience for my girls, my wife, for Aitor and for me. He's so welcome to come back." The Caronnas have also enjoyed getting to know other families that are participating in the exchange program. They went to a 4th of July party at Bonnie MacNab's house and Caronna said "Bonnie's attitude was great. She ended up having 7-9 families there. It was a blast. That warmth was really nice."

The Peacock family of Lafayette is hosting Leire. Janice Peacock said her daughter, Kiera, and Leire "are both single children. This has been a nice experience for both of them." Peacock said "I think one of the things that helped was Phyllis from ECI said to try and treat the exchange student as a visiting niece or nephew as opposed to an

honored guest." Peacock said this helped Leire settle in and feel comfortable helping herself in the house. Peacock also said "The time has gone by very quickly. Already we're in a panic about things we haven't done." Peacock suggested that future host families "try to plan some things out because the time will go by incredibly quickly." She also said it's important to show the students about American life at home: "They get a lot of touristy outings in San Francisco during the day." It's important to teach them about American foods, even some American television instead of just focusing on "we're going to the movies today and tomorrow we're going to the zoo."

ECI Director Phyllis O'Neill said ECI has worked with lots of Lamorinda families in both hosting and traveling capacities. O'Neill said they helped Campolindo High School host a group of students from Austria last February. She also mentioned a group of Campolindo students is spending the summer in Germany as part of an ECI trip. O'Neill said the foreign exchange experience "really changes lives dramatically." On a personal note, she said "I've hosted over 20 students myself and my kids have friends all over the world." As a former educator, O'Neill understands the amazing experience a new culture brings to the educational environment. For more information on ECI programs, contact Phyllis at [Phyllis@educulture.org](mailto:Phyllis@educulture.org) or 510-845-3925.

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The Bay Area Writing Project's Young Writers' Camp (<http://www.bayareawritingproject.org/>), for students entering grades 4-8, came to Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School for three weeks this summer. The hours of writing culminated in a public reading by the youthful authors of their own work at the Storyteller in Lafayette. We invited the writers to send us some of their creations—we hope you enjoy these two poems by elementary school students:

**I Am**  
By Addison Naton  
(The first two words of each line were provided to the writer)

I am cool  
I wonder what would happened if I was a squirrel  
I see my friends around me  
I hear my family telling me I'm special  
I want my family to love me  
I am myself

I pretend I am a warrior  
I feel that I must right the wrong  
I enjoy to play with my family  
I like to see who I love happy  
I respect all people  
I am myself

I understand war is evil  
I say we should stop war  
I dream that I can make a difference  
I try to make people respect Earth  
I hope war stops and Earth gets cleaned up  
I am myself

**Beach**  
By Ava Tajbakhsh  
My special place is the beach  
The sun in my hair, the sand on my feet  
I lay on a towel, getting a tan  
I run in the water again and again  
I swim with the dolphins  
(yeah, I wish...)  
I'm lucky if I see a fish!

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