

Acalanes High School • Bentley School • Burton Valley • Camino Pablo • Campolindo • Contra Costa Jewish Day School • Del Rey • Donald L. Rheem • Glorietta • Happy Valley • Joaquin Moraga

Lamorinda Schools

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Lamorinda Public Schools Ace the API

By Andrea A. Firth

All of the school districts in Lamorinda posted positive growth in academic performance over the past year as measured by the California Department of Education's API—academic performance index. Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD), which includes Acalanes, Campolindo, and Miramonte High Schools, showed an improved API score for the fourth consecutive year and continues to rank as the highest performing high school district in California based on this measure.

"While the API is an important number... I am most pleased by continuous improvement, which our students have demonstrated," states AUHSD Superintendent Jim Negri. He attributes the District's academic success to a number of factors including good quality instruction, highly motivated students, increased funding from the Measure A parcel tax, and a strong partnership with the K through 8th grade feeder districts.

Superintendents from the three K through 8th districts in Lamorinda concurred with Negri's assessment also citing the commitment of staff, students, parents and community to the education process and funding support from parent clubs, PTAs, and the education foundations as a key factor to their successes. "I have been awed by the quality of instruction and the high levels of student engagement," reports Dr. Fred Brill, Superintendent of the Lafayette School District. Dr. Brill recently returned to Lafayette and took over as the top manager the district. "It also helps that our parents share our high expectations and provide exceptional support in our schools and in their homes. Education is highly valued in our community," he adds.

All of the Lamorinda schools scored well above

the statewide goal of 800 for the API, which is scored on a scale of 200 to 1,000. With many schools in the area already achieving scores above 900, could the districts' be reaching an API ceiling? AUHSD's Negri thinks not. "The top API for a high school is 985," states Negri. "There is still room for growth as each school demonstrated this year. I am most interested in the continued growth of all students over time," he adds.

Orinda Union School District's Superintendent Dr. Joe Jaconette (whose district score is 955) acknowledges that API scores may rise and fall each year but feels confident in the ultimate outcome for his district. "We realize that our high scores have the potential for fluctuation and small changes in student achievement are readily evident," states Jaconette. "As long as our focus remains on students, we believe our resulting API will be strong."

And what if the schools' API scores drop, what then? Moraga School District (MSD) Superintendent Rick Schafer states clearly that

his district's focus is student learning, not test scores. However, he explains that student test performance reviews can sometimes identify gaps in learning. For example, a drop in scores at one MSD school revealed that students were learning a measured standard after the academic testing was administered. A simple change in the curriculum resulted in improved scores. "Did the learning increase?" asks Schafer. "Probably not because these students were learning the standard just the timing for measuring their mastery was different than the tests' timing," he responds to his own inquiry.

So it appears that as the Lamorinda public schools continue to set higher academic goals for themselves, for now they continue to achieve them. "If we are going to function as an effective learning organization, then we have to look at the hard data, and consider how we might do better next time around," states Brill of Lafayette. "Good educators are always considering how they might improve, regardless of their level of success."

Academic Performance Index Scores* Across Lamorinda		
District/School	2007 Base	2008 Growth
Acalanes Union High School District**	882	886
Acalanes	893	896
Campolindo	908	909
Miramonte	905	916
Lafayette School District	914	916
Burton Valley	935	928
Happy Valley	946	938
Lafayette Elementary	906	924
Springhill	904	898
Stanley Intermediate	904	910
Moraga School District	942	947
Camino Pablo	957	949
Rheem	954	962
Los Perales	954	959
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate	929	938
Orinda Union School District	948	955
Del Rey	949	963
Glorietta	948	959
Sleepy Hollow	977	977
Wagner Ranch	951	955
Orinda Intermediate	941	948

*The 2008 Growth API summarizes a district or school performance on the 2008 Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program and 2008 California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) tests.

**Also includes scores from Las Lomas and Del Oro High Schools and the Center for Independent Study

Lafayette Brownies Provide Backpacks

Submitted by Robin Longchamps



After a successful year of fund raising, Lafayette Brownie Troop 2050 of Burton Valley Elementary happily donated over \$200 in backpacks and school supplies to needy families affiliated with Shelter, Inc. in Martinez. Way to go, Brownies!

Lamorinda 4H Kick-off Meeting

Submitted by Alison Boddin

Now that the summer is over, 4-H is starting up again and it promises to be another great year! Come and check out our kick-off Community Meeting on September 18, 2008, at 7PM in the Stanley Middle School Multi-Purpose Room. We have many

fun groups to join, including Dog, Horse, Sewing, Foods, Poultry, Swine, Woodworking, Shooting Sports, Photography and many, many more. There is something for everyone, and we welcome all; boys and girls age 5 to 18 years. Come on by to check your

local Lamorinda 4H Club out, see what our kids can do, and we'll answer any questions you may have.

Please visit our website at <http://groups.ucanr.org/cc4h/> or call Michelle Chan at (925) 283-9519.

No More Pesticides at Local High Schools

By Sophie Braccini



PfSE meets with AUHSD's Chris Learned and Steve Fishbaugh

Photo Sophie Braccini

Chris Learned, Assistant Superintendent of the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD), promised a group of parents on September 2nd that AUHSD will ban the usage of all pesticides and herbicides on its sports fields.

The twelve parents, representing Parents for a Safer Environment (PfSE), were pleased; in their view this a major step in protecting our children from the dangers of chemicals.

Susan Junfish, founder of PfSE, said, "We have had parents with kids going to the Acalanes School District asking us to help evaluate the District's pest control program for years. We had been trying to meet with the District for a little while after acquiring and reviewing some tracking documents called Pesticide Use Reports." Junfish added, "We didn't know what to expect from the District."

Learned invited Maintenance Supervisor Steve Fishbaugh to the meeting. Fishbaugh knows exactly which and when pesticides have been used by the District. PfSE came with a list of products and respective toxicity profiles that had

been assembled by their intern, Campolindo Senior Molly Howland.

The list included ten products that had been used by the District between 2006 and 2008, according to the District's Pesticide Use Reports. Of those, Fishbaugh confirmed that five were still being used by the District, and 3 of the 5 were considered high risk by the group: Gopher Getter (contains Strychnine), Sevin Insecticide (with Carbaryl for ants) and Turflon (Triclopyr), an herbicide that is used by the district to control the proliferation of clover in the fields.

"Sevin is a likely human carcinogen, a neurotoxin, a hormone disruptor and a groundwater contaminant" said Junfish, "Gopher Getter also can contaminate groundwater and has high toxicity; besides gophers can become resistant to Strychnine so it's not even the most effective, and Turflon is a high risk product containing the developmental and reproduction toxin triclopyr."

Learned was very worried about the exposure of children to these products, and he asked the group for their sources of informa-

tion. He and his staff were concerned with the feasibility of stopping the use of chemicals. "We have lost 2 maintenance and one ground employee due to the budget cuts," said Fishbaugh, "with less personnel we cannot manually remove weeds or chase gophers."

Carol Shenon, another member of the group that has done a lot of research and outreach for the Moraga School District, explained, "It is important to disseminate this information to parents, so they understand why there is some clover in the fields or weeds along the fences." She believes that when parents understand that the long term health of the children is at stake, they readjust their priorities.

Junfish suggested some alternative treatments; although the District staff did not appear to be convinced that they would work Learned decided nonetheless to stop the usage of the three products. The only pesticide/herbicide that the District will use will be Round Up along the edges. According to PfSE that product is the least toxic, the only risk is air contamination when high volumes are spread.

The parents finished by asking to present a request for an Integrated Pest Management policy to the AUHSD Board. "What you have just done today is remarkable," said Junfish, "but you will move on at some point and it would be effective to have a policy in place for the years to come." Learned agreed to study the issue, but was not favorable to formalizing a policy at this time.

Local Rotary Clubs Give Dictionaries to Lamorinda 3rd Graders

By Jean Follmer



Tamara Raeth and Steve Hanna await their cue to deliver dictionaries to Lafayette Elementary 3rd graders. Tamara's son, Stefan, is a 3rd grader there and Steve's children are alumni

Photo Tom Black

Each year, the Rotary Clubs in Lamorinda give dictionaries to our 3rd grade students. Lafayette students receive their dictionaries from members of both the Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Club and the Lafayette Rotary Club. Moraga students are given dictionaries by the Moraga Rotary Club and the Orinda Rotary Club gives them to all Orinda 3rd graders. The Moraga Rotary Club also gives dictionaries to the 3rd graders in Canyon.

All Lamorinda 3rd graders receive dictionaries at both private and public schools. At a recent Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary meeting, George Chaffey said some folks have asked why dictionaries need to be distributed to students in such affluent communities. "This is a Rotarian to child (effort). We don't try

to distinguish between rich or poor or public and private," said Chaffey. "Part of it is to make Lamorinda better for everybody. Part of it is to make all of the children in Lamorinda better future leaders," continued Chaffey. Steve Ware confirmed Chaffey's statement by saying, "It's all about the kids...they're the future." Both of Ware's young daughters are honorary members of the Sunrise club.

The dictionary program began in 1998 when George Chaffey was the District 5160 Governor. They decided they wanted to participate in a district-wide effort and asked District 5160 rotary members for suggestions. The dictionary idea came from a member in a small club in Oregon who had seen a 20/20 report on a crossing guard handing out small dictionaries to students.

In that first year, Chaffey said 700 district members gathered in Concord to receive and label three truckloads worth of dictionaries. Chaffey said "There were Rotarians from every club in the district. It was a big working party." They distributed 30,000 dictionaries the first year. Chaffey said the district received over 15,000 "thank you" notes from teachers and students. Since then, the dictionary program has been handled at the local level and has spread to many rotary clubs across the country.

The distribution efforts often

extend beyond the membership. In Lafayette, Tamara Raeth is the wife of Lamorinda Sunrise member Thomas Raeth. The Raeths were in charge of the Lafayette dictionary program this year and held the work party at their home. "Two dozen people went to their (the Raeth's) house for a BBQ. We put name plates in each of the dictionaries. We also affixed a cover letter explaining to the parents what we're doing and why," said Sunrise Rotarian Tom Black. Current Lamorinda Sunrise President Pat Flaherty said Tamara Raeth "has been coordinating this for months." "This year we have the biggest 3rd grade ever. The schools are at capacity. I have a 3rd grader who's been waiting to get this," said Raeth. 448 Lafayette 3rd graders received dictionaries this year.

Moraga Rotary Club member Debbie Roessler said their club will distribute dictionaries later this fall. Roessler said they engage the students when they deliver the dictionaries and have them look up words like "truth" and "fair" to see how many different meanings there are. Roessler said the dictionary program "has been well received in Moraga."

Orinda Rotary Club member Gail Woznak said they will be delivering dictionaries on September 24. "Every year the dictionaries are welcomed by both the teachers and students in Orinda. The letters we get are just amazing. The kids are so cute and they write these wonderful letters using the words in the dictionary. We've been doing this for a number of years in Orinda and it's one of our favorite projects," said Woznak. For more information on the dictionary program, visit www.rotary5160.org/programs/dictionary.php

Wagner Ranch Parents Hike the Reservoir Rim Trail

By Jean Follmer



For the third year in a row, Wagner Ranch Elementary School parents met at the Lafayette Reservoir to hike the rim trail before breakfast last week. The hike is an auction item from the annual "Parents Night Out" auction held last spring. Parent Coordinator Kim Americh said, "We have about 30 people participate. Six moms lead the hike and 6 moms handle the breakfast (while the others are hiking)." Americh said "It's a great time to reconnect and meet new people. We get exercise, breakfast and it's social."