

SCHOOL CALENDAR

School Governing Board Meetings

Acalanes Union

High School District
Board Room AUHSD Office
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lafayette
Wednesday, April 15, 2009 at 7:30

Lafayette School District

LAFSD Office
3477 School Street, Lafayette
Wednesday, April 15, 2009 at 7:00

Orinda Union School District

OUSD Office
8 Altarinda Road, Orinda
Monday, April 13 at 4:00

Moraga School District

Joaquin Moraga Intermediate
School Auditorium
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
Tuesday, April 14 at 7:30

Accepted, Rejected, or Wait Listed?
How to Make Your Final Decision

By Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D.

Now that it is spring time, the letters you've been waiting for are finally coming in the mail. It's time for you to make your decisions. So, let's put the admissions news in perspective.

Rejected?

Rejection is always difficult to take. Parents can be more upset by a "letter of denial" than their children. Students and parents should realize that rejection from a particular school is not an indication of worth or ability. Colleges have many reasons for turning down applicants. Schools must address their own needs for an entering freshman class—factors like legacy, diversity, sports, and space in specific degree programs all play a role. There is also some randomness to the process.

Wait Listed?

Colleges build wait lists because not every admitted student decides to attend. Colleges wait until after the May 1 deadline to see how many students send in deposits. This process is similar to the way airlines fill their planes! If too many students accept admission, the result can be anything from increasing the number of freshmen in each dorm to converting student lounges into bedrooms or using hotels for housing. Some students get wait listed and, sometimes, accepted later or bounced off the plane!

There is a recent trend toward longer wait lists. The depressed economy could make this trend stronger. Private schools are worried that fewer students than usual will decide to attend. There are many different and conflicting factors at play. The pool of high school graduates is slightly smaller this year than last. Yet in bad economic times, more people attend college, particularly public colleges, rather than search for jobs. With so many factors involved, what should you do if offered a place on a wait list?

First, remember that accept-

ance from a wait list, especially at selective colleges, is a long shot. Don't let a wait list spoil your excitement about getting ready for college. Closure feels better than emotional limbo. Next, send a deposit to one of the colleges where you have been accepted outright by the May 1 reply deadline. Then check with undergraduate admissions at the school that offered the wait list option, and get the specifics. If the wait list is ranked, ask about your status. This is also a good time to ask about conditions attached to being wait listed—for example how does it affect priority housing or financial aid options? If you decide to remain on the list, it is wise to speak to your high school counselor. Your counselor can help your cause by contacting the school to convey support for you and your enthusiasm for attending. A letter from you expressing your interest and any new accomplishments is also important.

Accepted?

Many students get into more than one school. No matter how carefully you ordered the schools, there is often uncertainty about which to choose. Going far from home may become less desirable as senior year draws to a close. A large university may become more attractive than a small liberal arts college, if it invites you to join the honors program. To decide, review your original criteria for college selection. Then revisit your top choices, including the wait list option. Explore the campus, visit classrooms, have lunch in the cafeteria—try to get a sense of the real life of the school. Also, carefully consider the various financial aid awards. Check The College Board's Compare Your Aid Awards at www.collegeboard.com. This tool also offers an array of financing options.

Be sure to ask each school these important questions about financial aid:

1. What are the projected tuition and fee increases for the next four years? Compare this to increases during the past four years.
2. How does the college determine financial need?
3. Is institutional aid renewable? Does aid adjust if family circumstances change?
4. How do you treat outside scholarship awards? Do you reduce loan amounts or grants by the amount of the award? What is reduced first?
5. What is the average four year graduation rate? (Six year rates are typically reported, but the school should be able to provide a four year rate.)
6. What are the principal reasons students don't graduate in four years?
7. What is the average loan indebtedness of your students at graduation?
8. How do you help students prepare for careers (through the college years) and find employment as graduation nears?

Remember Your Manners

When the acceptance letter goes in the mail, other colleges that accepted you should get a brief thank you note declining the invitation to attend. And now you are truly on the road to college.

Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D. is a certified college advisor who lives and works in Lafayette. Dr. LaScala draws on 22 years of higher education experience to help guide and support the college admissions process for students and their families. She has 3 children—one a graduate of Cal Poly (San Luis Obispo), one a sophomore at MIT and the youngest, a junior in high school. Dr. LaScala is a member of NACAC, WACAC and HECA. She can be contacted at (925) 891-4491 or elizabeth@doingcollege.com.

In the Back Yard
Digging Deep—Gardening with Cynthia

By Cynthia Brian

The garden is a love song, a duet between a human being and Mother Nature. --Jeff Cox



Photos Cynthia Brian

Perched along the creek in my meditation meadow, I sit on the rickety white wicker chair listening to the tinkling of the running water. I am filled with anticipation for the beauty of the forthcoming spring as the creeping blue vinca major tickle my toes. Today the weather is mild. I inhale the fragrance of the freesias while admiring the fields of multi-colored daffodils and cerulean lupines. The timid tulips and iridescent Dutch irises are just beginning to unfurl their magnificence. The bountiful blossoms adorning the fruit trees in my orchard hint of the abundant harvest to come.



Yes, I admit, I have a very bad case of spring fever and am itching to get my hands deep in the dirt. Although I thank God we've had buckets of rain throughout February and March to quench the thirst of a drought parched earth, I'm ready to exchange my muddy boots and rain slicker for my clogs and shorts. The

words of Tom Waits filter through my meandering mind, "November has tied me to an old tree. Get word to April to rescue me!"

If you are ready to be rescued from the winter blahs and need a prescription for spring fever, I have a sure cure. Besides starting seeds indoors, I propose preparing for the warm weather ahead by planning our garden areas. Have you ever taken the time to discover what you really want in your landscape? During April and May, Bay area organizations host a variety of garden tours. These are great places to gather ideas for your own backyard. You'll have the opportunity to talk with other like-minded gardeners as well as take photos to remind you of the special ingredients you observe in Lamorinda.

In the meantime, you can begin contemplating your new landscape designs. Whether you are a do-it-yourselfer or you prefer to hire a professional, I've compiled a handy questionnaire to help you create the garden of your dreams.

To get started, you'll need a notebook, a computer, or better yet a garden journal. Ask yourself the following questions and record the responses. It is imperative that you be honest and accurate with your answers to insure the best results.

1. How large is your outdoor space?
2. Do you want to design or redesign the front, sides, and back yard? Are you starting from scratch, or will you have to remove old plantings and debris to create something new?
3. What types of hardscapes do you want to incorporate? Examples would be patios, walls, gazebos, trellises, pergolas, gates, decks, fences, pathways, waterfalls, ponds, fountains, sheds, pool house, conservatory, stone, brick, concrete, etc.
4. What kind of garden space are you envisioning? Do you prefer English gardens, formal landscapes,

cottage gardens, serene Asian styles, natural native plantings, or something entirely eclectic?

5. Is there a color scheme you'd like to maintain? I always advocate bringing the inside out and the outside in. What are your preferred color choices?

6. How much maintenance are you willing to enjoy or endure? Explain in detail if you are willing to do the heavy work or you want to spend only a minimal amount of time planting, pruning, and caring for your new yard? There is no right answer here except what works for you.

7. Do you want a lawn area? If so, are you going to mow the grass? Have you taken the increased water expenses into account?

8. What kinds of trees do you like? Do you want evergreen trees or deciduous trees? Would you like to have flowers and fruit? If you want a mini-orchard, what are your favorite fruits?

9. Do you have pets or children you need to take into account? If you have young kids, you may want a sandbox, tree swing, and play area. If you have teens, it may be better to have hammocks, horseshoes, and ping pong. Dogs may need an enclosed dog run, but if you have a cat, you'll probably want to nix that sandbox and instead provide a tree you can climb, too!

10. Is there wildlife in your neighborhood that you must consider—deer, raccoons, skunks, foxes, or hawks? You'll need to think about your plant list carefully.

11. Do you entertain outdoors? Do you desire a built-in outdoor kitchen or a simple barbecue area and fire pit?

12. Are you interested in adding any of the following to your landscape:

- butterfly garden
- cutting garden
- hummingbird garden
- vegetable garden
- herb garden
- rose garden
- fruit orchard
- fragrance garden
- perennial garden
- ponds
- water features
- birdbaths
- garden ornaments
- outdoor furniture
- exterior lighting
- music and sound

13. List the special needs of your family and pets (for example, basketball or sport court, doghouse, aviary, workshop playhouse, shed, croquet court, etc)

14. Will you install an irrigation system? If so, what are your requirements?

15. How much light do you have in each area? Do you have morning sun, all shade, hot afternoon sun?

16. Do you want to plant a colorful garden filled with annuals and perennials? Do you prefer planting bulbs and corms? Or do you want a variety of ground covers, shrubs and bushes?

17. And finally, the toughest question in this economy—what is your budget? Be realistic. It is not just the cost of the trees, flowers, and bushes, you'll need to include topsoil, soil amendments, compost, labor, fertilizer, and water.

Orinda's Boy Scout Troop 237



Orinda's Boy Scout Troop 237 recently honored its five newest Eagle Scouts: Daniel Esquivel, John Holland, Ted Alper, Evan Bontemps, and Craig Dathe (pictured L to R). The young men achieved Boy Scouting's highest award after completing their individual community service projects, which included helping young inner-city tennis players and young musicians in Berkeley, and the restoration and improvement of the City of Orinda Events Board and the Miramonte High School Aquatics record boards.

Photo provided

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