

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

Lafayette Elementary • Los Perales • Miramonte • Orinda Academy • Orinda Intermediate • Saklan Valley School • Sleepy Hollow • Springhill • Stanley Middle • St. Perpetua School • Wagner Ranch

SCHOOL CALENDAR

School Governing Board Meetings

Acalanes Union
High School District
Board Room AUHSD Office
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lafayette
Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2009 at 7:30pm

Lafayette School District
LAFSD Office
3477 School Street, Lafayette
Wednesday, Sept. 16, 2009 at 7 pm
Orinda Union School District
OUSD Office
8 Altarinda Road, Orinda
Monday, Oct. 12, 2009 at 4:00pm

Moraga School District
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate
School Auditorium
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
Tuesday, Oct. 13, 2009 at 7:30 pm

Preparatory Checklist for Potential H1N1 Outbreak

By Jennifer Wake



With the uncertainty about the number and severity of H1N1 Swine Flu infections expected among school children this fall, Lamorinda school districts have been proactive. Letters from district superintendents blanketed parents' e-mails with ways to increase hygiene and reduce the spread of the virus should an outbreak occur. But how should parents prepare at home for a possible outbreak?

According to the Contra Costa Health Services Web site, preparations can include something as simple as talking with employers about possible telecommuting options to keeping basic food and medical supplies on hand.

The following is a sampling of items the Contra Costa Health Services suggests:

- Medicines for fever such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood pressure monitoring
- Thermometer, tissues, toilet paper and disposable diapers (if needed)
- Bottled water, canned juices and fluids with electrolytes, such as Pedialyte®
- Ready to eat canned meats, vegetables, fruits, soups
- Manually-operated can opener
- Crackers, dried fruit, nuts, peanut butter and jelly
- Baby formula or jarred baby food (if needed)
- Pet food (if needed)
- Garbage bags, flashlight with extra batteries, portable radio with extra batteries
- Learning materials, such as books, school supplies, and educational computer activities and movies
- Puzzles, books, crosswords, crafts and recreational activities that your child can do at home

For a more detailed list, as well as tips on how to talk to your children about H1N1, visit the CC Health Services Web site at: http://www.cchealth.org/topics/pandemic_flu/school_action_kit/tips_for_parents.pdf or www.flu.gov.

College-Watch, LLC

College-Watch an independent, college admissions consulting company dedicated to guiding students and parents through the college admissions process. To guide students and parents through this process, the College-Watch 4-P System – Planning, Preparation, Performance, Persistence – was developed. The College-Watch 4-P System is a comprehensive approach to the college-admissions process, which focuses on students and the role that parents, advisors and supporters play in preparing a student for the admissions process. Close attention is given to personal and academic development, college selection, testing schedules, essay writing and the application process. Proprietary online modules, workshops and seminars are included in the system for freshman, sophomore, junior and senior years.

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Lamorinda's New Buses – Working Out the Kinks

By Jean Follmer

After a competitive bid process, the Lamorinda School Bus Program (LSBP) contracted with a new school bus provider this year. First Student replaced Durham School Services for the 2009/10 school year. Durham drivers were given the opportunity to sign on with First Student and LSBP Manager Juliet Hansen says at least half the drivers stayed on.

Hansen said LSBP is making progress with the transition. "First Student is a new company for us and the change, overall, has been positive," she states.

However, LSBP is not without its challenges in the first couple weeks of school. Hansen says there were a number of calls from parents complaining about drivers not knowing the routes. "We had quite a few late buses, especially in the afternoons," she acknowledges.

A Lafayette parent shared that she had to flag the bus down to stop for her daughter on the first day of school. Hansen says bus operations have improved consider-

ably. "We're confident that any remaining problems will be resolved," states Hansen. (We attempted to contact First Student for comment and were advised that they do not



issue statements.)

The new buses are equipped with seatbelts and Hansen says that feature has drawn a positive response from parents. Hansen said bus drivers instruct the students on how to use the belts and direct them to buckle up when they are seated.

For more information on LSBP, visit www.lamorindaschoolbus.org. For late buses and emergencies, contact First Student dispatch at 925-926-0375.

School Bus Safety Reminders

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), pedestrian accidents account for two-thirds of school bus-related fatalities.

Here are two quick tips to keep our students safe:

Set the alarm clock a bit earlier so drivers can slow down and keep our students safe. Motorists must be on the look-out for students approaching and standing at bus stops in the morning and students need to arrive at the stop early enough to avoid running across a street to catch the bus.

Don't be a "red light runner." As a bus prepares to make a stop, its yellow lights will start flashing. When the bus is stopped, its red warning lights will flash and the stop signal arm on the side of the bus will be out. The DOT says, "Motorists must come to a complete stop a safe distance from the bus and wait until the red lights stop flashing, the arm is retracted, and the bus begins moving before they start driving again." The only exception to this law is when a median or divider is separating the oncoming traffic.

Submit stories to

schooldesk@lamorindaweekly.com

How Six Figure Income Families Get Thousands of Dollars in Free Money For College

Local man teaches free workshops to help parents save thousands in process

Moraga---East Bay parents that are planning on sending a child to college in the next few years, but aren't quite sure how to pay for it can now rest a little easier. Gerna Benz of Bay Area College Planners has been educating families in the community for over 15 years.

'It's really sad, but most parents that we talk to have done real well financially, but never found the time to save for college, and now they're facing a bill of \$18,000-\$45,000 a year, and they don't know who to turn to,' he says. 'Further, most of the time, all they hear is to not even bother applying for any aid because they make too much money. However, most of the time, that is simply not true even if they make a six-figure income.'

Gerna would know, because his group has worked with over 1400 families in the last 10 years ranging from single moms to corporate CEO's, and they say they can help anyone get through the process and save a bundle.... no matter how good of a student they have or how much money they make.

'I got started in this because I was a very good student, but no one told us anything about how to access money for college, or even how to pick a career...so I didn't go right away. But, I vowed that I would learn the process and devote my time to helping families not fall into the same trap that we did. 'Simply put, we show parents the truth that they aren't hearing anywhere else about how the college process really works and save thousands of dollars in the process.'

Lamorinda parents will have an opportunity

to hear Gerna speak. He is teaching his class 'How to Give Your Kid a 4-Year College Education Without Going Broke!' on Saturday September 26th at the Moraga Library located at 1500 St. Mary's Road, Moraga, CA 94556 from 11:00am-12:15pm.

'We'll discuss everything from the greatest myths about the college process, to how to send your student to a fancy private school for less than the cost of a junior college...it'll be like learning how to get a brand new Lexus for the price of a used pick up truck,' he grins.

Topics will also include why private scholarships and 529 plans are a waste of time, how to double or even triple the amount of free money you receive from each school, and how to avoid the one mistake that will kill your chances of getting any money at all that almost every other parent will make this coming January, and much, much more.

'They will learn a ton, and I do my best to make the class fun,' he says. 'It's like I'm giving them a super bright flash light to navigate a pitch black cave, while all the other parents continue to stumble around blindly! 'Don't forget: the class is totally free, but seats are limited. Also, we are not sure when we will be teaching these classes in the East Bay again since my October and November calendars are already filling up, so come on out and see me.' You can reserve a seat online at www.baycollegeplanners.com or by calling our 24 hour reservation line at (877) 924-3726.

Beyond Fit in College Admissions

By Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D.

The concept of "fit" in college admissions has so penetrated our community that, to use a youthful phrase, students and their parents are "all over it." By now, most seniors have considered factors such as region (east, west, north, south), location (urban, residential, rural) and type. Seniors should understand the differences between a small liberal arts college that is more focused on undergraduate teaching, a larger research university that houses several different colleges, and a specialty school like a music conservatory, art institute and military academy. Some liberal arts schools have names that include the word "university" and universities often house a "college of arts and sciences." Nomenclature is less important than the actual mission of the school—which is exactly what you need to know. This article goes beyond general notions of "fit" to help students focus on specific information they need to make informed decisions about where to apply.

4. What are the class sizes for specific years, required courses, and courses in your major area of interest?
5. What is the composition of the student body? Examine breakdowns by gender, minority group, and geography. Will you be happy with a student body that is 65% female? What about being one of the few out of state residents in your class? Remember that diversity tells you at least two things about a college: the institution is attractive enough to draw students from beyond its own region and a diverse campus offers students the opportunity to learn from each other.
6. Financial aid questions are always important. Carefully research the school's financial aid options. **Tip:** CollegeBoard's 2009 College Handbook is an excellent resource to obtain some of the above information.

Collecting Basic Information
Often the most difficult part of understanding something is deciding what questions to ask. Here are some important ones:

1. What is the academic profile of the typical freshman and how does your academic profile compare? Here you are trying to ascertain if the school offers the right amount of challenge for you and assess your chances of admission.
2. What percentage of the freshman class returns for sophomore year? Less than 70% is cause for concern. You want to know why students do not return. Concerned deans, attentive advisors, proper admissions decisions, and strong academic programs should be able to keep rates high.
3. What percentage graduate in four years? A six year graduation rate is commonly reported, but you

should learn the four year rate. Also, understand the factors that may influence these rates. A small concern is finding out that many students take a course in the summer quarter following their senior year and are not included in the four year graduation rate. A much larger problem is a low four year graduation rate linked to students' inability to get into their major classes.

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How well does the college prepare students for life after graduation?
What percentage of the student body applies to graduate school (professional schools like medical and law as well as masters and doctoral programs). How many of these are accepted and to which schools? How many and which companies recruit on campus? Which majors are most heavily recruited and into what type of jobs? What is the average salary range for these positions? An active campus Career Counseling and Placement Office will have this type of information.

What is there to do for fun?
It is a truism that you learn as much out of the classroom as in it. Whatever college you attend, it is going to be your home for the next four years. It is important to know as much as you can about what activities are both on campus and in

the surrounding community. If you love rock-climbing, does the athletic center have a wall? Or is there an affordable gym nearby that does?

What about the campus visit?

It is better to see with your own eyes than rely upon the views of others. The campus visit is the most valuable experience you can have to evaluate a college. You may consider the visit as an educational insurance policy. Visiting can rule out a school or bring much needed passion and sincerity to your college application essay (in particular the question "Why our college?"). You will have the opportunity to evaluate what students wear, how they live, your reactions to them, the campus and the nearest town or city. Take time to observe and try to do some active participation: attend a class, eat in the cafeteria, visit the library, work out at the gym, and arrange an overnight stay if possible.

University of California Update: Budget constraints will limit UC travel this year. To provide students with timely information the UC is sponsoring UC Day: An On-line College Fair on Oct. 1 (9 a.m. to 7 p.m. PST). For more information visit www.CollegeWeekLive.com.



Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D. is an independent college admissions advisor located in Lafayette, California. Her goal is to help students and their families understand the college admissions process, research college and career options, create a college list and prepare a strong, organized and cohesive application. Dr. LaScala is a member of NACAC, WACAC, and HECA and earned a certification in College Admissions and Career Planning from University of California at Berkeley. Contact her at (925) 891-4491 or elizabeth@doingcollege.com.