

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

## The New Bullies Among Us

Cyberbullies take it to a whole new level

By Jean Follmer

There have always been and will always be bullies. Long dismissed as “kids will be kids,” a mere glance at recent news indicates the national thought on bullying is maturing. Bullying practices have become crueler and resulting suicides are getting national attention. A number of character development programs are present in our schools and operate with varying degrees of success. The newest challenge is cyberbullying.

“I think it’s been pretty effective – we’ve seen good results; we’ve seen improvement,” said Sharon Pincus, Moraga School District Director of Pupil Services, about the Safe Schools Ambassador Program at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School (JMIS). The results of the latest Healthy Kids survey indicate that JMIS still has a significant problem with bullying – 40% of 7th graders reported that they have been harassed at school. (The percentages are 29% in Lafayette and 31% in Orinda.)

“We take bullying incredibly seriously. Every principal goes into each classroom three or four times a year to talk about it. We hold annual assemblies like Day of Respect at Stanley and then bring the students together to talk in small groups,” said Rachel Zinn, Lafayette School District Director of Curriculum and Instruction.

Cyberbullying comes into play at the middle school level. “Students are not to be using electronic devices during school hours,” said Lisa Bissell, Orinda Union School District Director of Curriculum and Instruction. However, the District can’t prevent access to social networks like Facebook after hours. All three

districts allow for anonymous reporting of cyberbullying even if it takes place outside of school hours.

“Cyberbullying has increased and our high schools are taking different measures to address it. Data suggests that kids are on-line at least 1 ½ hours per day so cyberbullying is perhaps a more accessible way to bully,” said Dr. John Nickerson, Acalanes Union High School District Assistant Superintendent of Education Services. Nickerson added that cyberbullying seems to peak in middle school because it appears to be most common with incoming freshman. The high schools have Diversity Committees and older students let the incoming freshman know: “We don’t do that here; this is high school and that’s not cool,” said Nickerson.

Stanley Middle School Principal David Schrag agrees that middle school is the birthplace of cyberbullying. He says it’s much more common amongst 8th graders than it is amongst 6th graders. Most incoming 6th graders have just gotten their first cell phones and Schrag said they’re so engrossed in the early stages of texting that they haven’t progressed to social networking sites like Facebook.

“The bullying and making inappropriate choices is much more common in the older grades,” says Schrag. He says there is a strong correlation between middle school cyber-bullies and middle school students who have siblings in high school. Many of those middle school students are “Facebook Friends” with high school students so are part of a more advanced on-line culture.

Due to the Child Online Protection Act of 1998, kids are not legally allowed to use Facebook or other social networking sites until the age of 13.

“The Child Protection Act was intended to protect children under 13 from objectionable content and predators; kid-on-kid harassment was not contemplated at the time,” since social media sites like Facebook weren’t around yet, said Annie Fox, a nationally renowned Bay Area author, lecturer and blogger.

Fox recently launched a new anti-bullying campaign called “Cruel’s Not Cool!” Even though 13 is the minimum legal age to use social networking sites like Facebook, Fox said it’s not a magical age. “Sixth and 7th graders have no business using Facebook and 8th graders have to be monitored (by parents),” she stated, adding that unlike adults, kids have a hard time ignoring online criticisms, “They can’t just disengage – then it escalates due to a lack of self-control.”

Kids often don’t tell their parents or another adult they’ve been bullied on-line. “Kids who are targeted by friends are ashamed. They are afraid if they tell their parents (about the bullying), they will take away their computers and phone,” she noted.

Schrag agrees that parents need to monitor the on-line activities of their kids more closely. He said a lot of parents aren’t comfortable using the technology so don’t know how to adequately monitor their children.

The Lafayette School District recognizes a strong need for parent education in this area and

brings in regular speakers. “Last year we brought in Dr. Richard Freed who spoke on Losing our Children to the Internet, Video Games and Texting and this spring we are bringing in Larry Magid to address this subject,” said Lori Brueckner, Lafayette School District Parent Education co-chair.

So, who are these cyberbullies? Often, they’re children of adult bullies. “They are the kids who are picked on by parents or are exposed to an abusive marriage. They’re also children who are over-indulged at home or are at the center of the marriage. They are the kids of ‘Velcro-parents’ who constantly send texts to their kids throughout the day,” said Fox.

Like Nickerson, Fox said technology has made it easier to bully others. Why? “You don’t have to see their face; you just type it, hit send and drop your bomb,” describes Fox. It’s so much easier to be mean to other people when you’re not there to see the hurt in their eyes, to see them cry or to know they don’t want to go to school tomorrow because of you.

“It’s not a technology issue, it’s a parenting issue. It’s a permanent electronic footprint (these kids are leaving),” continued Fox. If we’re not careful, she said, we’ll lose our ability to relate to each other emotionally. If we’re buried in our screens as our primary source of communication, our species will unlearn the meaning of facial expressions. “Does this look like a happy face? Do I look happy right now?” will be lost on us, said Fox.

For more information on Annie Fox and Cruel’s Not Cool!, visit [www.anniefox.com](http://www.anniefox.com).

## SCHOOL CALENDAR

**Acalanes Union**  
High School District  
Board Room AUHSD Office  
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lafayette  
**TONIGHT** Wed., December 8, at 7:30pm  
Wednesday, January 12, 7:30pm

**Lafayette School District**  
LAFSD Office  
3477 School Street, Lafayette  
**TONIGHT** Wed., December 8, at 7pm  
Wednesday, January 12, 7pm

**Orinda Union School District**  
OUSD Office  
8 Altarinda Road, Orinda  
Monday, January 10, 4pm

**Moraga School District**  
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium  
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga  
Tuesday, December 14, at 7:30pm

### Family Focus

## How to Raise a Disrespectful Child

By Margie Ryerson, MFT

Now that we’re approaching the holiday season, there will be more opportunities to teach your child appreciation and respect for others. There will be gifts, gatherings with relatives and friends, more time together as a family, and opportunities to perform charitable deeds.

No one sets out to raise a disrespectful child. But if you’re not vigilant and highly determined, you may contribute to your child’s poor attitude and behavior. Here’s how a disrespectful child is produced and reinforced:

- Always allow your child to interrupt your conversation with others. Immediately give him your attention, even if it’s to scold him about interrupting you. This will help him feel he has the ability to get your attention, either positively or negatively, whenever he wants.
- When your child whines, shouts, or pouts, be sure to pay a lot of attention to him. This will help reinforce these behaviors so he will continue doing them.
- Allow your child to correct or contradict you as much as possible. If the details are truly insignificant and if he does this in front of others, he will definitely be on the path to becoming a disrespectful child.
- Tolerate your child’s mistreatment of his siblings. If he is younger, be sure to always assign blame to his older brother because, after all, “your older child should know better.” Find ways to excuse your child’s misbehavior with his siblings and friends.
- If your child comes home from school complaining about his teacher, be sure to automatically agree with him, and then call or email the teacher to rebuke her. Let him see how easily he can undermine his teacher’s authority and at the same time avoid responsibility for his own behavior. Better yet, don’t check out the situation with his teacher at all. Go straight to the principal to complain.
- If you hear from the school that your child is bullying others, don’t believe it. Your child would never act in this way. It must be the other children who are trying to get him in trouble. As a matter of fact, your child is probably the one being picked on. Give your child a lot of reassurance and support.
- Let your child hear you criticize

his teacher, the school district, other parents, and those in authority. He will learn that it is okay to disrespect adults and institutions.

· Allow your child to say mean things to you, and even curse you out, without responding. You may think ignoring this behavior is best, but he is actually succeeding in disrespecting you.

· Let your child hear you make fun of others behind their backs. Ridicule their behavior, appearance, and lifestyle choices. If he joins in with you so that you laugh together, he will learn to become even more disrespectful of others.

· Find fault with your child easily and nag him often. Make him work hard for a compliment from you. Be sure to label him in negative ways, such as telling him he’s lazy or selfish or ignorant. This way, he will develop low self-esteem and will tend to not care how he behaves. He will also be likely to have resentment toward authority.

· Do nice things for your child -- buy him something special, throw him a great birthday party, take him to a special event – and don’t insist upon receiving a “thank you.” After all, you enjoy giving to him, and seeing him happy is your reward. He will then expect you to cater to him without any responsibility or reciprocity on his part.

As parents, you want to give your child everything he needs to become a successful, fulfilled person. This season give him the gift of ensuring he respects others so that he will be better able to respect himself.



**Margie Ryerson, MFT**, is a marriage and family therapist in Orinda and Walnut Creek. Contact her at 925-376-9323 or [margierye@yahoo.com](mailto:margierye@yahoo.com). She is also available for parenting consultation.

## China, Here We Come!

With the help of the Lamorinda community, Campolindo Orchestra prepares to go to Beijing

Submitted by Carola Ziermann



Photo Brian Goto

The Campolindo Orchestra, invited by the Chinese Ministry of Culture and the International Fine Arts Institute to perform in Beijing, China, during Spring Break 2011, is getting an overwhelming response to their Rent-A-Student and other fundraiser activities.

The Rent-A-Student program, which was launched to

help students who need scholarships and to earn money for the general trip fund, is running very successfully. Tessa Cunha, the student who coordinates it, is very busy matching students with job requests. "There are 21 students actively enrolled in the program right now. Requests range from babysitting to help with electronics such as i-pods

and computers, but also housework and gardening are in demand. I also had requests for musicians to play at luncheons and even at a wedding", says Cunha.

Music Director Harvey Benstein is proud of his students. "These are exciting times in the music program at Campolindo as the students prepare to perform in Beijing in April," he says. "Throughout the school year the orchestra will build its tour repertoire. One of the pieces will be Aaron Copland's "Appalachian Spring" in its original scoring and instrumentation."

The Campo Music Boosters is experiencing record high numbers of visitors to their website since the China trip was announced. "Our community is so supportive and everyone is very interested in what's going on with our China trip planning" says Sue Carlson, the Music Boosters Fundraising Chair for

the trip. "Local businesses like Lamorinda Music show their support not only with financial contributions, Pizza Antica in Lafayette held a fundraiser night for us, Mountain Mike's Pizza helped us raise money with a coupon sale and Moraga Movers has hired a student string quartet for their Christmas luncheon.

Even some Campolindo teachers collected money to contribute to the trip fund. Campolindo High School Principal Carol Kitchens is very impressed with all the activities going on. "Students, parents, teachers and entire community are pulling together. This also shows how much pride we all take in our school. With so much support, I'm confident we will make this trip happen."

For more information about the orchestra's trip to China and upcoming events go to the website [www.campomusic.org](http://www.campomusic.org).

### Lamorinda Weekly

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