

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

**Acalanes Union High School District**  
Board Room AUHSD Office  
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lafayette  
Wednesday, June 22, 7:30pm

**Orinda Union School District**  
OUSD Office  
8 Altarinda Road, Orinda  
Monday, June 20, 4pm

**Lafayette School District**  
LAFSD Office  
3477 School Street, Lafayette  
Wednesday, June 22, 7pm

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

## Findlay Named AUHSD Educator of the Year



AUHSD Superintendent John Nickerson gives the 2011 Educator of the Year award to Acalanes Librarian Karen Findlay. Photo C. Tyson

On June 1, Karen Findlay was recognized as Educator of the Year for the Acalanes Union High School District. In the past this award has been given to teachers, but as Superintendent Nickerson explained this year it was expanded to include educators from counselors to the librarians and beyond. "I'm very surprised – it's an amazing place to work, and I'm so happy to be here," said Findlay. She's been involved in a variety of things on campus, serving on the Technology Committee and the Academic Honesty committee, and as a co-coach for the Academic Decathlon team.

## JM 6th Graders Win at NorCal Chess Championship

Submitted by Zhan Li



From left: A Bay Area Chess organizer, Jake Oxendine, and Austen Li  
Photo provided

The team of Austen Li and Jake Oxendine, 6th graders at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, won first place in the 6th grade team competition at the NorCal Chess Championship on May 30, 2011 in Fremont. More than a hundred players from all over the Bay Area competed in four games of chess over six hours of play. Li and Oxendine have been playing chess for many years and frequently compete at the Friday Chess Tournament in Walnut Creek organized by the Berkeley Chess School. "Jake and I did really well as a team. We are very happy about winning the first place prize for our school," said Li, who also won second place in the individual category.

## St. Perpetua Puts on a Show and Graduates Class of 2011

Submitted by Monica Chappell



Twenty-four 8th grade students graduated on Saturday, June 4th from St. Perpetua School's K-8 program after celebrating one last Mass together; many of the students having been classmates since kindergarten. Prior to graduation, the eighth grade students shared an off campus retreat and memories night. The celebration was extra special for the Hogan family – Sean Hogan and his son Daniel are now both graduates of St. Perpetua School. Graduates will go on to attend top-notch area high schools; Acalanes, Bentley, Campolindo, Carondelet, De La Salle and Miramonte. Photo Karen Goodshaw

## Letters of Recommendation: Asking in the Right Way, at the Right Time

By Elizabeth LaScala, PhD

As a college advisor I hold two sessions with each of my 11th grade clients to review 12 goals that should be accomplished no later than the fall of the senior year. One of the goals is to identify two teachers from the junior year to ask for letters of recommendation. In years past I suggested that students consider asking teachers before the end of the junior year to find out their willingness to perform this task. More recently my suggestion has turned into a strong recommendation, especially if that is current practice at the student's high school.

Here are my general guidelines for obtaining teacher recommendations:

- First, be aware that public school teachers are not paid to write letters of recommendation for students. To my knowledge no public school teacher's job description includes a requirement to produce letters for college-bound students. Teachers perform this service in their desire to help students along the path to college.
- Next, always be polite when you request a recommendation and be ready to supply whatever teachers need to complete your recommendations on time. It is your job to take care of logistics. For example, you should give your teachers pre-addressed, stamped envelopes if the recommendations are to be sent by regular mail. On the other hand, many colleges use the Common Application and many forms, including teacher and counselor letters of recommendation can be completed and sent on-line.
- Remember that a teacher who knows you in the classroom may not know much about your extracurricular activities. Do you write for the student newspaper? Do you play an active role in a school club? Perhaps you have taken piano lessons for many years and have earned a certificate of merit that documents your accomplishments. If you want the teacher to know these things about you, you must tell them. Some schools provide

a form at the counseling office that you can fill out and give to your teacher. At other high schools you may provide this information on Naviance (your school counseling office will tell you if they use this program). I suggest that you create and maintain a student profile/resume which details important academic and extracurricular achievements including employment, volunteerism, honors and awards and so on. This profile can be used in many important ways throughout the college admissions process (to have ready at a college interview, for example).

- Generally, the student should ask at least two teachers. Occasionally, a student may wish to ask three teachers, especially if they know a recommendation from a particular teacher is most appropriate for a particular institution (e.g. an AP math instructor for a technical institute like MIT or Cal-Tech). But usually it is sufficient to secure two definite commitments from teachers who teach academic, college-preparatory subjects such as English, foreign language, math, science, or the social sciences like history or economics.

Although there is new pressure to move even more swiftly along the path to completing college applications, be prepared if a teacher thinks it is too early to ask, and tells you to ask next fall. Thank her or him politely and do not press the issue. Also, be ready if teachers ask what school(s) you are applying to. If you know the names of some private colleges to which you are planning to send applications, certainly let them know. Many private colleges and some out of state public universities require letters. However, remember that the California public system does not take letters of recommendation. So if you ask for a recommendation when only applying to the University of California or California State Universities you will look as though you have not done your homework—definitely NOT a good idea when you are asking

a teacher for a recommendation!

A related issue involves early admission programs. Unless a student has thoroughly researched colleges and prepared a final list, he or she probably does not know which colleges are good candidates for early admission applications. Also, most students will want to know their junior year standardized test scores, AP exam results and final spring semester grades before making decisions about early applications. Still, students who believe they will apply to one or more schools early could benefit from letting their teachers know about their intention. This is particularly true for students with special talents like athletes and performing artists.

Although these are my general guidelines I feel compelled to add that I believe this trend puts teachers, students and parents under even more pressure about college admissions. This is most unfortunate. There are many students who will wait until the fall of their senior year to ask for recommendations, and I hope and believe these students will still find teachers who will write their letters.



Elizabeth LaScala Ph.D. guides high school and transfer students through the complex world of college admissions. She develops best match college lists, offers personalized essay coaching, and tools and strategies to help students tackle each step of the admissions process with confidence and success. Elizabeth helps students from all backgrounds, including college-bound athletes, to maximize merit and financial aid awards. She earned certification from UC Berkeley in College Admissions and Career Planning. Contact her @ (925) 891-4491 or elizabeth@doingcollege.com.

## New Mural at JM

Submitted by Moose Wesler



Photo provided

6th graders at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School created the artwork for this charming mural that was recently completed by their teachers, Kristin Anderson, Robin Anderson, Elaine Guttman, and Dawn Lezak along with art teacher Moose Wesler. The mural was funded by the PTA.



Lights, camera, action! With 50 1st through 7th grade students serving as cast and crew, St. Perpetua School proudly presented their

spring musical, Alice in BEATLES-Land. This original production was written and directed by Barrett Lindsay-Steiner, an accomplished

actor, writer and director. Barrett's staff included Sarah Sumner and Claire Laurence, local high school students, plus a St. Perpetua School Alumna, Katie Steele. The musical was a contemporary re-telling of the classic Alice in Wonderland but with a twist. When the Beatles follow the Rabbit into Wonderland, everything is "BEATLEfied." Alice goes on a quest to find the four missing BEATLES and to return Wonderland to its natural state. Barrett transformed this classic into a smart comedy, full of bright, original, and fun musical theater. With its wonderful humor and darling costumes, this small-scale production was performed to a full house and concluded with a standing ovation from the audience!

Photo provided