

Joaquin Moraga Garden Takes Shape

Submitted by Joan Danilson



Students and families at Joaquin Moraga garden BYOT party. Photos provided

With the addition of the Earth Stewardship class in the sixth grade wheel rotation, the mission to provide a lasting gardening program at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School continues to grow, with students and their families planting more than 100 native garden plants May 4 at a BYOT (bring your own

tools) party. The project to create an outdoor classroom space to promote learning and creativity in gardening and general horticulture became a reality with the support of a \$15,000 grant from the Bonita Garden Club of Oakland, a charitable organization that saw promise in the school. Improvements

included a 500-square-foot shaded patio space with a seat wall and tree for shade, grading and mulching of the garden surface, a new native garden section, an upgraded irrigation system, a stockpile of compost, bark mulch and wood mulch for the use of students on future garden projects. The multi-disciplinary Earth

Stewardship class incorporates all project sites for students to design, plant, decorate, and use as models for their studies. This course provides students the opportunity to work collaboratively on site, synthesizing many concepts and ideas they learn in the regular classroom, while having a

hands-on experience. Help from community members including landscape architect Lenore Morgridge, contractor Chuck Conover and his crew at Conover Landscape, and JM teachers Elaine Guttman, Dawn Lezak, and Harvey Kamian, made this garden possible.

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TEEN SCENE

Overcoming Fear

By Hannah Li

The night before my SAT, I remember sitting on the kitchen floor looking up at my mom: "What if I get every single question wrong?" I was being sarcastic to an extent, but at that moment I was genuinely overcome by a claustrophobic fear of failing the SAT. Mom's next few words changed my perspective – not only on the SAT, but approaching fear in general:

"We always assume that the worst is more likely to happen. We rarely give ourselves enough credit for the possibility of success." And as much as I hate to admit it, she was right.

As teens, we're living in the sort of "crossroads" of our lives. True childhood is in hazy retrospect, but our futures are uncertain. The ideas of college, grad school, a job, and family are realities just out of reach, yet we are constantly reminded of these incoming benchmarks. Instead of thinking positively about the outcome of our futures, we instead revert to this almost instinctive nature of pessimism. Current juniors at Miramonte High School tried to explain this pattern:

"I don't purposely try to feel anxious..." says Abby. B, "it's just the idea of me failing seems so much more natural than the idea of success. I know that sounds depressing, but it's true."

Alyssa H. expressed a similar notion: "There's just so much pressure to succeed. Yet all I see is the probability of failure. Fear is definitely helpful in getting me to study, but I think generally my life would be less stressful if fear didn't play such a big role."

Both juniors reassured me that they were emotionally stable, yet it's a distinct pattern that it is human nature – for teens, at least – to be overcome by fear. So at last I did some heavy introspection and realized the importance of fear. At times, and in small doses, fear is an excellent motivator; yet, in heavy doses it leads to paralyzing anxiety and stress. We must instead strive to find a balance between fear and confidence. We must find a way to avoid another round of pre-SAT breakdowns. But as far as solutions, I'm in the same boat as every other junior.

Hannah Li, a reporter on Express Yourself!™ is a high school junior who runs track and tutors. In her free time she enjoys blogging, photography, and cooking.

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