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# Lamorinda Schools

Joaquin Moraga • Lafayette Elementary • Los Perales • Miramonte • Orinda Intermediate • Sleepy Hollow • Springhill • Stanley Middle • Wagner Ranch

## How Does Your Garden Grow?

By Lee Borrowman

If you happened to be hanging out in the Garden Classroom at Burton Valley Elementary last week, you might have had the pleasure of watching a small group of special education students experiencing the sensory delights of honeysuckles and snapdragons, or listened in amazement to young voices asking for "More salad, please!" From green beans to chard, if your student attends BVE she may actually be eating her vegetables. And there are many more lessons to be learned in the Garden Classroom.

There are beds in the Garden with such names as Pizza, Salad, Soup and Salsa. Students can visit a Hummingbird Garden, a Butterfly Garden or the new Tops and Bottoms Garden (inspired by Janet Steven's Caldecott Honor book of the same name). Or walk through Central Valley, where food crops grow, and take the California Native Trail that features a wide variety of native plants. On Wednesdays students can spend "Lunch in the Garden," picnic-

ing and helping out with garden chores.

Science teacher Mallory Peirce explains, "The garden was designed from the beginning with curriculum in mind. Because of this, while the garden has been evolving over the past 3 years to include all elements needed to teach the curriculum, we initially developed the lessons to meet the state content standards - not just in science, but social studies and other subjects. Every lesson in the garden either enriches or delivers classroom content."

Peirce's favorite lesson teaches to a 2nd grade standard, "Soil - It's Alive." Soil is made partly from organic materials and partly from weathered rock. Thriving worm bins and compost bins, for both food scraps and plant materials, feature the organic components of the soil. Nothing goes to waste in the Garden Classroom.

Even the storm drain serves as a focal point for a lesson on watershed. Science teacher Laura Lowell takes her



Proud student offers samples 5th grade classes to visit a creek at the beginning of the school year. Then they watch water runoff to the Garden creek go down the storm drain. Back in the classroom, they use maps to trace the path of the water to Las Trampas Creek, where it joins Tice Creek under Broadway Plaza to form Walnut Creek, and moves on through Suisun Bay and finally meets the ocean. The students make connections between water conservation, ecology and the watershed.

Photo by Lee Borrowman



Pollinators at work

den to watch pollinators at work; the Garden is home to hummingbirds, butterflies, bees, small flies and beetles all busily doing their thing. Other classes use native plants such as soap root in their studies of Native Americans.

Support of many organizations, such as the BVE PTA, Soda Foundation, LASF, Intero Realty, East Bay Nursery, Garden Arts, The Water Project, and the Lafayette Community Foundation, and Boy/Girl Scouts have been invaluable. The PTA made possible last year the hiring of garden manager/instructor Kim Curiel. Peirce says, "Having Kim has allowed us to bring children into the garden, on a weekly basis, for activities. She has also expanded the original science/social studies curriculum to integrate nutrition education, art, literature and physical activity." Nearly all of BVE's teachers use the Garden in one way or another. Curiel also encourages students to just quietly observe the Garden. She says, "Their minds really turn on when they see and smell and taste."



The Hummingbird Garden

Photo by Lee Borrowman



Kim Curiel (center) with special ed class

Photo by Lee Borrowman

## WISE: The Senior English Experience option at Miramonte

By Nee-Sa Lossing

WISE is an in-depth interest project, focused on any topic of the students' choice. Seniors who elect this option are enrolled in English 4 for the first semester, and use the vacated time in the second semester to complete their projects. Students collaborate with teacher mentors, whom they choose, to complete reading and research in their area of interest, and work towards their final presentation at the end of the program, which is evaluated for a grade.

"WISE students gain independence, communication skills, organization and planning skills, problem solving skills, and most of all a connection between academic learning and real world experiences in a field they are passionate about," said Mira-

monte teacher Steve Poling.

Students are evaluated frequently, to ensure that they stay on track with their project, which, in turn, ensures them the best possible WISE experience that they can have.

"[Students] are often investigating a career path, developing existing talents, or giving back time and energy to the community. At the end of the semester, students typically have a clear idea of how their interests will play out in their college education or career plans," said Poling.

"Be ready to have a powerful and independent learning experience," said Poling. "Be prepared to work hard, make smart choices, and create your own success."



After Yom Kippur

Photo by Julia Zucker

## WISE student Julia Zucker

Striving to capture the essence of her subject through the lens, Miramonte senior Julia Zucker tries to create very real and honest messages through her photographs, while still incorporating her own personality. Choosing photography as the subject of her WISE project was a natural decision for Zucker.

"I really like art a lot," said Zucker, "but I don't have the patience to create something like drawing or painting, or even crafts. I think they're just way too hard for me to focus on, but photography lets me capture what I think is attractive to the eye or what I think is moving or important."

In order for her to create photographs that are distinctive and different, Zucker tries to convey her

own emotions through the image.

"How I feel at the moment is always in my photographs," said Zucker. "I like to think I'm very removed from my subjects, which is kind of who I am, in a way. I usually just stand off, and analyze the situation more than actually engage in social activity, I just kind of watch."

To further distinguish her photographic style, Zucker draws inspiration from her life and the world around her.

"My friends influence me a lot, and people around me influence me. Also the other photographers that I take classes with influence me," said Zucker. "I hate to define who I am, but I think that if I can define it in any way, it would be through my photography."

## MySpace? Facebook? What's a Teen to do?

By Nee-Sa Lossing, Miramonte High School

Over 50 million MySpace accounts have been created since the birth of the site in 2003, most of them belonging to youth between the ages of 14 and 24, according to: www.collegewebeditor.com.

"It's not okay for teens to spend so much time online, because it really affects people's schoolwork, and people just aren't personal anymore," said Miramonte High School junior Sasha Patpatia. "The other side of that, though, is that it helps you to communicate with people you otherwise wouldn't have met. I've met a lot of cool people with the same interests as me through MySpace."

In recent years, it is obvious

that the social development of teens is no longer restricted to face-to-face interactions. With the increasing popularity social networking sites, such as MySpace, teens' relations with their peers have crossed over onto the internet.

Facebook, another social networking site, used to be exclusive to college students trying to find friends on their own college campuses. In late 2006, though, the site became welcome to anyone with an email address, and has since been growing in popularity among high school students. With about half the amount of members as MySpace, Facebook creates a closer-knit community that is further emphasized by grouping

members together based on the school that they attend. A major appeal of social networking sites to teens is the ability to create an online personality that will attract other people with the same interests.

"Social networking sites really create situations where you can find friends and groups where you fit in and feel like you belong," said Patpatia. "I think that a sense of belonging is something that every teen needs, and if they find it through MySpace, then that's that."

No matter what, teens will always find a way to create the bonds that they need to develop socially, whether it be online or not.

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