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Lamorinda Public Schools Ace the API

By Andrea A. Firth

Academic Performance Index Scores* Across Lamorinda

District/School	2007 Base	2008 Growth
Acalanes Union High School District**	882	886
Acalanes	893	896
Campolindo	908	909
Miramonte	905	916
Lafayette School District	914	916
Burton Valley	935	928
Happy Valley	946	938
Lafayette Elementary	906	924
Springhill	904	898
Stanley Intermediate	904	910
Moraga School District	942	947
Camino Pablo	957	949
Rheem	954	962
Los Perales	954	959
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate	929	938
Orinda Union School District	948	955
Del Rey	949	963
Glorietta	948	959
Sleepy Hollow	977	977
Wagner Ranch	951	955
Orinda Intermediate	941	948

*The 2008 Growth API summarizes a district or school performance on the 2008 Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program and 2008 California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) tests. **Also includes scores from Las Lomas and Del Oro High Schools and the Center for Independent Study

All of the school districts in Lamorinda posted positive growth in academic performance over the past year as measured by the California Department of Education's API-academic performance index. Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD), which includes Acalanes, Campolindo, and Miramonte High Schools, showed an improved API score for the fourth consecutive year and continues to rank as the highest performing high school district in California based on this measure. "While the API is an important number...I am most pleased by continuous improvement, which our students have demonstrated," states AUHSD Superintendent Jim Negri. He attributes the District's academic success to a number of factors including good quality instruction, highly motivated students, increased funding from the Measure A parcel tax, and a strong partnership with the K through 8th grade feeder districts. Superintendents from the three K through 8th districts in Lamorinda concurred with Negri's assessment also citing the commitment of staff, students, parents and community to the education process and funding support from parent clubs, PTAs, and the education foundations as a key factor to their successes. "I have been awed by the quality of instruction and the high levels of student engagement," reports Dr. Fred Brill, Superintendent of the Lafeyette School District. Dr. Brill recently returned to Lafayette and took over as the top manager the district. "It also helps that our parents share our high expectations and provide exceptional support in our schools and in their homes. Education is highly valued in our community," he adds. All of the Lamorinda schools scored well above the statewide goal of 800 for the API, which is scored on a scale of 200 to 1,000. With many schools in the area already achieving scores above 900, could the districts' be reaching an API ceiling? AUHSD's Negri thinks not. "The top API for a high school is 985," states Negri. "There is still room

for growth as each school demonstrated this year. I am most interested in the continued growth of all students over time," he adds. Orinda Union School District's Superintendent Dr. Joe Jaconette (whose district score is 955) acknowledges that API scores may rise and fall each year but feels confident in the ultimate outcome for his district. "We realize that our high scores have the potential for fluctuation and small changes in student achievement are readily evident," states Jaconette. "As long as our focus remains on students, we believe our resulting API will be strong." And what if the schools' API scores drop, what then? Moraga School District (MSD) Superintendent Rick Schafer states clearly that his district's focus is student learning, not test scores. However, he explains that student test performance reviews can sometimes identify gaps in learning. For example, a drop in scores at one MSD school revealed that students were learning a measured standard after the academic testing was administered. A simple change in the curriculum resulted in improved scores. "Did the learning increase?" asks Schafer. "Probably not because these students were learning the standard just the timing for measuring their mastery was different than the tests' timing," he responds to his own inquiry. So it appears that as the Lamorinda public schools continue to set higher academic goals for themselves, for now they continue to achieve them. "If we are going to function as an effective learning organization, then we have to look at the hard data, and consider how we might do better next time around," states Brill of Lafayette. "Good educators are always considering how they might improve, regardless of their level of success."

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