

## Head's Column



For the third year now, I enjoyed spending a Tuesday evening with fellow Saklan parents in reflective discussion in response to a distributed article. Covering the “whole child,” we have moved from examination of the social lives of our children

(Michael Thompson’s “Peer Pleasure, Peer Pain”) to their emotional lives (Dan Kindlon’s “Too Much of a Good Thing: Raising Children in an Age of Indulgence”) to now, this month, their intellectual development. Dr. Mel Levine’s somewhat unfortunately titled article, “Raisin’ Brain: Homes for All Kinds of Minds,” addresses how to build and maintain homes which stimulate and support mental growth, and makes some very strong points that this critically important work cannot be left to the exclusive province of schools.

Our discussion ranged widely; at times, in considering his recommendations, we couldn’t help but wonder if his doctrines made him too much of a killjoy, and certainly his bias against the physical and sporting side of life is problematic in an age of couch potato kids and health destroying obesity. Appropriately he counsels us to avoid placing too high a value of being friends with our children, and yet his direction that we be “taskmasters” did not resonate with every parent in attendance, and indeed seems to fly in the face of the deep compassion he displays towards children in so many other of his lessons. There was also the matter of fact realism that some of us felt in reaction to the elevated idealism of his advice: an intellectual dinnertime conversation is something none of us could argue with, but hey Dr. Levine, we’d like to see you try it in a home with two or three children between the

ages of four and ten!

We also looked for those things that corresponded or conflicted with previous readings. Levine’s urging us to promote our children’s brain development by cultivating their strengths and developing deep affinities for particular intellectually engaging subjects reminded us of the lesson in last year’s reading on how to strengthen our children’s emotional lives: “One of the most consistent findings about happiness is that children report being happiest when they are fully absorbed in a challenging activity” about which they are passionate. Whereas last year’s author recommends that sports or other physical pursuits can serve as terrific elevators of good character, work habits, and self discipline; Levine emphasizes sports and recreation will not promote intellectual development and cannot serve as an “affinity.”

Levine’s deep compassion also influences his recommendation that we parents “build up our listening to kids skills,” offering them a sympathetic ear daily in order to champion them in their school-time pursuits. All well and good, but there is no acknowledgement that in doing so, we might on occasion actually lead children to treat their trials and tribulations too seriously; in our reading two years ago, psychologist Michael Thompson wisely counseled us to carefully avoid “interviewing for pain.” No child should be bullied or harassed, but at the same time, a parent who leaps to a child’s defense over each and every disappointment or setback may deprive that child of the “scar tissue” that our emotional life needs for life-long protection from a sometimes insensitive world.

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# BELIEVE... IN THE MAGIC OF A GREAT EDUCATION

THE PARENT ASSOCIATION INVITES YOU TO JOIN US IN SUPPORTING OUR CHILDREN BY ATTENDING OUR ANNUAL AUCTION

SILENT AND LIVE AUCTION  
DINNER, DANCING AND  
A SPECTACULAR MAGIC SHOW

MARCH 15, 2003  
6:00 P.M. TIL 11:00 P.M.  
CLAREMONT COUNTRY CLUB

R.S.V.P. BY MARCH 7TH REMEMBER TO BRING A FRIEND



## The Board Corner

Dear Saklan families:

Shimmering titanium surfaces sleekly covering sculptural forms of cones and domes; red tinted walls propping up soaring arches and skylights of paper thin marble under which a grand apse forms a sacred yet inclusive agora: Have you been to LA recently? Eight members of our board of trustees recently attended a two day weekend trip to the downtown area, and we are back to tell you the new downtown architecture is stunning: Gerhry's Guggenheim is re-created and re-conceived in the forthcoming, nearly completed Disney Symphony Hall, and the Catholic Cathedral two blocks a way, though a bit unfriendly from the outside forms a stunning interior basilica.

We were not there solely for architecture, however. It was the annual California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) conference for Trustees, held alternately in LA and San Francisco, and we are very proud to report that once again, our school sent one of the two largest Northern CAIS school delegations! Perhaps this could be seen as evidence we have a

lot to learn, but we prefer to see it as testimony to our board's dedication to continuing development in the not-so-easy work of school trusteeship, and as demonstrative of our commitment to model for the Saklan community and of course its students a life-long love of learning. Not only did our board members give up their precious weekend for this important business, but as always they paid their own way too!

This year we are proud to report that we did not attend solely as learners, however, but also as teachers: among the eighteen workshops presented for the 750 trustees from around the state was one by our very own twosome, Development Committee Chair Betsy Hill and Head of School Jonathan Martin. Their session, on Annual Giving Strategies, celebrates the tremendous unity displayed by our school community in last year's campaign, and was very well received by the 100-odd attendees; later that afternoon another of our attendees was warmly approached by a stranger who had noticed her nametag and raved about how impressive the Saklan presenters had been.

Our group greatly enjoyed keynote speeches by PBS essayist Richard Rodriguez on the "Browning of America" and National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) President Pat Bassett on the Top Ten Leadership Challenges for Independent Schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Rodriguez's insights into how the US has already become a multicultural society, that we are all already

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# Student Scoop

## Westward Ho!

The year is 1846. It's April and the third graders are anxious to head west out of Springfield, Illinois. They hope to arrive in California before the heavy winter snows hit the Sierra mountains. It could take them six months, but they are prepared. They've built their covered wagons and have gathered the required supplies for the arduous journey through uninhabited and rough terrain.



Thus starts our Pioneer Unit this year in Third Grade. We hope to make history come alive! The third graders will also travel to Borges Ranch in Walnut Creek and will stay over night at the Old Sierra Pioneer Camp, where they will participate in a variety of pioneer activities. They are also writing letters home as they travel westward and are writing newspaper articles as if they were reporters traveling with the Donner and Reed families in 1846. All in all, their journey west should be filled with excitement and adventure! They can't wait to build their log cabins when they reach their new home.



## Statistics: Everybody Needs Math!

Math is taught through experiences that develop understanding and practiced by application of meaningful contexts. Statistics is just one of the many units covered within the sixth grade math curriculum that covers critical thinking and logic and applied mathematics. The sixth grade children developed a survey from beginning to end and went out to each class and interviewed the children and had each child in the school fill out and answer a survey. The survey provided data collection and analysis of what the average Saklan Valley School Student looks like.



"Polling the kids was fun!" says Adam Green. "We asked questions about hair color, height, how many siblings, pets, favorite color and more." The results are in and can be viewed in the breeze way on the bulletin board.



### The Typical SUS Student:

- Has Brown Hair
- Has a Dog as a Pet
- Favorite Sport is Soccer
- Has 0.6 Sisters
- Has 0.8 Brothers
- Is 51 Inches Tall



# Head's Column

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A summary of Levine's recommendations:

- First, Do No Harm
  - Avoid being monotonously critical
  - Don't compare children to siblings
  - Weight the ledger toward Praise
  - Always demonstrate Respect
  - Watch words with Care—Kids take us Literally
  
- Know Thy Child: Practice Early Detection of Learning differences
  - Be informed and vigilant observers
  - Recognize the unique learning challenges of each age and developmental level and anticipate what skills your unique child might need to strengthen to prepare for them.
  
- Strengthen Skills at Home
  - Develop "subskills" such as memorization necessary for higher order thinking.
  - Develop ongoing automatization of skills and facts
  - Work on math facts, letter formation, basic vocabulary
  - Memorization is most effective just at bedtime
  
- Partner with School
  - Practice mutual respect, avoid letting child play off school vs. home
  
- Cultivate a work ethic at home
  - Be a taskmaster; Parents must teach kids how to work
  - Require a set duration of brain activity five nights a week
  - Schools teach children to learn; Parents teach children to work
  
- Maintain an Intellectual Life at Home
  - Demonstrate interest, show excitement over children's learning
  - Limit TV, model reading & intellectual activity, discuss the news
  - Limit outside activity, provide downtime,
  - Reward productivity, not grades

Jonathan Martin  
Head of School



## Mark Your Calendar

<b>March 3</b>	Re-Enrollment Contracts Due
<b>March 8-9</b>	Middle School Ski Trip
<b>March 12</b>	Spring Follies @ 10:30 A.M.
<b>March 15</b>	Annual Auction
<b>Mar. 31-Apr. 4</b>	Spring Break
<b>May 2</b>	Spring Concert

## Board Corner

*Continued from page 2*

"brown," in the best sense, in a gorgeous mosaic, was a warm appreciation of our country, and a strong condemnation of anyone who wishes to extend any now retrograde "us vs. them" divisive mentality, whether in the form of racism or political correctness.

Basset's crystal ball predicted great things for the future of independent schools. Independent schools offer a quality of excellence in education, in community, in service, and in character building un-matched by any other school system, and the demand for that quality is only going to increase. Basset believes our schools are "countercultural," opposed to the worst in American mass society, such as the lowering of standards, the defining down of deviancy, materialism, and the abandonment of ethics. He brought all of us who were independent school trustees great pride for doing what we do.

Individual sessions illuminated and invigorated our group similarly. Good governance is not easy, but our trainers explained from deep experience that a trustee is not a delegate, not a representative, and not a maverick: a trustee holds the school's future in trust, and needs to view the school with a broad time horizon. It is not about today, or even tomorrow, but about five years from now that trustees ought to worry. Our practices must derive from our principles: salaries should be defined not by what we think we can afford today, but derived from what our encompassing philosophy of compensation is. Our group took much from these meetings, and is back from the big city ready to tackle the challenges of Saklan's future.

Ruth Bailey, Co-Chair, Board of Trustees

# March 2003

Sun      Mon      Tue      Wed      Thu      Fri      Sat

						<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> Preschool FT to the Fire Dept.	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> End of Trimester 2 RSVP for Annual Auction	<b>8</b> Middle School Ski Trip
<b>9</b> Middle School Ski Trip	<b>10</b> School Closed-CAIS Conference	<b>11</b> 3rd Grade FT Borges Ranch	<b>12</b> Spring Follies 10:30 am	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> 3rd Grade Stagebridge Theater	<b>15</b> Annual Auction
<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> Family Groups	<b>18</b> Middle School Field Trip to S.F.	<b>19</b> Noon Dismissal -All School Conferences	<b>20</b> MS Hawaii Trip Noon Dismissal -All School Conferences	<b>21</b> MS Hawaii Trip	<b>22</b> MS Hawaii Trip
<b>23</b> MS Hawaii Trip	<b>24</b> MS Hawaii Trip	<b>25</b> 4th FT Chabot Perform. Arts MS Hawaii Trip	<b>26</b> 2nd FT-Guide Dogs MS Hawaii Trip	<b>27</b> MS Hawaii Trip Preschool FT Green Meadows	<b>28</b> Noon Dismissal	<b>29</b>

<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> Spring Break-Mar31st to Apr. 4th Spring Camp Available
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February

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9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

April

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6	7	8	9	10	11	12
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27	28	29	30			