

Dear Meyers Learning Center Families and Colleagues

Excitement is buzzing for Meyers Learning Center's new, improved website! Our new site rolled out this spring, as an extension of our continuing efforts to provide a better online experience to the families and communities we serve. Please check it out today, if you haven't already: www.meyerslearning.com.

Other recent news:

- We are proud to announce our [“Best Learning Center in Silicon Valley”](#) award from Bay Area Parent Magazine for the second year in a row.
- We launched our new [BYU \(Brigham Young University\) Program](#) that offers Independent Study credit and enrichment courses for interested students.
- Your satisfaction is important to us. If you haven't recently shared feedback, please take a few minutes to fill out this [Satisfaction Survey](#).

In this issue of "Learning Journey" you'll find a feature article written by Executive Director, Ali Meyers on teaching organization skills, a special announcement about Director of Education, Purvi Bhagat, our Tutor Spotlight on Chris Bonfilio, and the Student Spotlight on Bridget F.

We look forward to hearing your feedback, including requests you may have for content in future newsletters.

Thank you,
The Meyers Learning Center Team

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Announcements

Congratulations to our Director of Education, Purvi Bhagat and her husband Parixit on the birth of their second child, Arjun Bhagat Pathak, earlier this year. Big brother Abhi is happy too!

In The Community

This fall, Executive Director Ali Meyers will teach the **MLC time management, organization, and study skills program** to students from grades 4-12 at Sierra School, a small private school in Santa Clara. If you are interested in having this program considered at your child's school, please tell your school leadership (principal, vice-principal, counselors...) and invite them to contact Ali at:

ali@meyerslearning.com

We'd love to see you at the following **presentations** coming up this fall:

- "Making Homework Manageable" by the Canada College Foster Care Program on Thursday, November 17, 2011, from 6:30 - 8:30 pm at HSA 400 Harbor Blvd., Bldg 8 in Belmont.

OT: Organization and Time Management Tips you ought to try

Try these 4 Quick Tips to Make Life Easier

1. **Live by the OHIO principle. In this case, OHIO stands for Only Handle It Once!** This applies to emails, mail, clothing, and anything else that tends to hang out and clutter your life.
2. **PREPARE FOR PHONE CALLS AND MEETINGS.** Before you call someone, or attend a meeting, make a list of important things you want to say or ask.
3. **SAVE AND BACK UP YOUR WORK OFTEN.** When using computers at home or at work, save your work at least every 10-15 minutes. In addition, back up your work regularly, preferably with a web-based system. If your computer freezes up or crashes, this will save you loads of aggravation in the future.
4. **THE CASE FOR THE PILLOWCASE.** As soon as you pull sheets and pillow cases out of the dryer (or off the line) put all matching flat sheets, fitted sheets and pillowcases in one of the matching

How do you teach organizational skills?

I often hear this question. It's a good one, since teaching organization skills differs considerably from teaching how to catch a ball or solve a math equation. Organization skill-development involves acquiring new knowledge while shaping (or reshaping) behavior. Not so simple. For young children, we want to nurture nascent organizational skill development, and with older children, we may need to reshape (or entirely restructure) ingrained habits hovering like storm clouds over their learning. So, how do we teach organizational skills? Through **action, direct instruction, and accountability.**

Action

The most powerful forms of learning happen through action: hands-on experience and multi-sensory problem-solving. We learn best by DOING. Organizational skill building is no exception. In fact, I would argue there's no better way to learn organization than through practical experience (the "action of organization"). That experience is a combination of observation and experimentation. When students see a tutor's (or parent's) role-modeling, they witness organization in action. Consequently, when students see poor organizational role-modeling, they learn from those examples too. Practice — initially through experimentation and other problem-solving methods — lays the foundation for organizational skill-building. Once the tutor and student unearth the best ways for that particular student to organize, the focus shifts to practicing ongoing routines and habits for maintaining gains.

Direct Instruction

For younger and older students alike, direct instruction often represents the missing link between goals and success. Students might wish to improve their organization skills; they might even envision the desired outcomes, but they may simply lack the knowledge of how to get there. Like any form of behavior development or modification, organizational skill-building happens in small, cumulative steps. To that end, our tutors break down organizational skills into segments. We directly teach students how to organize their backpacks, how to build a better binder, how to categorize and systematize their school materials, how to set up routines for homework tracking and management, how to create order in their schedules and study routines. Like interlocking puzzle pieces, these distinct skills come together (over time) to help students learn and practice self-organization.

Accountability

What benefit would there be in learning new tools if there's no follow-through? Accountability helps the student actualize goals and internalize skills. Tutors hold students accountable by monitoring their progress and holding them responsible for implementing tools. The student benefits from knowing the tutor will return, to see the planner, check the binders, or assess his/her use of new strategies. Like having an exercise partner, the student knows that s/he must show up, prepared to work and demonstrate results. The shared commitment helps foment the student's resolve and cement the foundation for concrete skill-building. Parents can also help hold students accountable, working in a collaborative process with the tutor to decide how best to support the child's emerging skills. I encourage you to speak with your child's tutor about ways to do this, if you haven't already.

Conclusion

Organizational skill development may differ from solving math problems, but here's a sample equation of the fundamental variables:

Action + Direct instruction + Accountability = Progress

Though the equation seems simple, the process can be complex. What I haven't included here, are the critical factors of student motivation and readiness (topics for a future newsletter article). In addition to these variables, organization skill-building requires teamwork, trial and error, understanding, and enduring patience. Yet as new skills take root, the effort always proves worthwhile--saving time, energy, and sanity. After all, organization skills benefit students beyond the classroom; they serve as tools for lifelong learning and success.

Tutor Spotlight: Chris Bonfilio

Chris holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from UCSB and a California Lifetime Teaching Credential. She taught for ten years in the classroom before leaving to pursue other ventures. Returning to education has been like "coming home" for Chris. She has always had a passion for teaching, learning, and helping others.

What is your favorite ice cream?

I like vanilla the best and it has been my preference since I was a child. It is such a versatile flavor, can be dressed up with nuts, fruit or chocolate, and is delicious on a piece of warm apple pie!

Name a book you've read that you loved.

One of the most memorable books I've read is "A Thousand Splendid Suns," by Khaled Hosseini. It is a moving story about the close friendship and hard times of two young women in war-torn Afghanistan. This book left a lasting impression on me.

Name a place you've visited that had a significant impact on you.

On a trip to Southern England a few years ago, I had the opportunity to visit Stonehenge. It has always amazed me that men could have built such a monumental structure thousands of years ago.

If you could meet any person living or not, who would it be?

It would thrill me to meet J.S. Bach. His music fills my heart and soul.

Student Spotlight: Bridget F.

Bridget is a senior at Archbishop Mitty High School in San Jose and has been a student at MLC since 2009. She is an active and valuable member of her school's soccer team. After high school, Bridget hopes to attend Colgate University in New York and fulfill her ambitions of a career in business.

How would a friend or teacher who knows you well describe you?

At first meeting, they would describe me as being quiet or shy. But once they got to know me, they'd probably describe me as funny, kind, hard-working and optimistic.

What qualities should a successful student possess?

Ambition and optimism are two important qualities a student should possess. It takes a lot of will power to study hard and complete assignments to the best of your ability, but in the end it will always be worth it. Optimism is also a key quality to have as a student, because there will always be days or projects that don't go as planned. It's important to keep in mind that with "tomorrow" comes a new day with more opportunities.



What accomplishment of yours has given you great satisfaction or pride?

My soccer team won the District Cup tournament, and I scored the winning goal on a penalty kick after two over-times.

What is your favorite ice cream?

My favorite ice cream is chocolate chip with hot fudge.

Name a book you've read that you loved.

My favorite book is The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton.

Name a place you've visited that had a significant impact on you.

In 7th grade I had the opportunity to visit Costa Rica. I stayed with a family there, which changed my outlook on life. They had very few material possessions, but appreciated all they had and made the most out of everything. It made me think about what's really important in life.

If you could meet any person living or not, who would it be?

I would love to meet Princess Diana.