

# Learning Journey



## Meyers Learning Center



June 22, 2006

Issue 1

### Announcements !!

⇒ Summer has arrived! Let's keep our kids' brains as active as their bodies. **Summer tutoring** is an opportunity to fine-tune skills that haven't had their fair share of attention during the school year. Students can focus on gaining a deeper conceptual understanding of subject areas in which they have struggled or learn new concepts. Tutors and students can tackle an intensive writing curriculum or a math course that will allow them to clarify areas of confusion and move beyond past struggles. MLC is currently reserving spots with our tutors for summer tutoring. Our schedules fill up, so contact us to discuss summer tutoring — even if your summer schedule is still evolving.

⇒ MLC will once again offer **Summer Workshops** to students and parents. Please see

the end of the newsletter for details or check our website for more information.

⇒ In February, Ali presented to large parent groups at **Bullis Charter School** in Los Altos and **Franklin Elementary School** in Burlingame.



⇒ On April 10, Ali presented at the **National Tutoring Association's** annual conference in Costa Mesa, California to professional educators, tutors, and learning center directors.

⇒ On April 26, Ali presented to parents at **Oak and Loyola** schools in the Los Altos school district. Her talk was entitled "**Time Management and Organization Skills: A Basic Toolbox for Build-**

**ing a Solid Learning Foundation.**"

⇒ On April 28, Ali and Adam presented a teacher in-service training at **High Tech High Charter School** in Redwood City.

⇒ If you are interested in having Ali or Adam speak (it can be tailored to a particular audience) at your child's school, to parent groups you're affiliated with, or to staff at your workplace, please e-mail us at: [info@meyerslearningcenter.com](mailto:info@meyerslearningcenter.com).

### Featured Article: Persevere and Self-preserve

By Ali Z. Meyers, MSW

It's finally paying off. For the sum of his young four years on earth, Adam and I have deluged our son Lev with etiquette reminders. "Please," "Thank you," and "May I..." are mainstays of his diet-like fruit, nuts, and avocados (he's a self-proclaimed vegetarian).

Time and again, we've looked at each other in tired moments of exasperation and wondered, "When will he start saying this stuff on his own? When will it sink in??"



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### Recent Testimonials

- "I'm delighted with his progress. I think the tutor is doing an outstanding job"  
- Mother of 5th grade boy
- "We could not survive without you!"  
- Mother of 8th grade girl
- "You make math seem easy. You're a miracle worker. I wish I had had you as a tutor last year."  
- 10th grade boy

# Persevere and Self-preserve (continued)

Well, in the past few months Lev has finally adopted some of the courtesy language we so faithfully try to instill. He has actually begun to thank people spontaneously--*of his own accord*. He's requesting beverages and napkins with pleases. He thanks us for making him dinner! (I don't expect that to continue into his teen years.) I've also noticed that his negotiating skills are sharpening, but that was effortless (believe me) on our part.

What can the tedious process of etiquette education teach us? Quite a bit. As parents, we often know clearly in our minds the outcomes we want to see our kids realize. For basic skills like studying, time management, or organization, it may seem frustrating (even maddening?) at times, to hear ourselves stating the same reminders, teaching the same concept, or pointing out the same desired behavior that we've talked about repeatedly but still haven't seen implemented.

Your teaching words and moments have an impact which may not be instantly visible. But the collective store of your wisdom and education builds inside your child, and you may be surprised to see it emerge when you least expect it. Keep your mind, eyes, and ears open for those moments, and in the meantime, be patient. These habits take years to develop.

## The HIEP

Here is one tool you can try implementing that can shape your child's ability to self-start and develop the kind of work ethic that will carry him or her beyond high school into the next chapters of life. Consider instituting it this fall.

To facilitate the activation of homework habits you want to see your child exhibit, introduce an H-IEP. What is that? A Home-IEP. Many of you are familiar with the "IEP" or Individualized Educa-

tion Plan that some students have in schools. IEPs grew out of the recognition that not every child learns the same way, and that schools could be more responsive to specific students' needs by adapting (or individualizing) their educational approach to those students.

**“Systems for completing homework that are consistent and predictable breed habituation.”**

I propose the H-IEP after school to help maximize your child's learning, homework habituation, and work ethic. You can create and institute a Home Individualized Education Plan with your child(ren). This can be constructed like the ones in the school system (minus the great expense of time and resources required for those meetings)! Here's how to do it:

- Sit with your child and identify the specific needs s/he presents when it comes to learning and working effectively at home.
- That will usually involve:
  - A quiet, distraction-free place to study
  - Good lighting
  - A comfortable (but not too warm) temperature
  - A belly holding nutritious, brain-fueling food
  - Supplies necessary for homework close at hand

Other aspects the H-IEP should include:

- Dedicated regular study or “working” hours
- No chores, phone calls, or other interruptions allowable during these mutually agreed-upon times.
- This time should be consistently adhered to (if possible) until your child practices it more independently, much like the habits of showering or eating breakfast daily.

Systems for completing homework that are consistent and predictable breed habituation. A typical routine might look something like this:

- Student comes home, takes a half hour of unwind time; eats a nutritious snack.
- Student gets to work. (Remove distractions such as yourself, siblings, the computer, T.V., or the family pet!).
- Student should start with the planner, develop a plan of attack (prioritize), do work in 40-50 minute chunks with timed 5-10 minute breaks in between. A timer is an excellent tool for building these types of routines and removing arguments about how much time has passed.
- Student finishes work and returns work to HW folder or backpack to be turned in the next day.
- Make yourself available without hovering. Depending on the age of your child, your presence may be more or less necessary. I would generally say that less is more. Let your child know that you are there for assistance when needed, but encourage him or her to try to work inde-

# Persevere and Self-preserve (continued)

pendently as much as s/he can. You can monitor, but stop short of making yourself a nuisance.

The best thing you can do may be to simply create the environment in which your child can learn, rather than trying to orchestrate the learning outcome (or product) yourself.

Some of you may feel that this is fantasy thinking. I recognize that it's much easier to talk about something like the HIEP than to institute it. For families whose relationships have suffered through homework struggles, it can be especially difficult. But the notion of an HIEP can also

relieve some of the pressure and tension associated with homework time. Call it a homework contract. Build it together. Everyone can sign it. You can post it on the fridge, and there you have it. When conflicts arise, return to the contract. Revisit/revise it as necessary. If

anyone's straying from the agreement (parents included!), create logical non-punitive consequences (loss of privileges until HW is completed or parents writing "I will not nag you about completing your HW" 10 times). When the contract is working, give verbal praise and reinforcement

in the form of privileges granted, such as time tokens for something your child loves.

**“The best thing you can do may be to simply create the environment in which your child can learn, rather than trying to orchestrate the learning outcome (or product) yourself.”**

Keep this in mind: you may not witness all of your efforts in shaping your child's desired behaviors coming to fruition. It could take years. It may not look the way it looks for you. But perseverance and patience are your

friends. Keep them with you, and you will all make it through. Heed the timeless wisdom of Norman Vincent Peale: "It's always too soon to quit!"

## Tutor Spotlight: Abbie Lezak

Abbie holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology, a Pennsylvania Teacher's Certification for Kindergarten through Sixth Grade, a Mid Level Language Arts and Social Studies Certification, and has been trained in the Sondag phonics program, as well as Schools Attuned.



ditional learner, she came to value the learning differences all students have. This led her to challenge herself as an educator, figuring out how to help each student find unique strategies for success. She strives to provide meaning and relevance to her teaching in order to increase students' motivation and love of learning.

### Abbie's Fun Facts:

**Q:** What is your favorite ice cream flavor?

**A:** When I was a young girl, my grandmother took me shopping every Thursday, and we would get ice cream. I would always get strawberry; it's still my favorite.

**Q:** Name a book you've read that

you loved.

**A:** I love to read, so this question is nearly impossible to answer. However, *Charlotte's Web* and *Pride and Prejudice* are ranked highly among my favorites.

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

**A:** I went to Greece for the Olympics in 2004. The lifestyle, beautiful scenery, amazing food, and breathtaking relics made it very hard to leave.

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

**A:** Martin Luther King, Jr. Listening to his speeches moves me to tears. The honor of being in his presence would have been remarkable.

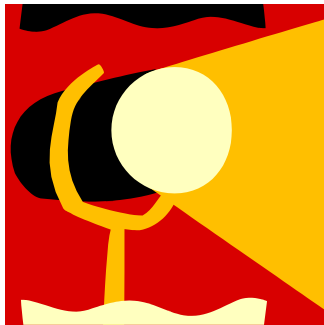
## Student Spotlight: Joe Perriso, 8th grade

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

**A:** Fun, makes friends easily, nice.

**Q:** What qualities should a successful student possess?

**A:** Determination, time management skills, organization skills, and proactive.



**A:** Getting honor roll all year, getting in to St. Francis, and having the opportunity to play football at St. Francis.

**Q:** What are some important lessons you've learned from your MLC tutor?

**A:** I learned not to procrastinate, how to plan for long term projects, and how to stay organized.

flavor?

**A:** Chocolate

**Q:** Name a book you've read that you loved.

**A:** *Pit Dragon Trilogy*

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

**A:** St. Francis High School

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

### Fun Facts!

**Q:** What is your favorite ice cream

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## Summer Workshop Info

Meyers Learning Center offers workshops catered to the needs of students entering 5th to 12th grades, as well as their parents. Workshops tend to be especially popular in the summer time. Please visit [www.meyerslearningcenter.com](http://www.meyerslearningcenter.com) for workshop details and registration. You can also contact us if you're interested in scheduling a semi-private workshop for a particular subject or grade level.

### **Basic Toolbox: 1) 5th and 6th grade students, 2) Middle school students, 3) High school students**

Time Management, Study, and Organizational skills. This workshop will teach students tools and strategies to help manage their time, materials, and school work. It will also present methods for becoming a better and more efficient learner. Topics covered include organization systems for backpack and binders, managing time through the effective use of a planner and time chart, and a sampling of valuable study skills.

### **Write On: 1) Middle school students, 2) High school students**

A combination of creative and formal writing. This workshop series will foster creative thinking and expression while also providing the disciplined focus of more formal written structures. Course content will be a combination of creative writing exercises, class discussion, peer and teacher review/feedback, as well as the critical elements of essay (structure, models, and practice).

### **School Prep. Boot Camp: 1) Middle school students, 2) High school students**

This workshop will teach students how to get organized for school success, plan an effective study routine, thoughtfully consider and construct an efficient schedule and plan for time management, and acquire valuable resources for self-advocacy, support, and success during the school year.

### **Parent Boot Camp: Trimming the Fat (for parents, not kids)**

Find out how to "trim the fat" from your schedule, your worries about your kids and school, and excess life clutter that seems to weigh you down during the school year.

## Our Mission

Meyers Learning Center teaches students practical tools to empower and manage themselves while instilling self-confidence and a love of learning.

## Our Service

Offering one-to-one academic tutoring, coaching, and workshops to youth of diverse ages and learning abilities, we teach the whole student. That means we seek to know your child as a person; we see him or her in the context of a school, a family, a stage of life, and other factors that can shape learning and academic success. Taking the time to understand your child's obstacles to achievement, we also believe it's crucial to identify and capitalize on every child's natural strengths and capacities. We focus on bolstering self-esteem and confidence since these factors critically impact academic success. With a holistic, tailored approach based on strengths, abilities, and clearly defined goals, students can achieve their tremendous potential.

Please contact us for more information.

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