



## **Voices from the Quad: An Upper School Student Panel Moderated by Tracy Bianchi, MFT**

*Attendee Notes for Menlo School Workshop: Feb. 5, 2011*

***The students:*** Students representing the Student Council came from each grade and were balanced in terms of gender. It was interesting to note the change of voice and perspective between the ages. Each had something important to say about his/her own class, in addition to personal views.

***On why students joined the Student Council:*** Why did students join and what were some of the best and worst parts about being on the council? A senior student described how he had just spoken to the whole senior class about how to behave during this second semester. He expressed that it was quite difficult but knew that he didn't want to lose a fellow classmate due to a poor choice made. Another student joined the student council in order to foster good communication with the teachers. Others agreed. The students described how a new process for electing class representatives has encouraged more thoughtfulness; elections are now less of a popularity contest or joke fest than in years past. This year the group works more on a committee system, which students say has proved more productive and made it easier for the freshmen to have a say.

***On how best to communicate with parents:*** Students agreed that the best time to communicate with parents is during dinner or in the car, especially after practice and before the dawning of homework. Let it be organic. Don't press it. Put away your electronics. Don't sneak a peek at your blackberry while trying to get your child's attention. A broken TV that just never got fixed has helped one household.

***On peer pressure at Menlo:*** How strong is peer pressure at Menlo, particularly at out of school events? A senior student expressed that he trusts his friends not to push him to do something he is not comfortable with, and he knows they can trust him. A junior said she just doesn't feel that kind of destructive peer pressure. Freshman can feel a little more pressure since they are still building bonds with their peers.

***On what happens to the "loner kid" at Menlo:*** Tony and Cindy Lapolla gave insight into how Menlo watches out for the child who might be struggling. Tracy discussed how teachers and administration have methods in place to notice and provide help for those who need it. A sophomore student expressed that it was actually hard to be by yourself at Menlo; one day he left lunch early for a teacher meeting and kids kept coming up to him and asking him if he was all right. A freshman said that in the beginning of the

school year everyone smiles a lot and doesn't show how they feel, but at this point in the year most have found a friend group. She suggested that it's a good idea to look around for a club or activity to find kids who like the same things. All students agreed that Menlo offers something for every type of interest, hobby or talent.

By the end, parents said how impressed they were with these students. And how grateful we were that they got up early on a Saturday to talk to a bunch of parents!