

From the  
HEAD OF SCHOOL

*Norm Colb*

## The Parent & Faculty Education Conference



The day one of my children turned 13 he woke up and had become...A PROBLEM! He disagreed with virtually everything his mom and I said, transformed his room into a toxic waste dump, started to resist going to school, skimped on his homework and, in general, became difficult to live with. Gone was my soft, pleasant 12-year-old. He had been replaced by an adolescent.

How are we supposed to do our job when our children—now adolescents!—can fight us every step of the way? What are we supposed to do when we want our kids to go down one path and they are determined to avoid that path at all costs? How can we impart the values we cherish when our offspring seem to spend more and more time being bombarded by messages

in the media that lead in an entirely different and unacceptable direction? How can our children even hear us when ubiquitous earbuds are so effective in tuning out what we are saying—what we want them to hear?

All of us—parents and teachers alike—want the same for our children. We want them to grow up to be confident, sensitive and productive. We want them to enjoy life to the fullest, to be confident in their abilities and to be able to enter into meaningful relationships.

While our goals could not be more clear, helping our children reach these goals is possibly the hardest work any of us is ever called upon to do. As challenging as it was when our children were in their earlier years, by the middle or upper school grades they have entered a new stage of development, a stage with challenges that can be all-consuming. For many of us, this comes as a shock. It certainly did for me. Until it hits, parents take it as an item of faith that there is a phase called “adolescence,” but when we find that we are actually living with a teenager, the concept of adolescence becomes powerfully real.

How are we to communicate with our children? How are we to break through the barriers that can seem impenetrable? Being the parents we always meant to be turns out to be difficult, and our plight is compounded by the fact that so many of us live

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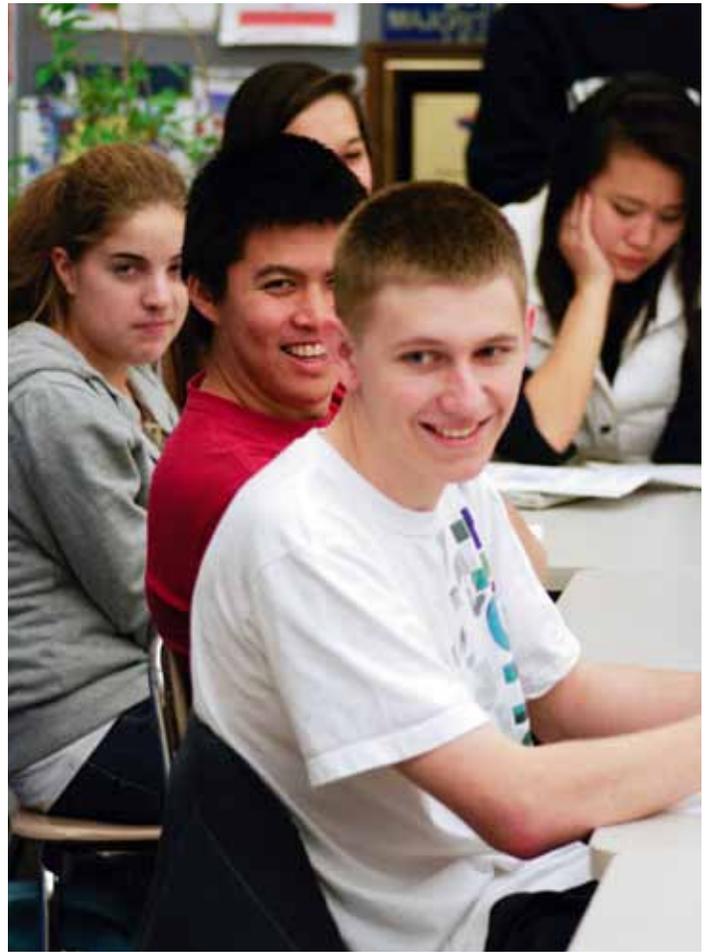
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in isolation from each other and from our extended families. There was a time—it really did exist—when parents lived near their own parents in tight, nurturing communities where they could explore these challenging questions and develop answers that had currency and support throughout the community. For a whole host of reasons, communities like that have largely disappeared, and the effect is that we are left largely on our own when we confront the tough questions about raising our children.

And this brings me to Menlo's Parent & Faculty Education Conference. For the past ten years this remarkable conference has helped members of the Menlo community think deeply about how we can best launch our children into lives of health, happiness and accomplishment. Year after year, keynote speakers and workshop leaders have sharpened our insights about childrearing. An ever-growing audience has left each conference fitted with powerful lenses through which to reassess our parenting and to understand the dynamics in our families. This year's conference features two keynote speakers as well as a choice of six workshops. You can learn about the conference, which takes place February 5 from 8:00 am to 12:30 pm, [here](#).

As I noted last month, the Parent and Faculty Education Conference is where we in the Menlo community build our village. Based on past experience, I wouldn't think of missing it.



KnightLine is published in .pdf form on the Menlo School website each month, with an email alert including a link sent to all parents. For questions, please contact Alex Perez, Director of Communications, via email at [alex.perez@menloschool.org](mailto:alex.perez@menloschool.org) or by calling 650.330.2001 ext. 2330.

