

## Growing population causes overcrowding in LG schools

by Rachel Salisbury and Montana Fowler  
Editors-in-Chief

"You didn't come through Fisher. I would know you if you had," asserted Lisa Fraser, principal of Raymond J. Fisher for the past eleven years. Her confidence in her ability to identify any of the thousands of students who have passed through the school in the last decade is evidence enough that she has succeeded in establishing the "familial feeling" she strives to maintain at Fisher.

"My first year here, I was very intent on knowing every kid's name, and that's not a core value that has changed for me," Fraser explained. This philosophy has been increasingly difficult to follow over the past few years, as all levels of the Los Gatos school system experience strain as a result of growing student populations. Fraser's dedication to memorizing the name of each student, despite the steady increase in the number of faces to be learned, mirrors many administrators' outlook as the Los Gatos school district confronts the challenges that accompany a growing student body.

LGHS principal **Markus Autrey** identified the same issue at a high school level. "I think we will need to be intentional about how we maintain that community aspect, that small-town feel in a growing system," Autrey said. Autrey is not alone, as other members of LGHS's administration agree that the larger student body could have an unwanted effect on the school's feeling of community if proper measures are not taken. Guidance Department chair Amy Gutierrez has made it part of her mission to let incoming students know "that everyone is welcome... and you are not anonymous here," even as the school expands.

In addition to the possible loss of the close-knit community, other more tangible issues have arisen as a result of the increasing number of students. The 77 new students who enrolled right before school this year left administration little time to prepare appropriately. Unable to hire new teachers or add new class sessions, the administration had to come up with creative solutions to accommodate

the larger-than-anticipated student body. This included enlisting part time teachers to teach extra classes and increasing class sizes.

Until the new buildings are constructed, classroom space will be an unfortunately scarce resource, meaning that many teachers have to share rooms or switch rooms throughout the day. In conjunction with the lack of classrooms, the student to teacher ratio has shifted from the normal 30 students per class and 25 students per

this year. Gutierrez noted, "Just like some classes are really full right now, our counselor caseload is the highest it has ever been... We all want to serve all of our students, but there's only so much time in the day."

Not only do counselors have more students, but they have to work harder with each student to satisfy each individual's scheduling needs. Classes requested by students are often too full, which has led to a backlash from both students and parents against counselors who are unable to combat these scheduling issues. This also disadvantages students who are unsuited for their current class, but unable to switch into a different class. For example, Math Department chair Cecilia Anderson is concerned "about students in Algebra 2 Accelerated and Trig/Pre-Calculus Honors having a place to go if they choose to move into the non-accelerated or non-honors course."

While both class sizes and staffing can be adjusted during upcoming years, especially with the construction taking place as a result of Measure E, there are some issues that present more of a challenge to the administration. Both parking and traffic issues fall under what Autrey deems the "manageable" category, saying, "You can never fix parking [and traffic], but you manage it." With a landlocked campus and new buildings being constructed, the maximum number of additional parking spots the school can construct, around 40, would not make a dent in the lack of parking spaces.

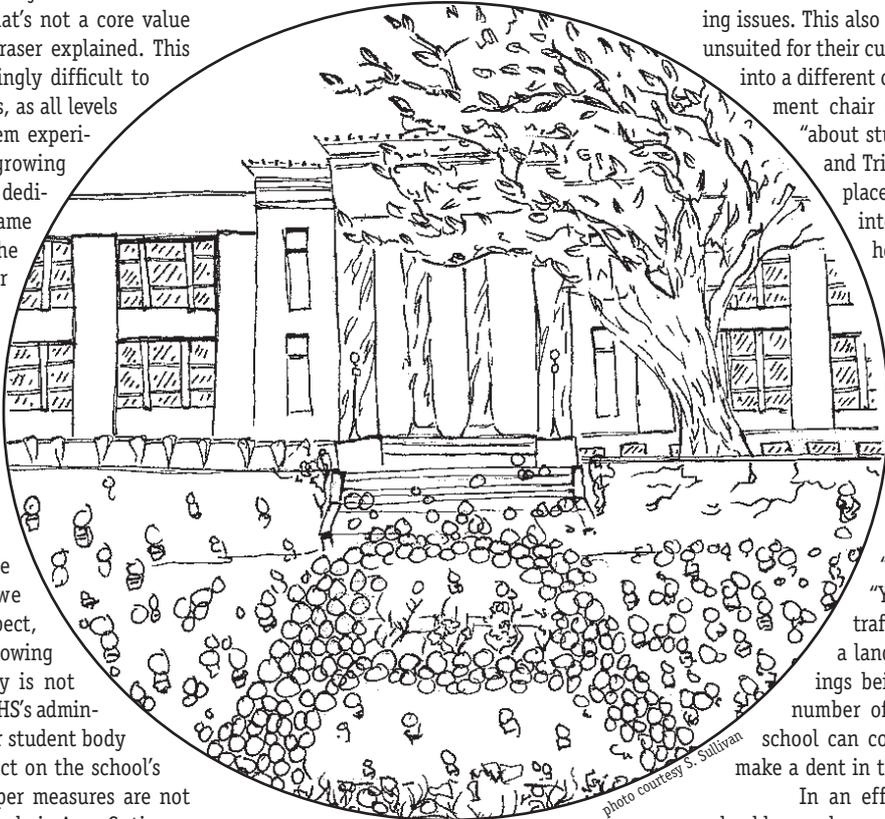
In an effort to manage this issue, the school has made arrangements with the LGPD to postpone ticketing around the school until noon, with Los Gatos Lodge to allow students to pass through their reopened gate, and with student-run groups to try to convince students to bike or skateboard to school. A bike and skateboard rack will be constructed near the front lawn in the upcoming year. "They are like tokens of 'we are trying.' I think that's the

thing that, as you manage those things that you can't fix completely, you do have to give signs that you're doing all you can. Even though all you can will never be enough," commented Autrey. The congestion is another issue that can only be solved by decreasing in the number of students commuting to school by car.

The main cause of the school's increasing population is the town's increased population due to the North Forty developments that were approved by Town Council in the North Forty Specific Plan. "While we take deserved pride in [our] schools, their ability to adequately serve our students will be challenged by the land use and the parameters contemplated in this plan," said Diana Abbati, Los Gatos Superintendent for lower and middle schools, in a public letter to Town Council addressing various issues surrounding these developments. The plan projects that the North Forty developments will contribute approximately 180 new students to the Los Gatos public school system. Abbati's letter details the effects the development will have on "traffic, safety, and air quality," foreshadows the request of "a four-acre parcel to build a new school site," and deems current public services (i.e. the fire department) inadequate to serve the growing population.

Student population growth means changes need to be made around campus, just as much by students as by administration. As Fraser puts it, "You can't assume that what you built for 875 kids, either the buildings or the culture, is going to be the same for 1250, 1300, 1400. We have to look at different ways to do things." Just as the administration grapples with problems and attempt to form creative solutions, students need to do the same. Consider carpooling to school to alleviate the traffic and parking issues. Try to maintain the small-community feeling at LGHS by being welcoming; upperclassmen can make little contributions to make the underclassmen

feel like Wildcats. Most importantly, the administration needs real student feedback in order to make changes that truly accommodate the student body, so if you have comments, complaints, or even possible solutions, send a letter to the editor or go online to [elgatonews.com](http://elgatonews.com) to submit ideas or use the QR code on the left. The administration wants your feedback!



## SEPTEMBER 2014

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1 Labor Day	2 Club Petitions Due	3	4 Back to School Night	5 Kickoff Dance	6	7
8	9 Board Meeting	10 Club Day School Site Council Meeting	11 CASA Meeting Senior Parent Information Night	12	13	14
15	16 Freshmen Parent Information Night	17	18 Home and School Meeting Junior Parent Information Night	19 Chicks with Sticks Field Hockey Dinner	20	21 LG Community Concert
22	23 Service Fair Sophomore Parent Information Night	24	25	26 End of First Grading Period	27 Childhood Cancer Awareness Day	28
29	30					

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