In 2016, the high school graduation rate in the United States reached an all-time high at 84% (source: National Center for Education Statistics, NCES). However, colleges are reporting that an increasing number of high school graduates arrive at college unprepared for college-level work. Across the U.S., 40% of students who enroll in college are required to take a remedial course, where they re-learn skills they were supposed to have mastered in high school. The percentage for minority students is even higher. Furthermore, students who must take a remedial course are 74% more likely to drop out than their peers.

Also according to the NCES, less than 40% of students starting their college studies will complete them in four years, and 41% of four-year college students will fail to graduate within six years. In the community college system, more than half of the students who start college drop out within six years. Employers are similarly reporting that new hires with only a high school diploma often lack basic skills to perform competently.

The news is even more sobering in the ACT’s Condition of College and Career Readiness National Report. They reported that in 2018, a higher percentage of students than in recent years dropped to the bottom of their preparedness scale, showing little or no readiness for college coursework: 35% of 2018 graduates met none of the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks, up from 31% in 2014 and 33% in 2017. On America’s latest exams (the National Assessment of Educational Progress), only one-third of eighth-grade students were proficient in math, science, or reading. Lower percentages were found in history, writing, and geography.

continued on page 4
A Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the New Year, and a new edition of Morrissey-Compton’s newsletter! For this issue, we decided to give our readers a brief experience of educational systems on two additional continents: Asia and Europe. In keeping with this theme (as well as the fact that I do assessments for a living!) it seemed appropriate for me to take this opportunity to perform a quick evaluation of the American educational system. While the results were not encouraging, I take comfort in knowing that all of you understand that one size does not fit all for students and bringing your child to Morrissey-Compton Educational Center is an important step toward helping them develop an approach to learning that will set them up for success in school, and in life.

You will also see several Morrissey-Compton programs highlighted on the following pages. The addition of Psychiatric Services was an important step in the evolution of our agency, but as we do not advertise, we rely on word of mouth to let people know that they are available. The same goes for our Social Skills Groups for Kids, which enjoy RAVE reviews from parents; our FREE Parent Education Classes, taught by our staff experts, who really know their stuff; and Challenge Summer School, about to enter its 37th year and a favorite of students and parents alike. I encourage you to share this newsletter, which is also posted on our home page (morrissey-compton.org), with your network of family, friends, and co-workers to not only help spread the word about Morrissey-Compton in our local communities, but share our insights into education, learning differences, and related issues of interest to concerned parents—such as video game addiction, discussed on pages 10-11.

I’m pleased that this issue includes an introduction to seven new staff members that have joined us in recent months. All are accomplished professionals and great additions to the Morrissey-Compton family, and I hope that you will take a few minutes to get to know all of them on pages 12-13. Also, you may have noticed the teaser at the bottom of this page. We are working on an impactful and updated fund development program that we will be talking about a lot at Morrissey-Compton over the next few months (and for years to come) called “Smart Giving.” Feel free to go online for a sneak peek at what it is all about!

With Warmest Wishes,

John T. Brentar, Ph.D.

John T. Brentar, Ph.D.

PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES AT M-C

When to Request a Psychiatric Evaluation

Originally printed in Morrissey-Compton’s Winter, 2016-2017 Newsletter

At Morrissey-Compton, we are often asked when it is the right time to consider prescribing medication to treat a student’s symptoms.

If the student is in treatment with a mental health professional, parents should discuss the possibility of trying medication with his or her therapist to determine whether it would be an appropriate step in the student’s treatment plan. If the student is not seeing a therapist but is displaying emotional or behavioral difficulties that are not responding to help provided by his or her pediatrician, parents, school staff, and other community supports, consider a mental health evaluation as the first step in developing a treatment plan. The evaluator can help parents decide the next course of action, such as individual therapy, family therapy, group therapy, and/or a medication evaluation.

Not a Singular Solution

Medication can be an effective part of the treatment for a number of mental health conditions during childhood and adolescence such as anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, ADHD, eating disorders, psychosis, bipolar disorder, severe aggression, autism, or sleep problems. However, psychiatric medications are rarely used alone and are usually one part of a comprehensive treatment plan. Indeed, there is considerable research that indicates that combined treatment (therapy and medication) is more effective in the treatment of anxiety, depression, and obsessive-compulsive disorder than either approach alone. For ADHD, medication has been proven to be the most effective and fastest-acting treatment of attention problems, but therapy can be extremely helpful in addressing self-esteem concerns and social difficulties as well as managing stress. Similarly, educational therapy can help improve academic performance.

What to Watch For

Some warning signs that may trigger a mental health or medication evaluation, particularly if they are observed across a variety of settings including home and school, are:

- Changes in appetite or sleep
- Social withdrawal or withdrawal from normal recreational activities
- Symptoms of sadness/tearfulness
- Excessive fears or worries
- Repeated thoughts of death

How it Helps

When medication is prescribed appropriately by a child and adolescent psychiatrist, and is taken as prescribed, it can help reduce or eliminate physiologically-based obstacles to change, enabling the student’s own efforts to be more effective and improve his or her daily functioning. For example, it can also help the student use other support services more effectively, such as therapy (due to improved motivation and engagement associated with lower levels of symptoms), tutoring (due to improved focus/attention), and social support (due to improved social motivation).

Look No Further

We are very pleased that Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist Dr. Thomas Butler is on Morrissey-Compton’s staff to provide psychiatric consultations to families. This allows our students to access medication services along with our other support services such as individual, family, and group therapy; educational therapy; and executive function therapy. Not only does this provide a convenient one-stop center for student support services, but it also allows for close collaboration of the student’s treatment team. However, Dr. Butler’s services are available to all students regardless of where they may receive other services, and he is happy to collaborate with other treatment providers.

Visit morrissey-compton.org to Learn More!
The numbers are even worse for 12th graders; only reading reaches the one-third proficient level. On average, 25% of 12th graders were proficient in math, 22% in science, 27% in writing, and 12% in U.S. history.

**A Recipe for Failure**

A new study, “The Opportunity Myth” from The New Teacher Project (TNTP), a national nonprofit focused on teacher development and educational programming, revealed that many students are finding themselves poorly prepared for whatever path they choose. Specifically, students reported feeling that performing well in school creates opportunities and prepares them for the next step in life. However, in their study, which looked at five diverse school systems across the U.S., TNTP found that more than half of the students consistently brought home As and Bs, indicating that they were obviously satisfying the demands of their schools and their teachers.

TNTP’s CEO, Daniel Weisberg, stated, “As we visited classrooms around the country, we found teachers working hard individually to help their students, but we also saw pretty low-quality assignments, and instruction that doesn’t give them a chance to do deep thinking and the type of work they’re going to need to do in order to succeed.”

Indeed, students in lower-income schools demonstrated grade-level proficiency on their assignments only 17% of the time. Frequently, their teachers were not assigning work that would bring them up to their grade level. This finding contrasts sharply with classrooms filled with predominantly higher-income students, who spent twice as much time on grade-appropriate assignments.

A sad side-note: 94% of the students in the low-income school in this study wanted to attend college, and 70% had career goals that required at least a college degree. When surveyed, less than half of the teachers responding believe their students could work at grade level, so they assign them work that doesn’t require them to stretch. However, Weisberg also argues that teachers as a group are not at fault since many are forced to rely on “cookie-cutter curricula” or are evaluated based on students’ standardized test scores. Therefore, they are unable to develop nuanced and engaging lessons or deal with students as individuals.

**International Mediocritiy**

When compared to other nations, the data is also discouraging. Every three years the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) measures reading ability, math and science literacy, and other key skills among 15-year-olds in dozens of developed and developing countries. The most recent PISA results, from 2015, placed the U.S. in 38th place out of 71 countries in math and 24th in science. And among the 35 members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which sponsors the PISA initiative, the U.S. ranked 30th in math and 19th in science.

Researchers in the Education field provide a number of theories to help explain these statistics. The Hewlett Foundation’s Partnership for 21st Century Skills noted the importance of deeper learning experiences for students that emphasize critical thinking, solving novel and complex problems, improved communication with diverse groups and within varied teams, and taking initiative in one’s own learning. The report also argues that students’ emotional and social well-being, combined with self-confidence that through hard work and persistence they can reach their goals, will improve education. In her research, Angela Duckworth also argues that perseverance (i.e., “grit”) not only improves academic achievement, but also general happiness and health.

**What Should We Do?**

A variety of ideas and techniques have been proposed to help improve the education of students. Weisberg proposes an easy first step solution by facilitating discussions between students and teachers and school administrators about their expectations. Are they engaged, participating, and asking questions, or do they find the classroom environment uninspiring and tedious? Others argue that we need to develop closer connections between high school education and students’ careers, particularly those headed straight to the workforce (i.e., vocational or skills training).

Proponents of technology in the classroom feel that we need to leverage technology to help restructure the high school experience through the form of adaptive learning technology or improved analytics related to students’ academic performance to provide more detailed feedback. Some schools are starting to use personalized technology to shift to competency-based education models, in which students progress as they demonstrate mastery of a course’s given learning objectives. These objectives can then be aligned with college-level competency expectations. We are also seeing collaborative relationships between technology companies and school, such as Design Tech High in Redwood Shores or P-TECH schools being launched around the world.

**Fiscal Frustrations**

Economic factors are also contributing to poor educational outcomes. Most students perform better with a smaller class size, but a study by the National Center for Education Statistics found that 14% of U.S. schools exceed capacity. Government spending on schools is another issue. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reports that public investment in K-12 schools has declined dramatically in several states during the past 10 years. In 2015, the latest year for which comprehensive spending data are available from the U.S. Census Bureau, 29 states were still providing less total school funding per student than they were in 2008. By the 2017-18 school year, at least 12 states cut general funding (the primary form of state aid for elementary and secondary schools) by 7% or more per student over the last decade. Seven of those 12 including Arizona, Idaho, Kansas, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Oklahoma enacted income tax rate cuts costing tens or hundreds of millions of dollars each year rather than restore education funding. Since then, only Kansas repealed the tax cuts and increased school funding.

More recently, we are recognizing the impact of corporate incentives on education. For example, in fiscal 2017, U.S. public schools lost $1.8 billion across 28 states through corporate tax incentives, over which most schools had little or no control.

**Educators Matter**

Old-fashioned models of teacher education may be another factor. New and innovative models of teacher training are needed to facilitate changes in the classroom. For example, all teachers should receive explicit training in how to use technology to deliver instruction. Similarly, teachers should be recognized and rewarded for developing cutting edge and engaging curricula or projects for students.

In 2008, President Obama recognized the important role of teachers when he said, “The single most important factor in determining [student] achievement is not the color of [students’] skin or where they come from. It’s not who their parents are or how much money they have. It’s who their teacher is.” In reflecting on how the U.S. is missing the point of Obama’s statement, Joel Klein from The Atlantic wrote that “rather than create a system that attracts and rewards excellent teachers—and that imposes consequences for ineffective or [uninspired] ones—we treat all teachers as if they were identical widgets and their performance didn’t matter.”

**Cover Story**

Morrissey–Compton staff are available for consultations to discuss the best school environments for your child. For information and appointments, call (650) 322-5910.
Why Spending my Honeymoon with my Brother was an Education Like No Other
by Meredith McEvoy, M.Ed., Educational Specialist

In October, my husband Pete and I traveled to Japan for our honeymoon. Following many long discussions, we decided that a week in Kauai, Hawaii followed by a week in Tokyo, would be ideal. One of the reasons we chose Japan was because my brother Andrew Feinberg moved there in July and is now teaching English as a Second Language through the JET Programme, a Japanese government-sponsored partnership with the U.S. He teaches at Wako International High School, a public upper-secondary school located in the Saitama Prefecture, one-half hour north of Tokyo. Andrew co-teaches all of his classes alongside a Japanese teacher, who is employed by the school. The highlights of our Japan trip included mouth-watering sushi, served to us on a train-like conveyor belt called a “Sushi-Go-Round”; visits to exquisite temples and shrines; breathtaking walks through Japanese gardens; and setting out each day to explore virtually every section of Tokyo via subway. Japanese gardens; and setting out each day to explore virtually every section of Tokyo via subway.

Cultural Contrasts

For example, students and teachers do not wear shoes at schools; they wear slippers instead. Even guests are required to use “guest slippers” (Pete shuffled around the school in a pair that were too small, but he made it work!). Andrew also explained that there are no custodians employed by the school; rather, the students volunteer to do all of the custodial work themselves. In addition, I immediately noticed how quiet and respectful the students were. Every student was punctual and sitting in their designated seat. No one interrupted or engaged in side conversations. And there was a strange reluctance among the students to speak out, even if the students knew the answers to questions addressed to them (Andrew’s explanation is detailed in the Q&A on the facing page.) Observing a quiet, attentive high school classroom was a new experience for me!

During our visit we observed both first-year and third-year English classes. We were surprised by how well even the first-year English speakers communicated. When Andrew asked them to form groups of two and come up with a question to ask us in English, girls only paired with other girls, and boys only paired with other boys. Andrew often has to remind boys and girls to work together.

Andrew explained to his third-year students that he and his co-teacher would be teaching a very special lesson that day on the topic of LGBTQ communities around the world. To be honest, I was shocked to hear that the Japanese teacher decided on the theme. The students watched a short video of a Japanese politician espousing the view that LGBTQ people were not productive members of society. Following the video, the teachers asked the students to react. Students reactions ranged from “This makes me sad” to “I do not agree with her” to “People’s differences should be celebrated.” Later, Andrew expressed gratitude for being placed in a school that is progressive and accepting of other people’s differences.

Bringing it Home

As an educator, this remarkable experience served as a critical reminder for me. Every family within every culture shapes their valued ideals. I am fortunate to work with many different families, who arrive from every corner of the world, here at Morrissey-Compton. As I participate in helping to shape their children’s educational futures, it is imperative to keep this in mind.

Q&A with Andrew Feinberg

Here are some additional questions Meredith posed to Andrew during her visit:

Q: What is the JET Programme?
A: The JET Programme stands for the Japan Exchange and Teaching program. While I’m technically an ALT (assistant language teacher), my job is first and foremost about intercultural exchange. In addition to language, I teach both students and teachers about life in the U.S., our customs, and our way of thinking. Not everyone in the JET Programme is an ALT, although most are. Some JET participants are CIRs (coordinators of international relations). These people translate and interpret between English and Japanese at local government offices throughout Japan.

Q: What school do you teach at?
A: I teach at Wako International High School, a public upper-secondary school run by Saitama Prefecture. While most ALTs are placed in public schools, some receive placement at private schools, especially in big cities like Tokyo and Kyoto. My school is about a five-minute walk away from the Tokyo city limits.

Q: What is your favorite part of teaching at your school?
A: I love to see the excitement expressed by my students when they finally understand a new concept, following an initial struggle. Japan is a very group-focused society that downplays individual accomplishments, so when I see students expressed confidence and pride in their English skills, that makes my role extra special.

Q: In your opinion, what is the biggest difference between American and Japanese schools?
A: Mostly, it’s getting students motivated to participate publicly. Especially in large-group or co-ed settings, it’s difficult to get students to raise their hands to answer questions. By and large, they’re terrified of speaking out, not just because they’re afraid of getting something wrong, but they don’t want to show off or stand out from the crowd. Students are much more comfortable talking in pairs than speaking in front of the whole class. Even the easiest question can take five minutes to answer if the students are feeling especially shy that day.

Q: What school do you teach at?
A: I teach at Wako International High School, a public upper-secondary school located in the Saitama Prefecture, one-half hour north of Tokyo. Andrew co-teaches all of his classes alongside a Japanese teacher, who is employed by the school.

Q: What is your favorite part of teaching at your school?
A: I love to see the excitement expressed by my students when they finally understand a new concept, following an initial struggle. Japan is a very group-focused society that downplays individual accomplishments, so when I see students expressed confidence and pride in their English skills, that makes my role extra special.

Q: In your opinion, what is the biggest difference between American and Japanese schools?
A: In American schools, it’s all about individuality, and in Japanese schools, it’s all about teamwork. There are pros and cons to each approach. In American high schools, students are developing their personal brands. They wear special clothes to broadcast their wealth, status, or group affiliation. They dye their hair to express their individuality. They either study hard to prove their intelligence or slack off to prove their indifference. None of that applies in Japan. Uniforms enforce the fact there is no social hierarchy between students; the only differences are between the student body and the teachers. Students are not allowed to dye their hair. Doing one’s best is seen as a virtue because it’s part of being a good team player. Students don’t want to disappoint their fellow group members, so they need to blend in and become a functioning cog in the machine. This is also why clubs and team sports are so important in Japan.

Q: Are there separate special education schools for students with significant difficulty following the standard school curriculum, such as students with severe cognitive impairments? However, it’s highly likely that some of my own students, in a typical public school, have learning differences that are more

continued on page 9
Marie Curie Gymnasium, Dresden, Germany

Our cover article touched briefly on how the American educational system measures up against those in other countries. There are no easy answers regarding which system works best—in fact, it is likely that each has its merits and issues—but one thing is certain: No two are exactly alike.

Take the German educational system, for example. By the age of 10, most students in Germany are placed into one of three educational tracks: 1. Gymnasium, a highly academic high school program for students intending to pursue a university degree 2. Realschule, for students with a career goal for average or better white-collar positions 3. Hauptschule, for students who are working toward the trades and blue-collar jobs About 40% of German high school students attend realschule, which has academic standards that equal or exceed those of a typical high school in the U.S. It is possible for students to switch tracks as they change or modify their career goals, which is becoming increasingly common.

German students attend school for 187-190 days in an academic year, depending on the state. Germany has a compulsory law that requires school attendance, not just instruction, from age six until age 15. Therefore, homeschooling is not an option in Germany.

Some students who attend a gymnasium are eligible to earn a diploma known as das Abitur by passing a series of oral and written examinations. For example, a recent Abitur for English assessed students’ reading comprehension for a selected passage, as well as their understanding of Brexit and ability to analyze two Brexit-related cartoons. Any student with this type of diploma must be admitted to a German university, but there are no guarantees concerning their field of study. Popular fields such a law and medicine are very competitive. Although the Abitur grades are the most important factor for admission to a particular university, admission is also based on the students’ grades during their last two years in the gymnasium.

Insights from Inside

I recently spoke to local student Charlotte Seibt, who attends the German International School of Silicon Valley in Mountain View. Last year, as a ninth grader, she studied at the Marie Curie Gymnasium in Dresden, Germany. Charlotte shared with me her experiences of attending a high school in Germany:

Charlotte’s gymnasium school day began with a 90-minute class period in the morning, followed by 45-minute periods. School ended at various times, usually between 3 and 4pm, depending on the day’s schedule.

Besides German, Marie Curie Gymnasium students are required to learn two foreign languages—usually English and an elective language, with Russian, French, and Spanish as the most popular options. In addition to her three languages, Charlotte studied math, physics, biology, chemistry, history, art, ethics, information technology (IT), and sports (PE). All students take physics, biology, and chemistry for three years.

Charlotte reported that the homework demand in Germany was less than her current school in the U.S. In her German class (comparable to language arts in the U.S.), she tended to have more reading assignments, primarily poetry and short stories, than writing assignments such as papers or essays. In fact, Charlotte noted that she had few writing assignments during the course of the school year in Germany.

Charlotte’s test schedule was one to two exams in each subject per semester. Marie Curie Gymnasium did not have school assemblies, but students participated in frequent field trips including visits to a former concentration camp, Goethe’s home, and technology centers. Students do not use laptops in class, but rather have access to 30 computers in a large room.

Students are required to hand write their work. Charlotte knew one classmate who received testing accommodations in class due to her diagnosis of dyslexia, but she was unaware of other students using accommodations.

According to Charlotte, one of the biggest differences between being a student in Germany vs. the U.S. is in the social realm: because of the excellent transportation system, students are not as reliant on their parents for transportation, which gives them much more freedom of independent movement.

Students are taught twice per week, others three times per week.

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When Does Video Game Playing Become an Addiction?

In June 2018, the World Health Organization published the 11th edition of its International Classification of Diseases (ICD). ICD codes are required for health insurance reimbursement, and one of the noteworthy additions to their list of diagnosable conditions is Gaming Disorder.

Gaming disorder is defined as “a pattern of gaming behavior characterized by impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activities, and continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences.” Gaming behavior can be continuous or episodic and recurrent and must be of sufficient severity to result in significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational, or other important areas of functioning, and evident for at least 12 months.

What Does the APA Have to Say?

In the United States, many mental health professionals use the Diagnostic and Statistics Manual, Fifth Edition (DSM-V), published by the American Psychiatric Association, for making diagnoses. In the DSM-V, Internet Gambling Disorder was added as a diagnosis, but not Internet Gaming Disorder. However, more recently the committee that reviews and recommends additions and changes to the DSM have developed a draft description of Internet Gaming Disorder requiring at least five of the following symptoms:

- A preoccupation or obsession with Internet games
- Withdrawal symptoms when not playing games
- A tolerance for gaming so that a person needs to spend more time playing to be satisfied
- At least one failed attempt to stop or cut back on playing games
- A loss of interest in other life activities
- Overuse of digital games despite realizing the impairment they have caused
- Lying to others about game usage
- Using gaming to escape or relieve anxiety or guilt
- Relationships that have been lost or risked because of gaming

Most parents likely feel that their child’s video game playing is a problem, but it is important to note that “video game addiction” refers to students who are struggling academically and socially (with friends and family) and maintain a reclusive and sedentary lifestyle due at least in part to playing video games.

Are You Concerned about Your Child’s Video Game Playing?

Please keep in mind that Morrissey-Compton’s psychologists are available for consultations to discuss options.

Quick Tips

Here are some rules to follow, particularly in the early days of your children’s game playing:

- Both parents must agree and enforce rules about game playing. Lock up game consoles, laptops, etc. when not in use.
- Negotiate and discuss the rules with your child (e.g., rules such as no game playing on school nights; or game playing for 30 minutes on school nights only after homework and chores are completed and that does not interfere with normal bed time; or how much time is your child allowed to play on weekends or school vacations).
- Set a timer so that your child knows when they reach the time limit. Consider giving them a 10-minute warning. If a child does not stop when required, each minute over time will be deducted the next day. Avoid taking away video game playing for extended periods of time unless you are 100% sure that you will enforce it. Some of our students tell us that they know they can “wait out their parents’ who forget the length of punishment and allow them to play again before the date told to them.
- Consider other activities during the week, such as sports, groups, clubs to limit amount of free time on school vacations.
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Additional Resources are Available Online, for Example:

- Through online forums and descriptions of treatment programs
- Local Intensive Outpatient Programs (IOPs)
- Summer programs through online forums and descriptions of treatment programs

For Parents

“Roadmap to College Success”

A Conference for Students with Learning Disabilities

For: College-bound students with Learning Disabilities* 14 years and older, parents, educators and other professionals

Date: Saturday, March 16, 2019, 10:00 am – 4:30 pm

Location: Parents Helping Parents, Sobrato Center for Non-profits, 1400 Parkmoor Ave. San Jose, 95126

Register: http://bit.ly/PHPs_RoadmapToCollegeSuccess

Register early, space limited

For more info, contact: julie@php.com 408-727-5775 x183
Brooke Budelli, M.Ed., Educational Specialist

Brooke Budelli joins Morrissy-Compton with a diverse background in education and a strong desire to help students find success. She attended Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo where she received her undergraduate degree in Child Development. She then attended the University of San Francisco and received a Multiple-Subject Teaching Credential and a Master’s in Education. She had such a passion for her coursework in reading instruction that she continued her education and received a Reading Specialist Certificate. She worked at Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes for 3 years as a clinician and also started a private tutoring business and successful summer intervention program. She worked at Sacred Heart in Atherton for nine years as both a first and second grade teacher and then as the K-5 Assessment and Reading Specialist.

Brooke’s strength is establishing rapport, trust, and respect with her students so that the student is able to make significant academic progress while ensuring she preserves and bolsters their self-esteem.

Jen Aronowitz, Ph.D.

Jen Aronowitz is a licensed pediatric neuropsychologist who specializes in the treatment and support of school age children (5-17) with attention problems, learning differences, processing difficulties, and behavior challenges. She has worked in hospital settings with a focus on children with epilepsy and traumatic brain injury as well as in clinics providing evaluations and neurofeedback to assist with symptoms of ADHD and Autism. She began private practice over 20 years ago in an effort to provide more individualized care to children and their families. She currently divides her time between her practice and caring for her two children.

Melissa Kelley, LMFT, Social Skills Group Leader

Melissa Kelley has been a School Counselor at Springer Elementary in Los Altos, Palo Alto High School, Alta Vista High School, and Kehillah Jewish High School. She designed and implemented a popular social skills group for K-1 students at Springer, which was later also offered at First Five in Mountain View. She has taught Social and Emotional Learning at the Nueva School in Hillsborough (grades 1-3) and at Helios New School in Palo Alto (grades K-5). Before coming to the counseling world, Melissa was a research director at the Stanford Center for the Study of Families, Children and Youth and a program officer in the area of at-risk youth with the Walter S. Johnson Foundation.

Jennifer Nehme, Psy.D., Postdoctoral Fellow

Jennifer Nehme has a strong interest in providing psychological assessments and evidence-based treatments for children, adolescents, and caregivers. While earning her Master’s Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy at Pepperdine University, she worked at Harbor UCLA’s Cognitive Behavioral and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy Clinic conducting clinical research on dialectical behavior therapy outcomes in a community-based setting. Jennifer then earned her Doctorate from Pepperdine, where she received intensive clinical training in community, forensic, and hospital settings. She completed her postdoctoral internship at Stanford University’s Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and the Children’s Health Council, where she received thorough training in conducting comprehensive psychological assessments and providing evidence-based treatments to medically fragile children, including adolescents and young adults with eating and feeding disorders.

Jennifer is committed to providing culturally-informed evidence-based treatment to meet the needs of each individual and their family. In addition to providing cognitive and emotional assessments, specific areas of therapeutic interest include helping children and adolescents struggling with anxiety, trauma, and depression, as well as Autism Spectrum Disorder. Additionally, Jennifer empowers caregivers through support and parent coaching. In her spare time, Jennifer enjoys spending time with friends and family, traveling, dining, and reading.

Kate Ekman, Psy.D.

Kate Ekman specializes in treatment of children and families. She graduated from the University of Michigan with a degree in Psychology in 2009. After three years in various roles including teaching abroad and counseling children on the inpatient psychiatric unit of Children’s National Medical Center in Washington, D.C., she came out west to begin graduate training in clinical psychology. Kate graduated from the Wright Institute in 2017 and completed her postdoctoral residency on the Kaiser Richmond Child & Family Team in 2018. Kate specializes in psychodiagnostic assessment, treatment of child anxiety, cognitive behavioral therapy, play therapy, and trauma-based interventions. Her approach is Family Systems oriented, believing that treating the child often requires healing the family dynamic and improving communication.

Melissa Brown, M.Ed., Educational Specialist

Melissa Brown brings more than 25 years of experience in helping students, teachers, and families in public and private schools to discover themselves as learners in ways that help them successfully navigate academic challenges. Her passion for helping students began as a classroom teacher working with a broad range of learners. Melissa holds a B.S. in Elementary Education and Special Education from Central Oklahoma University, as well as a Master of Education in Special Education from San Francisco State University. She continued her graduate studies with certification in Educational Therapy at the University of California Extension Program at Berkeley.

Melissa has extensive training in specialized instructional methods, including: Universal Design for Learning, Orton-Gillingham Language Instruction, Structured Word Inquiry, and Making Math Real. Melissa uses an integrated approach to individualized instructional methods, educational assessment, and in developing neurodevelopmental strategies. She has taught courses for Educational Therapy at the University of California Extension Program at Berkeley and for graduate students at the Bay Area Teacher Training Institute. For the past 15 years she led the development of the Learning Resource Program at San Francisco Day School, where she incorporated a developmentally, strength-based approach to student learning by identifying strengths, understanding possible barriers, and finding a curricular fit that enabled success.
**FREE Parent Education Classes**

**Winter/Spring 2019 Classes**

**Introducing Two New Classes in March:**

**Introduction to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) with Children and Adolescents (Ages 10 and Above)**

Instructor: Mark Westerfield, Psy.D.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is an evidenced-based method of psychotherapy designed to help individuals identify and manage thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Children and adolescents are taught to notice physical sensations in their bodies associated with their emotions, label their feelings and rate their intensity, as well as identify what situations in their lives “trigger” particular emotions. Relaxation skills and other coping strategies are taught and practiced. Kids learn techniques to challenge unproductive negative thoughts and replace them with thoughts and actions that will lead to more positive feelings and actions.

**Saturday, March 23, 2 to 4pm: Individual Education Plans (IEP) for Students with ADHD (All Ages)**

**Saturday, March 16, 2 to 4pm: Classroom Accommodations and IEP goals for Executive Function Difficulties and Increasing Desirable Behaviors Using Rewards Instead of Punishments (All Ages)**

**Saturday, February 23, 2 to 4pm: ADHD and Executive Function (4th–12th Grade)**

Back by Popular Demand!

Instructor: Mark Westerfield, Psy.D.

With Children and Adolescents (Ages 10 and Above)

Introducing Two New Classes in March:

**“Do it Yourself” Reading Games That are Easy to Make and Fun to Play! A “Make It and Take It” Workshop (for Parents/Teachers of Pre-K through 2nd Graders)**

Instructor: Erin Powers, M.Ed., BCET

Support young readers with games that you have made! This will be a "hands on" workshop for adults. As summer approaches, thoughts turn to maintaining and enhancing the reading skills of our young children. Practicing skills and learning through games is fun and motivating. Join us on a Saturday afternoon to make your own reading games that will reinforce skills in a playful way. All supplies and instructions will be provided. You will leave with the games that you created, ready to be played with your child.

**Saturday, March 30, 2 to 4pm**

**Back by Popular Demand! Five-Part ADHD Series with Janet Dafoe, Ph.D.**

**Saturday, February 23, 2 to 4pm: ADHD and Executive Function (4th–12th Grade)**

Children with ADHD often have difficulty starting assignments, following directions, organizing projects, writing reports, remembering supplies, and turning in homework. This class will offer strategies to help your child become more organized and to understand his learning style. You will leave with specific ideas to help your child to maximize success at school.

**Saturday, March 2, 2 to 4pm: Behavior Plans for ADHD Children: Managing Problems and Increasing Desirable Behaviors Using Rewards Instead of Punishments (All Ages)**

Rewards and consequences can be used to reinforce the behaviors that you expect, while decreasing problematic behaviors. Behavior plans are used to teach and maintain many kinds of behaviors, such as doing homework and getting along with siblings. Learn how to set up an effective behavior plan.

**Saturday, March 9, 2 to 4pm: Advocating for Your ADHD Child at School (All Ages)**

Learn how ADHD impacts children in the classroom and what services and accommodations will enable your child to succeed. Understand your legal rights and how to proceed effectively through the complicated process of assessments and meetings.

**Saturday, March 16, 2 to 4pm: Classroom Accommodations and IEP goals for Executive Function Difficulties (4th -12th Grade)**

One of the hallmarks of ADHD is having difficulty with executive function. This class will focus on specific difficulties that children experience in the classroom, and provide suggestions for effective interventions. Learn about specific accommodations and goals for specialized instruction obtained through IEPs. Class content will apply to any child with executive function weaknesses, not only those diagnosed with ADHD.

**Saturday, March 23, 2 to 4pm: Individual Education Plans (IEP) for Students with ADHD (All Ages)**

Bring your child’s IEP (with family and child’s names, addresses blacked out) and Dr. Dafoe will choose several samples and go through them with the group, providing feedback about how to increase their effectiveness.

**Thursday, March 21, 6:30 to 8pm**

**Stop, Relax, and Think: Managing Impulses and Strong Emotions**

Some children need extra support to improve self-control, recognize emotions in themselves and others, and understand how their behavior affects their peers. Children will practice listening skills, and strategies to slow down and think before speaking or acting.

**K-1st grade: Mondays, 4 to 5:15pm in Redwood City, starts on February 4**

**1st-2nd grade: Mondays, 5:30 to 6:45pm in Redwood City, starts on March 25**

**5th - 7th grade girls: Mondays, 5:30 to 7:30pm in Redwood City, starts on February 11**

**Note: 10-week session that includes a special group meeting on Saturday, May 18, at a local park**

**Girl Drama!**

Middle school can be a very stressful time for girls, as they navigate the many social, emotional and physical changes that come with adolescence. Girls will explore friendship challenges, such as dealing with exclusion, bossy girls, teasing or feeling like they just don’t “fit in.” This group will focus on building self-esteem, confidence, and self-advocacy.

**5th - 7th grade girls: Mondays, 5:30 to 7:30pm in Palo Alto, starts on February 11**

For information, to register for any group, or to get on the waiting list for groups that are full, please fill out the online Group Interest Form at morrissey-compton.org/group-programs.php. You will be contacted by Sue Garber, M.A., Director of Parent Education and Social Skills Groups. Your information will be kept confidential.

**For information regarding staff presentations, contact Sue Garber, M.A. at (650) 322-5910 or sue.garber@morrcomp.org.**

**Social Skills Groups**

**Winter/Spring 2019 Groups for Kids**

Morrissey-Compton’s ongoing skill-building groups take place at our Redwood City office as well as at a group site in Palo Alto. Groups are held in 12-week sessions and are available for kids who struggle with making or keeping friends, impulse control, anxiety, emotion regulation, and managing stress. There are typically four to six boys or girls in a group who are close in age and have similar challenges and goals.

**Social Skills: Making and Keeping Friends**

For children who have difficulty navigating the social dynamics involved in peer relationships. Topics include active listening, perspective taking, reading non-verbal cues, reciprocal conversation skills, noticing feelings in themselves and others, understanding how their behavior affects others, and problem-solving with peers.

**4th-5th grade boys: Tuesdays, 4 to 5:15pm in Palo Alto, starts on February 26**

**5th-7th grade boys: Wednesdays, 5:30 to 6:45pm in Redwood City, starts on February 20**

**Stop, Relax, and Think: Managing Impulses and Strong Emotions**

Some children need extra support to improve self-control, recognize emotions in themselves and others, and understand how their behavior affects their peers. Children will practice listening skills, and strategies to slow down and think before speaking or acting.

**K-1st grade: Mondays, 4 to 5:15pm in Redwood City, starts on February 4**

**1st-2nd grade: Mondays, 5:30 to 6:45pm in Redwood City, starts on March 25**

**5th - 7th grade girls: Mondays, 5:30 to 7:30pm in Palo Alto, starts on February 11**

**Note: 10-week session that includes a special group meeting on Saturday, May 18, at a local park**

**Girl Drama!**

Middle school can be a very stressful time for girls, as they navigate the many social, emotional and physical changes that come with adolescence. Girls will explore friendship challenges, such as dealing with exclusion, bossy girls, teasing or feeling like they just don’t “fit in.” This group will focus on building self-esteem, confidence, and self-advocacy.

**5th - 7th grade girls: Mondays, 5:30 to 7:30pm in Palo Alto, starts on February 11**

**Note: Includes weekly dinner of pizza and salad**

**Staff Experts**

**Bring a Speaker to Your School, Parent Group, or Other Organization**

Morrissey-Compton’s staff experts are qualified to speak on many subjects related to education and learning differences. We offer a variety of topics to choose from, or you can request topics customized to fit your needs.
It is the mission of the Morrissey-Compton Educational Center to empower those with learning, behavioral, and social-emotional challenges to succeed throughout their educational journey. In a supportive environment, Morrissey-Compton Educational Center, a nonprofit, provides the highest quality diagnostic, intervention, and treatment services through innovative programs with scholarship opportunities.