

Superintendent's Midsummer Update

Las Lomitas Elementary School District July 2025



LOOK INSIDE:

Board President
Message -
Page 2

Budget Update -
Page 3

Staffing Update -
Page 4

LLEF Invitation -
Page 8

...and so much
more!

Message to LLESD Families from Mr. B

I hope you're enjoying a well-deserved break—resting, recharging, and reconnecting with what matters most.

As July rolls on, I wanted to share a midsummer update that offers a glimpse into the meaningful work already underway. From the launch of our district design teams to early momentum on key initiatives, there's a lot to be excited about. We're making steady progress—**together**.

You'll also see encouraging news on our financial front. Thanks to strategic planning and thoughtful savings in partnership with the School Board, we've taken real steps toward closing our structural deficit while protecting key programs. There's more to do, but we're on the right path.

Staff are already preparing for a great year, and the Board continues to lead with clarity and purpose. That shared focus is setting the stage for a school year full of purpose and possibility. Take a look inside—I **think you'll be inspired**.

With gratitude,
Erin



Message from President Winikoff

On behalf of the board, I write to express optimism and gratitude to the LLESD staff as we move through the summer months and prepare for the year ahead. The community provided the board with an incredible amount of input on your priorities during the superintendent search. You asked for transparency, academic excellence, strong leadership with accountability, and long-term financial sustainability for the district.

The board selected Superintendent Burmeister to lead the district by unanimous vote. We also offered him an early start (and we were lucky that he was available and willing to take it).

As you will read in this newsletter, the district is taking meaningful and innovative steps to address community concerns, initiate academic design teams/improve student outcomes, as well as address our structural budget deficit.

Our shared commitment to this district - its people, its programs, and its potential - is strong. I'm excited for what lies ahead and confident that, together, we will create a future that honors the trust the LLESD community has placed in the school board.

Sincerely,

Paige Winikoff

President, LLESD Board of Trustees

Adrienne Philippe to join Woodside High

With bittersweet emotions, I am pleased to share that Adrienne Philippe has accepted the position of Assistant Principal of Instruction at Woodside High School in the Sequoia Union High School District. It's a perfect fit for Adrienne—a former math teacher and seasoned instructional leader who has spent the last ten years supporting LLESD students, staff, and families with thoughtfulness and skill.

Adrienne's curricular expertise, deep care for students, and steady presence have made a lasting impact. She will be deeply missed, and we wish her all the best in her new role.

As part of our Balanced Budget Initiative and in keeping with our commitment to reduce staffing costs through attrition before considering more disruptive cuts, I have notified the Board of my decision to return La Entrada to a single Assistant Principal model moving forward. This structural change will help us manage costs while maintaining strong site leadership and instructional support.



Budget Update

A Clearer Path Forward

At the June 4 Board meeting, I introduced our [Balanced Budget Initiative](#)—a two-year process aimed at ensuring LLESD's long-term financial health. It's a collaborative effort among the Board, staff, parents, advisory groups, and LLEF to understand our position, make wise decisions, and protect what matters most.

I am grateful to our Board for their strategic leadership, our Budget Advisory Committee advisors for their partnership, and our staff for their hard work and commitment to the cause.

Better Position Than Expected

In March, following the Second Interim, we faced a projected **\$4.7 million** structural deficit. Thanks to a confluence of factors, including disciplined budgeting and stronger-than-expected local revenue, we've reduced that number by nearly half, to around **\$2.5 million**.

Key drivers include:

- **\$660,000** in carryover from site, department, and technology budget reductions.
- Savings through **attrition**, not layoffs—including holding the French position open, reducing PE staffing in 4/5, and returning La Entrada to one Assistant Principal.
- A 5.5% property tax growth estimate from the County Assessor (vs. 4.75% assumed), adding **\$200,000** in ongoing revenue.
- Updated projections reflecting **\$1 million** in giving from LLEF, based on early momentum.
- Renegotiating Champion's rental contract, adding **\$231,000** annually.
- A **return to donation-funded programming** for experiences like OutdoorEd, field trips, and yearbooks, which protects programming without drawing from the general fund.

Because of these steps, we were able to protect key programs, at least for this year, such as

smaller class sizes in 3rd and 4th grades, additional Special Education support, and tech staffing at La Entrada.

The Underlying Challenge Remains

Although the outlook is improving, a structural deficit persists. We still need to align ongoing spending with ongoing revenue. The Balanced Budget Initiative gives us space and structure to:

- Revisit long-standing budget assumptions,
- Explore new revenue strategies,
- Involve the community in lasting solutions.

This fall, we'll begin a year-long visioning process led by several design teams to help shape future priorities and guide investments.

Philanthropy is Key

This fall, LLEF will launch a new annual giving campaign, aligned with a renewed vision for LLESD. The goal is to connect donations directly to the programs they fund—those we can't sustain through public dollars alone. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, LLEF provided over \$2 million in annual funding. Although an anomaly, this year's commitment is \$ 500,000. With a renewed focus and community alignment, I am confident we can grow that to **\$1-1.5 million** again and ask for everyone's partnership in helping us reach that goal.

What's Next

Thanks to the efforts of our staff, Board, and partners, we've made the challenge ahead more manageable. There's still work to be done—but we're entering this next phase with greater clarity, stronger footing, and a shared purpose. Together with our School Board, committee advisors, LLEA and CSEA partners, district and site leadership, staff, and families, we will work collectively to meet the challenge and put LLESD on solid financial footing.

Thank you for your continued support and trust as we move forward together. Stay tuned to Board meetings and newsletter communication for updates.

Staffing Update

I am excited to share that our schools are nearly fully staffed and gearing up for a fantastic 2025–26 school year! This summer, we've welcomed several talented new team members across the district, including:

- Kindergarten
- 4th and 5th Grade
- 8th Grade CORE / ELD / Yearbook
- Middle School STEM
- Two 4th–5th Grade Education Specialists
- Two Licensed Educational Psychologists
- Several Paraprofessionals

A big thank you to our **HR Coordinator, Mark Jones**, for helping guide a smooth and efficient hiring process throughout the summer. We have just one position left to fill—PE for 4th and 5th grade—and we're actively interviewing to ensure the best fit for our students and community.

Additionally, you may have heard about some strategic staffing changes we've made this summer—many of which were inspired by staff input and align with our long-term vision for more robust programming. These include moving **Mr. Cooper** full-time to Las Lomitas, which doubles the amount of music instruction for our TK–3 students; moving **Ms. Fordham** full-time to La Entrada to teach

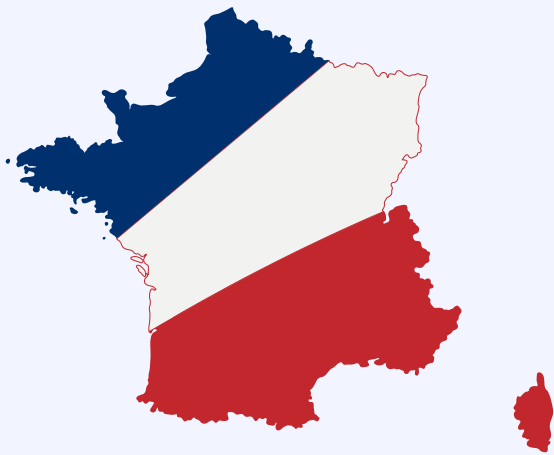


art and support music in grades 4–5; and shifting our librarian, Ms. Davis, full-time to La Entrada to help build our new Maker Space and expand library services. At Las Lomitas, Ms. Thielemann will now serve as our full-time Library Assistant, providing consistent leadership and vision for our elementary library program. She'll be joined by **Ms. Reis**, who will serve as a part-time library teacher.

These changes not only reflect staff interests and programmatic needs but also move us closer to a more comprehensive and inspiring vision for **STEM** (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and **ALL** (Art, Languages, and Libraries) instruction across the district.

New staff will be introduced at Convocation, and parents can connect with them at Meet the Teacher events in August.

We can't wait for you to experience the energy, experience, and care this group brings to our district. The future is bright, and the team is ready!



Update on French at La Entrada

We're thrilled to wish **Madame Forster**, LE's "incroyable" French teacher, a "bon voyage" as she heads to France to pursue her master's degree. While we'll miss her this year, we're hopeful she'll return in 2026–27 to share her learning with our students.

In alignment with our goal to reduce staffing through attrition, French will be on hold for all first-year students in 2025–26. Eighth graders who completed French 1 in seventh grade will have the option to take

French 2 online through BYU, fully funded and scheduled during the school day, with supervision by a credentialed LLESD teacher.

Seventh graders who selected French as their first choice will be placed in their second choice and can request a change in August. Counselors will follow up with more details. Second-year French students will remain enrolled or may also request a schedule change. I appreciate your understanding.

Announcing District Design Teams

As we look ahead to the 2025–26 school year, I am excited to launch a series of district design teams—collaborative groups of educators, staff, families, and students—tasked with developing innovative strategies that align our resources with what matters most: student success and thriving; staff recruitment, retention, & training; fiscal responsibility.

Using human-centered design mindsets, these teams will listen first, prototype solutions, and refine them together. Each is focused on a key area of opportunity, ensuring our efforts are purposeful, inclusive, and guided by those closest to the work. We are proud to announce the following design teams and facilitators:

- **Math Pathways** – Facilitated by Erik Burmeister
- **Literacy** – Facilitated by Val Park & Alain Camou
- **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)** – Facilitated by Marta Grau Battle & Tish Whiteley
- **Wellness and Social Emotional Learning (SEL)** – Facilitated by Nell Curran & Heather Smith
- **La Entrada Bell Schedule & Master Schedule** – Facilitated by Bjorn Wickstrom & Mei Chan
- **Great Place to Work** – Facilitated by Mark Jones

Each team will include teachers, classified staff, administrators, students, and parents participating as designers and/or end-users. Teams will meet throughout the year, including on rotating early-release Wednesdays, which will also support our standing committees, such as site safety and sustainability.

This work is part of our shared vision—not to fix what's broken, but to imagine what's possible. We can't wait to see what we create together. More information will be shared throughout the year, including opportunities to participate.

Literacy in Las Lomitas ESD

Building the Foundation for Lifelong Readers and Writers

As we look ahead to the new school year, we're excited to share the work of our new Literacy Design Team, which will develop a comprehensive, research-based literacy framework grounded in the Science of Reading and principles of Structured Literacy. This framework blends foundational skills—such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—with language-rich experiences to help all students become confident, capable, and joyful readers.



Under the capable facilitation of our **Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Val Park**, and **Principal, Alain Camou**, the team's mission is not only to ensure every child—especially by the end of third grade—is reading at grade level, but also to foster a lifelong love of reading. When students master the building blocks of literacy and experience the joy of connecting with texts, they gain the tools to succeed in K-12 and beyond.

With a strong MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) lens, the Literacy Design Team will identify high-quality instructional materials, guide ongoing professional learning, and utilize data to support targeted instruction. This work focuses on inclusive literacy practices that address the needs of all learners, ensuring that reading is not just a skill but a doorway to opportunity, imagination, and academic success.

Stay tuned for more updates as this important work continues to take shape—and thank you for your commitment to growing lifelong readers and writers!

Summer Reading Opportunity

The CA Department of Education has arranged for Capstone to provide a free, interactive summer reading experience designed to keep students reading, exploring, and engaged throughout the summer. We want to connect our students to this excellent opportunity!

From July 14 through August 31, students and families can get access to:

- Weekly reading missions focused on animals, nature, and habitats
- Over 3,000 nonfiction articles and 6,000 eBooks
- Fun digital materials like printable journals, badges, and posters
- Weekly giveaway winners
- A Certificate of Participation for every student
- End-of-summer prize opportunities—including a pizza party, virtual author visit, & more!

To participate, please follow the instructions below:

Log in with your PebbleGo account, visit: app.pebblego.com/login

Username: casafari

Password: reads

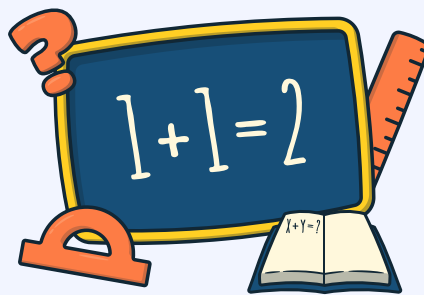


Revisiting Math Pathways in LLESD

This fall, LLESD is launching an exciting, long-term initiative to revisit and redesign our math pathways, starting with grades 6–8. Grounded in the belief that rigor and equity go hand in hand, our updated approach will ensure that every student receives the instruction they need to thrive, whether that means building confidence in grade-level content, accessing targeted support, or accelerating based on demonstrated readiness.

Historically, our acceleration model involved skipping or jumping content, which can lead to gaps in understanding. Moving forward, we're designing a competency-based model that provides clear, supported onramps and offramps for acceleration, utilizing content compaction rather than jumping or skipping, to help students who choose to accelerate. Students will have opportunities to demonstrate what they know and progress when ready, without sacrificing foundational skills.

While this comprehensive redesign won't be fully implemented until the 2026–27 school year, we're making one strategic change in 2025–26: adding a grade-level Common Core Math 8 course. This addition provides more flexibility and ensures all students receive instruction within their “zone of proximal development”—a critical factor in engagement and success. In August, some families will receive invitations to consider alternative math placements.



Placement changes are optional, and context will be provided.

This effort aims to prepare all students for the challenges of high school math and beyond. We're enhancing the clarity of math pathways, incorporating challenge and optionality, strengthening intervention structures, and developing robust systems of formative assessment. This summer, a dedicated team of middle school math teachers has already begun laying the groundwork for the upcoming school year. Starting this fall, the teachers will form a Math Pathways Design Team, which will guide the work of aligning curriculum, sequencing content, supporting fluency, and ensuring readiness for rigorous coursework. The math teachers and I will host a series of math-focused town halls that will complement the team's work throughout the year, gathering feedback and sharing design progress with the broader community.

Shout out to the outstanding math teachers, elementary classroom educators, and math interventionists across LLESD. Their wisdom, collaboration, and commitment to students are why LLESD continues to perform so well; they are central to this continuous improvement effort and deserve our commendation.

Exciting **times** (no pun intended) ahead!

Securing Our Future

LLEF Needs YOU. Join the Energy!



LAS LOMITAS EDUCATION FOUNDATION

As we turn the corner into a new school year, the Las Lomas Education Foundation (LLEF) is building on the incredible momentum of last spring's Rodeo and Auction. With record participation and renewed community spirit, LLEF is poised for a strong year ahead, and your voice matters.

The Foundation is especially energized by the arrival of Superintendent Erik Burmeister, whose leadership brings fresh vision and deep community familiarity. He has made it clear that LLEF will play a critical role in supporting strong, sustainable programming for our students.

LLEF is currently recruiting Board members for 2025-26 and is looking for engaged, thoughtful, and energetic parents to join. Board service is a unique way to learn about district operations, collaborate with leadership, help guide fundraising priorities, and plan memorable community events.

Whether you're a longtime parent or new to the district, there's a seat for you at the table—and the time commitment is manageable, at just 4 hours a month.

Save the Date: Pancake Breakfast

Saturday, September 27 | 8:30–11:00 a.m.

Las Lomas Courtyard

Kick off the year with pancakes, coffee, fresh fruit, and fun, while supporting our schools. Sponsorships are available (starting at \$1,000), offering visibility and impact. To sponsor, contact Executive Director Dan Bergeron at danb@llef.org by **August 15**.

[Read the full LLEF mid-summer letter here.](#)

Learn more or express interest in joining the Board at www.llef.org/volunteer.

Let's make this year our most connected and impactful yet!

Important Dates

August 1: School Site Offices Open to the Public

August 4: District Office returns to regular office hours, 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., M-F

August 19: LL Meet-the-Teacher, 8:30 a.m. LE Meet-the-Teacher, 9:30 a.m.

August 20: First Day Back for Students.

August 20: First School Board Meeting of the 2025-26 School Year

(NOTE: New start time and location: 6:30 p.m. LE MUR)

August 20 - 22: Early Release for TK-3 (see schedule published from LL)

August 28: LE Back to School Night, 6:00 p.m.

September 1: Labor Day NO SCHOOL

September 4: LL Back to School Night, 6:00 pm.

September 27: LLEF/PTA Community Pancake Breakfast @ LL 8:30 - 11:00 a.m.