



ISSUE NO. 6

LAS LOMITAS ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL DISTRICT

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SUPERINTENDENT NEWSLETTER



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Looking Ahead Together

As we begin a new year, I want to wish our Las Lomitas community a happy and hopeful start to 2026.

January includes a significant Board of Trustees meeting, where I'll provide a periodic update on our Balanced Budget Initiative. We'll begin preliminary conversations about potential cost savings (including transportation services) and possible revenue generation (such as a future parcel tax). These are early, informational discussions intended to support thoughtful planning.

Recent media coverage of a potential parcel tax included inaccuracies. I've addressed those on [page 3](#) of this newsletter to ensure our community has clear, accurate information. At this time, no decision has been made on whether to pursue a parcel tax. The Board and I look forward to continuing to consider all budget-balancing options available to us.

This month also marks the launch of a new Strategic Shifts series — short, one-page reflections that share emerging ideas using design thinking — with an invitation for feedback. Next week, I will publish the first Strategic Shift one-pagers. Several more will follow through the winter and spring. You can find the published Shifts at the Superintendent's page on the district website, complete with links to provide feedback. Learn more on [page 4](#) of the newsletter.

There is much work ahead, but our team is ready—and the possibilities for the year ahead are exciting.

Warm regards,

Erik Burmeister

Superintendent

Message from the Board President



*I am grateful for
the opportunity
to serve*

As we begin the new year, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as Board President and to continue working alongside this thoughtful and engaged community. Our district's strength lies in a shared commitment to learner-centered instruction and creative problem-solving as we navigate the challenges and opportunities ahead.

I am excited to partner with my fellow trustees, Superintendent Burmeister, and the entire district team as we support engaging learning experiences for students while maintaining a fiscally responsible approach. Together, we are focused on sustaining positive momentum and making decisions that reflect both our values and our responsibility to the community.

Please stay engaged by joining us at Board meetings, whether in person or virtually. You are always welcome to reach out at schoolboard@llesd.org.

Sincerely,
Kimberly Legg
President, LLESĐ Board of Trustees

Retirement Message from Valerie Park

After much reflection, I have decided to retire from Las Lomitas Elementary School District effective June 30, 2026, after thirty years in public education. It has been an honor to serve this remarkable community, and I am deeply grateful for the trust and partnership I have experienced.

My years at Las Lomitas have been among the most meaningful of my career. I am proud of the work we have accomplished together—from strengthening instructional practices and literacy initiatives to deepening our commitment to equity and belonging.

I am fully committed to the months ahead and will continue to support our schools, staff, and families. Superintendent Burmeister and I will work closely on a thoughtful transition plan. You may find my full retirement letter [here](#).

Thank you for welcoming me into this community and for allowing me the privilege of serving your children.

Warmly,
Valerie Park, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent



Beyond the Headline: Clarifying Some Mischaracterizations

Over winter break, the Palo Alto Daily Post published an article about LLESD budget discussions. While the author made a good-faith effort to inform the community about an upcoming Board discussion on a possible parcel tax, a few inaccuracies require clarification.

Why a Parcel Tax Is Being Discussed

The idea of a parcel tax is not new—this community has discussed it for over five years, dating back to the introduction of Transitional Kindergarten, when the state added an entire grade level without fully funding it.

As part of the Balanced Budget Initiative, staff are examining both cost containment and potential revenue generation. LLESD would be remiss not to explore whether a parcel tax makes sense—especially given that our district has one of the lowest parcel taxes among comparable neighboring districts.

Correcting the Inaccuracies

No decision has been made about a parcel tax. The Board has not decided whether or when to pursue a parcel tax. While November is the earliest one could appear on a ballot, there are currently no plans or commitments. Any claim that a tax is scheduled is incorrect.

No assistant principal was "fired." One former assistant principal at La Entrada received a well-deserved promotion in another district. The vacancy was used to reduce staffing through attrition—there was no termination.

Foreign languages are not being cut. The Board has no plans to eliminate foreign language programs. The confusion stems from discussion about potentially reducing sections to align offerings with student demand—a process called "right-sizing." There are no plans to cut languages.

Looking Ahead—Together

The Board and staff encourage families to engage in thoughtful dialogue about the district's long-term financial needs. Maintaining what our community values most—small class sizes, strong programs, safe campuses, and beautiful facilities—may eventually require consideration of a modest parcel tax, while creative work on cost containment is also underway. The destination remains clear: a rigorous, student-centered education in caring environments that reflect this remarkable community's values.

Introducing Strategic Shifts: Planting Ideas Together

Erik Burmeister, Superintendent

After eight months as superintendent, I've listened deeply through surveys, design team work, classroom visits, financial analysis, conversations, and Board meetings. Combined with 25 years in Bay Area schools, these experiences have surfaced ideas for thoughtful shifts to become more nimble, student-centered, and strategic with resources.

I'm calling these ideas Strategic Shifts—not decisions, but seeds. Each will be shared as a one-page concept to invite dialogue and feedback. Meaningful change requires clarity, transparency, and space for honest conversation.

Some ideas may take root quickly. Others may need more time or discussion. Some may never take root—and that's okay. A healthy organization examines ideas thoughtfully, allowing collective wisdom to determine what grows.

Strategic Shifts will cover topics like instruction, staffing, facilities, and fundraising. All one-pagers will live on the Superintendent's webpage and require Board discussion and approval.

I invite you to explore the Strategic Shifts as they're published, starting this month. Your perspective matters, and your feedback helps determine which seeds are worth nurturing.

AI-Supported Language Learning: How Our District Leads the Way

Hong Zang, Mandarin Teacher

At our January Board meeting, LLESĐ will consider a new Board Policy on Artificial Intelligence, along with updates to our Acceptable Use and Academic Honesty policies. As we modernize our language around AI, we want to highlight how it's already being used safely in classrooms—such as our pilot of **Mimir**, an AI-supported language learning platform in our Mandarin program.

Mimir creates authentic learning experiences by mirroring how people encounter language in real contexts. Its Watch-Read-Speak model has students view culturally rich videos, read scaffolded texts, and practice speaking with AI-guided prompts. Teachers receive ready-made lessons and real-time learning data, allowing more time for targeted instruction.

Early feedback has been encouraging. Students feel more confident speaking Mandarin because AI feedback lets them practice without fear of mistakes. Teachers find that Mimir streamlines preparation, offers clearer insight into student progress, and brings consistency to the Mandarin program.

By integrating AI tools thoughtfully, we are strengthening our language programs while upholding LLESĐ's commitment to innovation, safety, and instructional excellence.

Learning Community Updates

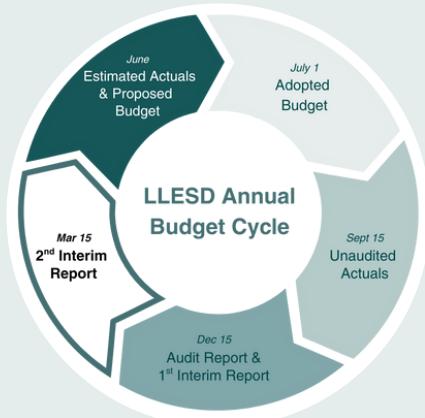
Board Meeting

At the January 14 Board of Trustees meeting, Superintendent Burmeister will provide an update on the district's Balanced Budget Initiative (BBI)—the ongoing effort to strengthen LLESĐ's long-term financial stability while protecting the student experience.

The update will revisit December's First Interim Report and begin framing long-term options, including potential cost savings and revenue strategies. This includes outlining steps for a possible parcel tax election as early as November 2026. No decisions are expected.

The MOT and Business Services departments will also present an overview of the district's transportation program.

Community members are encouraged to attend the January 14 meeting at 6:30 PM, either in person (at LE MUR) or virtually.



Math Town Hall

Families are invited to join us for a Math Town Hall to learn about LLESĐ's evolving math pathways.

These sessions will provide information about course options, acceleration through compacting, and supports available for all learners.

Two options are available:

- **In-person** on January 29 at 6:30 PM (LE MUR)
- **Via Zoom** on January 30 at 10:00 AM (will be recorded)

We hope you'll join us!

MATH TOWN HALL
COME LEARN MORE ABOUT LLESĐ'S NEW MATH PATHWAYS

- Learn about the Math Pathways Design Team's work
- Get introduced to the new math courses and pathways
- Understand acceleration through compacting, not skipping
- Review results from the Math Pathways survey
- Explore support, intervention, and extension options
- Ask questions and get answers

OPTION 1: IN-PERSON, JAN 29, 6:30 PM, LE MUR
OPTION 2: VIRTUAL, JAN 30, 10:00 AM [ZOOM LINK](#)

No need to attend both; information repeated. Virtual will be recorded. For questions, email Town Hall host Superintendent Burmeister at eburmeister@llesd.org

Interdistrict Transfer Applications

Families seeking a new or renewed interdistrict transfer into LLESD are reminded that the annual application window **opened on November 1 and closes on April 1.**

All students on an interdistrict transfer must reapply each year by **April 1**. This does not apply to students who participate in the Tinsley Transfer Program.

Families must first obtain a release from the student's district of residence. Review the updated Board Policy in advance — transfer opportunities are limited based on eligibility criteria and available space.

Supporting Literacy Through Professional Learning

This fall, teachers worked with CORE Learning to strengthen phonics instruction using UFLI and with the 95% Group to support phonics interventions for students needing extra help.

Teachers also participated in grade-level release days for collaborative planning. We are grateful for the support of our School Board and families—your investment directly benefits students every day.

8th Grade Night at Menlo-Atherton High School

Calling all 8th graders! Join Menlo-Atherton High School for their Third Annual 8th Grade Event on January 28 at 4:30 PM.

Cheer on the MA Bears JV Girls Basketball team as they take on Mills, meet future classmates, and get a feel for high school spirit.

This free event is a great opportunity for our soon-to-be high schoolers to connect with the MA community. See you there!



Your Apple for the Classroom Investments at Work

This month, our sixth graders didn't just *learn* about ancient Egypt—they held history in their hands.

Thanks to Apple for the Classroom, students participated in a hands-on enrichment experience with **Ancient Artifacts**, an organization dedicated to bringing history to life through storytelling and real and replica artifacts. **Mr. Young**, our presenter, visited sixth-grade classrooms as students concluded their social studies unit on ancient Egypt, transforming the curriculum into a vivid, unforgettable experience.

During the presentation, students examined genuine artifacts recovered from a mummy's tomb—objects thousands of years old—while hearing stories from Egyptian mythology alongside real historical events.

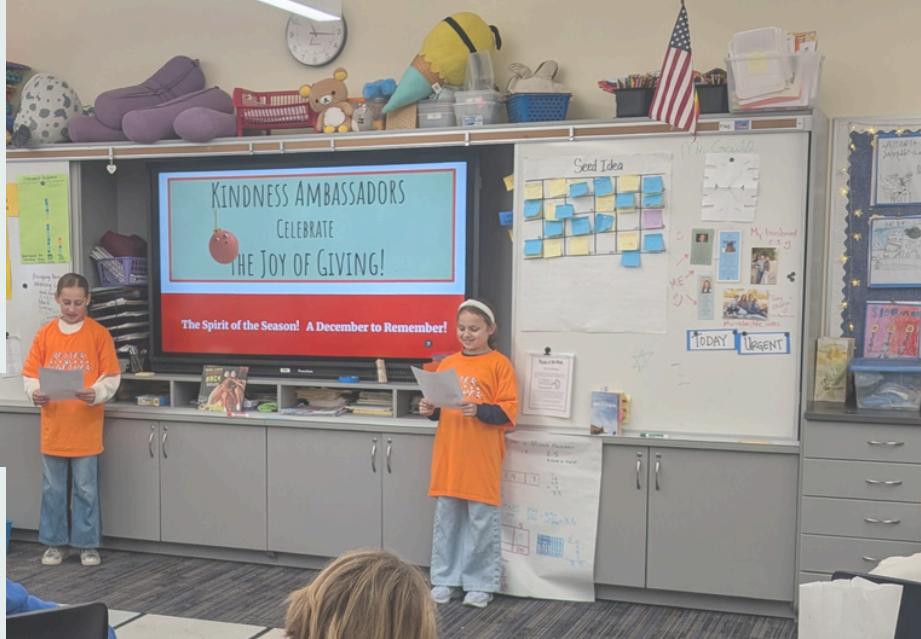


Through this immersive approach, students explored Egyptian beliefs about the afterlife, traditions and customs, art and architecture, and broader themes such as monotheism vs. polytheism and the role of women in society.

Experiences like this exemplify what Apple for the Classroom makes possible: learning that is engaging, tangible, and deeply connected to the curriculum. Looking ahead, we're excited to build on this momentum in the spring with a planned **Ancient Rome** presentation, where students will explore Roman civilization through artifacts, mythology, and interactive storytelling centered on life in the Roman Legion.

Thank you to our families and community for your generosity. Your support turns lessons into lived experiences—and sparks curiosity that lasts far beyond the classroom.

Operations & Tech Updates



Safety Reminder: Stop for School Buses

Please remember that state law requires all drivers to stop when a school bus has its red lights flashing and stop arm extended. This applies in both directions of traffic while students are loading or unloading.

Failing to stop puts students at serious risk. Thank you for doing your part to keep our school community safe.



New Breakfast Item Available

We know breakfast choices matter—for students and parents alike. One common challenge is finding options that students enjoy while meeting parents' expectations for nutrition.

Starting mid December, we're introducing Honey Bunches of Oats as a lower-sugar cereal choice on our breakfast menu. This is part of The Lunch Master's ongoing effort to provide "parent-approved, kid-loved" food choices across breakfast, lunch, and snack programs, while meeting the strict guidelines of the National School Lunch Program.

Thank you for your partnership in making healthy eating a positive experience for every student.



Stay Connected

Important Dates

Monday, January 5

Professional Development
(no students)

Wednesday, January 14

Board of Trustees Meeting
6:30-9:30 pm at LE MIR

Monday, January 19

Martin Luther King Jr. Day (holiday)

Tuesday, January 27

SBAC Meeting
3:15-5:00 pm at District Office
Conference Room

Wednesday, January 28

8th Grade Night
4:30 pm at MAHS Gym

Thursday, January 29

Math Town Hall
6:30 pm at LE MUR

Thursday, January 29

Special Board Meeting Session
4:00-6:00 pm at LE MUR

Friday, January 30

Math Town Hall (Virtual)
10:00 am on [Zoom](#)

Get Involved

Join a design team or committee:
Contact eburmeister@llesd.org

Volunteer at our after-school math center:
Email aanagnostou@llesd.org

Resources

District Website

<https://www.llesd.org>

Las Lomitas PTA

<https://www.laslomitaspta.org>

La Entrada PTA

<https://www.laentradapta.org>

Las Lomitas Education Fund

<https://www.llef.org>

CA School Dashboard

<https://www.caschooldashboard.org/>



**Las Lomitas
Elementary
School District**

Inclusive. Engaging. Inspiring.

Reminders
Due Friday
- Must Do List

Library = Thursday
Books

