

Dear MPCSD Community,

Becoming superintendent in the Menlo Park City School District has been the result of a meaningful journey that began in the year 2000. As a 23-year member of the MPCSD staff, where I began as a first grade teacher at Laurel, led Oak Knoll as principal, and moved to the district office to serve as Assistant Superintendent, my road to the superintendency has been fulfilling and has solidified my commitment to the MPCSD community.

While we may have one superintendent, teamwork is the foundation of my leadership. As a young person, I liked school but what I *loved* was playing team sports. I grew to deeply appreciate the outcomes of great teamwork: shared vision, trust building, utilization of each teammate's strengths, honest feedback, collaboration, communication, and shared laughter (and tears). Teamwork requires hard work, extra time, and intentional commitment. I believe it is the foundation for success on the field, in the classroom, and at the district office!

Because I believe so strongly in teams, I take this opportunity to introduce our cabinet team (pictured here), which is made up of department leaders who ensure our school district is functioning at the highest level. This team keeps students at the center of the decisions being made and prioritizes the work of our teachers and staff who are on the frontlines. This is just one example; teams work hard to ensure success at every school and within each department, from site leadership to special education to curriculum, student health, assessment, business and finance, and more.

As superintendent, I look forward to fresh connections, complex challenges, inspiring teamwork, and valued partnership as together we focus on being learner-centered. While our function as a school district is primarily to educate the students in our community, our true purpose and aspirations as educators reach far beyond successfully promoting students from one

grade level to the next. The meaningful experiences our students have at our schools today can have a lasting impact on their futures. All students deserve to have the confidence and skills necessary to successfully pursue their future interests, develop healthy relationships, and be world-ready.

Interdependence and teamwork - as evidenced by the highlights within this Annual Report - yield great outcomes for MPCSD! With our community's support, MPCSD's many strong teams of capable people work together towards our common purpose: our commitment that all students *engage, achieve, and thrive*.

Go team!

*Kristen Gracia*

MPCSD Superintendent



Cabinet members pictured left to right, back row: Ruben Trabanino, Director of Maintenance, Operations & Transportation; Christina Carrier, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent; Parke Treadway, Public Information Officer; Willy Haug, Director of Technology & Innovation; Stephanie Sheridan, Executive Director of Student Services; front row: Audra Romero, Director of Human Resources; Jammie Behrendt, Assistant Superintendent; Kristen Gracia, Superintendent; Marites Fermin, Chief Business Officer

# Meet Our Newest Team: PAWZitivity SEL Dogs

Research is clear that canine companionship in the form of trained facility dogs reaps huge benefits at schools. Dogs on campus foster an increased sense of belonging, higher attendance, decreased anxiety and depression, and improved academics. Since the pandemic, MPCSD has focused even more on the social emotional health and mental wellness of our students and staff. After piloting a facility dog at Hillview School and a therapy reading dog at Encinal School, the district has moved ahead to invest in a team of six specially trained facility dogs: one for each school campus and one who supports students across the district as part of the Student Services team. The Menlo Park-Atherton Education Foundation and its generous donors raised the startup funds for this program at their 2022 spring auction.



The PAWZitivity Team is already making a profound impact on students. Mental Health and Wellness Lead Chris Arrington, who facilitates the program, says having his therapy dog Duke with him in student counseling sessions has helped make more progress in an hour than in the previous four months. Students love spending time with the dogs and report feeling “happy,” “calm,” and “relieved.” They say “sometimes when you’re having a hard day a dog helps you feel better about yourself” and “they just help take your stress away.” We are grateful to the MPAEF and its supporters for making this possible and look forward to seeing all the ways our newest four-legged team members continue to make a positive difference for students.

## MPCSD Staff

MPCSD’s excellent and award winning staff of 400 professionals serves the needs of our students and community. Two thirds of our teachers hold advanced degrees and many have earned National Board Certification in their area of expertise. Our specialist teachers for library, art, music, world language, PE, and Special Education are credentialed in their subjects and leaders in their fields. We are only as good as our team, and the School Board is committed to professional compensation, especially given the high cost of living, that continues to make MPCSD an attractive employer for the best educators in the business.

- 198** Teachers, 133 with Advanced Degrees, 16 with National Board Certification
- 4** Instructional Coaches
- 30** Instructional Aides
- 56** Paraeducators to support Special Education Students
- 18** Credentialed Administrators
- 5** School Psychologists
- 6** Counselors
- 1** Mental Health & Wellness Lead
- 1** District Nurse
- 5** LVNs
- ELC staff:**
- 10** Teachers
- 9** Aides

### MPCSD Board of Education

- David Ackerman, 2023 President
- Francesca Segrè, 2023 Vice President
- Sherwin Chen
- Scott Saywell
- Jed Scolnick

### District Leaders

- Kristen Gracia, Superintendent
- Jammie Behrendt, Assistant Superintendent
- Stephanie Sheridan, Executive Director of Student Services
- Marites Fermin, Chief Business Officer

### Our Principal Team: The Super Six



MPCSD’s site leaders are key players in our mission to serve students, staff, and families. Our schools are in excellent hands with this team, which includes three new members this year: MPCSD veterans Danielle O’Brien (pictured on far left) as Hillview Principal and Chana Stewart (pictured third from right) as ELC Director, and new-to-MPCSD team member Alicia Heneghan (pictured far right) who joined us from San Mateo Foster City School District to be Laurel School Upper Campus Principal. Also pictured are Encinal Principal Sharon Burns (second from right), Laurel School Lower Campus Principal Linda Creighton (second from left), and Oak Knoll Principal Alicia Payton-Miyazaki (third from left).



# The Team Effort to Remove Barriers and Ensure Success for English Learners

About 5% of MPCSD's total enrollment are English Learner (EL) students, representing 21 home languages. MPCSD believes home language should not be a barrier to students accessing the full curriculum and achieving their potential. Fluency in English is foundational to the courses students can take in high school, and therefore to the options they have for college and beyond. Enabling every child to engage, achieve, and thrive means we must ensure that as many of our EL students as possible can be reclassified as English proficient before leaving eighth grade, while also recognizing that their multi-lingual status is an asset to their academic potential.

It takes a team of seven EL specialists working across our five campuses, plus district and site leaders, classroom teachers, and most importantly the students and their families, to help our students along their English fluency journey. Recently, MPCSD has made important changes to English Language Development (ELD) and reclassification criteria that elevate equity and will increase opportunity for our students.

## What is ELD and what changes has MPCSD made?

ELD develops advanced academic English. Instruction and learning is based on the California ELD standards which are directly aligned to the Common Core ELA/Literacy standards. Annually, we measure EL students' language learning progress and proficiency using the English Language Proficiency Assessments of CA (ELPAC) which measures a variety of rigorous academic tasks, like

- Listening and responding to an oral presentation
- Summarizing an academic presentation
- Presenting and discussing academic information
- Reading a literary and informational passage
- Writing about academic information



*Pictured here are some of the students who earned their reclassification as English Language Proficient this year. Congratulations!*

All districts in California adopt reclassification criteria that align with state expectations. MPCSD's criteria were updated and Board-approved in April 2023 for increased access and equity. Our work to improve access to English proficiency has not been done alone; for nine years MPCSD has been a part of the Stanford-Sequoia K-12 Research Collaborative, which is a research-practice partnership between the Stanford Graduate School of Education and Sequoia Union High School District and its K-8 feeder districts. The collaborative has focused on the long-term trajectories of our EL population and aligning reclassification practices across the districts to increase the number of students who begin high school as reclassified Fluent English Proficient, thus gaining access to higher level and college preparatory classes.

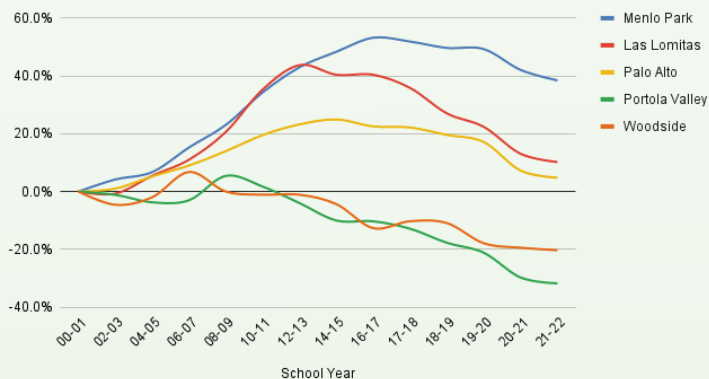
At the end of every school year, MPCSD holds a Reclassified Fluent English Proficient event to acknowledge our students' reclassification as multilingual learners who have become English proficient. On May 11, 2023, MPCSD recognized a record 47 students! We are also proud to report, thanks to the strong teamwork behind our ELD efforts, that MPCSD maintains "high" progress of our English Learner students year over year as reported on the California state dashboard, and that over 70% of our English Learners are reclassified as English proficient within 5 years, a district goal.



# MPCSD's Enrollment Picture

School enrollment in MPCSD has long been both a driver and a reflection of the high quality public education that our community expects and our schools deliver. In the mid-1990s the School Board began investing in our schools' facilities, staffing, and programs through parcel taxes and bond measures. This community investment reaped benefits like top achievement scores, campus upgrades, and state and national recognition for academics, innovation, the arts, and environmental design. Its excellent reputation caused MPCSD to become a "destination district" that attracts young families and continues to support high property values throughout the community.

% Change in School Enrollment since 2000



In a community-funded district like MPCSD, enrollment plays a crucial but unpredictable role in our planning. Our funding is not tied to enrollment and we do not receive significant funding from state or federal sources. In fact, those sources only make up 12% of our operating budget. From 2000 through 2019, MPCSD experienced unprecedented enrollment growth of nearly 54%, placing the district in a time of rapid expansion pressure on its facilities and staff. The community's support of parcel taxes and bonds has been crucial to the district's successful management of this growth.

After two decades of consistent growth, MPCSD is now in a near-term period of slow decline or plateau. This is a trend throughout the state, although in MPCSD the decline is much less pronounced than in other districts. The district's most recent demographic study predicts that we will expand again in school year 2023-24 with the full implementation of transitional kindergarten, and will decline for the following two years to reach about 2500 students by school year 2027-28. Beyond that timeframe, we expect our enrollment numbers to rise again, especially as new housing is built in accordance with the Housing Element.

## What does all this mean for our future?

- **Transitional kindergarten.** MPCSD will add three classes of TK in school year 2023-24. TK is mandated by the state for us to provide, but not funded by additional state dollars.
- **Site-based enrollment is uneven.** The majority of new housing in the district boundaries will be built along the El Camino corridor, impacting Encinal School disproportionately. Thus, MPCSD's internal school boundaries may need to change.
- **Declining enrollment releases the immediate pressure** on our facilities, although MPCSD has the largest elementary schools in the county by enrollment, and the smallest physical campuses.
- **Older buildings need replacing.** Our oldest campuses, particularly Laurel Lower Campus, need significant modernization including seismic upgrades, or replacing altogether. An enrollment plateau gives us time to focus on these necessary upgrades.
- **The cost of education rises every year.** MPCSD is not immune to inflation and the high cost of living in our community. Competitively compensating our staff remains a priority, but it is ever more difficult to recruit teachers and classified staff to an area which grows more unaffordable every year. As fewer and fewer young people choose a career in education, MPCSD needs to work harder to remain in a position of hiring the best talent to serve our community's children.
- **It's all relative.** Even with fewer students and strong property values, the per-student funding in MPCSD remains significantly lower than other local districts. For example, our neighbors in Ravenswood, Las Lomas, Woodside, and Portola Valley have between \$5,274 and \$15,626 MORE per student per year in funding.

MPCSD looks forward to a continued partnership with the community in supporting our facilities, programs, and staff. The education of our children is all of our responsibilities and we couldn't do it without you.



# Our Financial Picture

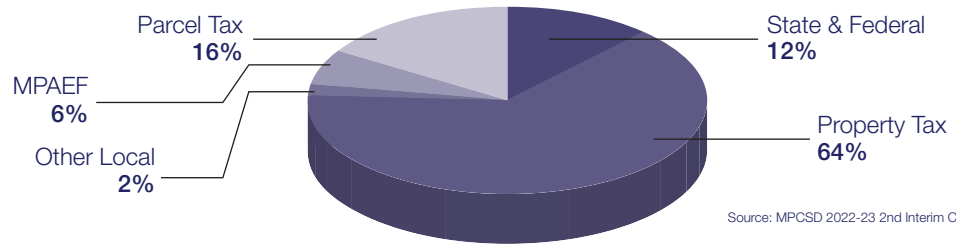
MPCSD is one of the 10% of California school districts that are “community funded.” This means we receive more in revenue from our local property taxes than the state would give us in per-student funding. Average annual per-student funding in California is \$18,141 for elementary districts like MPCSD. Because of our strong local funding, MPCSD received \$24,998 per student. (Source: Ed-data.org, school year 2021-22.)

Community funded districts do not receive substantial funds from the state or federal government. Instead, they get to keep a fraction of the property taxes raised within their jurisdiction. MPCSD is allocated about 18% of local property taxes; the rest of our community’s property taxes go to other entities like the county, cities, water, and fire districts.

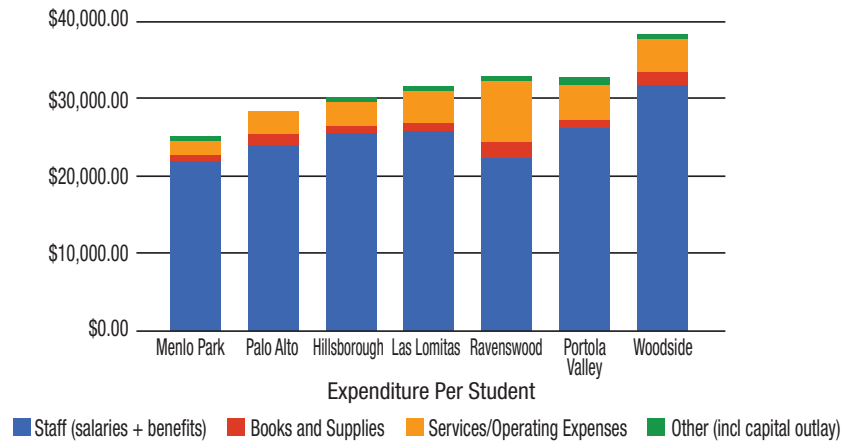
When other local sources are added, like parcel taxes and philanthropic donations, thanks to our partner the Menlo-Atherton Education Foundation, almost 90% of MPCSD’s budget comes directly from our local community. Thank you!

**Total revenue for 2022-23: \$70,548,156**

## MPCSD Funding Sources 2022-23



## Expenditure per Student – District Comparison, 2021-22



# The Teams Behind Our Financial Picture

Public schools are one of the biggest investments a community makes. Well-regarded schools educate future leaders, build community, and support strong property values. MPCSD takes its fiduciary responsibility for your public funds seriously. Many teams work hard behind the scenes to ensure that MPCSD manages its money responsibly and delivers the high quality education our community expects.

## Finance & Audit: A School Board Committee

In addition to monthly public Board meetings, the Board’s Finance & Audit Committee meets quarterly to review the district’s budget. Members of F&A have professional backgrounds in finance and business, and work together with MPCSD’s CBO and business office to present balanced budgets that reflect the community’s priorities while maintaining healthy reserves.

## Menlo Park-Atherton Education Foundation

Since 1982, the Menlo Park-Atherton Education Foundation (MPAEF) has fundraised to enable MPCSD to provide an exceptional education to all students. Working with parents, local businesses, community members, and the district,

MPAEF raises money to pay for high-quality teachers, a comprehensive educational program, and teaching innovation beyond what is possible with public dollars alone. About six percent of the district’s revenue comes from the MPAEF grant.

## Parent-Teacher Organizations

Each school - Encinal, Laurel, Oak Knoll, and Hillview - supports a vibrant PTO that raises money for school-specific initiatives and supplies. PTOs also organize the volunteers needed to run programs like art and library, and events that build community among families. The PTOs are the heart of their schools’ character and help create the welcoming sense of belonging that our students, staff, and families feel.

## One Community Campaign

Every year, the MPAEF and PTOs come together to build our district’s biggest team: the families that donate to support our schools. Over 60% of MPCSD families contribute to this campaign, showing the strong community effort to ensure that art, music, library, science, world language, PE, Maker Spaces, smaller class sizes, and mental health and wellness are offered across our district.

# Community Engagement

MPCSD invites you to connect with us. **School Board** meetings are open for in-person or remote attendance. Meeting schedule, agendas, and Zoom details are available at [mpcsd.org](http://mpcsd.org).

Our **Speaker Series** is open to the public and showcases renowned speakers and current topics. Find out more at [mpcsdspeakerseries.com](http://mpcsdspeakerseries.com).

Look for us at the **Menlo Park Farmers Market** and other community events.

To subscribe to our newsletter, **Community Matters Quarterly**, and also receive notices about special events, use the "Join an Email List" link at [mpcsd.org](http://mpcsd.org).

## Our Schools



### Early Learning Center

Director Chana Stewart  
95 Edge Road, ATH /  
1895 Oak Knoll Lane, MP  
650.463.1236  
Serves Children Ages 2.9-5  
*Nurturing young children's curiosity, sense of wonder, belonging, and deep engagement with the world around them.*



### Encinal Elementary School

Principal Sharon Burns  
195 Encinal Avenue, ATH  
650.326.5164  
Grades TK-5  
*We educate, nurture, and inspire all voices to contribute to a better world.*



### Laurel Elementary School

Principal Linda Creighton  
Lower Campus, Grades TK-2  
95 Edge Road, ATH  
650.324.0186  
Principal Alicia Heneghan  
Upper Campus, Grades 3-5  
275 Elliott Drive, MP  
650.321.6010  
*We are confident students, passionate teachers, and an involved community.*



### Oak Knoll Elementary School

Principal Alicia Payton-Miyazaki  
1895 Oak Knoll Lane, MP  
650.854.4433  
Grades TK-5  
*Every child an exemplary scholar, a valued friend, and a courageous citizen.*



### Hillview Middle School

Principal Danielle O'Brien  
1100 Elder Avenue, MP  
650.326.4341  
Grades 6-8  
*Creating a middle school where all students, staff, and families feel valued, connected, and inspired.*

To find out which elementary school serves your home address, search for "School Locator" on our website, [www.mpcsd.org](http://www.mpcsd.org). All students in grades 6-8 attend Hillview Middle School.



181 Encinal Avenue  
Atherton, CA 94027  
650.321.7140



[www.mpcsd.org](http://www.mpcsd.org)

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