MINUTES OF THE 2025-2026 ENCINAL PTO GENERAL BOARD MEETING OF THE ENCINAL SCHOOL PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION

195 Encinal Avenue, Atherton, CA 94027

DATE: November 13, 2025

TIME: 8:45 am PST

PLACE: ENspire Lab, Encinal School

MEMBERS PRESENT:
Eleanor de Jong
Lindsey Sikes
Allison Jagtiani
Francesca Baraggioli
Emily Bhatia
Prachi Parvin
Stacey Shirer
Jessica Kohli
Chelsea Marinelli
Leah Wolf
Anand Gupta

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ashley Ludlow

OTHERS PRESENT:
Sharon Burns
Allison Carlson
Aanika Carroll
Jessica Hix
Clare Lee
Nikki Miskowicz
Adrian Silva
Francesca Segrè

1.	**Call To Order**	**Eleanor de Jong**

- The meeting was called to order at 8:48 am by Parliamentarian Eleanor de Jong.
- Emily Bhatia took notes as Recording Secretary.

2.	**President Welcome**	**Lindsey Sikes**

- It's a busy week—thank you to everyone for attending on this rainy day.
- Huge thanks to all volunteers who supported the Halloween Coffee, Parade, and classroom parties. The energy on campus was incredible.
- Movie Night was a great success, with families having a wonderful time.
- The 4th Grade Bike Rodeo was featured in "The Almanac" newspaper. Special thanks to Adrian Silva and Juan Pinzon for organizing and leading an engaging and educational experience.
- The 3rd Grade Bike Rodeo was held this week as well and was run by an outside vendor.
- Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day is tomorrow!
- Leadership & Philanthropy
    - The 5th Grade Girl Scout Troop has launched a blanket drive and reached out to other troops to encourage participation. This initiative has been fully led and managed by the 5th graders.
    - There have been many opportunities for 5th graders to take on meaningful leadership roles this year.
    - The Scouts continue to collect plastic to reach their 1,000 lb. goal. The recycled material will be turned into another bench for Encinal—this would be the school's third.
- Caring & Sharing Drive
    - The Caring and Sharing Drive is currently underway and remains an important school program.
    - 70 families are participating this year, and the drive is currently behind the $15,000 goal. Please help spread the word.
    - Safeway gift cards will be purchased for Thanksgiving support.
    - Cookies will be provided by the Girl Scouts.
    - Target gift cards planned for winter holiday gift and holiday meal support
- Upcoming Events:
    - 11/14: Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day
    - 11/18: Caring & Sharing Dinner (staff only)
    - 11/20: Staff Appreciation—Fall Birthdays
    - 12/3-12/5: Musical Auditions
    - 12/5: Movie Night #2 (NEW date—Friday)
    - 12/5: Polynesian Dancers—lunchtime performance

Encinal **PTO ByLaws** and **Standing Rules**

3.	**School Board Update**	**Francesca Segrè**

Welcome & Opening Remarks

- Francesca Segrè was introduced by Lindsey Sikes. She has been a part of the School Board since 2020, and is our School Board Representative this year. She joined the School Board at the end of Covid, and was on the Site Council when her own two children attended Encinal.
- Expressed appreciation to Sharon Burns for a campus tour and thanked all attendees for participating in the PTO.
- Emphasized the importance of public service in the current global climate.
- All School Board Meetings are streamed live, and Francesca distributes a newsletter afterward. Contact the Board to be added to the distribution list.

Academics

- District testing levels remain at pre-Covid levels and have not yet reached desired outcomes.
- Continued push for increased phonics instruction; district remains strong compared to the state overall.
    - Reading: 80% meeting expectations
    - Math: 78% meeting expectations
    - Science: 68% meeting expectations
- i-Ready continues to support teachers by identifying student needs and helping target instruction.
- Ongoing question: *How do we improve academic performance?*

Standards-Based Grading

- Topic on tonight's School Board Meeting agenda.
- An evaluation was completed at Hillview following grading implementation.
- Students were able to retest repeatedly until earning a desired score, which became burdensome for both students and teachers.
- Proposed policy change: students may retest **only after demonstrating completion of required work**. The Board will vote tonight.

Facilities & Enrollment

- Bond funds are being used at Encinal (e.g., tree planting over the summer).
- Lower Laurel will be discussed due to seismic concerns.
- Enrollment Trends:
    - Declining enrollment locally, statewide, and nationally; birth rates are also falling.
    - Menlo Park is at its lowest enrollment level in 12 years (2,621 vs. 3,000 in 2020), largely due to high cost of living and families relocating.
    - Despite lower enrollment, per-pupil funding remains high due to strong local property tax revenue.
    - Demographers predicted the decline; however, long-term enrollment is expected to rise with new housing development.

E-Bike Policy

- Main topic at tonight's School Board Meeting.
- Expected outcome:

    - Class 1 pedal-assist (registered) e-bikes will be allowed to park on campus.
    - Throttle e-bikes will not be permitted on campus.
- Community encouraged to attend—the meeting begins with public comment.

Budget

- District budget is just above break-even ("barely in the black") with a total of $75M.
- The Teacher Compensation Philosophy results in rising salary and benefit costs that cannot be fully predicted.
- Budget reductions will be necessary.
- Superintendent Gracia is holding listening sessions to gather parent and community feedback.
- 90% of the budget goes toward teachers and staff, ensuring high-quality instruction.
- Goal: identify $4M in cuts by 2029; changes will become apparent in April.
- Budget Cuts Across Schools
    - Cuts will be program-based, not school-based.

iPad Usage & i-Ready

- District-wide questions were raised about iPad usage in classrooms and at home.
- Data shows students who complete two i-Ready lessons per week tend to score higher on state assessments.
- State testing is rigorous, and i-Ready helps build necessary reading stamina.
- Science assessments (in 5th and 8th grade) are heavily reading-based and challenging.
- i-Ready differentiates instruction and is supplemental, not part of the core curriculum.
- The program "shuts off" when students fail lessons, prompting teacher intervention.
- Soft-launched last year.
- Test score data by school is publicly available

Q&A and Discussion

- Enrollment & Exit Data
    - Hillview conducts exit surveys.
    - Roughly 50 students leave and 50 join the district each year.
    - Families typically move out of the area or out of state.
- Science Instruction
    - Pre-COVID, the district had a science specialist; the role was eliminated due to workload.
    - Current science instruction is more theoretical and workbook-based, with fewer hands-on experiences.
    - The Board and educators recommended eliminating the specialist position; the state test is still relatively new (2 years), and instruction is adjusting accordingly.
- Spanish Immersion
    - Question raised: Do Spanish Immersion and English-only students perform similarly on standardized tests? District will follow up.
- Phonics Instruction
    - District shifted to a more systematic phonics approach due to the science of reading.
    - A balanced approach is used: phonics and context clues.

- No reported teacher pushback.
- Limited instructional time and increased state-mandated recess pose challenges.
- Upper-grade teachers report the new phonics emphasis has been positive.
- Note: Handwriting is state-mandated; math and science are not

4.	**OCC Recap**	**Eleanor de Jong**

- Great OCC energy — thank you to everyone who contributed and supported the campaign.
- At the end of the campaign, we do not yet have the full corporate match totals.
- The general meeting was shifted from October to November so we could share more finalized numbers.
- Recently received:
  - $14,000 in additional corporate matches
  - $3,000 in additional parent contributions
- Current total raised: $102,000 to date
- Overall district-wide results:
  - $3.56M raised so far
  - Projected to end around $3.8M
- Encinal PTO Portion
  - $102,901 raised so far
  - Projected to end around $114,000

5.	**VOTE:** Motion to approve prior minutes	**Eleanor de Jong**

- Eleanor de Jong moved that the October 23, 2025 minutes be approved. The motion was seconded by Lindsey Sikes and approved unanimously

6.	**Budget Presentation**	**Chelsea Marinelli**

- Checking account is $85,400 and savings account is $20,024 - total cash available: $105,424
- PTO President presented the proposed 2025-2026 budget (**Exhibit A**)
- Received: 60% of projected annual budget
- Taxes: PTO received a filing extension
- Correction: Last meeting's Book Fair earnings were misreported. Actual earnings were approximately $1,800.
- Approximately 35% of the projected budget has been spent this year (not including surplus funds).
- Surplus funds are still under discussion
- Recent & Upcoming Events
  - Recent:
    - Movie Night
    - Halloween Coffee
    - Basketball Registration
  - Upcoming:
    - Safeway Gift Card Reimbursement
    - C&S Holiday Dinner
    - Basketball District Registration

        - PTO Mini Grants
        - Target Gift Cards
        - Fall Birthday Celebration
        - Holiday Drive
- Mini Grants
    - Only two teacher submissions received so far; teachers are currently focused on report card assessments.
    - Any Encinal staff member may submit a project idea.
- Budget Adjustments
    - Increased funding for garden supplies, allowing each class a set reimbursement amount.
    - Bike & Pedestrian Safety supplies budget decreased.
    - Fall Family Picnic, TK & Kinder Play Dates, and Back to School Coffee Mixer all came in under budget.
    - Increased budget for ENTV to allow purchase of hats.
    - Staff Appreciation budget increased to better align with last year's actual expenses

7.	**Principal Report**	**Sharon Burns**

- Teachers are currently focused on preparing student report cards during the assessment period.
- Winter Sing will take place on December 17th:
    - Question raised: Should assemblies be back-to-back as last year or spread throughout the day?
    - Consensus: Morning assemblies, held together, would be best.
- "Ghost Light" Performance at Hillview:
    - Nikki Miskowicz shared that 5th graders will be performing.
    - Performance dates: November 18th and 20th at 6:00 PM.
    - Every role is a starring role.
- Musical Auditions:
    - Auditions will occur earlier this year, before the break.
    - Production: "Oliver Jr.!" performed by 4th and 5th graders.
    - Note: Oliver rehearsals will conflict with basketball practices.
- Planning for the Fall Staff Appreciation Lunch is progressing well.
- Upcoming Events
    - Math Festival (Dec. 12):
        - TK students will attend an assembly with CuriOddyssey the same day.
        - The rest of the school will participate in the on-campus Math Festival.
        - Multiple hands-on math activity stations will be set up.
        - Many parent volunteers will be needed.
        - Request for recommendations: Does anyone know a math guest speaker for an assembly?
- Funding & Grants
    - Funds from last year's auction (Fund-a-Need for math) can support math-related needs without requiring mini grant submissions.
    - This year's Fund-a-Need focus is still being determined.
- Fingerprinting:
    - Jessica Hix is doing an excellent job managing the fingerprinting process.

    - Communication has been effective, and there have been no issues with volunteers getting fingerprinted.
- Approved Parent List:
    - Question: Can teachers receive a list of approved parents?
    - Issue: Approved parent list is not linked to specific students.
    - Teachers already have access to the list as it currently exists

8.	**VOTE:** Motion to approve budget	**Eleanor de Jong**

- Eleanor de Jong moved that the 2025-2026 Budget be approved. The motion was seconded by Lindsey Sikes and approved unanimously.

9.	**Adjourn**	**Eleanor de Jong**

- The meeting adjourned at 10:05 am
- The next scheduled meeting of the Encinal Executive Board is scheduled for December 11, 2025 at 8:45 am in the ENspire Lab at Encinal School.
- Attachments to these minutes:
    - Exhibit A: 2025-2026 Budget

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Emily Bhatia
Recording Secretary of the Meeting