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

195 Encinal Avenue, Atherton, CA 94027

DATE: February 26, 2026

TIME: 8:45 am PST

PLACE: ENspire Lab, Encinal School

MEMBERS PRESENT:
Eleanor de Jong
Lindsey Sikes
Allison Jagtiani
Francesca Baraggioli
Stacey Shirer
Jessica Kohli
Ashley Ludlow
Chelsea Marinelli
Leah Wolf

MEMBERS ABSENT:
Emily Bhatia
Prachi Parvin
Anand Gupta

OTHERS PRESENT:
Gina Watkins
Aanika Carroll
Jessica Hix
Nikki Miskowicz

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

- The meeting was called to order at 8:51am by Parliamentarian Eleanor de Jong.
- Recording Secretary Emily Bhatia is absent for today's meeting; Eleanor de Jong took notes.

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

- Eleanor de Jong moved that the January 22, 2026 minutes be approved. The motion was seconded by Lindsey Sikes and approved unanimously.

3.	**President Update**	**Lindsey Sikes**

- Vice President, Francesca, discussed she is doing initial testing at today's meeting regarding how to make these PTO meetings accessible virtually in the future.
- Thank you, Francesca and Allison for volunteer coordination and production assistance during the 3rd grade Lion King Jr. Musical performances. Experience in 3rd grade increases interest in optional 4th/5th grade musical: 80+ kids participating this year, which is about 20 more than last year.
- Thank you, Safe Routes team ("Bike Dads" Juan, Adrian, and Eric) for 2 successful bike buses in the past 2 months. Really fantastic. Discussion around partnering with police and/or city council regarding safety and awareness about kids and adults taking up a lane during the bike bus.
- Thank you, Allison for Astronomy Week - expanded from Astronomy Night last year - we had the Planetarium assembly, Astronomy Night with telescopes, and the students even made constellations in Art. Goal of Assembly program to do more integration with curriculum across grades and within classrooms in the future. Discussion regarding one idea to do a similar week with Owls and pellet dissection.
- Thank you, Sports Commissioners, Allison and Nikki: 3rd through 5th grade basketball is wrapping up; 5th grade boys basketball won 1st in the league! Thank you to all our enthusiastic coaches.
- Upcoming Events:
    - 3/27: School Spirit Day—Sports Day!
    - 3/27: Movie Night #3
    - 3/31-4/4: Crossing Guard Appreciation Week

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

4.	**Treasurer Report**	**Chelsea Marinelli & Prachi Parvin**

- Checking account is $88,839.49 and savings account is $20,024.02 - total cash available: $108,863.51
- Income: Donation from the Atherton Police Department, Outdoor Ed t-shirt fee collection, Frozen Jr. ticket sales ($16K), and Benevity donation directed to C&S.
- Expenses: PTO Mini Grants, Basketball parties, Astronomy Night (very low cost - only hot chocolate and glow sticks), Staff Winter Celebration, 5th grade parent breakfast with Hillview, Lion King production items, Oliver Musical costume reimbursements .
- Upcoming: Movie Night #3, Crossing Guard Appreciation Week, and Oliver Musical.

5.	**Musical Update**	**Leah Wolf & Liza Zassenhaus**

- Lunch and snack time rehearsals are starting; kids should check the list posted on Mr. Ashfield's door. Practices will start to get longer in 2 weeks and they will be moving into the gym soon.
- Important to have a staff person backstage at shows. Need to make sure that parent volunteers are all cleared to volunteer with students on campus.
- Collaboration with Hillview and across elementary schools for costumes as well as banners, e.g. "The District Presents Oliver the Musical" (smaller, school-specific banners as well); coordinate with other schools regarding expenses and especially in light of ticket sale revenue (need to "right-size" the budget and consider being consistent across schools).

6.	**After School Activities**	**Alyson Blume & Ashley Green**

- Survey link has gone out through the newsletter about what programs parents are interested in. Hope to have more participation in the survey in the next week and will then share out the results. Moving this discussion to next month's meeting when we have the data - please encourage others to take the survey.

7.	**Barnyard Collective**	**Stacey Shirer**

- We have 3 chickens and a new chicken coop back at Encinal thanks to a Jeanie Ritchie Grant! Working in conjunction with AIMS teachers in the Learning Center - Mr. Ruth and Ms. Stamates. Mr. Ruth's room will do the primary caring for the chickens with feed and water.
- 3 young hens: Cheeto, Dorrito, and Fritto who will start laying eggs in a month or two. Will all lay large brown eggs.
- Stacey will offer to Garden Leads to lead an optional garden lesson for the classes including a meet-and-greet opportunity for the students. Participation is optional and depends on comfort level. Ideas for lessons divided into grade-appropriate ideas, including a card sorting game for TK-Kinder.
- Other ideas for increasing the scope include: engineering toys for the chickens in the ENspire Lab, and an incentive system for a positive reward for kids.
- Discussion ensued regarding the positive impact of hands-on experiences with chickens for Science as well as Language curriculum standards.
- Idea for parents to visit Ohlone Elementary School in Palo Alto to learn from their larger "barn".
- Expenses have been initially covered by the Jeanie Ritchie Grant (can apply to continue funding for 3 years). Ongoing expenses include litter and feed (small). We can potentially incorporate these costs into the Garden budget in the future.

8.	**OCC MOU Update**	**Francesca Baraggioli & Eleanor de Jong**

- The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlines the mechanics of the OCC and is a binding document signed by representatives from: each school PTO (VPs are signatories), MPCSD, MPAEF, and District Council.
- Reps from each organization have been meeting weekly for the past two months to review and revise the OCC MOU for the 2026-2027 school year.
- Summary of MOU Edits:

    - Campaign Duration: new dates, but same campaign length (first letters out in early August, official launch at BTSN, wrap up end of September).
    - Reimbursements: extend deadline to account for PTO Spring "donor thank you" activities.
    - Suggested Donation Increase to $3000/child (up to first $300/child to PTOs)
- Based on a detailed and thorough analysis of donation trends, we hope the following additional funds may be generated by the OCC (if those who give at the current suggested donation choose to give at the raised amount):
    - MPAEF grant to MPCSD: back to (hopefully) where it was 7 years ago (or above).
    - Encinal PTO: enough to reduce (and potentially eliminate) the need for additional parent donation requests throughout the year.
- We're enthusiastic about the opportunity to better serve our community through an increase in funds, both at the district level and by our own PTO!
- Discussion included how the funds we raise relate to the district budget cuts, especially those items that fall into the 3 critical pillars of which the OCC helps fill almost 40%. Clear messaging to parents in the Fall will be important.

9.	**School Board Update**	**Sherwin Chen**

- You're not going to see lower spending across the district - we're spending less in some areas in order to spend more in others; to provide the same level of services while being more efficient (e.g. reductions to staff in the district offices).
- In January the Superintendent presented overall ideas for the next 3 years. In February the Superintendent presented a revised list for next year alone, which the Board has greenlit - will be about $1.2M in cuts for next year.
- Student-facing cuts for Year 1 (next year):
    - World Language program: confirmed.
    - Field Trips: budget is being reduced by 50%, but we've been consistently underspending on the budget anyway so this cut is right-sizing the budget and focused on preserving the quality and consistency of the experiences across schools and grades.
    - Spanish Immersion Interns: hard to determine who would handle the logistics of that program without the World Language staff; Superintendent is looking at this one as parents have communicated they'd like to keep it.
- Proposed cuts for Year 2:
    - 5th grade instrumental program will be preserved.
    - Considerations regarding Aides and Library will be focused on restructuring, not eliminating.

10.	**Acting Principal's Report**	**Gina Watkins**

- Regarding police activity on campus at carline during arrival this morning: "We were supporting a situation between adults that did not involve students. School is proceeding on a normal schedule, and our day is progressing as usual."
- Our staff and teachers have helped so much with the transition from Principal Burns to Acting Principal Watkins - thank you!
- Astronomy Night was such a highlight experience - seeing the Moon and Jupiter. Such a special event that was such a positive community experience - thank you, Allison.

- The Safe Routes team and our new Student Patroller program has been so successful this year.
- Behavior issues at Encinal: kids are playing more roughly during ball sports at Recess and using negative language, also physical behavior problems are elevated. Doing things to address:
    - Instead of putting in an Assistant Principal in place to replace Watkins, we have Counselor Lin to partner with existing Counselor and Psychologist. Behavior issues are loosely assessed by tier: tier 1 is handled by the teacher in the classroom, tier 2 needs a step up and maybe a behavior plan for a student, tier 3 has a very unique plan for the student with parents coming in and potentially co-signing the plan.
    - We focus first on "Preventative Actions" (e.g. school rules - use kind words, hands/body to self, listed to adults, and respect school property) and then "Restorative Practices" where kids learn why they did what was wrong, make it right with who was wronged, and have natural consequences (e.g. missing a choice such as ball sports at Recess).
    - Concern regarding unkind language in 5th grade - hate speech that comes to admin is also sent to the Superintendent.. Counselors going into classrooms are giving presentations in classrooms, starting at 5th grade ("hate speech") and moving down to 3rd ("unkind language").
    - Admin is hearing from teachers that they are seeing bigger behavioral challenges in the classroom than they've seen before - a pattern country-wide (potentially due to effects of COVID and technology-use).
    - The superintendent has created a task force that includes many Encinal teachers who have met after school, led by Superintendent and Jammie Behrendt (Associate Superintendent of Educational Services) and are putting together standard approaches to address the increase in behavioral problems that go beyond the tools teachers are already using in the classroom.
    - An idea for an addition to the PTO weekly newsletter was discussed: sharing what they're doing at school to address the problem and what parents can communicate at home. General idea to spotlight SEL action on campus on a weekly basis.
- Professional Development on Monday focused on teaching multi-language learners.
- Challenges regarding the many different drop off times, recesses, and pick-ups that require significant amounts of staff supervision. 3 bell schedule currently (not including TK). Considering a 1 bell schedule (K-5th grade arrive at the same time and depart at the same time). This is what Oak Knoll and Laurel both have. Encinal has particular challenges regarding parking, traffic patterns, and lack of side walks to consider. Have collected data with Adrian Silva (Safe Routes) regarding length of carline and it was not impacted at single pick-up.

11.	**Adjourn**	**Eleanor de Jong**

- The meeting adjourned at 10: 22 am
- The next scheduled meeting of the Encinal Executive Board is scheduled for March 19, 2026 at 8:45 am in the ENspire Lab at Encinal School.
- No attachments to these minutes.

Eleanor de Jong
Substitute Recording Secretary of the

Meeting