



PASADENA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



PUSD Equity-Centered Facility Plan Update

ELIOT ARTS MAGNET ACADEMY INTERIM COMMUNITY PRIORITIES REPORT

School Site Committee Listening Sessions / Workshop

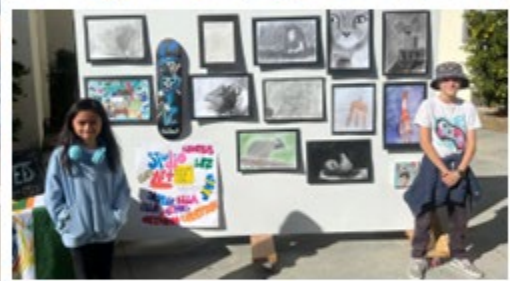
May 27, 2026 | 3:30 pm – 5:30 pm

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Introduction

Twelve Eliot Arts Magnet Academy community members shared insights during the first School Site Committee listening session on May 27, 2026. Participants included parents, staff, school leadership, a librarian, a PE teacher, a magnet grant coordinator, a facility director, and a school community advocate. They discussed what made the past Eliot campus unique, what is not working for students, and what future facility and planning decisions should protect, recover, or improve.

Across the session, participants described Eliot as more than a campus. They described an arts-centered, historically rooted school community where students feel happy, confident, expressive, and able to be themselves. Participants repeatedly connected the physical campus to identity: murals, performance spaces, art rooms, music rooms, outdoor areas, wide hallways, the library, the auditorium, the gym, and even small “Easter eggs” (hidden moments of art, creativity, and campus identity that students could discover over time) helped students know where they were, what the school valued, and how they belonged. The central message is that future improvements should not simply replace buildings. They should rebuild and expand the conditions that made Eliot feel like a second home: creative expression, student choice, historical continuity, inclusive support, green outdoor life, public-facing performance, and spaces where **“everybody gets to be who they are.”**



What We Heard

Participants describe Eliot's greatest strength as a community that survives beyond any single physical location, but they also made clear that space matters deeply. One participant said Eliot's uniqueness comes from the **"community that it's built, regardless of where that community is,"** while others described students as happy, confident, creative, expressive, and authentic. The past campus helped make that identity visible. Students remembered tours where they saw dance and drama, felt they could express themselves, and encountered murals, paintings, and hidden campus details that made the school feel alive. Staff and parents described a historic campus with wide-open spaces, beautiful murals, high ceilings, and a sense of continuity with Altadena. The planning implication is that the future Eliot should not treat history, art, and belonging as decorative layers added after design decisions are made. They are part of the school's core infrastructure for identity, navigation, memory, and trust.

"Our campus had something for everyone, and everyone had a part of the campus: the auditorium, black box theater, library, art gallery, music space, dance room, PE, and outdoor space."

Participants emphasized that Eliot's **ARTS PROGRAM** requires a connected ecosystem of spaces, not just a general commitment to arts education. They remembered an auditorium, black box theater, library, art gallery, music spaces, a dance room, PE areas, outdoor performance locations, a sewing room, and space for ceramics, including a kiln. They also described current or future needs for larger dance and drama spaces, stage expansion, upgraded sound and lighting, acoustics, air conditioning, dressing rooms, restrooms, recording capacity, a costume design shop, sewing tables, art sinks, science sinks, outlets, storage, gallery space, and a kiln. These details matter because the arts at Eliot are not isolated electives; they are how students build confidence, explore identity, practice public-facing work, and connect academics to making, performing, producing, and reflecting. Future planning should therefore design arts spaces as an integrated production pathway: places to practice, perform, build, store, display, record, gather, and move between disciplines.

Participants also described Eliot students as multi-talented middle schoolers who need room to try on different identities. Students were described as artists, athletes, dancers, actors, musicians, makers, and students still discovering who they want to become. One participant said students are **"artists, but they're also multi-talented,"** and others described athletes who also perform in plays, dancers who play soccer, and students interested in 3D printing, costume design, stage tech, and maker spaces. This matters developmentally. Participants repeatedly said middle school students are still figuring out their style, interests, confidence, and future pathways. Arts spaces should not

narrow students into a single identity; they should help students move across identities. As one participant put it, the beauty of an art school is that students do not have to become artists; the arts give them **“another way to be themselves.”** Put simply, Eliot’s future campus should help students find themselves by giving them access to more than one kind of space.

“It is great to have third spaces where students can get regulated, like places where they know they can go, feel safe and supported, and bring their whole selves to school.”

ATHLETICS, MOVEMENT, AND OUTDOOR LIFE were described as equally important to Eliot’s identity. Participants valued that PE was central at the past campus rather than pushed to the edge. The gym, blacktop, field, and outdoor spaces allowed PE to feel connected to the school community. Participants also named the importance of fields, the track, football, a ball checkout room, basketball, soccer, walking clubs, and designated areas where students are not trying to play **“in the corner of something else.”** At the same time, they described the need for more green space, shade, and outdoor eating areas that do not overheat. The current grass and picnic table area was described as healthy and grounding, with students organically sitting on the grass, taking off their shoes, and choosing different levels of activity. **Future planning should treat outdoor space as social-emotional, athletic, environmental, and community infrastructure at once:** shaded places to eat, green places to regulate, athletic places to move, and outdoor stages or amphitheater areas where students can perform and be seen.

STUDENT SUPPORT SPACES emerged as another major priority. Participants described the need for counseling offices that protect privacy without making students feel isolated or exposed. One participant said counseling spaces should feel somewhat protected, so students are not in the center of everything or worried about peers asking why they are going to counseling. Another participant noted that this generation values mental health and described how the current student services building works well because it is not only a counseling space; students also go there for resources, clothing, problem-solving, and connection. This reduces stigma and creates options for students to meet inside, outside, on a bench, or somewhere they feel comfortable. Participants also described sensory supports, including OT (Occupational Therapy). resources, swings, tactile tools, calming rooms, sensory gardens, and classroom calming corners. The implication is not simply to create one wellness room. Eliot needs a network of regulated, supervised, flexible support spaces where students can access counseling, sensory input, quiet, movement, and trusted adults without feeling singled out.

INCLUSION was especially important for families of students with disabilities. Participants expressed deep gratitude for the care, conscientiousness, aides, therapists, and classroom support their children have received. They also described needs that go beyond classrooms: behavior intervention support, gathering space for families of students in special education, accessible pathways, accessible dressing rooms, elevators, ramps, and multiple access points across campus. One parent

described the difficulty of building relationships with other families when children are nonverbal or when parents do not share a language; a **family gathering space** would allow parents to meet one another, connect children socially, and reduce isolation. **Future design should therefore consider inclusion at multiple scales:** individual support rooms, sensory and regulation areas, accessible arts and performance spaces, family gathering spaces, and circulation that allows all students and families to participate without workarounds.

Participants repeatedly named **BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE** as essential to program quality. Lockers and storage were not described as minor conveniences. Middle school students need places for books, costumes, shoes, sports equipment, and personal materials. Arts, robotics, CTE, painting, ceramics, performance, and classroom instruction all depend on materials being accessible, organized, and protected. Staff also described the importance of classroom storage, flexible room layouts, small-group areas, sinks, outlets, natural light, and places for staff to take a breath or eat lunch outside the classroom. Several operational issues carry safety implications as well: the gym lacked air conditioning and an intercom, meaning important announcements could be missed; the dance room can get extremely hot; older restrooms need modernization; and auditorium dressing rooms were described as inaccessible. **These details are not back-of-house concerns.** They determine whether students can learn hands-on, whether staff can stay responsive, whether performances can be produced well, whether emergencies can be communicated, and whether all students can participate with dignity.

“We have had to cancel ceramics because we have no access to a kiln.”

The **PAST CAMPUS** was also valued because it was connected to Altadena’s history and community. Participants spoke with emotion about the library, wood floors, architectural detail, murals, the whale wall, the tower, and the broader loss of historic landmarks after the fire. They did not ask for the future campus to be a pure replica. Instead, they asked for research, care, and continuity: elements of architectural history, art, culture, and the people of Altadena should be expressed while also meeting contemporary needs. Participants also saw potential for Eliot to serve the broader community through publicly accessible performance, sports, garden, art, gallery, community center, or wellness spaces, possibly with separate entrances, community partnerships, or grant opportunities. **This creates a planning opportunity:** the school can be secure and student-centered while also becoming a visible cultural asset for Altadena.

Finally, participants connected trust in the **PLANNING PROCESS** to communication and continued engagement. One parent said **“erring on the side of more communication”** is better because there is so much media attention and speculation about what will happen to the campus and community. Another participant said surveys can feel limited when none of the available responses match what someone wants to say, and asked for an **“other”** option. Participants also specifically asked to hear from elective teachers, who may know best what is missing in arts and program spaces. For Eliot, community-centered planning should not end with this listening session. It should



continue through over-communication, open-ended feedback, direct engagement with elective teachers and support staff, and clear explanation of how community voice shapes design decisions.

Selected Insights

The following insights were selected from participant discussion because they speak to challenges, assets, and priorities that future facility improvements should address.

“The biggest thing that makes Eliot unique is the **community** that it has built, **regardless of where that community is.**”

“The kids are **happy** here. I want the kids to be in an environment where they are happy and **confident**, and with so much **expressive arts**, that brings something extremely unique.”

“I saw the dance class and drama class, and I saw that you were able to **express yourself**. The campus itself was beautiful, with **murals**, paintings, and little **Easter eggs.**”

“The previous Eliot campus had the **historical aspect**, but it was clean and well maintained. There were wide-open spaces, murals, a kiln, two music rooms, a large dance room, a gym, and classroom spaces conducive to the arts.”

“Our campus had **something for everyone**, and everyone had a part of the campus: the auditorium, black box theater, library, art gallery, music space, dance room, PE, and outdoor space.”

“The students are **unique, talented, creative, expressive, and authentic**. They are able to be their authentic selves and find people who support them.”

"They are artists, but they are also **multi-talented**. They need spaces for athletics, maker work, performing, 3D printing, costume shop, stage tech, sports, and creative work."

"Lockers and space have been hurting. The old lockers were not working for **costumes, shoes, sports equipment**, and books."

"Dance and drama definitely need **space**. Dance needs to jump from one side to the other, and there is **no space**."

"The gym has **no AC**, and there is **no sound system** or intercom, so important announcements and emergencies can be missed."

"Students have started coming to the grass and picnic tables organically. Some sit on the grass, some take off their shoes, and they are **grounding themselves**."

"Shade when eating is really important. Students want to be outside, but not everything black and concrete, because it **heats up**."

"The sinks in science allow students to do labs so learning can be more interactive and hands-on. Art also needs sinks so students can clean materials and reuse them."

"For **sensory support**, it is not a lot of equipment, but a few key things could really help: swings, chairs, tactile tools, and movement that help students regulate and focus."

"It is great to have **third spaces** where students can get regulated, like places where they know they can go, feel safe and supported, and **bring their whole selves to school**."

"We needed more small offices where students could receive counseling support. Sometimes there was no space, so counselors would walk with students if the student was comfortable."

"When you walk in, you need support or a greeting. Accessibility also means ramps, elevators, and different access points so no one feels limited."

"The library was gorgeous: the molding, the wood floors, the attention to detail. The **heart and soul, the history of Altadena**, was represented in that building."

"Students take pride in their spaces. Having the gallery right there is good for practical purposes, but it also fosters a **sense of belonging**."

"As we rebuild Eliot, performance spaces, sports spaces, gardens, and public art spaces could be more publicly accessible. That would **build community buy-in and open grant opportunities**."

"I want to be an actor. Drama and dance help build confidence, but we need more equipment to succeed."

"The spaces allow kids to find their sports, find their arts, and **be who they are**. I hope the school can reflect that and continue."

"My wish is that **everybody gets to be who they are**. Middle school students are still figuring it out, so they need various art spaces and a breadth of electives."

"The beauty of being in an art school is that you do not have to become an artist. The arts give students confidence and another way to be themselves."

"We have had to cancel ceramics because we do not have access to a **kiln**."

"Storage close to classrooms would be helpful. Arts, robotics, CTE, paintbrushes, and materials need to be accessible without crowding the room."

"Spaces where staff can take a breath serve students too, because they allow staff to be more present and responsive."

"**Over-communication** is better, because there is so much in the media about what will happen to the campus and the community."

"Surveys can feel limited when none of the answers are exactly what you wanted. There should always be an **other** option."

