Annual Report

to the community Fall 2026

MENLO PARK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dear Community,

This year MPCSD is "Doing More with What Matters Most." What does this mean? Inspired by Brad Stulberg's book, *The Way of Excellence*, this phrase reminds us that excellence isn't a finish line we cross, it's a practice we return to daily. Excellence is built on consistency, focus, and bringing our authentic strengths to the work we do in service of our students, families, and the community. So "Doing More with What Matters Most" means diving deeper into the vision we share: Educating and empowering our students while embracing childhood and adolescence.



Mr. Lopez's 4th grade class at Oak Knoll was my Superintendent for the Day class this year! We rode the bus to visit MPPD and the City Council Chambers

The MPCSD vision guides all our work. Distilled into its three E's: Educate, Empower, and Embrace, we think of these E's as outlining our path to excellence. We deepen our commitment to knowing every student well and protecting every instructional minute (classroom experience = Educate). We build relationships, clear routines, and a strong sense of belonging at every site (student behavior & belonging = Empower). And, we trust our staff's professional expertise to reach students where they are developmentally, making the most impact on each child's learning journey (ages & stages = Embrace).

As we uphold our commitment to providing the best possible education to the community's children through academics, a sense of belonging, and meeting our students' developmental needs, we also continue the work of improving our physical facilities through Measure U. We are now in the third year of this bond program, and an update is included in this report.

As you can see, there is a lot happening at MPCSD - academically, socially, and physically! We are grateful to the community for its consistent support of all the rewarding work happening at the Early Learning Center, Encinal, Laurel, Oak Knoll, and Hillview Schools.

In partnership,

Kristen Gracia

MPCSD Superintendent

MPCSD FAMILIES INVEST IN THEIR SCHOOLS

Made possible by your donations to the OCC

Like most local districts, Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO) and our education foundation raise funds to support our schools. Every fall, MPCSD parent leaders from each school's PTO and the Menlo Park-Atherton Education Foundation (MPAEF) run an annual fundraiser, the ***One Community Campaign (OCC)***. The OCC funds our PTO budgets and contributes 70% of the MPAEF's grant to the district, which makes up 5% of total district revenues. The OCC asks families to contribute $3,000 per student, one of the lower asks among our district neighbors.

This crucial funding has an outsized impact by supporting smaller class sizes and excellent staff · the elementary specialist program of art, music, PE, and library · Hillview's impressive array of 40 electives · full-time nurses, counselors, and school psychologists at every school · school assemblies · STEM spaces · and community-building events. Sixty percent of district families support the OCC, raising over $4.1M in just the first month of school.

If you'd like to support our public schools as a Friend of the MPAEF, see mpaef.org/friends-of-mpaef

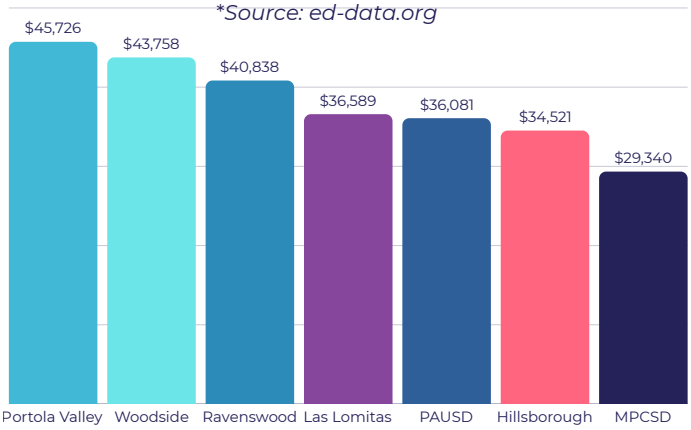
School Funding: Right-Sizing the District Budget

MPCSD is Community Funded, as are about 15% of school districts in California. This means that the per-student funding target determined by the state is met by local property tax dollars, not state funding. Community-funded districts' school funding *is not* dependent on enrollment. MPCSD's enrollment has declined nearly 15% since 2016, and MPCSD is now engaged in right-sizing its staffing and programs, while remaining committed to the Board's compensation philosophy. The enrollment decline also provides the district flexibility when local housing developments add new students over the next few years.

Property taxes fund many local agencies in addition to schools, like fire, water, libraries, city governments, and more. MPCSD receives only about 17% of property taxes collected in our boundaries, funding roughly two thirds of our expenses. The cost of doing business, including salaries and benefits which are 90% of the district's budget, grow every year, especially with the inflation of the last several years. Prop 13 froze tax allocations as they were in the late 1970s, preventing adjustments for growth and leading to MPCSD's lower per-student funding compared to neighboring districts:

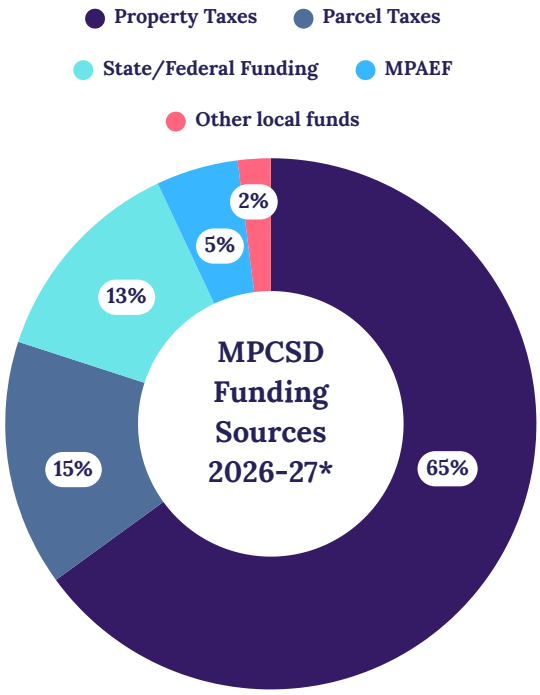
General Fund Revenue per Student (ADA*)
District Comparison, 2024-25

**Source: ed-data.org*



**ADA, or average daily attendance, is defined as the total days of student attendance divided by the total days of instruction, per the California Department of Education. ADA is generally lower than the total enrollment because of students moving, leaving the district, or being absent due to illness. For comparison, MPCSD is using data publicly available at ed-data.org and these funding numbers are based on ADA.*

87% of total revenue is generated locally. Thank you, community!



**Source: MPCSD 2026-27 Budget, Board-adopted June 11, 2026. Scan the code at right to see the full budget overview presentation.*

Funding Our Priorities

MPCSD is in year two of a three-year financial exercise to right size its budget. The process, "Funding Our Priorities" will:

- Align budget to district vision and community priorities
- Realign staffing to enrollment
- Anticipate increased expenditures related to personnel, operations, capital outlay, and services, taking into account cost-of-living adjustments
- Facilitate three or more years of balanced budgets
- Maintain competitive compensation
- Maintain healthy reserve for economic uncertainties

Enrollment Trends

Like districts across the state, MPCSD's enrollment has declined over the last ten years. It peaked at 3,000 students in 2016, and is now 2,554 for 2026-27*. This decline means MPCSD is evaluating staffing needs and making adjustments for future budget sustainability.

MPCSD will preserve the excellent academic and enrichment programs, highly qualified teachers, manageable class sizes, and strong student support services it is known for.

As MPCSD builds for future generations, it remains adaptable to enrollment growth spurred by housing development throughout the district's attendance boundaries.

**CBEDS enrollment, October 2026*

Doing More With What Matters Most:
Bringing Our Vision to Life with its Three E's

EDUCATE



The first "E", Educate, is all about classroom experience. We believe every student should be deeply known and every minute of time with the teacher should be well used. To ensure this, we are:

- learning our students' strengths, interests, and challenges, within the first weeks of school
- protecting instructional minutes with bell-to-bell planning and minimized interruptions
- emphasizing more pencil-to-paper, hands-on learning, including a 50% reduction in device deployment in grades K-2
- making classroom routines consistent
- planning Tier I explicit instruction while prioritizing student needs

EMPOWER



The second "E", Empower, refers to student behavior and belonging. We believe in clear expectations, real relationships, and room for kids to be kids. This means:

- students are greeted at the door by name, every day
- classrooms are creating charters or community agreements together, within the first two weeks of school
- SEL (Social Emotional Learning) lessons, using district curriculum, are part of classrooms' weekly routines
- no-tech blocks are built into daily (for elementary students) or weekly (for middle school students) classroom schedules
- space is intentionally created for students to learn and share their interests, identities, and cultures, including through musicals, specialist classes, and Hillview electives
- purposeful time for unstructured play will be protected

EMBRACE



The third "E", Embrace, respects students' developmental ages and stages. Our professional staff of educators understands child development, trusts their craft, and shares their expertise. Throughout the year, we will:

- provide professional development to reinforce our staff's knowledge
- share developmental milestones and guidance with the parent community
- review our schools' behavior guidelines/framework for consistent and proactive implementation
- provide parent/guardian education using MPCSD's in-house experts on three topics: tech use in MPCSD, student behavior at school and home, and MPCSD's take on AI in education

Building for the Future

Measure U

MENLO PARK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Measure U was passed by 71% in Fall 2024. Its goals are improved safety, security, and modernization. One of the biggest projects, electrifying HVAC with added cooling in all district classrooms, is ahead of schedule, with Laurel's campuses (pictured below middle) upgraded during summer 2026. At Lower Campus, only the buildings that are not being replaced were upgraded. Other projects, completed in the 2025-26 year, include:

- single-mode fiber cabling replacement districtwide
- Verkada security camera installation
- Oak Knoll shade installation (pictured below left) and play surface rep
- Hillview PAC flooring repair (pictured below right)

During the 2025-26 fiscal year, $5.65M was spent, of which $5.37M came from Measure U and $0.28M from Developer Fees. The district ended the year with an available balance of $63.9M, with future bond issuances planned for FY27-28 and FY29-30. Projected spending for the 2026-27 fiscal year is $10.4M, which includes installing electric HVAC at Encinal, Oak Knoll, and Hillview, and completing preparations for the Laurel Lower Campus rebuild.

The Citizens' Bond Oversight Committee issued its first report, certifying that "for FY24-25 the District expended Measure U General Obligation Bond and related funds only on projects approved by voters." Keep track of our progress:



Oak Knoll Shade for Kindergarten Lunch Area



Laurel Upper Campus HVAC Electrification



Hillview PAC Floor Repair

The Bond's biggest project, rebuildling Laurel School's Lower Campus, is making progress and is on track for ground-breaking by the end of 2027.

- Design development is complete. Pictured at right is a rendering of the new buildings, which will house administration, classrooms, the library, and new multiuse space.
- Stormwater and soil testing are complete.
- CEQA exemption has been filed.
- Planning for the impact of construction on programming and operations is underway.



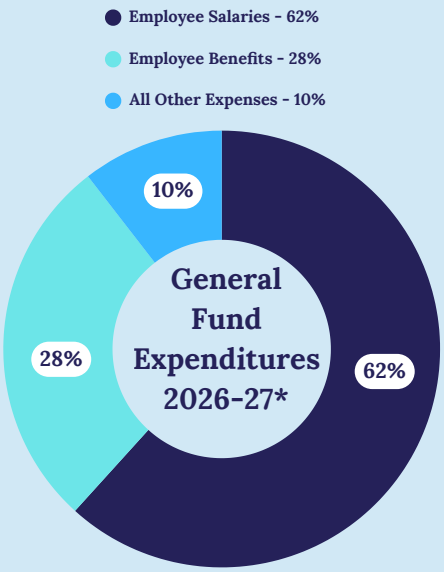
Laurel Lower Campus New Construction Rendering

MPCSD Staff, the Engine of the District

MPCSD's most important resource is its incredible staff! Outstanding teachers, counselors, principals, nurses, classroom aides and paraeducators, bus drivers, tech and facilities maintenance staff, school front office teams, yard duties, and every other member of our team work to deliver on MPCSD's vision to educate and empower students while embracing childhood and adolescence.

The district's investment in its people is apparent through its budget, which is 90% dedicated to salary and benefits. With non-personnel expenses at only 10%, our operations are extremely efficient.

MPCSD's School Board has publicly committed - through its Teacher and Staff Compensation Philosophies - to competitive pay for teachers and non-teaching staff, knowing that the most critical component of student success is a highly effective teacher. This commitment helps MPCSD retain 94% of its staff.



Source: MPCSD 2026-27 Budget, Board-adopted June 11, 2026.

MPCSD People by the Numbers



Teachers, Counselors & Psychologists



Student-Facing Support Staff



Tech & Facilities Support Staff



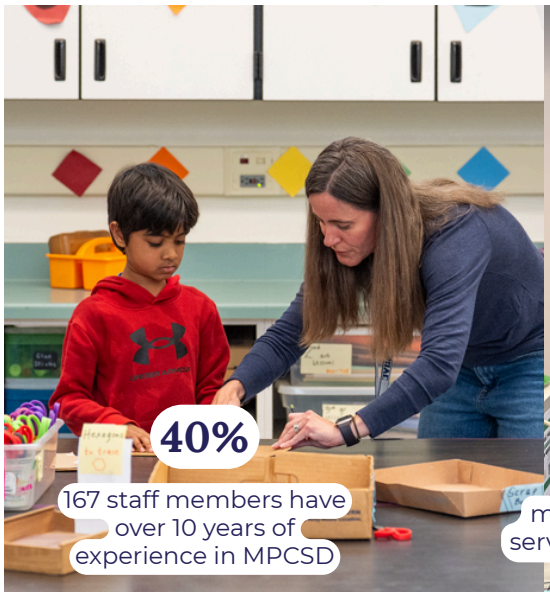
School Leaders



District Administrators



Experience Lives Here







Community Engagement







MPCSD invites you to connect with us.
School Board meetings are open with in-person or remote attendance options.
Meeting schedule, agendas, and Zoom details are available at mpcsd.org.

MPCSD reaches the community in partnership with Safeway Pharmacy to offer **vaccine clinics** (pictured left), at the **Menlo Park Farmers Market** (pictured center left), at the MPAEF's annual **Schoolhouse Rocks Run and Festival** (pictured right), through our parent education **Speaker Series** (pictured center right at an event featuring MPCSD staff members in October 2025), and more. We look forward to seeing you around town!

To subscribe to our newsletter, **Community Matters Quarterly**, and also receive notices about special events, use the "Join a District Email List" link at mpcsd.org

MENLO PARK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Early Learning Center

Early Learning Center
Chana Stewart, Director
Nurturing young children's curiosity, sense of wonder, belonging, and deep engagement with the world around them.

ENCINAL SCHOOL

Encinal Elementary School
Trisha Lee, Principal
We educate, nurture, and inspire all voices to contribute to a better world.

LAUREL SCHOOL
Confident, Passionate & Involved

Laurel Elementary School
Linda Creighton, Principal, Lower Campus
Alicia Heneghan, Principal, Upper Campus
We are confident students, passionate teachers, and an involved community.

OAK KNOLL SCHOOL
OTTERS

Oak Knoll Elementary School
Alicia Payton-Miyazaki, Principal
Every child an exemplary scholar, a valued friend, and a courageous citizen.

HILLVIEW
MIDDLE SCHOOL

Hillview Middle School
Danielle O'Brien, Principal
Creating a middle school where all students, staff, and families feel valued, connected, and inspired.

District Leaders: Kristen Gracia, Superintendent • Jammie Behrendt, Associate Superintendent
Stephanie Sheridan, Assistant Superintendent • Jackie Chen, Chief Business Officer

BOARD OF EDUCATION: SHERWIN CHEN • SCOTT SAYWELL • JED SCOLNICK • FRANCESCA SEGRÈ • JOSH SPIRA
MPCSD's School Board has three open seats in the November 2026 election. Board composition will change in December 2026.

EDUCATING AND EMPOWERING STUDENTS WHILE EMBRACING CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE.

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WWW.MPCSD.ORG

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