

# Let's Talk March 2026

## Topic: DISTRICT

1. This is a question that was asked at Let's Talk last fall: Is there still a Superintendent's Bond Subcommittee? Who decides which projects will be funded with the bond money and in what order the projects will be done? (Oscar)

This is the Superintendent's Bond Subcommittee, which is addressing the highest-priority needs based on the 2023 Eastman Perkins Study.

*Does this committee still exist, and who is on it?*

2. Can you share the document you referred to at the last Let's Talk that shows the legal fees the district has been paying? (Jason)

This is what was presented to the Board on February 5, 2026: [Legal Fees Year-to-Date Presentation - Fiscal Year 2025-2026](#)

3. Why does it take the District so long to cash our checks? Can you fix this? When can you fix this? (Jason)

Checks are received on an ongoing basis and are currently deposited weekly. That said, we recognize there may be delays within that process that need to be addressed. Currently, District staff are reviewing various workflows. For example, specific to this case, from when checks are received to when they are deposited. The goal is to identify any inefficiencies or bottlenecks occurring.

As any issues are identified, District staff will address them immediately.

4. How often are the auditorium curtains cleaned and fireproofed? If it hasn't been scheduled recently, can it be scheduled for all schools? Is this something that bond money can be used to address? (Peggy)

I am not aware of any scheduled cleaning of auditorium curtains; that would be a question best directed to the Facilities Department. All stage curtains are labeled with the expiration date for the required fire-retardant treatment.

Districtwide replacement of school stage curtains took place between 2006 and 2008, funded through the Arts & Music and Arts & Physical Education Block Grants.

## **Topic: Fundraising Committees (Jason)**

1. We have had what is essentially a breakdown of the District management of District-controlled Fundraising Committees this year. I absolutely acknowledge that we are not a priority while the District wades through troubled waters; however, we are reaching a breaking point that will result in the experiences for students and funding streams for those experiences being interrupted.

I have a few questions relating to the functioning of FC's:

- If we are a committee, who exactly are we a committee of? I assume the school District is a nonprofit, but clarity is needed.
- Are there governing bylaws of the nonprofit? Are we adhering to them? We have no contact information about what we should or shouldn't do.
- Since school sites are not supposed to communicate with FCs to obtain current District-held balances, who can we contact if that's not happening?
- It seems like the District is communicating to the principals as if they are the "chair" of the committee, while most FCs have a president. What is accurate?
- It's been 8 months since the abrupt changes at the start of the school year (and it wasn't great in the years leading up to them), but we are truly at a point where things are going to stop functioning. This needs some attention before we plan (or not!) for next year.

2. Can we get an update on what is being done to address the issues with the fundraising groups? Will they get access to online platforms to raise funds?

District staff is actively assessing operational processes across the District and fundraising groups to determine more efficient, transparent, and secure practices.

A key area of focus is reducing the reliance on cash and checks outside of District systems. To support this, the District is planning to implement a new point-of-sale payment platform called RevTrak. This system will function similarly to tools like FourSquare and will include mobile payment devices, allowing donors to contribute using credit cards and digital wallets such as Apple Pay.

The goal is to provide fundraising groups with access to modern, user-friendly online and mobile payment options that improve accountability and ease of use. We anticipate implementation before the end of the school year and will provide additional guidance and training to fundraising groups as we move forward.

## Topic: GATE (Peter)

The Board shall approve a District plan for gifted and talented education (GATE) which meets criteria established by the State Board of Education for program approval.

(Board Policy 6172)

The Board shall annually review the progress of students enrolled in the District's GATE program and the program's administration using methods identified in the District's GATE plan, and may require modifications to the program as indicated by the results of this review. (5 CCR 3831)

\* Reviews are supposed to be done annually. The last review was done in 2020. \*  
The Gate plan is no longer on the District website. Instructional Services said this is because it is old and needs to be updated. If the plan is still being used, it should be available to parents. If it is not in use, the District is out of compliance with Board policy.

### **Is the district in compliance with Board Policy?**

\* On the Gate Advisory Council - Parent Meetings page, there are no presentations posted for the current school year. **Have there been any parent education presentations this year? If so, how many and on what topics? If you had them, why have you stopped recording and posting them?**

\* When you click on the previous years on the Gate Advisory Council - Parent Meetings page, all of the prior recordings of parent education presentations are no longer there. It looks like they were moved to another section called Presentations. **Is the Parents Meetings page now being used for posting minutes from those meetings? Can those be posted?**

\* The District has been saying that they are working on the Gate program. However, there has been no information about what is happening. **What are the goals? When will a new plan be presented? When does the district want to implement this new plan?**

• On the Contact Page, the Gate coordinators for sites are listed but there is no District Gate Coordinator listed. **Is there a District Gate Coordinator?**

A GATE teacher on a special assignment began work in January 2026 after months of trying to hire someone in July/August 2025. The first priority was to complete GATE testing for third graders, and that was accomplished. The 2nd task is to identify/review what is occurring in the GATE program in our schools. From that identification/review process, we hope to establish the goals/expectations for the GATE program. A survey was administered to all school administrators and GATE teachers to gather their feedback about the GATE program. Over the next two weeks, we are meeting with GATE teachers in a focus group. Part of the review process is to examine other school districts and capture best practices and ideas to rebuild the GATE program. From that, a DRAFT GATE plan will be developed. A group will be pulled together to review/edit the DRAFT plan. Part of the redevelopment process involves redesigning the GATE website. Parent meetings, too, are part of the review process. Multiple communications have been sent to schools, teachers, and families about GATE and the

renewal process. More information will be forthcoming soon.

### **Topic: School Safety (Narineh)**

1. There have been instances at more than one school in our district where parents have reported hearing that there is a student who claimed they might hurt themselves or someone else. The district says that it is following policy by returning these students to their classrooms. Please share with us the policies that the district is following.

From INtervention under BP Reg 5141.52

When a suicide attempt or threat is reported, the principal or designee shall ensure student safety by taking the following actions:

1. Immediately securing medical treatment and/or mental health services as necessary
2. Notifying law enforcement and/or other emergency assistance if a suicidal act is being actively threatened
3. Keeping the student under continuous adult supervision and providing comfort to the student until the parent/guardian and/or appropriate support agent or agency can be contacted and has the opportunity to intervene
4. Removing other students from the immediate area as soon as possible

The principal or designee shall document the incident in writing, including the steps that the school took in response to the suicide attempt or threat.

The Superintendent or designee shall follow up with the parent/guardian and student in a timely manner to provide referrals to appropriate services as needed. If the parent/guardian does not access treatment for the student, the Superintendent or designee may meet with the parent/guardian to identify barriers to treatment and assist the family in providing follow-up care for the student. If follow-up care is still not provided, the Superintendent or designee shall consider whether it is necessary, pursuant to laws for mandated reporters of child neglect, to refer the matter to the local child protective services agency.

For any student returning to school after a mental health crisis, the principal or designee and/or school counselor may meet with the parents/guardians and, if appropriate, with the student to discuss re-entry and appropriate steps to ensure the student's readiness for return to school and determine the need for ongoing support.

We always contact SRO/MHET/BPD Dispatch in these cases. If disciplinary actions are deemed to be appropriate, Ed Code is followed. Administrators take into consideration special circumstances, such as a manifestation of a disability, when determining a course of action.

2. Who or what entity is responsible for auditing school site emergency procedures and the effectiveness (or not) of emergency procedures?

The School Site Council Council or the School Safety Committee come together each year to review and edit the site's safety plan. The SSC is made up of administrator(s), certificated and classified staff, parents and students.

After each drill a brief drill report is submitted to facilities. The form asks sites to share: pull station (if fire drill), time to evacuate, any issues encountered and changes to procedures that need to be made, if any. This gives sites an opportunity to reflect on their practice and adjust, as needed.

The District holds 2 meetings per year (BTA Contract) to share broad areas of discussion as a district and provide opportunities for the stakeholders to share any specific issues related to their respective sites.

<https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Policy/ViewPolicy.aspx?S=36030557&revid=Lvb4PRlqfMzC0UGbwVA9LA==&ptid=amlgTZiB9plushNjl6WXhfiOQ==&secid=&PG=6&IRP=0&isPndg=false>

### **Topic: Elementary (Rebecca)**

1. What is the assembly policy? My friend's school has assemblies, but our school rarely does, and I heard that it is because our Principal doesn't allow assemblies.

School assemblies vary in type: some are site-led (like Student of the Month), while others involve consultants or community partners. Assembly calendars and approaches are specific to each school site. Elementary principals are open to input from parents who wish to request more assemblies or assemblies of a specific type.

2. Is there any data that shows what each of the elementary schools is providing for their students through funding from the fundraising committee or PTA that covers art instruction, such as drama, music, or dance? Does the data include information on which grade levels receive this instruction, how much instruction they receive each week, and the cost to the school? Is there information on which programs each Elementary School is providing with its Prop 28 funds?

(Peggy)

The District maintains records of funds raised by outside sources. Expenditure reports—including those related to arts consultants, materials, supplies, and equipment—are tracked and maintained by the District’s budget department, and all consultants and classified arts instructors are required to have school board approval.

District curriculum in dance, visual arts, theatre, and music is aligned with California State Standards for each grade level. Classroom teachers are responsible for instruction in dance, visual arts, and theatre. The elementary music program, however, is provided to every student in grades TK–5 by credentialed music teachers.

Unlike other art forms, music instruction requires a level of specialized expertise that cannot be fully addressed through general professional development. For that reason, credentialed music teachers deliver regularly scheduled instruction to all elementary students for 30 minutes per week.

Instructional minutes are not mandated for dance, theatre, or visual arts. Instead, these subjects are integrated throughout the instructional day and may also be taught as discrete lessons, depending on site-based planning and instructional priorities.

Because of its structure and staffing model, the District can quantify both the cost and instructional time for elementary music instruction.

The District is also responsible for annual reporting on expenditures related to Proposition 28 (Arts and Music in Schools Funding). Data on staffing allocations and discretionary spending are available by school site and compiled into the District’s required annual and triennial reports submitted to the California Department of Education.

### 3. Why is arts education so uneven across the elementary schools?

**(Peggy)**

The District provides equal access to elementary music instruction at every school. In addition, professional development in arts instructional strategies—both integrated and discipline-specific—is offered annually. Participation in arts professional development is voluntary for teachers, and substitute coverage is provided through grant funding.

District curriculum in visual arts, theatre, and dance is also provided for every grade level.

At the same time, our teachers and school communities are as individual as the

students they serve. As in any district, teachers come from a wide range of backgrounds and bring different strengths and experiences to their practice. That can influence which art forms may appear stronger at one site than another. This should not be interpreted as inequity. When one site offers programming, another does not, it is typically because of an identified need, interest, or area of strength within that school community. All teachers have access to professional development, arts resources, and district curriculum.

Principals and staff work together to determine which art forms will be supported through teaching artists and how Proposition 28 funds will be allocated. By law, those decisions are made at the school-site level and are not mandated by the District. The Director of Arts and CTE provides guidance, grant support, and planning assistance to all elementary and secondary schools.

It is essential that the focus remain on access, not sameness. Equity does not mean every school receives an identical program in identical form. In fact, moving toward a “the same for everyone” approach would not create equity; it would reduce responsiveness to student and site needs and push us backward toward the days when arts opportunities depended largely on a school community’s ability to raise private funds.

We recognize that some schools have greater fundraising capacity than others. Regardless of what is or isn't provided universally, schools with stronger fundraising communities will always be able to raise more. That is neither realistic nor appropriate for the district to control. Our responsibility—and our success—has been in ensuring that every school and every student has access to arts education.

The goal is not to have identical programming at every school. The goal is guaranteed access for every student. That is the standard the district has worked hard to establish, and it is a significant shift from the inequitable “have and have-not” system that existed in the past.

4. What communication occurs between primary educators and secondary educators to determine what the secondary schools want the students to know before they arrive? Not just in Math, English, Science, Social Studies, but also in drama, music, etc.

**(Peggy)**

Visual, Performing, and Media Arts teachers meet annually to communicate and align their curricula.

Teachers from TK-12 collaborate on VAPAM curriculum updates as needed (changes to California State Standards; increases or decreases in instructional minutes; integration with textbook adoptions, etc.).

### **Topic: Elementary Music (Peter, Rebecca, Peggy)**

1. Every Elementary School has ukuleles to be used as part of the Elementary music program. I heard that some elementary schools have never used theirs. How many elementary schools fall into that category? Why are the district music teachers not teaching the ukuleles? For schools that are using the ukuleles, how many weeks of instruction do students get? Which grades are learning to play the ukuleles?

This is highly unlikely. Ukuleles are included in the 4th- and 5th-grade curriculum and taught as a unit of study during the second semester at all elementary schools.

I would recommend that the parent follow up directly with the original source of this information and ask for clarification or substantiation. This can be done by scheduling a conversation with the school's elementary music teacher and/or the site principal.

2. The elementary music program costs over half a million dollars. It has credentialed music teachers. It should be an excellent program. Last year the superintendent said that he assumed the kids were learning base clef, treble clef, middle C, families of instruments like percussion, brass, woodwinds, strings. The only kids that learn this are the ones going to the schools where the fundraising committees are paying for additional music instruction. The district program seems to focus on clapping rhythms and singing with the teacher. Am I correct? If they learn more, what are they learning? Please don't refer me to the standards or tell me to talk to my music teacher. Please share what students should learn after 6 years of music education through BUSD? What are the district's expectations? How is the district following up to see if these expectations are being met?

The expectation of the elementary music program is to ensure that every student has access to standards-based, sequential music instruction. The goal is not uniformity in outcomes, but equity in opportunity—ensuring all students receive a high-quality music education regardless of their school site or family resources.

Prior to the implementation of the districtwide elementary music program in 2007, access to music instruction was inconsistent. Students enrolled in secondary music courses were predominantly from schools where parent fundraising supported music opportunities (e.g., Jefferson, Roosevelt, Bret Harte, Edison, Emerson). In contrast, students from schools in

lower-socioeconomic areas (e.g., Washington, Providencia, Miller, Disney) often had no access to music instruction, as reflected in lower enrollment in secondary music programs.

BUSD's commitment to universal access has led to a measurable impact. Enrollment among historically underserved student populations has increased, every elementary school has been recognized by the California Department of Education as an Exemplary Arts School, and the district has seen gains in both student attendance and academic performance since the program's inception.

By the end of each year, students demonstrate growth in foundational music skills aligned to California State Standards. However, with instruction provided once per week, the goal is not mastery. The focus is on equitable access, skill development, and fostering a lifelong connection to music.

The total cost of the elementary music program, including credentialed music teachers, exceeds \$500,000 annually, with the majority of funding supported through Proposition 28 (Arts and Music in Schools Funding) and Film LA funds.