

Phoebe A Hearst Elementary School
Parent Teacher Organization

PTO Meeting (Open)
January 14th, 2026
PHE Cafeteria - 6 pm



Attendance:

Present:

President: Erica Clayton

Vice President: Lorry Marvin

Secretary: Nichole St. Germain

Treasurer: Anastasia Dolotov

Co Treasurer: Denae Pruner

Principal: Brooke Fahey

Teacher representative: Mrs. Chasko

Communications: Amanda Panton

Special Events Coordinator: Kerry Sokol

Parliamentarian: Isaac Gonzalez

Garden Chair: Melissa Miller

Fundraising Coordinator - Fonda Trimble

Charity Drive Priya Vij

Members at Large: Rachel Connor, Jason

Hechtkopf, Mina Tahai, and Carolyn Chu

Our Organizations Agreements: Individuals agree to be respectful of others, engage in collaboration and communication, and listen to who is speaking without interrupting. Because this meeting will be short and focused, please keep dialogue on topic and brief.

Call to Order - President called the meeting to order at 6:08pm

- **Approval of Draft Agenda:** Melissa motioned, Lorry seconded. Ayes carried the vote.
- **President Report:** Erica Clayton
 - Welcome & Introductions: Welcome everyone, and thank you for being here. January is our Gate Meeting, and I want to start by sharing a few reflections. This is my tenth year as a parent in this community, and while that sounds like a long time, it truly doesn't

feel that way. I'll be finishing my leadership role next year, and I just want to say how privileged I am to serve on this board and be part of this community and all the ways it has supported my family. When I think about Phoebe, what stands out most is the level of involvement. We are truly a school of destination—and that's because of this community and the values we hold. It's because of how we show up for one another, and the time, effort, and funds we invest to create the best possible experience for our kids.

- General Updates:

- Art Program Update:

- I want to speak openly about what we learned regarding the art program. One of our core values as a PTO is transparency. A few years ago, when we rewrote our bylaws, transparency came up again and again as something deeply important to this community and to this board. Over the past months, the executive board has been working with the district to explore options for an art educator, with the goal of ensuring that any art program we provide is sustainable, equitable, meaningful, and robust, not just this year, but well into the future.
 - As we worked through this process, we learned that staffing models are far more complex than we initially understood, particularly with potential shared staffing. We asked deeper questions and requested clearer, itemized cost information. Before we could responsibly move forward, we realized more conversation and clarification were needed.
 - As a board, we take financial oversight very seriously. We have a fantastic treasurer team, and together we work closely with the district. We do not move forward without written assurances and itemized information. The funds you donate and the money we raise as a community deserve that level of care. Every dollar donated is used responsibly and transparently, with the goal of benefiting all students in this community.
 - Tonight's update is not the end of this conversation. We will continue to seek clarity, work collaboratively with the district, and ensure that any decision made is educationally sound and fiscally responsible. We are committed to ongoing

communication and to providing the highest level of transparency possible. Thank you for your involvement, whether that's attending meetings, volunteering, or simply being here tonight.

Getting Involved in Our Community:

- There are so many ways to participate in the PTO, at many different levels. One area where we could really use support is our website, so if you have a technical bone in your body, please reach out.
 - On the PTO website, if you click "How to Get Involved," you'll find many opportunities: Helping at events, making copies, supporting the Harvest Festival, event clean-up, volunteering in the library, and more. That's actually how I started, putting books away in the library with Ms. Desiree.
 - We have multiple events throughout the year, each supported by committees that make them possible. We truly want you to join us, not just as volunteers, but as leaders.
 - This is my last year in a leadership role, and we need someone to step up. If you are interested in joining the board, please reach out through the website. We would love for you to be a part of our efforts and our leadership team.
 - You'll also see a brief presentation on the "How to Get Involved" page, which walks through all the ways the PTO supports the community and how we partner with the school site. It's a wonderful tool to help you find the right fit.
- **Principal Report:** Brooke Fahey: I want to acknowledge the frustration around arts and share that I spent over three hours today advocating for our students. I came to this school because it educates the whole child, and that remains my commitment. I am currently working with the district on the budget and timeline. Once we receive final clarity, we will know how to move forward. At this time, we have been approved for three artist residencies, each serving one classroom, one residency artist per classroom. We have decided to prioritize kindergarten, and although we have four classes, we will be offering dance and movement to all of our kindergarten students for 10 weeks. We are moving forward with these artist residencies.

- **Treasurer Report:** Anastasia Dolotov/Denae Pruner - I'm Anastasia, parent of a 2nd grader and a future Dragon, and Denae is my partner in all things finance.
 - Our projected income and expenses are both \$271k, with a goal of ending the year at zero, as we are a nonprofit. We did roll over \$32k from last year, primarily intended for art and music.
 - This year's operating income is \$232k, and we also have \$169k in invested funds (3 different maturity dates and interest rates) so we don't start from zero. This allows us to cover expenses in July and August.
 - Income Breakdown:
 - Jog-A-Thon: 48.7% (\$128k). Thank you to Amanda and the team.
 - The Event: 21%.
 - 2024-2025 Rollover Funds: 12.5%.
 - Grants: 5.5%. We receive \$15k annually due to a grant opportunity. If you hear of any potential grant opportunities, please reach out.
 - Dividends: 2.3%. We earned barely \$100 dollars last year in dividends so we have seen a large increase with our dividends this year.
 - Social Events: 2.1%. We offset costs by selling treats at the events.
 - Student Activities: 0.8% (\$2k). Our students sold 4,000 Boo Grams at \$0.50 each to offset expenses!
 - Small Fundraising: 2.8% (\$7k). Dine and donate, Kona Ice, Farm Fresh To You, See's Candy, Ornaments, Clothing Swap, and more.
 - Other Donations: 1.9% (\$5k). Small businesses and families donate to specific areas such as P.E., garden, and classroom support.
 - Expense Breakdown:
 - Jog-A-Thon: 10.3%. You have to spend money to make money (swag, field set up, etc).
 - The Event: 9.9%.
 - Social Events: 9.4%.
 - Sixth Grade Promotion: 4.8%.
 - Campus Improvement: 3.7%.
 - Admin/Operations: 2.9%.

- Field Trips & Buses: 16.5% (\$42.5k).
- Classroom Enrichment: 6.5% (\$17k).
- Student Needs & Activities: 4.4%.
- Art: 15.1% (\$39k).
- Music: 13.9% (\$36k).
- Garden: 1.4% (\$3.5k).
- STEM: 1.2% (\$3k).
- Biggest Concern: Art & Prop 28:
 - Prop 28 funds are allocated by the state based on enrollment.
 - Our first-year allocation was \$81k, expiring this June.
 - We can see that only \$15k has been spent, but the district has not yet provided full transparency on where funds are held or how they can be used.
 - As of today, PTO funds cannot be used to fund artist residencies that bring in a program, which was not communicated earlier.
 - A 2.5-day staffing model costs ~\$95k; a 2-day model costs ~\$63k, and we currently only have ~\$39k available.
 - We currently have two pots of money: PTO-raised funds and Prop 28 funds. Our bylaws only allow PTO funds to be spent during the school day for educational purposes.
 - We will continue working with Mrs. Fahey and the district to get clear answers about Prop 28 funds, especially since there may be up to \$250k, over three years, that we risk losing if not properly allocated.
- Discussion and Q&A:
 - Kinder will receive dance and movement; we are also exploring theater and asking for 21 additional artist residencies. Our number one ask is for teachers to be here teaching music and art.
 - There is a shortage of credentialed art and music teachers, but at the elementary level, credentialed multiple-subject teachers may be hired.
 - PTO funds can support cultural events, but not a person bringing in a program. It takes away from our labor positions.
 - Transparency is a priority. Please research Prop 28, ask questions, and stay engaged.
 - All PTO meeting minutes, treasurer reports, and the 2025–26 meeting schedule are posted on the PTO website. Thank you

Kari for being patient and kind while we reviewed this information.

- **The Event Team:** Anastasia Dolotov/Kerry Sokol - No report.
- **GATE Presentation:** Kari Lofing - District Coordinator for Gifted Education and Advanced Placement Programs at Sacramento City Unified School District.

 Understanding CogAT in SCUSD for Parents PHE_PTO (2).pdf

- This time of year, the district conducts universal screening to identify students who may benefit from gifted (GATE) services.
- California has shifted away from categorical funding for GATE; previous Education Code language tied to that funding was removed.
- There is currently no protected Education Code guaranteeing GATE services.
- The district worked with the U.S. Department of Education and the Department of Civil Rights to develop an equitable, research-based screening process.
- Universal Screening Process (CogAT): Grades tested: 1st and 3rd grade.
- Assessment: CogAT (Cognitive Abilities Test): Given to all students during the school day. Proctored by teachers. Computer-based. Non-academic (not reading-based). Accommodations available. Available in all major district languages.
- Student Experience: Students often say: “That was easier than I thought,” “That was hard,” or “That didn’t feel like school.” The first-grade test does not require reading. The district intentionally avoids calling it a “test,” referring to it as puzzles to reduce stress. It is inappropriate to prepare or tutor students for the CogAT. Parents were asked not to engage in test prep behaviors.
- Why the CogAT? Designed for classroom use by educators. Provides interpretable results that help identify outliers. Supports instructional planning, not just identification. More informative than a single diagnostic measure.

- Domains Assessed: Verbal, Quantitative, Non-verbal / Spatial. Most students score differently across domains. It is rare for students to score in the 90th percentile in all three. Results give teachers meaningful insight into how students think and learn.
- Test Structure & Timeline: 9 sections, approximately 9–10 minutes each. Teachers ensure devices and students are ready before testing. Testing may be spread out with breaks. Results are compiled alongside additional data.
- Results & Communication: Results shared: Late May/by end of school year. All families receive results, regardless of GATE eligibility. Results are: Viewable by all teachers, uploaded to Infinite Campus in July, and retained permanently by the district (even if families move).
- Identification Criteria: 75th percentile: Considered an outlier. It does not mean they will be identified for gate services, but additional data will be reviewed. Additional data reviewed: i-Ready scores (ELA & Math), teacher input and observations, and multiple “glances” at data from March–May. 90th percentile in all 3 domains: Automatically flagged for GATE services.
- GATE Placement Process: Families receive eligibility letters as early as May. Families have 4 weeks to request placement via Google Form. Placement is determined by a double-blind lottery run by an independent party.
- Lottery Details: Phoebe families are automatically entered into the lottery. Example: 50 eligible students, 44 spots available. Students 1–44 placed. Students 45–50 become waitlist positions 1–6. The second lottery includes all other district families. Families receive one letter stating initial waitlist position. Two cohorts per grade; no expected expansion.
- Services for Students Not Placed in GATE Classes: Students may still be eligible for GATE services without being in a self-contained class. Service models include: Differentiated instruction in general education classrooms. Cluster grouping (5–6 identified students per class). Teachers are informed of student eligibility and expected to

differentiate instruction. Most GATE-identified students remain at neighborhood schools.

○ Discussion:

- Question: In terms of twins and how they are placed in the lottery, is it individually? Answer: Entered individually; no linked placement.
- Question: If waitlisted in 1st grade, do they take the test again? Answer: All students take the test in 1st grade and again in 3rd grade. 3rd-grade testing does not change GATE status or class status, but gives insight to the student now.
- Question: Budget concerns (\$43M deficit / Attorney General settlement), are either of these going to change this process? Answer: Current year funding supports the process. Future years are uncertain. Attorney General matters are outside the presenter's role.
- Question: If a student is identified as Gate in 3rd grade and placed on the waitlist, will their status on the waitlist change? Answer: No class growth in most grades. Minimal movement in 4th grade only.
- Question: If a child is eligible, but not placed (still on the waitlist), do they receive services? Answer: Yes, through differentiated instruction and clustering.
- Question: Risk of GATE program cuts? Answer: No guarantees due to lack of protected Education Code. The program has faced elimination discussions before.
- Question: What are the credentialing requirements for teachers providing Gate instruction? Answer: California does not require a specific GATE credential. The district offers voluntary professional learning.
- Question: Is the district required to administer GATE testing? Answer: No, the state does not mandate it.
- Question: What is differentiated instruction? Answer: Adjusting content, learning process, and student engagement methods.

- Question: Why choose a self-contained GATE class? Answer: Benefits academically advanced outliers. Allows for cohort-based acceleration and deeper pacing. Teachers can move more quickly without constant regrouping.

Adjournment: Thank you Kari for your presentation. Thank you all for coming tonight. The meeting adjourned at 7:38pm.