

# SMB:

**SARATOGA MUSIC  
BOOSTERS**

A 501(c)(3) organization supporting music programs in the Saratoga Union School District and Saratoga High School

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Regular Meeting in-person on January 13, 2026

Attendance: total number of attendees = 21

## Attendees

### Executive Board

Name	Role
Alicia de Fuentes	President
Tista Kapoor	Co-VP Donations
Sneha Melkote	Treasurer/ Pancake Breakfast Treasurer
Tina Pao	Co-Recording Secretary
Srividhya Balakrishnan	Co-Recording Secretary
Josh Rupert	Parliamentarian

### Music Directors

Name	School
Michael Boitz	SHS
Sean Clark	SHS
Shelley Durbin	SHS
Jon Jow	RMS
Isabel McPherson	RMS
Jason Shiuan	SHS

### Booster Members

Name	Role
Richard Aochi	Controller
Dongni Chen	SHS Band / Publicity
Lily Chow	Cookie Dough Co-Chair
Beryl Liu	SHS Band / Publicity
Isabel Oh	Member
Oliver Su	SMB Student Webmaster
Thea Widmer	SMB Webmaster
Amanda Wroblewski	Member

### Other

Name	Role
Heath Rocha	LGSUHSD Superintendent

Alicia calls the meeting to order at **7:05pm**

# Welcome

**Alicia:** I am so happy to see everybody. I hope you all had a restful break and ready to start this new year. Japan, here we go. There's a lot of excitement in the air and we've got good stuff coming down the pipe. November minutes were circulated over the weekend and e-votes. Would you, recording secretaries, like to give us an update of the e-votes please?

**Tina:** Both of the e-votes (SHS 2025-26 Winter Guard Budget and SHS 2026-27 Marching Band Music Show Design Deposit) passed unanimously and circulated as well.

## November Minutes Approval

(presented by Alicia de Fuentes)

**Alicia:** November Minutes was circulated in the meeting minutes over the weekend. Any comments, any corrections?

**Tina Pao** makes a motion to approve the November 2025 SMB meeting minutes, **Sneha Melkote** seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

## Year End Financials

(presented by Sneha Melkote & Alicia de Fuentes)

**Sneha:** We are trying to catch up for November and December as we didn't have a meeting in December.

### November & December Balance Sheet

[November & December Budget vs Actual](#)

### November & December Budget vs Actual:

[November Balance Sheet](#)

[December Balance Sheet](#)

**Sneha:** All the income we've received are for the programs, the trips (Japan, Asta, RMS Asta Symphony and Disney Trip) as well as beneficiary. Other than that, there was not much financial activity. Paying for the programs was one thing that happened over December. The balance sheet shows a lot of money compared to last year because of the Japan Trip. We're receiving it through PayPal, checks and stock donations.

**Josh:** Are the stock donations directly attributable to an individual person going or are they donating those stocks in order to apply to anything?

**Sneha:** It is a donation that can be used for anything.

## **November & December Transaction List**

[November & December Transaction List #1678-1728:](#)

**Tina Pao** makes a motion to approve the November and December Financials and Transactions Lists # 1678-1728 as presented, **Tista Kapoor** seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

## **Pancake Breakfast Update**

(Presented by Lily Chow & Tina Pao)

**Lily:** We are still working on trying to fill a couple of positions. But most of the leads are there. So, we may be needing four more people. The primary thing we want to talk about today is the price increase for the PB ticket. We wanted to hear from the group what your thoughts are?

**Tina:** We really think we should bring the price up because of inflation and we're not sure we're going to get the same amount of donations this year compared to last year. Last year, the sausages were donated. It's not a guarantee for this year either. I think the last time we went through this process was 2020. And I think prior to that point we had not increased prices for a pretty long period of time, so that increase was pretty large. I know there's a lot of feedback from the community with a \$10 increase, I think one of the things we felt is if we increase the price by \$2 a ticket is a lot more palatable to do that every couple of years versus waiting five or seven years to increase it by 2x. And I think inflation has hit everybody in their own household. When we took it to the committee, I think most people in the committee really felt like it was a good idea. But we really wanted to hear from you and get your feedback. It's an uneven number we understand. But I think now that we're making payments at the ticketing through the QR code and with predominantly most of the tickets going through early bird. I don't think it will be as big of an issue.

**Josh:** As someone who's working the desk, we do get people with cash. And so I mean, taking change for 27 while you've got 10 people waiting, that's going to stink so, I don't know.

**Alicia:** What about the thought of the raffle tickets? The raffle tickets have been tending to always give us a deficit. And we have never looked at that.

**Tina:** I think we sell very well there. Part of the reason there's always a deficit is because we spend pretty big amounts of money on prizes. I think if we could make a bigger push to have donations for prizes, it could make a big difference on that end. I think the raffle tickets appeal to a lot of kids.

**Alicia:** I think this is a debate for the committee and we can bring it back here once we come to a decision as a committee. It's sort of putting people in a spot in this meeting that are not in tune with the inner dealings of pancake breakfast affairs.

**Tina:** I think, just for your FYI, no one on the committee was opposed to raising the ticket price. I think the question was really by how much and the split up. And there was a little talk about the

raffles as well. So I think that will be a big topic for our next meeting as well. But I thought it would be useful to hear.

**Josh:** I think we should wait till the Japan trip is in the rear view mirror and raise the price.

**Alicia:** I'm not saying no to the ticket price increase at all. I'm saying let's have this discussion outside. But I'm really tuned into community stresses right now. And I want us to be happy.

**Tina:** But my fear is that we wait. Another five years. And then we want to raise it by \$10. Japan is very costly, a lot of people are going, and that if we don't do it this year, we need to commit to doing it soon. This is why we brought it to the group because I think it is a big decision. It is something that affects our entire community. Thank you for all of your feedback. We will take it.

**Michael:** I really don't know the inner workings of it so well. I just end up buying a bunch of tickets for my neighbors and stuff. I don't know how you got those sausages donated but that was the greatest gift.

**Tina:** Well, we're going to try to do that again this year and if we can get some juice donated that'll be even better. Joyce is taking over purchasing this year so she will work on that.

**Josh:** If we do it next year, there's potentially an opportunity to not just do the two-dollar increment but take it all the way to 30. This is my own personal opinion that when you get to that 27 number, people aren't really going to balk at another three dollars. It certainly makes it feel cleaner when you're transacting with someone. Maybe we could announce it like: 'Hey, just FYI, the cost increases next year.', just to give people a heads up.

**Isabel:** No matter what, the kids when we present it to them, they don't necessarily have a concept of money. You know it's like all you can eat, so that's pretty good and it's like supporting yourself, so you know there's always ways that we talk about it. We can spin whatever you need to to the kids, but the parent interaction is what we see.

**Shelley Durbin:** I will say that, like anything, any messaging we can do that shows the courtesy that we are trying to keep costs down is great. But I will also say, I think you're going to run into people that are like, 25, 27, it's all the same. Why are we nickel and diming something like we're potentially losing money? It's potentially financially irresponsible.

**Josh:** What I distinctly recall is an elderly gentleman who came to me to buy a ticket. And when I told him it was \$25, he's like, 'I'm not doing that at all.', that's sort of guiding my feedback here because I simply remember that gentleman walking off the street, obviously it was a Saratoga resident and kind of had no affiliation to SMB or the music program they're there because they want pancakes and want to support. I think parents are willing to pay \$25, \$27, \$30. But we're trying to make it a community event. I think we need to be mindful that there are people in this community who are on a fixed budget and who do not have the means to support it. So again, just things to consider.

**Michael :** Josh's suggestion This to me sounds like a sweet spot, sounds reasonable to maybe consider doing the \$5 as opposed to the \$2 this year. And then we can prepare people. This is the fundraiser for our program for our kids. At the same time, there's the reality of inflation.

**Josh:** You all do such a good job marketing this to the community at large. But I'm wondering if. Maybe there's an opportunity to get like an early bird. Purchase where you keep that early bird at 25 or maybe that's 27, and then that you know, anyone who's walking up has to pay 30 dollars.

**Alicia:** At the end of the day you are the committee leads so get together with your committee, discuss, decide and then offer the board a follow up with the final plan.

**Tina:** The other thing that I think is interesting is my neighbor attended last year, but she did not eat. So she just wanted to come and listen to the music. She's an alumni parent. Not realizing she was my neighbor, she said, 'I'm actually not eating, so I did not wait for a ticket because I'm not taking a plate, but I'd like to listen to music". So, you're welcome to come and enjoy the music, you may not get to enjoy the pancakes if you don't want to. I think those are the only updates we had for Pancake Breakfast. We just had our first meeting and we will have our second meeting next week.

**Heath:** I am a member of Saratoga Rotary. We had a meeting last night and they wanted to know, and apparently in the past PB was held at Redwood, if we would have students play at the Saratoga Rotary art show? This event takes place over Saturday and Sunday.

**Michael:** Let me work with you on that one because we have a lot of chamber groups and combos. I mean, for some kids, it's a challenging day because we have our event and then they go right into AP testing and stuff that week. But if we give it far enough notice it may work. We have so many kids that have their own chamber ensembles, they really like the opportunity. Things we would need to understand ahead of time if there is a stage or are they playing in a facility.

## SMB Insurance renewal

(Presented by Alicia de Fuentes)

**Alicia :** SMB's insurance will be renewed in February. As a nonprofit supporting schools it's mandatory and required by the schools—to maintain active insurance coverage.

## Creation of Nomination Committee

(Presented by Josh Rupert)

**Josh:** We are preparing for the 26-27 school year. We need to create a nominating committee for our board selections for next year, which would include the director positions but also the other parent positions that we have. The bylaws require at least three people to form the nominating committee. All we've ever had is three people. So last year, it was a little bit difficult to identify three people. I will say this: there's very little work involved with the nominating committee. I do most of it. So, at the end of the day, really, I just need two names. If we don't, then there will be a voluntary pick at some point. But again, there's not really any involvement aside from just being copied emails that I'm going to be sending out. So that's the nominating committee now. The

parliamentarian position will be open. In a lot of situations, we had two people, in case one is missing. The good news is regarding the job descriptions these have been updated and are all online. Very easy to see what they are. You'll see an Excel spreadsheet coming out in the next probably four to six weeks, from me trying to get these positions identified. At a minimum, we have to have our director positions identified. Then we will take a vote in May. I will probably use your personal emails, so just be on the lookout for that over the next four weeks.

## Japan Cultural Exchange update

(Presented by Michael Boitz and Alicia De Fuentes)

**Michael:** I received a major update today with a lot more details. The challenge is that it isn't fully laid out by date and time in the official itinerary yet. The information is in a different format. Mr. Shiuan, if you have it available, we could put it on the screen, though that may not be necessary. The update narrows down several timeframes. One school visit is being changed due to concerns about group size, and a different school has been recommended. We're now in contact with that school. There are several details like this still unfolding. We should be able to send a more complete update to everyone by the end of this week or early next week, once we plug everything into the itinerary and give final approval. Final pricing should also be completed soon. The trip cost will be about \$80–\$100 less than originally listed, which is great news. We also built a financial cushion into the trip. Around April or May, we'll determine if any of that remains unused. As we did in 2022, any excess funds will be returned to families as what we call "meal money." We call it that but families can use it however they like. Last time, that amount was about \$140. It wasn't exactly a nice round number. If we can make it a round number this time, that would certainly help.

We have all flights booked, though I thought everyone had already been assigned to specific flights, and that's not quite finalized yet. For example, some families need to know exact flight times due to conflicts like graduations. I'm behind on this and will work on getting the flight assignments finalized. The deviation deadline is the end of this month. We want to share flight details, as soon as possible. Some flights leave late at night, while others depart the following morning. If that flexibility helps families manage other commitments, we try to accommodate them when possible. We always place students and required chaperones first, then work through individual requests. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't, but we do our best.

**Alicia:** There have been questions in the WhatsApp channel. Often I know the answer, but I still forward them to you so people hear directly from the music directors.

**Michael:** That's helpful. If we don't know the answer yet, it flags what we need to follow up on. Please continue forwarding questions our way.

**Josh:** Are students, chaperones, and shadows all on separate flights, or are they mixed?

**Michael:** In most cases they're separate, but there are a few mixed situations due to seat availability. We ended up with more travelers than anticipated, and the air vendor had to secure additional seats. To keep prices down, our contact purchased additional seats individually rather than through the group desk, which would have raised costs significantly. Mr. Yamada, did this multiple times, and we're very grateful. I'm especially aware of the cost since I'm paying for two of

my own twins and a family member. You may hear a few more Minnesota accents on the trip. Questions are extremely helpful. Please ask whenever something comes to mind. It helps keep us on track. Much of our day is spent working directly with students—preparing for honor band auditions and placement auditions—so questions are often the reminder we need to refocus on logistics.

## Prop 28 Update

(Presented by Jason Shiuan & Alicia de Fuentes)

**Jason:** Each year, Mr. Louie presents a thorough overview of Prop 28 funding, including carryover funds from the prior year and what is available for use. At the Saratoga site, it's been especially smooth because the main stakeholders have remained consistent for the past three years. That continuity has made the process straightforward just to check-in. For next year, we are proposing to continue largely with the status quo. This proposal still needs board approval. From the music program perspective, Prop 28 funds would support 0.2 FTE of Mr. Clark's position and 0.2 FTE of Mrs. Durbin's position. The hope is that Mr. Louie may be able to absorb those portions within existing FTE constraints, which would reduce the amount taken from Prop 28. That determination can't be made yet, so we'll reconvene once more information is available. If that adjustment is possible, a portion of the Prop 28 funding could then be redirected to support another program. Until we know for sure, the plan remains status quo for next year.

## SHS Falcons Calendar Initiative

(Presented by Alicia de Fuentes)

**Alicia:** Every year for as long as I can remember, SHS families receive a red envelope at the start of the school year—usually in July. Inside are forms, donation information, important dates, and details about school programs. It's been a long-standing tradition. But, that may be changing. Mr. Louie has proposed a new, more innovative approach, and I wanted to share the idea with you.

The concept is a **month-by-month calendar booklet** that will replace all the loose collection of papers. Each month would highlight a different organization or booster group, include reminders to donate, and feature a full school calendar with holidays, red and blue days, and key dates. This is still a draft idea—not finalized. For example, one month might highlight the Saratoga High Foundation, another PTSO, and so on. Each group would have a dedicated month. Families would receive a wall calendar, organized month by month, instead of an envelope full of loose papers. The reason this is being considered is cost and efficiency. Last year, the red envelope cost approximately \$371 to produce and mail. The proposed calendar would cost slightly more—approximately \$426 to \$500 total per booster group, including printing and postage. The question is whether we want to participate in this new “Falcons Calendar” concept or continue with the red envelope. The intent would be to phase out the red envelope if most groups opt into the calendar. If the majority prefer to keep the red envelope, then nothing changes.

We're looking for input from SMB before the next booster group meeting. If most booster groups choose the calendar, it would be difficult for SMB not to participate. The specific monthly assignments are not yet set in stone. All groups would be represented across the calendar year.

**Michael:** From experience, when Mr. Louie proposes something, he executes it very well. His ideas tend to be thoughtfully planned and well organized.

**Tina:** From a practical standpoint, this would also move us toward a **paperless model**, using QR codes instead of physical forms.

**Amanda:** That would be nice. One concern with the red envelope is paper waste—I receive more than one because I have 2 kids in HS. Would this calendar be 1 per household?

**Alicia:** The plan would be **one calendar per household**. Some families may want extra calendars and they would pay for the extra but this is still TBD but overall it should be more efficient.

So what I need to report back is the general consensus. From what I'm hearing, there's support for the calendar concept, especially given reduced paper waste and clearer organization. If the majority of booster groups decide against it, we'll stay with the red envelope. But if most groups move forward, SMB would align with that decision.

That's the update. We'll revisit this once feedback from all groups is collected.

## SUSD Alignment of Field Trips

(Presented by Jon Jow, Isabel McPherson & Alicia de Fuentes)

**Jow:** Isabel, Alicia, and I have been in communication with Jean Aldrete at the district office. The district is working to standardize the field trip approval process. Please jump in if I miss anything. For field trips that **do not occur on school days**, the process will remain largely the same as it has been. For example, with the Disney trip, SMB fundraises independently, submits the trip for administrative and board approval, completes district paperwork, and then SMB pays vendors directly. However, for field trips that **occur on school days**—or multi-day trips that include at least one school day—the process is more involved and falls under district jurisdiction. In those cases, fundraising is done through the school, and vendors are paid through the district. Last year's symphony field trip is an example of this, since it occurred on a school day. Donations were fundraised through the district's system rather than SMB. This year, the district is aiming for a more consistent, aligned process. One key takeaway is that starting next school year, for trips like Disney, the district would prefer to **pay vendors directly**, even for non-school-day trips. SMB would then reimburse the district for the exact costs. This is largely for liability and recordkeeping purposes—the district needs to be listed as the vendor of record. SMB would still cover the expenses. That would likely be the main change for trips like Disney.

**Alicia:** To simplify: the district wants clearer visibility into the financial flow of activities. Music directors would still evaluate trip costs and create a budget. Before coming to SMB, the proposal would first go to the on-site principal for review and approval. Once approved, it moves forward to

SMB for budget approval and fundraising. There's no issue with this added oversight—it ensures transparency and alignment. Fundraising would continue as normal, with the understanding that funds raised for music must remain dedicated to music.

As a group, we essentially have **two pathways**:

1. All field trips go fully through the district system (PowerSchool).
2. We continue our traditional SMB process, with added administrative oversight.

The preference seems to be option two—continuing our current approach with SUSD admin approving the budget. There have been many emails on this topic over the past month, and it's understandable that it's still confusing. To clarify, is SMB still able to fundraise while the district pays vendors and SMB reimburses them? What option do you choose?

1. The district collects funds and pays vendors directly.
2. SMB fundraises on behalf of the music program, as we currently do.

In option two, SMB works with the school site and principal to determine total estimated costs before fundraising begins. In that model, either the district bills SMB for actual expenses, or SMB provides a donation check to the school to cover costs.

**Josh:** In practical terms—using the Disney trip as an example—the district would pay individual vendors, and SMB would reimburse the total cost.

**Durbin:** I've been through this exact process in another School district, and it worked smoothly. The district acted as the purchasing agent, which helped manage costs and logistics.

**Alicia:** The primary goal here is district oversight to protect SUSD's interests, not to change our programming.

**McPherson:** Either way, the money ultimately flows through the district—it's just a question of who handles the individual transactions. SMB should continue to be responsible for fundraising, ensuring funds remain dedicated to students and music programs.

**Josh:** There is concern about maintaining program autonomy—for example, ensuring the district doesn't redirect funds or alter long-standing trips like Disney.

**Alicia:**

The district has fiduciary responsibilities, but the intent appears to be support, not control. Option two reflects mostly how we already operate, with the addition of on-site administrative oversight.

**Josh:** Will we be assigned a specific administrator?

**Alicia:** That hasn't been finalized yet, but likely the site principal. Please send additional questions, and we'll continue the discussion as we move forward.

For now, we'll proceed with option two and revisit if new questions come up.

# Music Directors' Reports

Jon Jow

As a general overview, our concerts were really fun this year. For the first time since 2019, we split the concerts into two separate shows—one for band and one for orchestra. In past years, we were consistently exceeding fire code capacity. It's great to have such strong attendance, but it's also great to ensure everyone has a seat. This felt like a bold and successful reimagining of how we organize our concerts. Thank you to everyone who came out to support the students.

Color Guard and Winter Guard are continuing preparations for their spring competitive season. Color Guard will attend CCGC evaluations at Logan High School next Saturday. Winter Percussion is continuing rehearsals and will attend its first NCPA event at Logan in March. This is especially exciting since Winter Percussion is participating for the first time this year, and Color Guard began formal Winter Guard competitions just last year.

We also recently completed our symphony field trip last Friday, which was fantastic. Students attended a San Francisco Symphony performance of *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Student feedback was very positive, including discussions about unique seating behind the stage and observing musicians from a different perspective. This experience is a great lead-in to the Disney trip. It helps students understand how musicians perform with film—using click tracks, timing, and synchronization. On the Disney trip, students will experience this from a musician's perspective, including backstage work and recording, making it a valuable progression in their musical education.

We are now preparing for ASTA and will share more details later. Bands are also working toward performances for CMEA and BC, which occur back-to-back in March and April, as well as the April Disney trip.

Finally, we are hopeful that Jazz Band will be starting up again at Redwood either later this semester or early next fall as we found an instructor. Things are beginning to align to make that possible. Overall, there are many great things happening. No news from Choir.

Isabel McPherson

I can cover the rest of the Redwood update. I'll echo much of what's already been shared. The winter concerts were really nice, and it was great to see that everyone in the audience had a place to sit. I was initially worried we might miss having our traditional large finale, but since we've shifted more of those shared finales to events like the pancake breakfast with the high school in the spring, it feels like a reasonable tradeoff. The finale is fun, but logistically it's always been challenging. If it happens once a year instead of every concert, and in exchange everyone is comfortable, that feels like a good balance. Audience comfort makes a big difference—people are more likely to attend when it's a good experience. As Mr. Jow mentioned, we're continuing preparations for ASTA. Our Advancement Chamber group had a very eye-opening experience

performing some of their repertoire in December. Normally we don't perform December music again, but this year the repertoire is more challenging, so it was a helpful checkpoint. We've already made a lot of progress since then though it has not been much time.

ASTA is coming up at the end of February, right after a week off from school, which will be interesting, but everything is shaping up well. We have our clinic schedule and are hoping students will also have opportunities to hear other groups perform.

The symphony field trip was excellent. One student mentioned that they almost forgot the music was live because it sounded so perfect. That led to a good conversation about live performance and professionalism. The San Francisco Symphony now has musicians speak before the movie performances, encouraging audience members to return for non-film concerts. It's a great way to engage people who don't normally attend symphony performances. It was a long day—we returned close to midnight—but since it wasn't a school night, it worked out. Some students have been singing the music ever since, which has been really fun to see. It was especially meaningful for students who play instruments like viola, where they don't always feel featured. Being able to watch musicians play their same instrument during the film helped them feel represented and excited.

**Jow:** We received several emails from parents sharing how enthusiastic their kids were afterward. It really opened students' eyes—not necessarily toward becoming professional musicians, but toward appreciating the craft and recognizing their own potential.

**McPherson:** We're now shifting focus to auditions between now and February.

We also have students leaving this week for All-State. They'll be out Thursday through Sunday, and the office has been notified that their absences are excused.

At the elementary level, we're switching instruments for fifth grade this week. This is usually a hectic time, but support from the district has made it much smoother. The additional help has been great—especially from someone who understands the program firsthand. That's everything from Redwood.

## Sean Clark

Marching Band design has already begun. We already have the opener, and the design process is underway, even though the season itself hasn't started yet. Thank you for the Evote support—it was great to get that moving.

Even though it's currently winter percussion season, I wanted to start with what's furthest ahead. Winter percussion had two camps over the break and we staged about four and a half minutes of the show—roughly 70%, which is amazing. The ensemble is extremely strong and mature, with the best leadership and rehearsal etiquette we've ever had. This is also the hardest show we've attempted. We have front ensemble performers on the floor, front ensemble dancing, and the goal is that you don't notice who traditionally plays which role. Our prop is finished and will be picked up in a couple of weeks. We have an MLK Day camp coming up, where we'll learn the remainder of the show. Musically, the show is already complete, which puts us far ahead of schedule. Uniforms

and the floor arrived last week, so we'll have all the elements in place before competition season begins on February 1st. Our first competition is the Community Show at James Logan High School. This event has grown significantly—from three groups three years ago, to six last year, and now 13 groups. Last year we had about 1,000 attendees, so we're excited to see how it continues to grow. It's a really special event that brings together high school groups, adult groups, and community members. Students rarely get the chance to watch other ensembles perform, so being able to cheer on competitors and build camaraderie is incredibly meaningful.

The percussion ensemble is also going very well. We're preparing repertoire for Japan and continuing our concert cycle. This year we shifted percussion to its own fifth-period class, which initially made us nervous. However, with fewer combined rehearsals, students have shown increased ownership and accountability. We've actually seen improved quality and musicianship.

Jazz is starting a new concert cycle, including an exchange concert with Los Gatos High School on February 11th. We'll be performing a challenging repertoire that highlights many standout players.

That's my update—busy, exciting, and intense, but in a good way.

## Shelley Durbin

I'll go in chronological order. We had three students participate in the CMEA Bay Section Honor Choir, which includes middle school and ninth graders. Our ninth graders did an excellent job and demonstrated strong leadership.

The winter concert was a great experience. I had the opportunity to collaborate with Jamal for the first time, and it went extremely well. The students enjoyed the collaboration, and we're looking forward to continuing to build that relationship.

After the winter concert, the choir performed singing telegrams across campus—for students, administrators, and staff. It was a great way to build community. Beyond accuracy, we focus heavily on expression and performance. Students are growing in confidence and presentation, not just reading notes on a page.

A small group of singers also performed at a holiday event at a local vineyard. It was a valuable learning experience that required flexibility and adaptability, and the audience response was very positive.

Looking ahead, we have an elective fair performance, Valentine's singing on February 12th, and an increased focus on small group performances to encourage accountability and confidence. I am going to be meeting with Ms. Isola choir teacher from Lynbrook to finalize and nail down repertoire for Japan trip.

We have six students selected for All-State Choir—nearly 20% of our program—which is outstanding.

Our March concert will be a pop show, which offers variety and allows for many different ensemble configurations, including solos and duets. This has historically been a favorite for students.

I also want to commend our Philharmonic String orchestra students. Many entered feeling

discouraged, but they are now thriving, working on Grade 5 repertoire, and building confidence. The class culture is very positive, and their progress has been remarkable.

## Michael Boitz

December concerts went very well, with strong student performances and solid audience attendance. What we are getting from middle school is awesome! We also hosted Chamber Music founded 13 years ago by alumna Jessica Chang, which included chamber music workshops and a side-by-side concert with students.

We welcomed several guest clinicians, including Dr. Lauren Casey-Clyde (Trombone player) and Dr. Mark Laycock, who worked with students across ensembles. These visits provided meaningful professional and educational experiences.

Some All-State students have already left—mostly jazz band and choir students. A few will leave tomorrow afternoon or evening, and the majority will go Thursday morning. CASMEC stands for the California All-State Music Education Conference. It's really the pinnacle weekend for All-State in California. This has been the most competitive year ever for bands and orchestras across the board. It's gotten so large that it's almost becoming untenable, and something probably needs to change. Still, we're very excited to go because it's also a professional development conference.

Sometimes we share the session schedule with students. I sent an email earlier with a link so they could look at sessions we might attend and even suggest ones—like, "Mr. Boitz, you should attend this flute session." It's fun to see their responses. I hadn't done it in years, but Craig Bryant from Albany High reminded me. He shared some of the funny responses he'd gotten from students. It's not mandatory, but it's valuable—often their suggestions are spot on.

It's statewide. There are multiple All-State ensembles: several choirs, three main All-State bands—Wind Symphony, Symphonic Band, and Concert Band—and the Golden State Band. The Golden State Band is designed for students from small or remote communities with limited access or very small programs, and it actually ends up being a really strong group.

There are also multiple high school and junior high All-State ensembles for orchestra and band—two or three of each at this point.

**Josh:** Is there a real distinction between Bands 1, 2, and 3, or are they just divided up?

**Boitz:** That's where I have some issues. It's all based on recorded auditions. Any student can audition, and we work with them to submit the best recording possible. But some schools or studios send students to very expensive professional recording studios. Public schools don't have that kind of access, and it's gotten a bit extreme.

In theory, the top group is Wind Symphony, then Symphonic Band, then Concert Band. But the adjudication process is incredibly difficult. Imagine listening to 200 clarinet auditions, all playing the same excerpts. It's exhausting, even for professionals. There's a rubric and scoring system, but there's still a huge human variable.

You really can't replace a live audition. With recordings, there will always be advantages depending on resources.

Most students do use recordings, but we actually start with live auditions. It's a funnel system—students audition at the regional level first, and then advance from there.

California does a lot of things really well in music education. But the audition process for bands and orchestras can be frustrating. You see so many students putting in tremendous effort—blood, sweat, and tears—and you want them to have the best shot possible. It's tough, especially with the preparation levels they go through. But for most audience members and parents, listening to all three groups, they're all fantastic. The kids themselves are always their own toughest critics.

## Jason Shiuan

The winter guard season is off and running. Our first evaluations are on January 24th, and the first competition is February 7th. The floor, costumes, and props are all ready, and the students are moving quickly.

The band had a great concert in December—thank you to everyone who supported it. The highlight was seeing the student chamber ensembles perform. These groups are completely student-run, and it was wonderful to see them take ownership of their learning.

Looking ahead, the band is preparing for our conference in March, county honor band auditions, wind ensemble auditions, and, of course, our upcoming trip to Japan. The work never stops!

## Closing

**Alicia:** Thank you to all our music educators. Your work is extraordinary, and this community is incredibly fortunate to have you.

Special congratulations to Superintendent Heath Rocha for the recent nomination for Superintendent to watch by NSPRA.

**Heath:** I feel very blessed to be part of this community. Amazing what we've accomplished in 1 year.

**Alicia:** Any final comments, questions?

**Meeting adjourned 8:44pm**

## Summary of Motions

Approval of November SMB Meeting Minutes	<b>Tina Pao</b> moves, <b>Sneha Melkote</b> seconds, motion carries
Approval of November & December 2025 Financials & Transactions <b>1678-1728</b>	<b>Tina Pao</b> moves, <b>Tista Kapoor</b> seconds, motion carries

Thank You,

Sri Balakrishnan / Tina Pao  
Co-Recording Secretaries