

Bret Harte PTA

July Newsletter

Summer Reflections

I hope everyone is having a fun summer break, spending the time to create fond family memories. This summer has given me time to reflect back on the past school year and think of all the incredible things we did as a PTA at Bret Harte. There was so much accomplished that I had to write it all in a separate letter. Please see the **attached file** with a wrap-up of our last year and all the incredible things we did together. I'm amazed at what a small group of dedicated people can accomplish. I'm very excited for this upcoming school year and can't wait to see what we can do next!

~ Adam Gothard / President, Bret Harte PTA

PTA Membership Drive

Signup online to join the PTA

We are using a new online membership system provided by CA State PTA. The new TOTEM system will make it easier to sign up and manage memberships. Sign up now and your PTA membership will be valid for the next year, until June 30th.

To signup, visit BretHartePTA.com/join

Mark Your Calendar...

New Family Orientation

For new families joining Bret Harte this year, the school is having an orientation meeting at 5:00pm on Monday August 10th.

Ice Cream Social / Meet Your Teacher

All families are invited to the school meet-and-greet at 5:30pm on Monday August 10th. Meet your teacher, find your classroom, and get to know others in your class. The PTA will be providing ice cream treats for an Ice Cream Social. This is a great way to start the year, ask any questions, and meet new people.

To help with this activity: [sign up here](#)

First Day of School

The first day of school is Tuesday, August 11th starting at 8:00am.

Help us create a fun experience to give our students a warm welcome! We will be setting

up music, red carpet, balloons, and a photo area. We need help getting the decorations prepared Monday night and set them out Tuesday morning. If you would like to help:

[sign up here](#)

Pizza Meet & Greet / 1st PTA Meeting

Our first PTA meeting will be at 6:00pm on Monday August 31st. PTA will be providing pizza for dinner. This is a great way to start the year off, help us plan some upcoming activities, review our budget, and have time to chat with others and meet new families.

Gratitude & Recognition

- Thank you to everyone that helped out with all of the end-of-year activities in June. There was a lot going on and everyone stepped up to get it done!
- Thank you to everyone that helped with decorating for the Red Carpet Awards and the promotion ceremonies for Kindergarten and 6th grade students.
- Thank you to everyone that came out to our Hop Gardens fundraiser - it was one of our largest fundraisers of the year! We will try to make this an annual event.
- Thank you to Ms Jones for all the work being done to prepare for the upcoming school year.

Upcoming Planning Meetings

- Tue 8/25: 5:15pm - Student Belonging Committee Meeting
- Mon 8/31: 6:00pm - PTA Meeting (with Pizza Meet & Greet)
- Wed 9/2: 6:00pm - Garden Committee Meeting
- Wed 9/9: 6:00pm - Fundraising Committee Meeting

Bret Harte PTA

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Summer Reflections on Success - Celebrating an Incredible School Year

Dear Bret Harte Families and Community,

As we close out another school year, we want to take a moment to reflect on all that we've accomplished together. This year was one of growth, connection, and meaningful progress for our school—and none of it would have been possible without the support of our families, staff, and volunteers.

A Year of Partnership and Progress

This year marked an exciting new chapter with the arrival of our new principal and several new teachers. From the very beginning, we built a strong and collaborative partnership—working together to support her vision for the school while also sharing PTA ideas, concerns, and solutions. In turn, she has been a supportive partner to the PTA, helping guide our efforts, offering thoughtful recommendations, and working alongside us to implement solutions that benefit the entire school community.

Bringing Our Community Together Through Events

Our Events Committee truly outdid themselves this year, organizing a wide range of activities that brought joy and connection to our campus.

Before the school year even began, the team refreshed the staff lounge to create a welcoming and comfortable space for teachers and staff. They also ensured that every classroom started the year strong by providing teachers with essential supplies.

To kick off the year, we hosted a memorable First Day of School celebration complete with a red carpet, music, and a photo area—creating an exciting and welcoming experience for students and families. Throughout the year, the committee continued to build community through events such as the Welcome Back Dance, Fall Festival, Holiday Lights Scavenger Hunt, and Valentine's Dance.

Creativity and student expression were highlighted through Family Art Night, classroom art projects, and our Annual Art Show during Open House. In addition, we celebrated and supported our teachers with a dedicated Teacher Appreciation Week.

The Events Committee also played an important role in supporting school-wide programs, including the Winter Concert, Awards Ceremonies, Monthly Attendance Incentives, Read Across Bret Harte, and many end-of-year celebrations. Each of these efforts helped strengthen our school community and create lasting memories for our students.

Growing Something Special: The Garden Program

Our Garden Committee continued to nurture one of Bret Harte's most unique and enriching programs through consistent care and exciting new initiatives.

Volunteers came together each month for Garden Work Days to maintain and improve the space, ensuring it remains a vibrant and welcoming environment for students. This year also saw the installation of a new Butterfly Garden expansion, further enhancing the beauty and educational value of the campus.

Students were actively engaged in hands-on learning through planting and harvesting activities, which culminated in fun and memorable experiences such as salad parties and French fry parties using their own harvests.

The committee also supported the launch of a student-led composting initiative. To help ensure its success, we brought in a composting educator and consultant to guide the development of a sustainable compost program.

The garden became a point of pride not only for our school but for the broader community as well. We hosted tours for the California Native Plant Society's "Gardens Got Natives" event, with our native garden on Franklin Blvd serving as one of the featured stops. Additionally, both the school garden and Butterfly Garden were open to visitors during the Curtis Park Home & Garden Tours.

To help sustain these efforts, the Spring Plant Sale successfully raised funds to support ongoing garden programming.

Supporting Our School Through Fundraising

Our Fundraising Committee played a vital role in ensuring we could continue to support important programs and resources for our students and staff.

This year, we hosted two Book Fairs that directly supported our school library, helping expand access to books and reading opportunities for students. During the Fall Festival, the committee organized a Silent Auction that brought the community together while raising valuable funds.

In April, our annual Pancake Breakfast once again served as a fun and successful community event. We also partnered with local businesses for dine & donate events throughout the year, including a particularly successful fundraiser at Hop Gardens on the last day of school.

These fundraising efforts make a meaningful difference in what the PTA can provide to enhance the student experience at Bret Harte.

Fostering Inclusion and Belonging

This year marked the launch of our Student Belonging Committee, focused on ensuring every student feels supported, connected, and valued within our school community.

The committee began by listening carefully to input from students, families, and staff. This included student feedback gathered through the Kelvin survey, parent perspectives shared through a family survey, and insights from staff through individual conversations.

Through this process, the committee identified key areas for growth, including the importance of fostering positive conversations about race, ensuring students see themselves represented in school materials, strengthening social-emotional learning, and improving the sense of belonging for families with autistic and/or LGBTQ+ members. They also recognized the need to support staff in building knowledge and confidence when working with diverse families and neurodivergent students.

In response, the committee identified and purchased books that help more students see themselves reflected in classroom and library materials while also supporting social-emotional development. They also advocated for more inclusive practices by writing to the district to request moving away from Autism Speaks and offering alternative resources.

The committee supported school programming for Autism Pride Month and successfully piloted a “Book of the Month” program to highlight inclusive literature. Additionally, they began assembling resource materials based on teacher and family needs, which will be organized into binders for staff at the start of the next school year.

With Gratitude—and Excitement for What’s Ahead

We are incredibly grateful to every parent, caregiver, teacher, staff member, and volunteer who contributed time, energy, and ideas this year. Your involvement is what makes Bret Harte such a special place.

As we look ahead to the next school year, we are excited to build on this momentum—continuing to strengthen our community, support our students, and create meaningful experiences for all.

Thank you for being part of Bret Harte PTA. We can’t wait to see what we accomplish together next year!

With appreciation,
Adam Gothard
President, Bret Harte PTA