

Berkeley, February 2018

After six years, Balsa's long-running leaders (Founder/President Rachel Hurwitz and VP Communications Franziska Raedeker) are moving on. Interested parties can continue to use Balsa's Google Group (<https://groups.google.com/group/balsacommunity>) as a forum, but it will no longer be moderated. The Balsa website will be shut down in early 2019 unless members raise ~\$80 and find a new webmaster.

We'd like to take this opportunity to **thank** everyone who has contributed time, energy, passion, and expertise to Balsa. Our thanks also go to the district for providing space for our (now suspended) monthly meetings.

As we say goodbye, it is a good time to celebrate **Balsa's accomplishments**. Together we

- Raised awareness of issues and opportunities for advanced learners among all stakeholders, including parents, educators, administrators
- Collaborated with Superintendent Dr. Donald Evans and BUSD leadership to support new initiatives for advanced students
- Advocated with the School Board for talent identification and access to enrichment for underrepresented students (to address the opportunity gap)
- Conducted outreach and collaborated with other BUSD affinity groups and the Office of Family Engagement & Equity
- Developed and incubated a unique free program to cultivate talent for identified students who otherwise might not have had access to such an opportunity (APEX/APDP). Within that program, designed, wrote grants for, and implemented three years of specialized STEAM programming (Curved Blackboard)
- Wrote grants to support a wide-ranging array of projects and resources to benefit advanced learners, including
 - An Advanced Learner library (to be housed at 2020 Bonar by the end of the 2017-18 school year)
 - Odyssey of the Mind materials
 - BUSD attendance at the 2017 California Association for the Gifted state conference
- Provided input into professional development
- Conceived and organized 5 years of guest speaker programs for parents and educators
- Hosted monthly support meetings and social events
- Developed website and communications with resources for support

While we are proud of these accomplishments, our work on behalf of advanced learners is far from done. We strongly encourage BUSD educators, administrators, and parents to **continue** to address the unique needs of students who are ready for greater challenge, and we look forward to the day when ALL students flourish within BUSD.