

Community Engagement Practices for Board Meetings and Beyond



CalSPRA

Connect • Communicate • Inspire



Trinette Marquis, APR
Executive Director, CalSPRA

Jessica Hull
*Executive Director of
Communication & Community
Relations, Roseville City School
District
President, CalSPRA*

Agenda

- The Importance of Community Engagement
- Setting Clear Expectations for Board Meetings
- Ensuring Equitable Community Input
- Practical Ideas for Increasing Community Voice
- Best Practices
- Q&A



What IS Community Engagement?

The process of **engaging** our community members, including families, students, and other educational partners, in **meaningful ways** to **influence decisions and actions** that affect our schools.

It goes beyond merely providing information; it's about **actively listening and collaborating.**



The Benefits of Community Engagement

Trust

- Building trust is essential
- When people feel heard and respected, it fosters trust in decision-making processes
- Even if the decision is not what they prefer, they understand the process



The Benefits of Community Engagement

Student Achievement

- More likely to support and participate in initiatives
- More likely to provide financial support for facilities
- Positively impacts student outcomes



System Benefits

Effective Communication & Engagement



Setting Clear Expectations for Board Meetings

Agenda Development

- A well-structured agenda ensures that meetings are focused and efficient
- Develop a comprehensive and balanced agenda
- Clearly identify opportunities for community engagement and why they are structured in that way



- Strategic Goal Numbers with EVERY Item
- Discussion and Action versus Information Items
- Standing Items



Board Meeting Agenda
Executive Board

Jessica Hull, President; Dina Gentry, President-elect; Jacqueline Dillard, Secretary; Robert Meszaros, Treasurer; Treasurer; Nathan Quevedo, Immediate Past President

Meeting Date: 11/03/2023 | 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM

- A. ORGANIZATIONAL ITEMS
 - a. Call to Order
 - i. Roll Call -
 - b. Review and Acceptance of Agenda Items
 - c. Review [Meeting Norms for 2023-24](#)
- B. DISCUSSION ITEMS/ACTION ITEMS
 - a. Approve Minutes of [10.20.23](#) - Goal 3 (Dillard)
- C. INFORMATION ITEMS
 - a. Chair Updates - Goals 1-5 (Marquis)
 - i. Volunteer - [Conference lists](#)
 - ii. Partnerships
 - iii. APR
 - iv. Communications
 - v. Regionals - [Expectations Sheet](#), next meet-up Nov 14 12-1
 - b. Conference Update - Goal 4 (Gentry)
 - i. [Subcommittee updates](#)
 - c. Awards Update - Goal 4 and 5 (Quevedo)
 - d. [Survey](#) - Goal 2 (Marquis)
 - e. JPA Update - Goal 1 (Marquis and Hull)
 - f. CalSPRA Gear - Goal 4 (Marquis)
 - g. Treasurer's Report - Goal 3 (Meszaros) [Cashflow report](#)
- D. STANDING ITEMS
 - a. Any items to add to the Annual Plan?
 - b. Any items to communicate out?

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment

Setting Clear Expectations for Board Meetings

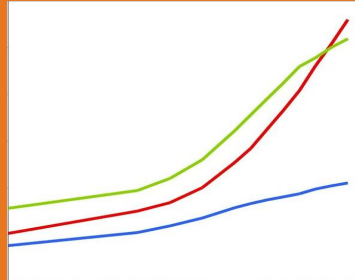
Meeting Procedures

- Clear procedures for discussions, voting, and public comments
- Everyone understands their roles and responsibilities during meetings
- What should the public expect and how should they be expected to act/respond?
- Consider the opportunities to inform, inspire and educate during down times



Happy USD

Attendance is UP (Goal 1)



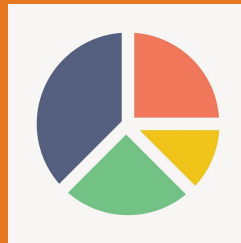
Happy USD



Thanks for funding our Science lab! (Goal 2)

Happy USD

How our Budget is Spent (Goal 3)



Happy USD

Investing in Teacher PD (Goal 4)



Closed Session/ Break/ Delay Deck

- Activities
- Clarify Issues
- Accomplishments
- Initiatives
- Efforts



Placer Union High School District (PUHSD) Board Meeting - What to Expect

A summary of the Guiding Principles and Laws for the Conduct of California Board of Education Meetings



Access to all Board of Education agendas and additional information can be found at: www.srvusd.net/About-Us/Board-of-Education

Updated February 2023

CONDUCT/STRUCTURE OF MEETINGS

Closed Session (Education Code 54954-54963)

What is Closed Session on an Agenda?

- Closed Sessions are confidentially held with the Board and any designated individuals or legal counsel.
- The Board is presented with updates to negotiations with labor unions and offers direction to the chief negotiator.
- Employees for public appointment/discipline/release may be interviewed by the Board.

Are decisions made in Closed Session?

- Action in Closed Session is reserved for only specific types of items (Ed Code 54954.5). Any action taken in a Closed Session must be reported to the public.

Why are they not responding to my public comment?

The Brown Act (CA Government Code section 54950 to 54962) guarantees the public's right to attend and participate in meetings of local legislative bodies. All of the Board's actions are done in public, except for closed session items. There are times when the Board cannot discuss a topic that is raised in public comment because that item was not on the agenda and other matters are being discussed. The public would not have an opportunity to be present.

The 6 Steps

- 1. Motion:** A member raises a hand to signal the Board President.
- 2. Second:** Another member seconds the Motion.
- 3. Restate Motion:** The President restates the Motion.
- 4. Debate:** The member may speak for or against the Motion.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Trustees work at the Placer Union High School District (PUHSD).

- Board Trustees often have full-time jobs outside of their elected position and are only present at PUHSD Board Meetings, one-on-one meetings with the Superintendent, or at site events/activities.

The Board already discussed the item they are about to vote on.

- Under the Brown Act, the Board cannot legally discuss items within their jurisdiction outside of a public meeting.
- This is oftentimes why the Board doesn't reply to emails.

Public Comment

**Question 1:
What are the Different Types of Board Meetings?**

REGULAR MEETING



- Annually the Board approves a calendar of Regular Board meetings during the annual organizational meeting held in December.
- Regular meeting agendas must be posted at least 72 hours before the meeting and must allow public comment on both agenda and non-agenda items.

SPECIAL MEETING



- If the Board needs to conduct business outside of Regular meetings, they will schedule a "Special" meeting.
- Special meetings often facilitate study sessions, board workshops or presentations, but can also be scheduled to attend to business that is time sensitive.
- Special meetings must be posted 24 hours before the meeting and only allow for public comment on items on the agenda.

CLOSED SESSION



- Only matters legally allowed by the Brown Act will be discussed in closed session. These matters include employee contract negotiations, district litigation, personnel matters, and the superintendent evaluation.
- Closed session meetings must be part of a regular meeting or a special meeting and will allow for the public comment prior to the board beginning a closed session.



TYPES OF MEETINGS

There are three types of meetings that the Board may hold.

Regular Meeting: Monthly

- These are normal, scheduled business meetings, and are the most common type of Board meeting
- The agenda/Board packet is posted on our website at least 72 hours prior to the meeting and typically on the Friday afternoon of the week preceding the meeting.
 - The public may address the Board on agendized and non-agendized items.

Special Meeting/Workshop: May be called at anytime

- The agenda must be posted at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.
- Only items on the agenda may be considered.
- The public may address the Board, but on agenda items only.
- Scheduled Board workshops are considered special meetings.

Public Comment

**Question 4:
How Do I Make My Public Comment?**

TIME



- The Board allows 30 minutes on non-agenda items during "Public Comment"
- The Board allows 30 minutes on each agenda item, after presentation of the item but before the Board deliberate.
- Each member of the public shall have 3 minutes to address the Board.
- If there are large numbers of comments, this may be restricted to 2 minutes per person.

GROUPS & SINGLE SUBJECT COMMENT



- If large groups attend to speak on a single subject, they will be encouraged to summarize comments to a 10-minute time segment.
- After 30 minutes the President can poll board members to extend the public comment period under special circumstances.

WHAT DO I DO?



- When the President invites you to address the Board, approach the podium and introduce yourself.
- All comments should be addressed to the Board, not to members of the public.
- The Board is not able to respond your comments.
- Public comment will not be accepted after the board has begun deliberating on an item.



STRUCTURE OF OPEN SESSION

Reports to the Board/Informational

Items presented to the Board for informational purposes or discussion. No action is taken.

Board/Student Board Member/Superintendent Reports

Allows individual Board members, the student Board member, and the Superintendent to share reports, comments, concerns, observations, or request items be scheduled on a future agenda.

Action Items

Presented for review prior to Board action. Staff will typically present. The Board will take public comment and then discuss prior to action.

Resolution

Expresses Board policy or directs certain types of administrative action.

Consent Items

Items that are considered to be routine in nature and will be enacted in one motion.

Public Hearings

A public hearing is designed to protect personal interests by permitting citizens to voice their position on an issue at hand. Government code prescribes the manner in which the hearing is to be conducted.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment for both agendized and non-agendized Items:

- Anyone who wishes to address the Board must submit a speaker card to Cindy Fischer at the dais in the Boardroom.
- The Board President will call each speaker to the speaker table during the appropriate agenda item.
- Please note that, by law, the Board cannot take action or engage in dialogue on items not on the agenda.
- Individual speakers will be allowed three minutes to address the Board on each item.
- The Board may limit the total time per item to 30 minutes.

Setting Clear Expectations for Board Meetings

Transparency and Accountability

- Transparency in decision-making builds trust
- Accountability mechanisms to track progress and outcomes
- Inform the public by providing a comment or question to each item instead of “rubber stamping” item by item



Tips for Ensuring Equitable Community Input

Diverse Outreach Strategies

- Reach out to underrepresented groups through various channels (e.g., social media, community events)
- Translate materials into different languages
- Consider different dates, times, venues



Tips for Ensuring Equitable Community Input

Diverse Outreach Strategies

- Cultural competence and sensitivity when engaging with diverse communities
- Recognize and respect cultural differences and traditions in communication and decision-making processes



**Strategy for increasing
diverse input-**
*Meet them where they
are*



Tips for Ensuring Equitable Community Input

Inclusive Meeting Formats

- Offer options for virtual and in-person attendance
- Use inclusive facilitation techniques
- Utilize an anti-bias engagement software, like ThoughtExchange to gather comprehensive and accurate information and feedback



Tips for Ensuring Equitable Community Input

Accessible Technology

- Meetings and materials are accessible to individuals with disabilities and those who speak languages other than English
- Offer tech training, if necessary, so all can participate



Five angry people at a meeting are not your majority. Fifty angry people at a meeting are not your majority.

Make decisions for ALL students and staff with **situational awareness.**

Don't Mistake Volume for Representation



Practical Ideas for Increasing Community Voice

Public Forums

- Regular public forums provide a platform for open dialogue
- Encourage participation through themed discussions
- Consider hosting forums in alternative spaces
- Engage and train facilitators
- Recruit diverse voices



Practical Ideas for Increasing Community Voice

Survey and Feedback Mechanisms

- Use surveys, online platforms, and feedback forms to gather input
- Provide non-tech ways to submit
- Multiple languages
- Analyze and act on the data collected to make informed decisions



Practical Ideas for Increasing Community Voice

Survey and Feedback Mechanisms

- Plan for success - develop a campaign for engagement
- Measure the impact of community engagement efforts:
 - quantitative data (e.g., increased attendance at meetings)
 - qualitative feedback (e.g., improved trust levels)



Practical Ideas for Increasing Community Voice

Engaged Employees have Ideas

- Filter through mission, strategic plan, portrait of a student/graduate
 - Communicate if/why you didn't go forward with idea
- Employees who make suggestions care, so ensure those employees know their input is valued - and appreciated
- Make it easy for employees to offer suggestions
 - Ask leading, open-ended questions
 - "What other thoughts do you have that I didn't ask about?"
- Diverse voices



Practical Ideas for Increasing Community Voice

Advisory Group Representation

- Employee
 - Each site
 - Certificated and classified
- Underserved Populations
 - English learner families
- Students
 - Variety of sites and grade levels
 - Not just the GATE kids/sports stars



Are lessons learned and successes from
community engagement shared with the
community?

What did you do with their input?



Increasing Input

Promote Opportunities Widely

- Promotional plan announcing forums, surveys, advisory groups
- Use multiple channels, including personal invitations
- Share what you learned from input and what you will do with it
- Use the same plan you used to collect input



Do you have a regular process for evaluating and improving community engagement practices?

Practical Ideas for Increasing Community Voice

Sustainability

- Sustain efforts over the long term
- Should not be a one-time initiative, but an ongoing commitment
- Annual surveys allow you to see trends
- Ongoing advisory meetings provide valuable information about areas for improvement



Is there a commitment to ongoing professional development for board members and district staff related to community engagement best practices?

Best Practices

Community Education

- Consider offering community education programs
 - increase awareness of the school district's goals, initiatives, and the role of the board
 - increase ability to advocate for student services and needed improvements



Best Practices

Emergency and Crisis Communication

- Prepare for crisis situations that require rapid and sensitive communication with the community
- Develop community relationships and trust before a crisis hits



Best Practices

Feedback Loop

- Community members are kept informed of how their input has influenced decisions and actions
- Reference community input when discussing important decisions or programs inspired by their feedback



Best Practices

Community Partnerships

- Partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and nonprofits strengthen community engagement efforts
- Partnerships can provide resources and support



Conflict Resolution and Mediation

Best Practices

- Discuss strategies for resolving conflicts that may arise
- Understand the feeling underneath the words to find common ground
- Look for the lesson(s)
- Have a plan in place for constructive conflict resolution



Diverse Voices

Meeting People Where They Are

- At least 20% diversity in a group before there is enough confidence to share
- There are MANY dimensions of diversity
- We all have more in common than we think



calspra.org

Supporting school communication

- *Professional development*
- *Templates & materials*
- *Mentoring & support*



Thank You/Questions?



**Scan QR Code for
handout and slides**

