



SAN MATEO-FOSTER CITY
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Proposal for Establishing Monthly Board & Community Workshops (BCW)

DIEGO OCHOA, SUPERINTENDENT



SUPERINTENDENT DIEGO R. OCHOA



Dear School Board, Parents & Community Members,

The San Mateo-Foster City School District is a K-8 educational organization tasked with providing high quality programs to over 11,000 children. We educate children from highly diverse communities. Our schools are characterized by their programmatic uniqueness and their local history. For these reasons, I believe strongly that establishing monthly Board & Community Workshops.

The current strategies we utilize to engage parents are limited to emails, automated phone calls, automated letters, and public comment at school board meetings. Much of the time, communication is one-way and minimizes the richness of parent/community voices.

The proposal included herein explains a new strategy called Board & Community Workshops (BCW). This strategy is equity-focused and will greatly increase parent involvement in the district. It will also create a path for Board members to talk openly with parents/community members without the constraints built into the system of Board Meetings which are governed by the Brown Act.

Sincerely,

Diego R. Ochoa
Superintendent



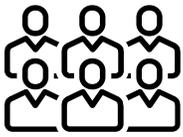
BOARD MEETINGS



The Brown Act applies to all "legislative bodies," which includes the governing body of a local agency or any other local body created by state or federal statute



A meeting is defined as any occasion in which a majority of the voting members of the board come together at the same time and location to "hear, discuss, deliberate or take action on any matter that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body."



The public must be given the opportunity to address the board on any item on the agenda, and on any item that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body.



The school board may place "reasonable" time limits on the comments, and must double the amount of time available if the comment needs to be translated. You also cannot be stopped because your comments are unfavorable.



However, "reasonable time limits" can be interpreted in different ways. If you've ever tried to give a complete and coherent argument in one minute, you understand the challenge. Introducing yourself and your topic can easily chomp up 10 seconds.

So, what's missing?

Two-Way Communication



In a Board & Community Workshop, we can invite as many parents as we'd like to attend. We'd select (2) two school board members to participate, the school principal, and the Superintendent.



In a Board & Community Workshop, we set the agenda collaboratively. We spend as much time as we feel is needed on any particular item. There is no specific time that governs who can speak and on how many items.



In a Board & Community Workshop, there are no votes. There is no decision being made at the meeting. It is designed to give parents a chance to let Board members hear directly from them in an unfiltered way.



In a Board & Community Workshop, parents can send in questions in advance so that the principal and superintendent can create an FAQ before the meeting. This will help clarify issues and give attendees a good starting point.



In a Board & Community Workshop, parents can meaningfully attend (once in-person due to the district offering dinner and free on-site child care for families).

