Summary of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education Meeting of November 6, 2025

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Here's a summary of the Santa Monica Board of Education meeting:

Core Points

- Meeting Overview and Attendance

  The board meeting opened with roll call attendance, pledge of allegiance, approval of the agenda (including a correction to a consent calendar item), and approval of minutes from a prior meeting. The meeting included both in-person and remote participants, indicating hybrid engagement.
- Webster Elementary School Presentation

  Karina, the principal of Webster Elementary, provided a comprehensive update focusing on instructional initiatives, student engagement, safety measures, and community partnerships. Emphasis was placed on new staff roles, STEM and media literacy programs, and innovative project-based learning approaches.
- Implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Building Thinking Classrooms (BTC) in Math

  Webster Elementary is deepening its use of PBL aligned with real-world connections, supported by partnerships and professional development. The school is actively implementing BTC strategies in math instruction to increase student engagement and collaboration, based on recent data indicating declines in math performance.
- Student Voice and Engagement in Math Learning

  Students from kindergarten through fourth grade shared positive experiences with the interactive math learning approach, highlighting collaboration, creativity, and enjoyment. This feedback is being deliberately collected and used to inform instructional practices.
- Facilities and Attendance Improvements

  Facilities upgrades included replenishment of instructional materials lost to fire, new healthy food options, and library improvements with new flexible seating. Notably, student attendance

has improved, with chronic absenteeism decreasing significantly, attributed to engagement strategies and proactive family outreach.

- Community Partnerships and Events

  Strong community involvement through PTA and local organizations was highlighted via events such as family playground gatherings and the Webster Glampout, fostering family and community engagement beyond the classroom.

- Public Comments Addressing Safety and Environmental Concerns

  Parents and community members raised concerns about safety risks from large trucks refueling in school parking lots, as well as the adequacy and transparency of post-fire cleaning efforts at Webster Elementary. They emphasized the need for thorough toxic substance testing and proper remediation.

- Board Member and Student Reports from Other Schools

  Updates were provided by student representatives from Santa Monica High, Malibu High, and Olympic High School, covering school events, leadership initiatives, new facilities, student engagement, academic opportunities, and attendance challenges.

- Union Reports

  The teachers' union (SMMCTA) reported on advocacy efforts regarding funding threats at state and federal levels, support for education equity, and community engagement programs including food drives and constitutional rights workshops. SEIU representatives discussed upcoming contract negotiations and concerns about subcontracting classified staff.

- Board Policy Updates and Administrative Items

  The board reviewed proposed updates to bylaws relating to board organization, president duties, legal counsel, board representatives, and student board members to ensure legal compliance and governance clarity. Senior management salary schedules and employment workbooks were approved to maintain compliance with retirement regulations.

- Ongoing Unification Negotiations and Community Feedback

  Discussions referenced ongoing efforts to address Malibu's desire for a separate school district, with community members advocating for local control, tailored educational programs,

and equitable funding. Concerns were expressed about governance representation and board leadership demographics.

- Environmental and Health Advocacy

  Public comments highlighted concerns about pesticide use on Malibu campuses, advocating for adherence to pesticide-free policies aligned with city and state regulations to protect student and environmental health.

- Superintendent's Remarks on Kindness and Community Support

  Superintendent Dr. Shelton emphasized the importance of kindness, community resilience, and ongoing support for students and families, particularly in the context of recent societal challenges and natural disasters affecting the area.

Key Conclusions

- Project-Based and Collaborative Learning Are Central to Webster's Instructional Vision

  The formalization and enhancement of project-based learning and building thinking classrooms in math are poised to transform student engagement and achievement by fostering collaboration, creativity, and real-world problem solving.

- Student Feedback Validates the Effectiveness of Interactive Learning Approaches

  Authentic student voices reflect increased enjoyment, confidence, and conceptual understanding in math due to interactive and collaborative strategies, signaling alignment between instructional innovation and learner needs.

- Facilities Recovery Is Progressing but Requires Ongoing Attention

  Post-fire facility restoration and replenishment of instructional materials are underway, supported by district purchasing efforts and vendor donations. However, community concerns about environmental safety and cleaning thoroughness indicate a need for increased transparency and monitoring.

- Attendance Improvements Are Linked to Meaningful Student Engagement and Family Outreach

  Data showing declines in absenteeism underscore the importance of creating engaging,

hands-on learning environments and proactive communication with families to address barriers to attendance.

- Community Partnerships Enrich the Student Experience and Support Holistic Education
  Collaborative events and initiatives involving PTA, local organizations, and families strengthen community ties and contribute to a positive school climate where students thrive academically and socially.
- Board Governance and Representation Are Under Review to Enhance Equity and Inclusion
  Calls for revisiting board leadership rotation policies and increasing equitable representation from diverse areas of the district reflect community desires for more inclusive governance structures.
- Union Advocacy Highlights Funding Challenges and the Need for Collaborative Labor Relations
  Both teacher and classified employee unions are actively addressing funding uncertainties and working toward negotiations that protect employee rights and promote job stability, which directly impacts student services.
- Environmental Health Policies Must Align with Community and Regulatory Expectations
  The use of pesticides on Malibu campuses contradicts prior agreements and local ordinances, prompting demands for renewed commitment to pesticide-free campuses to safeguard health and environmental sustainability.
- Malibu's Drive for Local Control Reflects Distinct Community Identity and Educational Needs
  Repeated public comments emphasize Malibu's unique challenges, priorities, and aspirations for education tailored to its environment, underscoring tensions within the unified district arrangement.
- Leadership Emphasizes Community Resilience and Kindness Amidst Challenges
  The superintendent's message to prioritize kindness and collaboration highlights the district's commitment to fostering a supportive culture for students, staff, and families during challenging times.

Important Details

- Instructional Staffing and Safety Enhancements at Webster

  Four new instructional aides serving dual roles as campus monitors have enhanced both classroom support and campus safety. One new hire, Brianna Solace, is a district alumna contributing to the community.
- Tech for Tomorrow Program

  This K–5 initiative integrates STEM and media literacy through hands-on learning in engineering, robotics, 3D modeling, digital storytelling, coding, and responsible technology use.
- Best on the Beach Recognition Program

  Monthly student recognitions celebrate character traits such as perseverance, involving secret family invitations to assemblies, creating special moments for students.
- Student Leadership and Events

  Student leaders in grades 4 and 5 run events like Boograms, supported by staff mentors, building important teamwork and service skills.
- Schoolwide Theme: Dare, Do, Discover

  This theme encourages students to ask big questions, take action collaboratively and courageously, and reflect to improve, aligning with the PBL framework.
- Project Examples Under PBL
    - Mars mission simulation designing sustainable life systems.
    - Food truck economics blending math, design, and marketing.
    - California endangered species campaign.
    - Student news team reporting on relevant issues.
    - Partnership with peers abroad studying wildlife and global citizenship.

      Kindergarten and first graders focus on marine and butterfly conservation, culminating in a student-led showcase.
- Math Engagement Goals and Data

  Cycle one goal targets a 15% increase in student engagement on BTC tasks, responding to data showing a 13% drop in CASP math proficiency and 12% decline on Renaissance Star math assessments.

- BTC Strategies and Professional Development

  Teachers are using “low floor, high ceiling” tasks, gallery walks to share solutions, and book studies led by BTC-trained staff. The CMC South Mathematics Conference is a key professional learning event.
- Student Testimonials

  Students describe math on boards as collaborative, creative, enjoyable, and supportive of their thinking process, emphasizing the benefits of visual and interactive problem solving.
- Facilities Improvements
  - Amazon business accounts facilitate replenishment of instructional materials after Franklin fire losses.
  - New salad bar offers fresh, healthy food choices daily.
  - Library renovations funded by Malibu city library set-aside funds feature flexible seating popular among students.
- Attendance Data
  - Chronic absenteeism declined by 5.6% overall.
  - White student subgroup improved by 9.7%.
  - Students with disabilities subgroup moved into the green performance band.

    Personalized outreach includes bilingual liaison phone calls and attendance education at family events.
- Community Engagement Examples
  - Parent playground event coordinated by PTA and local partners.
  - Webster Glampout featuring games, crafts, movies, and family activities.
  - PTA fundraising for all Malibu schools through comedy night.
- Safety and Environmental Concerns Raised by Parents
  - Large trucks refueling in Webster parking lot during dismissal times pose risks to children.
  - Calls for rigorous testing for toxins (lead, asbestos, cyanide, heavy metals) post-fire, citing lack of CAM 17 testing and inadequate cleaning transparency.

- Student Reports from Other Schools
    - Santa Monica High highlights leadership training, largest-ever homecoming attendance, club showcases, college visits, and upcoming theater and sports events.
    - Malibu High celebrates new building features, flexible workspaces, homecoming activities, club day, Red Ribbon Week, and sports achievements.
    - Olympic High reports attendance challenges, incentive programs, college classes, senior meetings, and upcoming parent night with giveaways.
- Union Advocacy
    - SMMCTA focused on fighting federal aid cuts, supporting Proposition 55 extension, conducting rights workshops, and hosting a virtual food drive.
    - SEIU Local 99 preparing for contract negotiations emphasizing job security, opposition to subcontracting, and promoting attractive working conditions.
- Board Bylaws Updates

  Key updates include:
    - BB 9100 Organization: Adjusting annual meeting timing and scheduling flexibility.
    - BB 9121 President: Clarifying president's duties and adding leadership training option.
    - BB 9124 Attorney: Introducing legal counsel bylaw to formalize legal representation and evaluation.
    - BB 9140 Board Representatives: Defining committee participation and reporting duties.
    - BB 9150 Student Board Members: Reflecting new laws on term adjustments, materials access, and alternate appointments.
- Senior Management Salary and Employment Workbook

  Updates ensure compliance with CalPERS regulations related to retirement and employment terms, with no salary increases implied.
- Public Hearing on Negotiations

  The board conducted hearings on negotiations with Santa Monica Unified School District

classified staff union (SEIU Local 99) and teachers union (SMMCTA), with no public comments during hearings.

- Malibu Unification Advocacy

  Multiple public speakers advocated for Malibu's separation from Santa Monica Unified School District, citing community identity, funding inequities, local control, and specific educational and environmental needs.

- Environmental Safety and Pesticide Use

  Community members request the district uphold pesticide-free policies on Malibu campuses in alignment with city and coastal commission regulations, citing health risks associated with chemical herbicides.

- Superintendent's Emphasis on Kindness and Community

  Recognition of the emotional toll of societal issues and disasters, with a call for kindness, reflection, and collaboration to foster a supportive educational environment.

- Next Steps on Unification Communications

  The superintendent and board member noted a forthcoming joint communication between the city of Malibu and the district to outline unification process steps and timelines.

- Clarification on Fire-Related Permitting

  The district confirmed streamlined processes accommodate displaced families' school access post-fire, with staff available to address any issues.

- Meeting Closure

  The meeting concluded with approval of consent items, action items, and adjournment following future agenda planning.

This summary captures the essential content, key takeaways, and important details from the video transcript, providing a thorough understanding of the meeting's discussions, decisions, and community concerns.

Please be aware this transcript/summary was generated by an AI and may contain errors or omissions. For complete and accurate information, please consult the original audio or video recording of the meeting.