Summary of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education Meeting of November 20, 2025

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

Core Points

- Memorial and Opening Remarks
    - The meeting opened with a tribute to Mrs. Katherine Cat Boyd, a longtime custodian at Santa Monica High School (Samo High) who recently retired and passed away. She was remembered for her kindness, dedication, and positive impact on the school community over 30 years. Details about her memorial services were shared, and heartfelt condolences were extended to her family and colleagues.
- Board Meeting Administrative Actions
    - The board addressed procedural items including approval of the agenda with some adjustments, approval of minutes from the previous meeting, and roll call of members present both in person and via Zoom.
    - Close session items included discussion of easement and license terms for a solar purchase agreement, and a final settlement involving reimbursement for parents' educational expenses totaling up to $39,939 plus attorney fees.
- School Presentations and Recognitions
    - Roosevelt Elementary School presented on its focus areas including community connection, growth, resilience, and project-based learning (PBL). Highlights included the implementation of GRIT values (Growth, Respect, Integrity, Tenacity), a successful Hispanic Heritage Month festival, and hands-on learning projects such as the "Mission Monarch" butterfly garden.
    - The City of Santa Monica's Safe Routes to School program presented the Golden Sneaker Award to Grant Elementary for highest student participation (85%) in sustainable transportation initiatives (walking, biking, bussing). The program promotes healthy, green commuting and environmental awareness.
    - Santa Monica High School principal Dr. Maré Cruz highlighted academic achievements including National Merit Scholarship semi-finalists and commended scholars, improvements in standardized testing results (CASP), and expansion of Advanced Placement (AP) participation with high success rates. New academies in Health & Wellness and Law & Public Policy were introduced with community partnerships. The school emphasized project-based learning and structured collaborative conversations to enhance academic rigor and student engagement. Facility upgrades were also noted.
    - National Merit Scholarship recipients from Santa Monica High School were formally recognized and awarded certificates.

- Superintendent's Report and District Updates
    - Superintendent Dr. Shelton shared highlights from recent events, such as the Malibu Optimist Youth Appreciation Breakfast and early learning exhibitions at Webster Elementary, emphasizing student optimism and project-based learning in early education.
    - Updates on capital improvement bonds were provided, including a recent refinancing that saved taxpayers nearly $4.5 million and progress on a $130 million bond approved by Malibu voters.
    - The district's Emergency Operations Coordination Center (EOCC) effectively managed responses to recent atmospheric river storms, enabling schools to remain open safely.
    - The Ocean Park Schoolhouse was named as a new campus for Olympic High School and Off Campus Learning Center, with moves scheduled over breaks for smooth transitions.
    - Thanksgiving holiday dates and well-wishes were announced.
- California School Dashboard Presentation
    - Dr. Alyssa Grady, Director of Assessment, Research, and Evaluation, presented the 2025 California School Dashboard data. This system reports on seven state indicators of school and district performance, including academic achievement, attendance, suspension rates, English learner progress, and graduation rates.
    - The district maintained or improved performance in most areas, notably maintaining high English Language Arts (ELA) and math scores with no subgroups in the "red" performance category, and earned a green rating in science for the first time.
    - Chronic absenteeism remains a noted challenge, particularly in certain student subgroups.
    - Participation rates in state assessments improved, reducing penalties associated with low participation.
    - The importance of accurate data reflective of all student groups was emphasized, alongside strategies to increase test participation and address absenteeism.
- Data Utilization and Next Steps
    - Dr. Williamson described using both quantitative data from the dashboard and qualitative "street data" — student, staff, and family feedback — to inform school improvement plans and ensure that instructional goals match lived classroom experiences.
    - The district celebrated exiting "differentiated assistance" status for certain English learner subgroups due to academic progress, but committed to continued support via new English learner curriculum, coaching, focus groups, and progress monitoring.
- Policy Updates Presentation

        - Updates to eight student services policies and administrative regulations were presented. Changes align district policies with recent state laws, clarify language, and reflect current practices. Key updates included:
            - Parent rights regarding instructional materials and privacy, including protections against collection of social security numbers and immigration status.
            - Admission and residency policies, including provisions for military families and displaced students due to natural disasters, with protections under McKinney-Vento law.
            - Attendance exemptions, exclusions, and leaves with updated gender-neutral language and clearer definitions.
        - The district will continue updating policies throughout the year.
- Board Bylaws Update
    - The second round of revisions to board bylaws (9000 series) was reviewed, covering topics such as governing board elections, resignations, filling vacancies, oath of office, orientation, training, legal protections, conflicts of interest, and board policies.
    - The updates incorporated recent legislative changes, clarified procedural elements, and ensured alignment with best practices.
    - Notably, new ethics training requirements for board members effective January 2025 were introduced.
- Resolution for National Inclusive Schools Week
    - The board unanimously approved a resolution recognizing December 5-9, 2025, as National Inclusive Schools Week, emphasizing unity, inclusive practices, accessibility, and celebration of progress in supporting all students.
- Closing Comments and Adjournment
    - Board members expressed gratitude and optimism about district progress and community involvement. Thanksgiving well-wishes were extended.
    - No public comments were made on agenda or non-agenda items.
    - The meeting adjourned with members wishing everyone a safe and restorative holiday.

Key Conclusions

- Strong Commitment to Community and Student Well-Being
    - The district's tribute to Mrs. Katherine Cat Boyd and emphasis on community celebrations, family engagement, and inclusive practices illustrate a deep commitment to fostering a supportive and connected educational environment.
- Academic Progress and Innovation
    - Roosevelt Elementary and Santa Monica High School demonstrate significant strides in implementing project-based and inquiry-driven learning, with a focus on student voice, rigor, and real-world relevance. The expansion of AP courses and

new academies at Samo High further support student readiness for post-secondary success.

- Equity and Access Focus
    - The district continues to prioritize addressing achievement gaps and attendance disparities, particularly among English learners, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and other vulnerable subgroups. Use of data coupled with “street data” feedback enhances targeted interventions.
- Sustainability and Health Initiatives
    - Programs like Safe Routes to School promote healthy lifestyles, environmental responsibility, and community engagement, reflecting broader district goals around sustainability.
- Effective Governance and Policy Alignment
    - Ongoing updates to board bylaws and district policies ensure legal compliance, clarity, and alignment with current educational standards and community needs, supporting transparent and accountable governance.
- Resilience in Crisis Management
    - The district’s proactive response to severe weather events and natural disasters, along with policies protecting displaced families, demonstrate preparedness and a student-centered approach to challenges.
- Recognition of Excellence and Continuous Improvement
    - Celebrations of student achievements, such as National Merit recognitions, and acknowledgment of progress in state accountability measures reinforce a culture of excellence while recognizing areas for growth.

Important Details

- Memorial Services for Katherine Cat Boyd
    - Wake: Friday, November 21, 4-8 PM
    - Services: Saturday, November 22, 11 AM-1 PM at Lighthouse Memorials
    - Burial: 2 PM at Englewood Cemetery
- Solar System Easement and Settlement Agreement
    - Board approved reimbursement up to $39,939 for privately obtained educational expenses and attorney fees up to $7,000.
- Roosevelt Elementary GRIT Values
    - Growth, Respect, Integrity, Tenacity
    - Example: Students returning a found $100 bill to the office as a demonstration of integrity.
- Mission Monarch Project Details
    - Third-grade project integrating science and writing focused on monarch butterfly migration and habitat creation.
    - Students plant and maintain a butterfly garden, collect data, write research-based reports, and share findings.

- Safe Routes to School Participation
    - 2,388 students across nine schools participated in October event.
    - Grant Elementary won with 85% participation, rewarded with a Golden Sneaker trophy and ice cream party.
- Santa Monica High School Academic Highlights
    - 5 National Merit Semi-finalists and 26 Commended Scholars this year.
    - 57% of students met/exceeded math CASP standards; 83% in English.
    - 85% of AP test takers scored 3 or above.
    - New academies: Health & Wellness and Law & Public Policy with community partnerships including UCLA and city officials.
- Facility Upgrades at Samo High
    - New seating in Barnum Hall reopening for winter concerts.
    - New basketball and pickleball courts.
    - New stands for Viking Stadium, highly attended recent games.
    - Samo High sign illuminated.
- Attendance and Absenteeism Data
    - Roosevelt Elementary chronic absenteeism dropped from 18% to 13.5%.
    - Samo High chronic absenteeism at 20.5%, slight decrease but still a focus area.
    - Positive attendance incentives include monthly drawings and “fast pass” lunch line privileges.
- California School Dashboard Indicators
    - Seven state indicators now include science with a green rating for the first time.
    - No subgroups in “red” for academic performance.
    - Chronic absenteeism remains the only indicator with decline or challenge.
    - Graduation rate at 97.2%, a 2% increase over two years.
- English Learner Supports
    - Implementation of Benchmark Express curriculum in K-6.
    - Instructional coaches and professional development support.
    - Leadership teams using “street data” for deeper understanding of student experiences.
- Policy Updates Reflecting Legal Changes
    - Inclusion of protections for student privacy regarding citizenship and immigration status.
    - Clarification of residency requirements for military families and displaced students.
    - Use of gender-neutral language in attendance policies.
- Board Bylaw Updates
    - Inclusion of ethics training requirements starting January 1, 2025, every two years thereafter.
    - New provisions for recall processes and campaign conduct for board members.
    - Prohibition on felons serving on the school board noted, though with some community member commentary.

- National Inclusive Schools Week Resolution
    - Celebrates December 5-9, 2025 with a focus on unity, accessibility, and inclusive educational practices.
- Upcoming Special Board Meeting
    - Scheduled for December 1, 2025, to consider agreements related to unification efforts.
- Holiday Schedule
    - Thanksgiving break begins Wednesday, November 26, 2025.
    - Classes resume Monday, December 1, 2025.
- Community and Board Member Engagement
    - Board members expressed appreciation for district leadership and teamwork.
    - Recognition of partnerships with Santa Monica College and community organizations to expand student opportunities such as esports and public policy pathways.

This comprehensive summary captures the essential information, decisions, and thematic focuses from the school board meeting transcript, reflecting the district's ongoing efforts in academic excellence, equity, community engagement, and governance.

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.