

APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE SAN MATEO COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Meeting Date: March 18, 2026

Meeting Location: San Mateo County Office of Education
101 Twin Dolphin Dr.
Redwood City, California 94065

Board Members Present: Susan Alvaro, Edith Arias, Chelsea Bonini,
Beverly Gerard, Patricia Love, Mike
O’Neill, Hugo Torres

Staff Officials Present: Marco Chávez, Superintendent;
Jennifer Perna, Executive Assistant

Other Staff Present: Ian Bain, Kevin Bultema, Tami Moore,
Randy Perez, Jae Takahashi, Mary Yung

1. **OPENING ITEMS**

A. Call to Order

Board President Hugo Torres called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

B. Approval of Agenda

Board President Torres informed that Item 5C would be pulled from the agenda because the Board was made aware of serious and credible allegations of sexual misconduct involving the individual they had planned to recognize. He stated the Board felt it was appropriate to remove the item and acknowledged the pain expressed by those affected.

After a motion by Board Member Gerard and a second by Board Member Alvaro, the March 18, 2026, agenda as amended was unanimously (Alvaro, Arias, Bonini, Gerard, Love, O’Neill, and Torres) approved.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no persons wishing to address the Board.

3. **EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH**

- A. March 2026 Employee of the Month - Curricular and Improvement Support Committee (CISC) Symposium Administrative Support Team: Sylvia Pae, Personnel Commission Analyst, Personnel Commission Services, Office of the Superintendent, and Rosemarie Pozzobon, Administrative Assistant, Research and Systems Planning, Educational Services Division

Board President Torres recognized the March 2026 Employee of the Month, the Curricular and Improvement Support Committee (CISC) Symposium Administrative Support Team: Sylvia Pae, Personnel Commission Analyst, Personnel Commission Services, Office of the Superintendent, and Rosemarie Pozzobon, Administrative Assistant, Research and Systems Planning, Educational Services Division, and honored them on behalf of the Board.

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- A. March 4, 2026, Regular Board Meeting

After a motion by Board Member O'Neill and a second by Board Member Alvaro, the Minutes of the March 4, 2026, Regular Board Meeting were unanimously (Alvaro, Arias, Bonini, Gerard, Love, O'Neill, and Torres) approved.

5. **CONSENT AGENDA**

- B. Receive Staffing Reports
D. Adopt Joint Resolution No. 26-15 Recognizing April 2026 as Public Schools Month
E. Adopt Joint Resolution No. 26-16 Recognizing April 2026 as Autism Acceptance Month
F. Adopt Joint Resolution No. 26-17 Recognizing School Volunteers and April 2026 as National Volunteer Month
G. Adopt Joint Resolution No. 26-18 Recognizing April 2026 as Deaf History Month
H. Adopt Resolution No. 26-19 Honoring Nancy Magee on Her Retirement

After a motion by Board Member O'Neill and a second by Board Member Gerard, the Consent Agenda was unanimously (Alvaro, Arias, Bonini, Gerard, Love, O'Neill, and Torres) approved.

6. **BUSINESS SERVICES DIVISION**

- A. Receive, Review, and Approve with Positive Certification the 2025-2026 Second Interim Financial Report

Kevin Bultema, Deputy Superintendent, Business Services Division, and Minette Manio, Executive Director, Internal Business Services, Business Services Division, presented the 2025-2026 Second Interim Financial Report.

BUSINESS SERVICES DIVISION (continued)

Board Member Alvaro asked about the County Office returning more than half of its property tax revenue, nearly \$40 million, to the state despite total property taxes rising to roughly \$74.5 million. Deputy Superintendent Bultema explained that although a recent funding formula change allows the County Office to keep a small portion of new revenue, most increases are still reclaimed. Because local property taxes continue to grow rapidly, the amount sent back has risen sharply, from roughly \$20 million, or about 30%, five years ago, to over 50% today.

Board Member Alvaro discussed how as local property taxes rise, the state takes back a larger share, which results in the County Office being penalized for higher local tax contributions, with reclaimed funds going toward state costs unrelated to education. Deputy Superintendent Bultema noted that this issue affects county offices but not community-funded districts, and while there may be some willingness at the state level to revisit the policy, no changes are certain.

Board Member Gerard asked whether there is a set percentage the state requires the County Office to return from excess property tax revenue. Deputy Superintendent Bultema clarified there is not a set percentage. The state uses county offices' local control funding formula (LCFF) calculations to determine how much funding they are entitled to. School districts that collect more than their LCFF amount keep the excess, but county offices only keep the amount defined by their LCFF calculation. Any property tax revenue above that is returned to the state.

Board Member Love asked about the renewed interest in conversations about excess property tax take-backs. Deputy Superintendent Bultema responded that historically the state has shut down any discussion and threatened to change the law to preserve the current system. But recently there has been a slight opening because the amounts being reclaimed have grown and more county offices are affected. There is talk of allowing county offices to keep a small portion of new revenue, although nothing is confirmed.

Board Member Love discussed the request for a Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) study and Vehicle License Fee (VLF) changes. Superintendent Chávez added that after earlier conversations with San Mateo County executives about redirecting funds from community-funded districts, and the realization of how harmful that would be, the County changed its strategy. As a result, there has been no movement or discussion about school-funding changes that would address the excess property tax issue.

Board Member Love asked about what appeared to be a large jump in Gateway program costs, and whether that increase affects how the program is being evaluated. Deputy Superintendent Bultema clarified that the increase was \$145,000 added to an existing cost of about \$600,000, bringing the total to roughly \$745,000, and the wording may have caused confusion. He explained that this change does not alter the overall approach to the program. This year the County Office intentionally held the rate charged to districts to only a 3% increase, placing responsibility on the County Office to manage rising costs internally. The hope was that stable rates would attract more students, but enrollment has not increased.

Board Member O'Neill discussed the financial impact of the Genentech lawsuit, noting that the County Office must return \$530,000 in previously paid property tax revenue. He asked when that

BUSINESS SERVICES DIVISION (continued)

adjustment would appear. Deputy Superintendent Bultema explained that since the County Office does not get to keep excess property taxes, the impact of this repayment would be a reduction in in the excess property tax payment to the state, which would be reflected in next year's budget projections.

After a motion by Board Member Gerard and a second by Board Member Love, the 2025-2026 Second Interim Financial Report was unanimously (Alvaro, Arias, Bonini, Gerard, Love, O'Neill, and Torres) approved.

B. Discuss/Act on Resolution No. 26-20 Authorizing a Short-Term Financing Loan for the San Carlos School District

Kevin Bultema, Deputy Superintendent, Business Services Division, provided information on Resolution No. 26-20 Authorizing a Short-Term Financing Loan for the San Carlos School District.

Board Member Alvaro expressed frustration that districts cannot reliably budget because state payments fluctuate and excess local revenue is taken back rather than staying in schools. She asked what happens if the state pays late. Deputy Superintendent Bultema explained that the County Office controls the timing of the cash transfer to the County Treasury and can delay it if needed. State deferrals have always been paid and the state's cash position is strong, so he expects the payment to arrive. The County Office will coordinate closely with the San Carlos School District and wait for updated projections. He assured that the County Office has full control over the timing of the cash movement.

Board Member Bonini asked whether other districts face the same risk of flipping between community-funded and state-funded status. Deputy Superintendent Bultema informed that while some districts have flipped in the past, only one district is currently on the cusp of shifting from community-funded to state-funded.

Board Member Bonini asked more broadly how many districts are financially concerning. Deputy Superintendent Bultema indicated that one district has received a concern letter and two others are being monitored because their community-funded status is only slightly above state funding levels. The San Carlos School District is the only district expected to face a cash-flow issue before the end of the fiscal year.

Board Member Love asked whether there had been any progress on efforts to fix these issues at the state level. Deputy Superintendent Bultema said there has been no movement, largely because the issue is uncommon statewide and other counties that have experienced it haven't faced the same cash challenges. As a result, there is no strong advocacy group pushing for change. The core problem stems from tax code rules governing how the county controller pulls back cash, while any potential solution would fall under education code, specifically, getting the state to release its revenue sooner. Therefore, there has not been much momentum.

Board Member Love asked whether the San Carlos School District's situation is partly due to having higher average daily attendance (ADA). Deputy Superintendent Bultema described how

BUSINESS SERVICES DIVISION (continued)

districts with declining enrollment typically remain community-funded. Ralph Crame, Chief Financial Officer, San Carlos School District, shared that the district's enrollment is increasing, so the projection is that they will flip back to LCFF. Board Member Love shared appreciation that the County Office is able to support districts facing these challenges.

Board Member O'Neill emphasized that the cash-flow problem facing the San Carlos School District is not the fault of the district, its board, its superintendent, or its business staff, but rather a consequence of state law. Deputy Superintendent Bultema agreed, sharing that the San Carlos School District should be commended for managing its cash responsibly.

After a motion by Board Member Love and a second by Board Member Alvaro, Resolution No. 26-20 Authorizing a Short-Term Financing Loan for the San Carlos School District was unanimously (Alvaro, Arias, Bonini, Gerard, Love, O'Neill, and Torres) approved.

7. CLOSED SESSION: CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL

- A. Conference with Real Property Negotiators (Government Code 54956.8); Property: 1650 S. Delaware St., San Mateo, CA 94402; SMCOE's Negotiators: Marco Chávez, Kevin Bultema; Negotiating Parties: SMCOE and Housing Endowment and Regional Trust (HEART); Under Negotiation: Price and Terms of Payment

At 7:48 p.m., Board President Torres announced the meeting would move into Closed Session to engage in Conference with Real Property Negotiators (Government Code 54956.8); Property: 1650 S. Delaware St., San Mateo, CA 94402; SMCOE's Negotiators: Marco Chávez, Kevin Bultema; Negotiating Parties: SMCOE and Housing Endowment and Regional Trust (HEART); Under Negotiation: Price and Terms of Payment.

8. OPEN SESSION: REPORT ON CLOSED SESSION

- A. Report on Actions Taken in Closed Session

The Board reconvened in Open Session at 8:56 p.m.

Board President Torres reported there were no actions taken in Closed Session.

9. OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

- A. Public Disclosure of Compensation Adjustments for San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) Confidential and Management Employees for 2025-2026

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT (continued)

Kevin Bultema, Deputy Superintendent, Business Services Division, presented the public disclosure of the compensation adjustments for San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) Confidential and Management Employees for 2025-2026.

Board Member Love asked whether the proposed 3.5% increase includes any future salary adjustments that might result from the Classification and Compensation Study. Deputy Superintendent Bultema confirmed it does not. Any recommendations from that study would be in addition to the 3.5%. However, providing the 3.5% now helps narrow the gap between current salaries and whatever the study may recommend, potentially reducing the overall impact later.

B. Superintendent's Comments

Superintendent Chávez reported that the County Office hosted its annual San Mateo County Education Employment Fair on Saturday, with 23 school districts and several private schools participating. Multiple County Office teams staffed recruitment tables and about 270 job seekers attended and had opportunities for on-the-spot interviews with districts. He thanked the Personnel Services team for organizing a successful event under the leadership of Tami Moore, Associate Superintendent, Human Resources.

Superintendent Chávez informed that San Mateo County hosted its first Mariachi and Folklórico Festival, *El Sonido del Orgullo*, at South San Francisco High School. The event was facilitated by Allison Gamlen, Coordinator, Visual and Performing Arts, Educational Services Division, in partnership with local districts and arts organizations. Mariachi and folklórico dance groups from across the county performed, and the festival highlighted cultural pride and diversity, including students of many backgrounds performing traditional Mexican music and dance.

Superintendent Chávez shared that the Youth Commission's Executive Subcommittee will open recruitment for the Youth Commission Liaison to the Board earlier than expected, so the new liaison can begin in July instead of waiting until the fall. There are currently six eligible commissioners, all rising juniors or seniors in San Mateo County public schools, and Board President Torres will participate in the selection process. The County Office will also begin recruiting a student board member from its own school programs.

10. **BOARD MEMBERS**

A. Third Reading and Action on Updated Board Policy 0450: Comprehensive Safety Plan

Superintendent Chávez provided information on the third reading of updated Board Policy 0450: Comprehensive Safety Plan.

There were no comments or questions from the Board.

BOARD MEMBERS (continued)

After a motion by Board Member Love and a second by Board Member Bonini, updated Board Policy 0450: Comprehensive Safety Plan was unanimously (Alvaro, Arias, Bonini, Gerard, Love, O’Neill, and Torres) approved.

B. Discuss/Act on Participation by Board Members in the 2026 Coast2Coast Federal Advocacy Trip in Washington D.C. April 13 - 15, 2026

Superintendent Chávez provided information on the participation by board members in the 2026 Coast2Coast Federal Advocacy Trip in Washington D.C. April 13 - 15, 2026.

Board Member Love added that the agenda item was included because she wanted to keep the option open for anyone involved in advocacy work to attend.

Board Member Alvaro questioned the value of sending board members across the country for events, noting a previous policy discouraging out-of-state travel, except in rare cases. She shared that that this particular trip may not warrant the expense, especially since the relevant officials can be met locally.

Board Member Bonini said she believes this out-of-state advocacy trip is worthwhile, noting that it offers valuable opportunities to engage with other school board members, participate in federal-level advocacy, and hear perspectives from legislators beyond the local delegation. While acknowledging the need to consider budget impacts, she respectfully disagreed that the trip lacks value. She added that if any board member is interested in attending, she would support their attendance.

Superintendent Chávez added that the California County Superintendents participate in similar advocacy trips and going as a unified group gives their messages more weight. He noted that these trips help superintendents connect with policymakers from across the state to discuss shared priorities and underscored that there is value in coordinated, in-person advocacy.

Board Member Gerard shared that she had participated in this advocacy trip twice and found it valuable, but emphasized that any county board member who goes must be prepared to speak specifically for county boards and county offices, because most attendees focus only on school districts. Throughout the trips, she repeatedly had to raise county perspectives. She stressed that anyone attending must be ready to advocate strongly for county offices, because federal policymakers need to hear both district and county impacts.

Board President Torres suggested that the advocacy trip could be a strong opportunity to focus on the issue of excess property taxes by spreading awareness and building momentum around that priority.

Board Member O’Neill emphasized that the County Board should advocate for all 84,000 students in San Mateo County, so the trip is relevant. He highlighted how federal law promised to fund 40% of special education costs, but the government only provides about 16%, creating a \$58 million annual shortfall in the county, far larger than the \$38 million in excess property taxes being discussed. He argued this shows there are important federal issues worth advocating for.

BOARD MEMBERS (continued)

Board Member Alvaro clarified that she was not saying that advocacy is unnecessary. Her point was that the most effective place to advocate is with the officials who represent the county – those based in Sacramento or the local congressional delegation. She noted that in past trips, county board members were surrounded by people advocating for school districts and county voices can get lost. She emphasized that advocacy is important, but doing it locally or in Sacramento makes more sense than a cross-country trip.

Board Member O’Neill noted that only two members of Congress represent this area, meaning just two out of 435 House members are familiar with the issues. That leaves 433 others who need to be educated. He emphasized that special education funding is a national, bipartisan issue affecting every school district in the country, which underscores the importance of broad federal advocacy.

Board Member Love said she had been prepared to attend the trip, but her schedule made it impossible. She added that if the Board’s two other Board/Superintendent Advocacy Subcommittee members were available, they would be the most logical people to attend on the Board’s behalf.

Board Member Bonini said that she believes it is important for the Board to participate in such advocacy efforts, perhaps not every year, but regularly enough to stay engaged.

There was no action taken on this item.

C. Receive Reports from the Board Ad Hoc Subcommittees and Representatives

Board Member Love reported that the Board Policy Subcommittee met and made progress reviewing several Gamut policy updates, although there is still a significant backlog. Some policies will come to the Board at the next meeting, while others need more work. One policy returning soon is the student board member policy, which will be clarified to reflect that if the County Board already has its own student selection process, it does not need to recruit from the entire county, an issue raised after a student inquiry. They will meet again on April 1 to revisit outstanding questions, address mandatory bills, and review another GAMUT update.

Board Member Love informed that Board/Superintendent Advocacy Subcommittee met to refine its school-funding priorities, including the vehicle license fee issue, the financial impact of Genentech’s property tax changes on districts, and excess property taxes. They also focused on strengthening local advocacy and expect to release a toolkit in May so board members can attend city council and school board meetings in June to promote the County Office’s role and advocate for public education. Additionally, they reviewed legislation from partner groups and agreed to support several bills. She emphasized the need for the County Office to reclaim a leadership role in artificial intelligence (AI).

Board Member Bonini reported that the Board Budget Subcommittee did not meet but has been communicating offline. With the Board Budget Study Session approaching, they plan to schedule additional meetings soon to review information received from staff.

BOARD MEMBERS (continued)

Board Member O’Neill noted that the report out from the Workforce Housing Subcommittee was covered in Closed Session.

D. Board Member Comments

Board Member Alvaro

Board Member Alvaro shared that the *Coastside News* reprinted a previous interview with longtime community leader Naomi Patridge, whose Japanese-American family was incarcerated during World War II after losing their Pescadero farm. Despite experiencing hardships, Ms. Patridge chose not to be bitter. Board Member Alvaro said the story felt especially powerful given current events and her personal connection to Ms. Patridge.

Board Member Arias

Board Member Arias reported on her visit to the South San Francisco Unified School District, where she met with Superintendent Moore and Trustee Murray. The district is in its third year of its Portrait of a Graduate initiative and its second year of strategic planning. She shared about the district’s priorities and how they operate schools from preschool through adult education, offer career and technical (CTE) programs in five industry sectors, and partner closely with Genentech on lab experiences and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) scholarships.

Board Member Arias shared that she attended the Transition to Independence Resource Fair at the County Office, which included Zumba classes, student micro-businesses, workshop rooms, and forty organizations offering information for students preparing for adulthood. The event highlighted how student-centered opportunities can support independence and skill development.

Board Member Arias noted that she participated in the first session of the California School Boards Association (CSBA) Masters in Governance program for county offices. She appreciated the discussions on trustee and superintendent roles, shared governance, strategic goals, advocacy, the significance of “shall” versus “may” in Education Code, and the importance of self-evaluation.

Board Member Arias described attending a presentation from the California Foster Youth Adjudication Task Force, with sessions highlighting the Riverside County Office of Education’s Foster Ferret app, research showing that one supportive adult can change a foster youth’s life, and the value of Bright Spots reports that showcase successful practices that can be replicated across counties. The discussions reinforced the importance of foster youth supports.

Board Member Arias noted that she plans to attend the Association of California County Boards of Education (ACCBE) conference in Riverside, and expressed appreciation for training specifically designed for county office board members. She discussed a Family Engagement Conference at the Riverside County Office of Education focused on elevating parent leadership to strengthen student success, happening one day after the ACCBE Conference. Because family engagement is a priority for her, she will reach out about attending.

Board Member Bonini

BOARD MEMBERS (continued)

Board Member Bonini reported visiting Gateway, Hillcrest, and the Anne Campbell Center, and noted an upcoming visit to Canyon Oaks on March 20. She also plans to return to Hillcrest for the CTE Showcase on March 20, and invited the other board members to join.

Board Member Bonini informed that she attended the County Board Governance Workshop, which focused on foster youth. Presentations included lived-experience speakers and a youth-led session on Foster Ferret. She noted that the conference revealed countywide activity and statutory committee work board members may have been previously unaware of. She suggested the Board may want to continue work on foster youth issues.

Board Member Bonini shared that she serves on CSBA's Annual Conference Planning Committee and was in Sacramento working on the six strands for the March 30 call for proposals. She also serves on the committee for the September CSBA County Board Conference, which will be held in Marina del Rey rather than Monterey. She encouraged submission of proposals to both conferences, noting that county representation on the planning committees is strong this year. She highlighted that the call for student performance proposals for the CSBA Annual Conference opens May 15 and closes June 24, and suggested the County Office should consider submitting student groups.

Board Member Bonini reported on activities of the San Mateo County School Boards Association (SMCSBA). Kent Award submissions total around 15–16 entries and the review process will begin soon. The final quarterly meeting will be held April 20, featuring Seeds to Solutions and, hopefully, a segment with legislators, since the legislative brunch had to be canceled due to low attendance.

Board Member Love

Board Member Love praised the resolution honoring former superintendent Nancy Magee, noting how well it captured her major contributions, from guiding schools safely through COVID to leading initiatives like the Coalition for Safe Schools and Communities, United for Youth, and Environmental Literacy. She expressed regret about being out of town for the retirement event.

Board Member Love thanked Deputy Superintendent Bultema for his extensive presentations.

Board Member Love reflected on the housing discussion, saying she had a different understanding of the program. The comments about potentially making up some of the funds in a year prompted her to wonder about long-term financial planning and whether the Budget Committee should consider broader possibilities, including housing.

Board Member Love described her participation in advocacy work with ACCBE and SMCSBA, noting that ACCBE surfaces bills board members may not otherwise see. She highlighted legislation related to interdistrict transfers, foster youth, and students transitioning from the juvenile justice system, which the Subcommittee supported.

Board Member Love said she looked forward to meeting with Superintendent Chávez the following day and appreciated his efforts to connect with board members.

Board Member O'Neill

BOARD MEMBERS (continued)

Board Member O’Neill shared he had met with Superintendent Chávez earlier in the day for a productive meeting.

Board Member O’Neill discussed attending the County Board Governance Workshop, where he enjoyed connecting with board members from other counties. One board member expressed interest in receiving the LAO report because her county returns \$14 million to the state. He spoke with a Humboldt County board member and was struck by how different that region is, with 23 tiny districts, many with under 100 students, and some combining multiple grade levels in a single classroom.

Board Member O’Neill said he was looking forward to organizing a conference call with the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, which wants to explore partnering on workforce development and economic mobility initiatives. He noted that the details are still being arranged but the conversation will focus on how the foundation might collaborate with the County Office or other entities.

Board Member Gerard

Board Member Gerard shared that she had a busy couple of weeks, including reading to a third-grade class, which was fun and energizing.

Board Member Gerard discussed visits to Gateway, Hillcrest, and the Anne Campbell Center, highlighting an impressive CTE lesson at Hillcrest where students built sensor lights from kits.

Board Member Gerard reported that she was recently trained at Oceana High School to help evaluate the senior projects.

Board Member Gerard noted that ACCBE work has been especially active, with Zoom meetings nearly every other day and several training sessions underway. She spent two hours on a planning call the previous day and encouraged colleagues to attend upcoming sessions, reminding them that recordings are available online if they cannot join live.

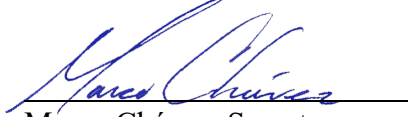
Board President Torres

Board President Torres underscored the need to reconnect with the Board’s commitments from the Governance Workshop. He emphasized the importance of holding each other accountable to shared norms—assuming positive intent, asking questions to understand differing perspectives, and engaging in disagreement respectfully and in alignment with the Board’s standards. He reminded the group that productive conversations often come from differing viewpoints, and how those conversations are conducted matters.

Board President Torres noted he had forgotten to give a Board Governance Work Group Subcommittee update earlier in the meeting. He reported that they met with the facilitators to begin developing action-oriented goals, which the Board had expressed interest in. Some individual reflection and personal work are still needed among board members, and he encouraged colleagues to consider what they each need to address so the next Governance Workshop can focus on unified, collective action. He closed by emphasizing that individual board members have no power alone – effectiveness comes only when the Board acts together.

11. **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 9:46 p.m. Board President Torres announced the next regular meeting will take place on Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Marco Chávez", is written over a horizontal line.

Marco Chávez, Secretary

jlp