



678 W. 18th Street
Merced, CA
November 13, 2025
6:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Executive Council: Estella Dunn, Loretta Spence, Richale Babbs, Annette Lee

Members: Pamela Merritt-Bennett, Charlie Bennett, Herschel Thompson, Deanna Cosby, Shirley Winzer

Parent Ambassador: Richale Babbs, Shirley Winzer

Visitors: Latoya Blocker, Serenity Health Services

Opening Prayer: The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Dunn with prayer by Annette Lee. Secretary Babbs reminded membership that the meeting was being recorded.

Pledge: The pledge was led by Chair Dunn.

Introductions: Everyone introduced themselves.

Adoption of Agenda: M/S by Pamela Merritt-Bennett and Annette Lee to “**accept the agenda with an addition for a discussion on suspending kindergartners.**” Motion carried.

Adoption of Minutes: M/S by Annette Lee and Richale Babbs to “**accept the October 9, 2025, minutes as presented.**” Motion carried.

Treasurer’s Report: Chair Dunn reported expenses of: Website, \$29.00; Dollar Tree, \$41.74; Staples-copies, \$28.36; Parking for Conference, \$7.50; Fuel for Conference, \$53.66; Parking for Conference, \$7.50; Auntie’s-meeting meals for October, \$300.00; M/S by Richale Babbs and Pamela Merritt-Bennett to “**accept the Treasurer’s report as presented.**” Motion carried.

Presentation: Ms. Pamela Merritt-Bennett did a presentation on the data for Merced City School District for English and Math with only 24.36% passing in 2025. The graph went back to 2015 for comparison. She emphasized the need for better support for African American students. Discussed the challenges and trends in test scores, noting the impact of COVID-19 and the seesaw effect; the data from the Department of Education, showing chronic absenteeism and suspension rates for African American students; discussion on Suspension Policies and Behavior Protocols with concerns about the new suspension protocol and its potential impact on African American students; the need for a cooling-down room and the importance of addressing the root causes of behavioral issues; Annette Lee shared her experience with a special needs student and the need for better support and understanding from school staff; suggests researching programs like the Heart program in Atwater to see if they could be implemented in Merced.

MBPSB General Meeting

November 13, 2025

Page 2

Board Meeting and Other Reports: The Chair reported she and Loretta Spence attended the Central Valley Movement Building Organizing Institute Conference in Modesto in October; we're still waiting for another testimonial from a member for posting on the website; unfortunately, SB19 was signed into law on October 10; contact has been made with Merced College and the Ebony Socialites and they have accepted our invitation to participate in our "Career and Scholarship Information Fair on January 8, 2026. There were no reports from the Vice-Chair, MUHSD, Atwater, or Weaver Board meetings. Richale Babbs reported on Board meeting for MCSD.

Action Items:

- Email the superintendent to inquire about the steps required to change the new "extreme behavior response protocol."
- Attend the school board meeting on Tuesday to address the new protocol and ask the superintendent directly about it.
- Continue organizing the career and scholarship information fair, including following up with potential presenters.
- Get the meeting flyer updated with the group's monthly meeting dates and work on distributing it to the schools.

Community Input and Closing Remarks

• Latoya Blocker from Serenity Health Services provides information about their services, including behavioral health counseling and resource referrals. The organization offers various services, including intake assessments, counseling for children and parents, family counseling, and advocacy in schools. They help young people transition out of school, assisting with job navigation, applications, and transportation if needed. The organization works with members for six months to a year, depending on their needs, and provides resources for those not eligible for Medi-Cal. If a family is not eligible for Medi-Cal, they will provide resources and possibly a quick conversation to assess their needs.

Challenges in School Attendance and Academic Performance

- discussed the issue of low school attendance and suspensions, with 50% of students not attending school.
- The board members are concerned about the long-term impact of these issues, noting that it has been a problem for over 60 years.
- Speaker 2 mentions a study in their humanities class about systems and laws created for bias and fear, which relates to the educational system.
- Speaker 1 shares historical context, stating that education was created in Africa and later adopted by Europeans.

Efforts to Improve School Board and Community Collaboration

- Speaker 19 talks about the board's efforts to meet with pastors to address concerns about school attendance and suspensions.
- The board has identified four key issues to address, including hiring black staff, cultural sensitivity training, resources for churches and community efforts, and improving test scores.
- Speaker 2 highlights the difficulty of finding African American candidates for positions due to language restrictions in job descriptions.
- Speaker 19 shares a personal story about a relative who was passed over for a position due to language requirements, despite having more experience.

Concerns About Special Education and Academic Support

- Speaker 19 discusses the challenges faced by special education students, including missing assignments and lack of support from teachers.
- Speaker 2 emphasizes the need for a collaborative approach between the community, parents, and teachers to address these issues.
- Speaker 15 suggests that teachers need better training and support to effectively educate students, especially those with special needs.
- Speaker 22 mentions the importance of restorative justice and mentoring for students who have experienced trauma or bullying.

Final Thoughts and Next Steps

- Speaker 1 summarizes the meeting, noting the importance of community involvement and collaboration with churches.
- Speaker 3 shares concerns about the effectiveness of special education programs and the need for better evaluation and support.
- Speaker 19 highlights the importance of addressing social and emotional needs in addition to academic support.
- The meeting concludes with plans for future meetings and continued efforts to support the community and improve educational outcomes.

Next meeting on December 11, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. Adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Richale Babbs, Secretary