

Brainstorming for improvements at Del Mar schools



Participants share ideas for campus improvements during a session at Carmel Del Mar School.

What should we know about campus safety and security? How could the multi-use room be improved? What about fixing up libraries and outdoor spaces?

Del Mar Union School District is asking these questions directly to parents and teachers during brainstorming sessions at each of the district's schools.

As the district lays plans to build two new schools and modernize seven others, it is hosting the sessions at each campus to gather input from members of each school's community.

The information exchange follows voters' November 2018 approval of [Measure MM](#), which provides funding to replace 60-year-old Del Mar Heights School on the west side of the district and build a ninth campus, in Pacific Highlands Ranch, on the east side. Modernization is planned at all campuses.

The district-wide planning process included development of a [Facilities Master Plan](#), which the Board of Trustees approved in July and which identifies needs at each school. Today, Superintendent Holly

McClurg and her facilities team are hosting brainstorming sessions to gather input specific to each site. When the sessions end in April, the information will be compiled into a report for the Board of Trustees.

“How awesome is it for the district to reach out like this?” said school facilities expert Eric Hall during a session in January at Carmel Del Mar School. “I appreciate the work of DMUSD and its culture of transparency, community engagement and communication.”

About 40 community members attended the Carmel Del Mar session and soon divided into smaller groups. Discussions focused on how to improve safety, multi-use rooms, common learning areas and outdoor spaces. Moderators penned the suggestions onto large, paper charts.



Facilities expert Eric Hall.

An art teacher did what art teachers do: She drew an illustration showing how to make an entrance safer for pedestrians. A parent who said she enjoys volunteering in the classroom suggested that shared spaces outside of the classroom be furnished to better accommodate learning groups. Multi-use rooms are where memories are made, another parent said, and Carmel Del Mar’s MUR should have better restrooms and better connections to the rest of the school. Still other parents suggested more furnishings and improvements to the lunch areas and playgrounds, as social time is an important part of learning.

The wish lists filled several sheets of chart paper.

After the breakout groups compared notes, the district’s executive director of capital programs and technology, Chris Delehanty, told participants every school in the district needs work.

At Del Mar Heights, portable classrooms cover much of the blacktop at the district’s oldest school, which must be replaced, he said. In the developing community of Pacific Highlands Ranch, enrollments at neighboring schools could spike if the district does not build a new campus within three years.

Elsewhere in the district, roofs and HVAC units need replacing. As a matter of parity, all classrooms must have access to the latest technology. The district is examining “quick-start” projects – furnishings, painting and carpeting, for instance – as well as larger projects that take more time to plan and build.

Any project must be built to the highest level of structural integrity and accessibility, said Hall, an expert in facilities financing, planning and construction, as all public schools are designated as emergency shelters.



Superintendent Holly McClurg: "We've gotten great input."

Funding for projects will become available in the spring.

At the end of the 90-minute session, Superintendent McClurg thanked participants.

“We’ve gotten great input,” she said. “I can’t wait for the work to happen.”

A schedule of brainstorming sessions can be found at www.dmusd.org. To provide input on school improvements, e-mail: facilities@dmusd.org