



CALIFORNIA LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS

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## Why You Should Take Over Your Exec Committee

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If you won your election, you have a lot of decisions to make as you prepare to assume your seat on the board. One of the most important considerations is the Executive Committee. If the members of your board now reflect a majority of parent first advocates, your chance for future success depends on who runs the Executive Committee sitting as President and Vice President of the board. The executive officers drive the agenda and control the administration of the district.

### You should take over the Executive Committee of your board

Provided you have the support and votes, determine who among your parent first coalition would be the most effective leader. If you are part of a five-member board, you will need three of those seats to vote in your favor, or if part of a seven-member board, you will need four votes. Often the executive committee is the President and Vice President. Other boards may use the terms President and President Pro Tem.

Different boards have varying by-laws, typically the President or Executive Committee puts together the agenda with the Superintendent, which really sets the tone of the meeting. Depending on your board's by-laws other members of the board may also be able to add items to the agenda. However, there will need to be a majority vote for anything to pass.

You can avoid violating the Brown Act\* by accessing mentors outside of your board to help you navigate the challenges in your new position. You can also review past agendas and meetings for guidance. A majority of the board cannot speak about an issue privately that might eventually come before the board. You are allowed socialize with a majority of the board as long no business or future business is discussed.

### How to hit the ground running as a new school board member

You have probably attended several board meetings as a spectator, but now that you have won, you might want to go back and look at a few of the past meetings. There should be recordings on your website. This exercise can provide a lot of insight into several areas, from how to run a meeting, to interaction with the superintendent, staff, board counsel and the public. You can see what works for you and what needs to change. You might also discover if you have any allies.

Keep in mind you always have CPC and other amazing organizations like PRI to support you through the challenges of being a new school board member.



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## What you need to know about the Brown Act

**\*The Brown Act**, also known as California's "sunshine" law, requires local government business to be conducted at open and public meetings, except in very limited situations. The name comes from its author, former Assemblymember Ralph M. Brown. Passed in 1953, the Brown Act guarantees the public's right to attend and participate in meetings of local government either in person or virtually if circumstances don't allow for in-person attendance.

Some examples of local government meetings covered by the Act include councils, boards, commissions and committees. The location where the meeting is held must be free and accessible to the public and an agenda must be posted within a certain amount of time so that the public knows what will be discussed. Depending on the type of meeting, 24 to 72 hours notice is required.

The Brown Act also specifies what items can be discussed in closed session (privately) rather than in public. The most common items that are allowed to be discussed during closed session are litigation, personnel matters, labor negotiations, and real estate negotiations. If a Brown Act violation occurs, a person can ask the courts or the district attorney for an order to prevent any future violations. If the Brown Act violation actually results in action being taken, then the court can be requested to send a "cure and correct" demand letter. If only the Brown Act is violated but no action is taken, then a "cure and correct" is not appropriate; instead only an order to prevent future violations would be requested.

## Join CLEO Today!

California Local Elected Officials (CLEO) is a membership organization that supports, advises, and educates local elected officials building durable networks throughout California's thousands of cities, counties, school and special districts. CLEO members are elected and appointed officials who stand for financial sustainability, government transparency and personal liberty.

Get the tools and support you need to be a leader in good governance. Become part of the CLEO community today at [calelecteds.org](http://calelecteds.org).



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