

Suggestions for a Virtual School Community Meeting

A detailed guide on running an engaging virtual school community meeting

1. Select multiple times to encourage participation.

With *virtual* events, families don't have to plan their day around getting to school. But even working from home, people are busy. Be flexible. Offer your event at multiple times – at least twice, one in the morning and one in the evening. Providing key information and answering questions more than once can establish a great sense of good will with your school communities. Keep events short and poignant, leaving time to answer questions verbally and/or in the virtual chat.

2. Send a *meaningful* invitation and pre-event updates to your virtual audience.

A meaningful invitation invites people to participate in a conversation, instead of just hearing information. Let your community know that their feedback is valuable and encouraged.

3. Design clear connection instructions for remote participants

Your remote audience shouldn't need to scramble for links and instructions on the event day. Attach clear dial-in or login instructions and a detailed guide on what to do if they have trouble connecting. Include basic troubleshooting instructions.

4. Audio Tips

Use headphones/earbuds rather than speakers to eliminate feedback. Mute sounds from other devices and try to maintain as quiet of an environment as possible. Speak up.

5. Provide a clear agenda with event details

A clear agenda can make all the difference in enticing your families to attend. A well-crafted agenda informs your attendees on what to expect and they can clearly see that they will find value in the time spent.

Example

School Logo

Event Title

Time/Date

Description of event and who will be participating

Time	Opening Remarks	Who
Time	Opening Engagement Item Poll or Survey	
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specific Item• Specific Item• Specific Item	Who
Time	Question and Answer	Who

	(Participants will be asked to put their questions in the chat window)	
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6. Invite questions in advance

Crowdsourcing questions a few days or weeks before a town hall creates anticipation for your audience to attend. Your virtual audience will also feel involved in shaping the event. Select one person to receive, curate and theme questions as they come in.

7. Use the chat feature to gather questions during the program

Designate one person to monitor the chat and alert you to questions as they come in, verbally, or offline by text or email. As the facilitator you may wish to monitor the chat but very often too many questions will come on and leave the screen before you can get a sense of what is being asked by your audience.

8. Keep your virtual audience engaged with interactive tactics

If speakers tend to lose their audience after 10 minutes during in-person presentations, can you imagine how much worse it is if their audience is not present in the room? Maintaining the connection and engagement with your virtual audience is much more difficult due to the absence in the atmosphere and the increase in distractions.

Introducing interactive activities such as live polls and quizzes throughout the event keeps your audience engaged and energized. Interactive tactics also help to create a social element to an otherwise individual-oriented town hall.

Opinion poll

Before opening your presentation, you can conduct a quick poll with your audience on a something general or a topic related to what you are covering. For example, you could open with “What topic is most important? What should discuss first? Write your response in the chat.” The person monitoring the chat can share the results.

Use slides to deepen understanding

Use your slides to convey points to your audience. Prepare a few PowerPoint slides to support expected topics and simply share your screen so that viewers can see. This is a level of interactivity that further creates interest during the program.

Provide a recording and summary of the event

Some families will inevitably miss the meeting, even if you have multiple meetings. You can share a link to the recorded meeting in your next school email or via your school’s website along with a summary of what occurred.

Other Technical Tips to help your online experience

Video Tips

Ensure proper framing. Allow for a little bit of room above your head, but not too much. Get the camera as eye-level as possible, rather than looking down too extreme.

Ensure that what's behind you is not inappropriate or distracting.

Choose an environment with plenty of light in front of you, even from side-to-side. Avoid very bright lights or the sun shining in through a window behind you.

Meeting Tips

Even while you're not talking, other participants or viewers may still see you. Smile (if appropriate). Stay engaged.

On Zoom, you can click/tap the Speaker View/Gallery View button to toggle back and forth between seeing the speaker and seeing a multi-view of everyone. Other participants and public viewers will not see/know which view you've selected.

Use the Chat button to send a message to all participants or a private message to individual participants. These messages will not be broadcast to the public.

Use the Share Screen feature to share PDF's, PowerPoints, etc. You can also drop links into the chat for external resources relevant to the conversation.

