

SUMMARY REPORT REGARDING THE HELENA MODRZEJEWSKA POLISH SCHOOL IN YORBA LINDA

Prepared by

Polish American Congress of Southern California

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Preliminary Statement

This report has been prepared by the Polish American Congress of Southern California following a series of discussions with individuals and groups associated with the Helena Modrzejewska Polish School in Yorba Linda. Its purpose is to provide an objective summary of the perspectives, experiences, and observations shared during those discussions.

This report is not intended to serve as an audit, legal opinion, investigative report, or resolution of any existing disputes. Likewise, it should not be interpreted as assigning responsibility or establishing findings of fact. Rather, it reflects the viewpoints expressed by participants and identifies recurring themes that emerged throughout the discussions.

The Polish American Congress of Southern California undertook this initiative with the sole objective of fostering dialogue, encouraging mutual understanding, and supporting efforts that contribute to the long-term success and stability of the school community.

I. Introduction

The Polish American Congress (PAC) is a nationwide nonprofit organization representing the Polish-American community throughout the United States. Its membership includes educational, cultural, civic, veterans', religious, and community organizations, as well as individual members. Among PAC's longstanding missions are the preservation of the Polish language, culture, and heritage, the promotion of civic engagement, and the strengthening of Polish-American communities.

The Polish American Congress of Southern California was invited to facilitate discussions concerning the Helena Modrzejewska Polish School in Yorba Linda, which has experienced organizational challenges and internal tensions in recent years. PAC's role was not to investigate or resolve disputes, but rather to provide a neutral forum where the perspectives of all interested stakeholders could be heard and better understood.

This report summarizes the discussions that took place and highlights the principal themes that emerged during the process.

Between April and June 2026, representatives of the Polish American Congress of Southern California met with members of the Board of Directors, school leadership, former teachers, parents, and representatives of governing boards from other Polish schools throughout Southern California. The purpose of these discussions was to develop a comprehensive understanding of the issues facing the school, identify recurring concerns and opportunities, and document observations that may support continued dialogue and the school's future development.

II. Scope of the Discussions

As part of this initiative, the following meetings were held:

- **April 18, 2026** – Meeting with the School Administration and representatives of the Board of Directors.
- **April 24, 2026** – Meeting with former teachers.
- **April 27, 2026** – Meeting with former members of the Parents' Council and parents of current students.
- **June 12, 2026** – Meeting with representatives of the governing boards of other Polish schools operating in California.

All discussions were informational and consultative in nature. The objective was not to resolve disputes, evaluate individual conduct, or determine responsibility, but rather to better understand the diverse perspectives regarding the school's governance, operations, and future development.

III. Key Findings

1. Shared Commitment to the School's Future

Despite significant differences in how participants viewed the current situation, every group expressed a strong commitment to the Helena Modrzejewska Polish School and its continued success.

Members of the Board of Directors, school leadership, teachers, parents, and former members of the school's governing bodies consistently emphasized the importance of preserving a high standard of Polish language and cultural education while ensuring the school's long-term stability and growth.

Although perspectives on recent events often differed, there was broad agreement that the school's continued success should remain the primary objective of all members of the school community.

2. Declining Student Enrollment

One of the most frequently discussed concerns was the significant decline in student enrollment in recent years.

Enrollment data reported by the school to the **Centre for the Development of Polish Education Abroad (ORPEG)** indicates the following:

School Year	Number of Students
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2018/2019	106
2019/2020	101
2020/2021	84
2021/2022	94
2022/2023	105
2023/2024	
2024/2025	74
2025/2026	60

The available data reflects a noticeable downward trend in enrollment over the past several years.

Regardless of the factors contributing to this decline, participants widely agreed that reversing this trend should be among the school's highest priorities. Sustaining enrollment is essential not only to the school's financial stability but also to its ability to fulfill its educational mission and serve future generations of Polish American families.

3. Faculty Turnover

Another recurring topic was the departure of several teachers and individuals who had previously served in leadership positions.

Former teachers described challenges related primarily to communication, limited opportunities to participate in decision-making, and a deterioration of the collaborative working environment.

Representatives of the school, however, emphasized that administrative decisions have been made in accordance with the school's governing policies and procedures and were intended to ensure the institution's continued stability and effective operation.

The discussions reflected differing perspectives regarding the underlying causes of faculty turnover. Nevertheless, many participants acknowledged the importance of maintaining a supportive professional environment that encourages long-term engagement and collaboration among educators.

4. Communication and Transparency

Communication emerged as one of the most consistently discussed topics throughout the meetings.

Parents and former teachers expressed a desire for greater transparency regarding administrative decisions, improved communication regarding school operations, and broader access to information affecting the school community.

Representatives of the school noted that formal communication channels and opportunities for participation already exist, including open meetings and established governance procedures.

While opinions differed regarding the effectiveness of current practices, many participants agreed that continued efforts to strengthen communication could help build trust, improve collaboration, and reduce misunderstandings among members of the school community.

5. Parent Engagement

Many participants emphasized the important role parents play in the life of the school and encouraged greater parental involvement in school activities and initiatives.

At the same time, participants observed that meaningful collaboration requires active participation from both parents and school leadership. Building strong partnerships between families and the school was widely viewed as an important factor in supporting student success and strengthening the overall school community.

Participants consistently recognized parents as valuable partners whose perspectives, experience, and involvement can make meaningful contributions to the school's continued development.

6. Professional Development for Teachers

Representatives of other Polish schools in Southern California highlighted the importance of investing in the professional growth of teachers through continuing education, professional training, educational conferences, and participation in collaborative learning initiatives.

They emphasized that supporting educators' professional development not only enhances the quality of instruction but also contributes to faculty retention, organizational stability, and the long-term success of the school.

Schools that prioritize ongoing professional development were generally viewed as being better positioned to adapt to changing educational needs while maintaining high academic standards.

IV. Best Practices Observed at Other Polish Schools

During discussions with representatives of other Polish schools throughout Southern California, several practices were consistently identified as contributing to effective school governance, strong community engagement, and long-term organizational stability.

While each school operates within its own unique circumstances, participants noted that the following practices have proven beneficial across multiple institutions:

- Holding regular informational meetings that provide parents with opportunities to receive updates, ask questions, and engage in meaningful dialogue with school leadership.
- Maintaining clear and consistent communication among the Board of Directors, school administration, teachers, and parents.
- Encouraging and supporting initiatives proposed by teachers and parents that contribute to the educational, cultural, and social life of the school.
- Investing in the ongoing professional development of teachers through training opportunities, educational conferences, and collaborative programs.
- Promoting transparency by communicating significant decisions, policies, and organizational developments in a timely and accessible manner.
- Fostering a culture of mutual respect, collaboration, and shared responsibility among all members of the school community.
- Addressing disagreements through open dialogue and a willingness to seek practical, collaborative solutions.

Participants emphasized that these practices are not intended as prescriptive recommendations for any particular school. Rather, they represent approaches that have contributed to positive organizational outcomes in comparable educational settings.

V. Observations Based on the Discussions

Throughout the discussions, several themes emerged consistently across stakeholder groups, regardless of individual perspectives or experiences.

Communication, transparency in decision-making, parental engagement, collaboration with teachers, and strategies for addressing declining student enrollment were among the issues most frequently raised by participants.

Although opinions differed regarding the causes of the school's current challenges, many participants expressed a shared belief that greater dialogue and stronger collaboration could help strengthen relationships within the school community and support the institution's long-term success.

Representatives of other Polish schools also observed that sustainable organizational development is most often achieved through transparent governance, open communication, mutual respect, and a willingness among all stakeholders to work collaboratively toward common goals.

A recurring theme throughout the discussions was the recognition that preserving a strong sense of community is essential to the long-term vitality of a Polish supplementary school. Participants consistently emphasized that successful schools rely not only on effective governance but also on active engagement and mutual trust among school leadership, teachers, parents, volunteers, and students.

The discussions also demonstrated that, despite differing viewpoints, participants shared a common commitment to preserving Polish language education and cultural heritage for future

generations. This shared commitment provides an important foundation for continued dialogue and constructive collaboration.

VI. Conclusion

The Polish American Congress of Southern California undertook these discussions with the sole purpose of developing a clearer understanding of the situation at the Helena Modrzejewska Polish School in Yorba Linda and providing a structured opportunity for stakeholders to share their perspectives.

The meetings demonstrated that, while participants often held differing interpretations of past events and current challenges, there is a consistently shared commitment to the school's mission and long-term success. This common foundation represents an important point of alignment across all groups involved.

The issues most frequently raised throughout the discussions included communication between governing bodies, the level of parental engagement, collaboration between school leadership and teachers, transparency in decision-making processes, and concerns regarding declining student enrollment.

Although these issues were viewed differently by various participants, there was broad agreement that continued dialogue and improved cooperation among stakeholders could contribute positively to the school's future development.

The Polish American Congress of Southern California does not serve as a governing, supervisory, or adjudicative body in relation to the school, nor does it seek to resolve disputes or assign responsibility. Its role in this process was limited to facilitating discussions and documenting the perspectives shared by participants.

At the same time, as a long-standing organization serving the Polish-American community, PAC recognizes the importance of supporting initiatives that promote constructive dialogue, mutual understanding, and cooperation within Polish educational and cultural institutions.

Based on the discussions held, it is the view of PAC that the continued development of the school will depend primarily on the strengthening of communication and trust between the Board of Directors, school leadership, teachers, and parents. Experiences of other Polish schools in California indicate that even in situations of differing viewpoints, it is possible to develop effective solutions when stakeholders are committed to open communication and collaboration.

PAC encourages all parties involved to continue engaging in dialogue aimed at identifying shared solutions that respond to the evolving needs of the school community. The future of the school ultimately depends on the collective engagement of its community. A shared commitment to the school's mission — including the preservation of Polish language, culture, and heritage — should remain the guiding principle for all future efforts.

Appendix 1

Polska Szkoła. ORPEG Baza danych szkół. (2025, November 21).

<https://orpeg.gov.pl/db/web/database/entry/7428>