

BERKELEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Minutes, Regular Meeting

OFFICIAL MINUTES

Wednesday, March 30, 2011
Berkeley Unified School District
2134 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Berkeley CA 94704

Roll Call 6:00pm

Members Present:

Beatriz Leyva-Cutler, President
John T. Selawsky, Vice President /Clerk
Karen Hemphill, Director
Leah Wilson, Director
Josh Daniels, Director
Lias Djili, Student Director

Administration: Superintendent William Huyett, Secretary
Javetta Cleveland, Deputy Superintendent
Neil Smith, Assistant Superintendent of Educational
Services
Delia Ruiz, Assistant Superintendent of Human
Resources

President Leyva-Cutler called the meeting to order at 7:50 pm

Report Closed Session Actions

The Board discussed REALM facilities

The Board received updates on collective bargaining.

Approve Settlement Agreement-Classified

Hemphill/Selawsky and approved on a vote of 5-0

Approve Settlement Agreement-Certificated

Hemphill/Selawsky and approved on a vote of 5-0

Appointment of Director of Evaluation and Assessment

Hemphill/Selawsky and approved on a vote of 5-0

Expulsion:

Student Case No. 1011-21-042897

Wilson/Selawsky and approved on a vote of 4-1 (Hemphill voting no)

APPROVAL OF REGULAR AGENDA

2.2A pulled by Administration

Selawsky/Hemphill and approved as amended on a vote of 5-0

Public Testimony

Tony Thurman, Board member from West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD), came to the meeting hoping that WCCUSD can work with BUSD to share best practices in regards to student safety. WCCUSD has a daytime curfew on campus. The curfew has made an impact with truant students. Students wear ID badges. He would like to see a regional collaboration/partnership with larger urban schools in the east bay. People are bringing weapons into our communities. Students do not feel safe. They can be part of the solution. He encouraged the Board to listen to the student voice.

Todd Walker, youth activist, suggested the District should have had the special meeting six months ago when a BHS student was killed with a gun. He suggested bringing community members onto the BHS campus to mentor students. Joyce Fleming, BHS parent, "There are a lot of great things happening at BHS." She is scared for her daughter and BHS teachers. Ms. Fleming suggested that people can walk onto campus without being checked. "Non BHS students access our campus." "The problem is the open campus. The situation is far too complex to blame only weapons. We need to reach out to at risk students. It is not suddenly a dangerous place. The majority of students feel safe at BHS." Limiting campus entrances and checking ids was encouraged by a parent.

Denise Diggs-Ray, parent and District employee, requested that the Board adopt a policy in regards to preventing harassment and bullying.

A parent stated that her daughter feels safe but has also witnessed violence on campus. She requested to meet with her son's teacher at John Muir. The teacher is refusing to meet with her. She is working with the principal, human resources and the union representative.

A parent was upset that law enforcement officers have not been brought onto campus. He suggested that BHS safety officers need to understand law enforcement better.

A parent communicated the thoughts of his daughter. She wished that the principal wasn't so honest. He is happy Mr. Scuderi is so honest and communicating. The men on the security staff are good men and they

try hard. They are all the same race and the same gender. The diversity of the security staff would lend different perspectives.

Peggy Powers, Washington PTA President, “Washington elementary school is right across the street from BHS and our principal is not informed about incidents at BHS to help keep the students and staff safe. BHS students are part of the Washington family. Everything you are learning during this process needs to be passed down to the middle schools.”

UNION REPORT

Paula Phillips, BCCE President, expressed concern for the growing number of guns in and around our campus. She suggested the recent events reinforce the need for 1) sites to update their safety plans and to inform staff regarding their plans. 2) review rules and behavioral expectations of our students 3) enforce standards for safe buildings. Many doors only lock from the outside. Teachers would have to go out into the halls to secure their classrooms. AFT is submitting a bill to the Assembly that would require new construction to have doors that could be locked from both sides. Ms. Phillips suggested the District and community support Assembly Bill 85.

ACTION ITEMS

2.1-A

Amended Initial Proposal for a Successor Agreement with BCCE

Staff Recommendation:

Allow public review and comment, approve the request to negotiate, and direct staff to establish parameters to negotiate with BCCE.

Open and Closed public hearing

Selawsky/Wilson and approved unanimously 5-0

2.2-A

Joint Initial Proposal of the Berkeley Unified School District and the Professional and Technical Engineers, Local 21, for the 2011-2012 School Year

Staff Recommendation:

Allow public review and comment, approve the request to negotiate, and direct staff to establish parameters to negotiate a successor agreement.

Pulled from the agenda by Administration

2.3-A

Joint Initial Proposal of the Berkeley Unified School District and the Union of Berkeley Administrators for the 2011-2012 School Year

Staff Recommendation:

Allow public review and comment, approve the request to negotiate, and direct staff to establish parameters to negotiate a successor agreement.

Opened and Closed public hearing

Selawsky/Hemphill and approved unanimously 5-0

INFORMATION ITEMS

1.1-I

Response to Weapons on Campus

Received for information

Presented by Superintendent Huyett, Dr. Susan Craig, Pasquale Scuderi and Ardarius McDonald.

Supt. Huyett thanked the staff for their response to the incident and Principal Scuderi for his leadership. “Both the criticism and complements paid to us tonight by the community are justified.” Mr. Huyett thanked the police department for their immediate response to the past incidents and for working with the District.

Focus groups with students conducted by Pastor McBride and the Life Line group are taking place this week. We want to make sure we capture the student voice.

Supt. Huyett stated, “BHS is not unique in having to deal with guns on campus. Civil discourse and constructive dialogue about the best solutions for BUSD is the only way for us to find solutions. I do believe that some things have to change. We are very proud about the way we were. It has brought us uniqueness, praise and awards. But times change and things change. We have to make strategies that will make a difference. What is possible and doable and what will make the most impact.”

Dr. Susan Craig: We receive a lot of feedback from the Monday night meeting to include.

- Citizen peacekeepers at schools
- Metal detectors- pros and cons
- Student education about safety
- Mentors for high-risk students
- More training for staff on safety issues
- Peer involvement to change student attitudes
- Questions about inequity in search and seizure
- Information from “Black Youth in Crisis” issues in neighborhood making their way into BHS.

Recommendations from the Berkeley Police Department

- Limit open campus at BHS and B-Tech-offer as a privilege rather than a right
- Improve the school security program with more training, uniforms and equipment
- Provide additional School Resource Officer coverage
- Require visible ID cards for students and require them to be visible
- Provide comprehensive intake and case management for the highest risk students

Ideas Being Considered

- Require visible student ID badges
- Provide additional Safety Officer training and review roles and responsibilities
- Access campus supervision- coverage of campus and gates
- Pilot a Restorative Justice Program in selected small schools
- Work with Probation Department to enhance supervision and support of students on probation
- Enhance intake procedures and case management for highest risk students
- Increase supervision of park and adjacent areas
- Enhance strategies to reduce truancy

We are not considering metal detectors at this time. The evidence is that they are not very effective at schools of our size. They are not being recommended by the Berkeley Police Department. They are not practical for our school having an open campus at lunch.

Principal Scuderi wanted to thank his staff for their work and support during the events over the past few weeks. “It saddens me that our school culture has taken a hit.” He wanted to give a lot of credit to the school safety officers. “They are a group of professionals that will rise to the occasion. Our staff is performing at a high level under a tremendous amount of stress.” Ardarius McDonald, Dean, “Our emotions are high. We need to balance our emotions with logic. How power, privilege and proceeds have put us in this position. This is not unique to BHS. Many around this country are dealing with this. We need to evaluate why the students are feeling vulnerable enough to decide to carry a weapon to school. The main focus needs to stay on teaching and learning. We are fortunate that no one has been injured or killed.”

Director Selawsky thanked Principal Scuderi and Dean McDonald. “Things have been handled in an exemplary manner. The Board is taking this incredibly seriously. I do not disagree with any of the

possibilities suggested. The obvious first step to me is the id badges.” He wanted to know if the camera’s are operable and being used. Dean McDonald responded that the cameras are being used regularly. There are a couple of blind spots and maintenance issues. Director Selawsky would also like to see a District wide safety committee created. He wanted to make sure that everything being done at BHS is also being done at BTech. He wants to make sure that we are talking with peer groups. “They can provide a lot of information to us. The student voice is critical.” Principal Scuderi stated that there have been several rich discussions with students. Pastor McBride will be leading focus groups by non school staff hoping to get different perspectives. Director Selawsky would like some clarity of the roles of the safety officers and police department in an emergency. He noticed that nothing was presented about gang affiliation. “Do we have any information? Will it be shared with the Board.” Principal Scuderi stated that they do not believe there to be a link between the incidents and gangs. We do have gang culture on BHS campus. Supt. Huyett suggested that we review gang attire.

Lias Djili, Student Director: The administration has done a great job. The students appreciate it. The presence of the BPD has also made us feel safe. The incidents we are having are criminal problems. We do not have a Columbine or Virginia Tech problem. The majority of students are not in fear of being harmed. It is refreshing to hear that metal detectors are not being considered at this time. A locked campus is not the way to go either. People who want to bring weapons on campus will find a way to get them on no matter what. Our over reaction can end up hurting us more then helping us. The safety officers have been responding well, but there are some inadequacies in the staff. The old gymnasium is hard to monitor. The student voice is most important. I urge that we do not jump to hasty decisions without collaborating with the students.

Director Daniels: What is the schedule to come back with actual recommendations? Supt. Huyett responded that they would share a schedule on Friday in Friday notes. Can we discuss publicly at all the students who were involved? Dr. Craig responded that the District can not share any information, where a student could be inadvertently identified. Director Daniels agreed in starting a District wide safety committee. “I am not sure that all the ideas that could work at BHS also apply to BTech. It is not the same situation but is the same problem.” He is interested in future community meetings and using text messaging to communicate with parents. He requested that we be cognizant about how the school culture is being impacted.

Principal Scuderi: “We are finding an alarmingly casual relationship between young people and firearms.”

Director Hemphill: “There are some people in our community that are trying to link the number of students on probation on our campus and the incidents at BHS and that they are the cause of the problem.” She would like to see a plan at the April 13th meeting about what we can do to move forward immediately. She would like to see student id badges implemented by the end of the year. She suggested that all teachers and staff need to have photos IDs as well. “We need to look more closely at visitor protocols. If they don’t have a student, staff or visitor badge, they need to be addressed immediately. Students are afraid of who maybe in their school.” She would like to see a status report in Friday notes, but also publicly at the next Board meeting. “We need to keep the public informed.” She wanted to make sure that Washington Elementary is being kept informed of events. Director Hemphill would also like to focus on the park at lunch time and immediately after school. “These are areas that people may see our students as customers for drugs or weapons. The park is a retail opportunity for kids in the Bay Area. The park is surrounded by BHS, City Hall and the Police Department. Our safety officers have been doing a good job, but their job may be ill defined.”

Principal Scuderi responded that they utilize school resource officers and go into the park to get our students back into school. Supt. Huyett agreed there will be a status report at the April 13th meeting. He also responded that we do not have full jurisdiction over the park. Dr. Craig stated there are currently 33 students at BHS and 9 at BTEch on probation.

Director Wilson: “We must understand our problem before we can develop a solution. We must appropriately identify our problem. We cannot have access to the information that we need about the students to understand the patterns to appropriately address the problem. I don’t believe that restorative justice is appropriate at this level. We need to triage, but not pretend that we can address all of these problems and do them well. There is damaging discourse out there about how the District has handled past events. We need to have these critical members of the community involved in the process. We could create the safety committee and give them a timeline and a charge. We want it to include best practices and staffing ratios. We would also request a fiscal analysis. We need to look at both weapons and assultive behavior. I am opposed to metal detectors (screening), ID badges and closed campuses. From a social justice perspective, implementing a system that would produce a disproportionate rate of discipline and suspension rate would

be bad. We need to work to identify high risk students and supporting them by providing more supervision and support.

President Leyva-Cutler: She had thoughts about constructing a District wide safety committee. She is also in agreement with staff wearing ID badges. “There are things that are already being done. We do not have to reinvent them. We need to look at the safety corridor from Richmond to Oakland. It is everyone’s problem. There is also a special training by Omega Boys for school safety officers. They are experts and can offer us a lot. There is also training on mediation at SEEDS. They are offering us four slots at the training. I have asked the chief probation officer for Alameda County to come speak with us. I am in support of implementing a day curfew at the park. We heard that some students feel unsafe when they leave school. We need to monitor the perimeter at the start of school, lunch and at dismissal. I commend Principal Scuderi for getting the message out to parents so quickly today in both English and Spanish. I hope our students will have a safe spring break.”

4.1-I

Staff Proposed Budget Reductions

Received information

Presented by Superintendent Huyett

“The proposal is looking more like plan B. The governor has called off negotiations with Republicans.”

Director Wilson requested to see the whole budget cuts presented in class size alone. She wants to look at the effects of class size on student achievement.

Director Selawsky: Are the furlough days and release time both negotiable? Yes. If you raise furlough days, there is savings in BSEP since BSEP pays for teachers. What are we giving up if we reduce release time? Teachers would have to teach Science.

Director Hemphill: The budget advisory committee has discussed them, but they have not taken a position on them. We may need to think about what will happen to our preschool program and how secondary class size increases affect our math classes that are at a reduced class size. BSEP would have to pay more to keep the class size low. Which of these have an impact on our goals to close the achievement gap? Would we offer staff development for Science instruction?

Motion to extend the meeting past 11:00

Daniels/Selawsky and approved on a vote of 5-0

Supt. Huyett: We can bring an impact statement for all the cuts we are proposing. This will come back to the Board after the May revise either in the first or second meeting in May. April 14th and 21st are the next budget advisory committee meeting dates.

Board's Report

Director Daniels: Principal Scuderi, Dean McDonald, Supt. Huyett and anyone who has worked on these issues has done an excellent job. It is not an easy job.

Director Hemphill: Congratulations to the Lady Jackets for their efforts in the state championship. They showed a lot of character and they never gave up. BUSD will be part of a panel for the National School Board Association with our Welcoming Schools curriculum. PCAD will be meeting this Saturday to talk about the recent gun incidents in and around campus. The Superintendent will be there. April 17th there is a fund raiser in the morning at John Muir and later in the day the annual Berkeley High Live celebration. Tickets are available at www.brownpapertickets.com.

EXTENDED PUBLIC TESTIMONY

None

President Leyva-Cutler adjourned the meeting at 11:15 pm.

John T. Selawsky, Clerk
Board of Education