



Berkeley Unified School District

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Donald Evans, Ed. D., Superintendent

20 January 2015

Dear BUSD Middle and High School Families:

The Berkeley Public School District (BUSD) places an immense value on student safety and well-being, and recognizes the critical importance of protecting our students from the impact of sexually harassing behavior and sexual misconduct. As you may be aware, there have been multiple issues around sexual harassment at Berkeley High School (BHS) during the past few months, including an unintended linkage made during the BHS Welcome Assemblies in mid-September, which linked female students' clothing choices and the incidence of sexual harassment. BUSD in no way meant to imply that personal attire invites or justifies harassing or abusive behavior. Based on student, teacher, and community feedback about this and other related issues, we have come to realize that there is an urgent need to work on developing a culture focused on prevention of sexual harassment, not simply reacting to it.

To that end, we are creating a new policy to do just that, with input from a variety of stakeholders. Our objective, in compliance with California law and Federal Title IX law, is to promote a broader and clearer dialogue to support and sustain safe campuses, including safe and positive options for "upstander" intervention - teaching students and teachers how to recognize and address sexual harassment when they witness it. BUSD is fully committed to revising our practices and policies to take a leadership role on this issue. We are particularly appreciative of the initiative taken by a group of our high school students to ensure that BUSD is proactive in addressing this issue.

There is significant work to do in this area. In the coming months we plan to roll out training and educational programs for students and teachers; improve the transparency around the reporting and complaint processes to support students who come forward with complaints or who are experiencing retaliation; and provide enhanced support to parents whose children are affected by harassment. We have designated Dr. Susan Craig, Director of Student Services, as the interim Title IX Coordinator for issues pertaining to sexual harassment at BUSD. She may be reached at 510-883-5224.

Enclosed is a summary of the current Sexual Harassment Policy. Your student also received a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document on this topic sent to their BUSD email account the week of December 15th. The responsibility of preparing our students to have healthy interactions, built on trust, respect and safety is a core value at BUSD. We look forward to partnering with you on this critical work. We appreciate your support and will update you on additional steps shortly.

Sincerely,

Donald Evans, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

Judy Appel  
President, Board of Education