

## **Talking Points for School Board P&O Committee Comment - November 2**

Good Evening Members of the Board, Superintendent, District Staff, and members of the Community,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a member of the Planning and Oversight Committee for the Berkeley Schools Excellence Project, also known as BSEP.

We are separated by just 6 days from a truly momentous general election. While the nation's attention has been drawn to a Presidential election campaign that defies description, we are also voting for Senator, Mayor, city council members, school board directors, as well as 11 city measures, and 17 state propositions...and then...

Buried deep in the ballot is a special tax measure for Berkeley Public Schools, Measure E1, the BSEP measure. Voters need to be aware to look below the top of the ballot for items that will affect the quality of life in our state and city, and be sure to find E1, which affects the quality of public schools right here in Berkeley.

We would like to take one last opportunity to remind everyone of why the School Board passed a resolution to place Measure E1 on the November 8 ballot. The funds raised through BSEP are essential to our schools. It is a grim certainty that our district would look very different without the funds that Measure E1 would provide, which comprise approximately 20% of the district's budget and pays for one third of our classroom teachers. These funds help maintain our school district as one of the best in the Bay Area and help keep Berkeley an appealing place to live.

Revenue from the State of California and federal sources are not enough to provide the quality instruction and programs to which our community has become accustomed. Even with the funding from Proposition 30, which was passed in 2012 and is now up for renewal as Prop 55 on this year's ballot, state funding for schools in California ranks among the bottom 10% nation-wide.

Thankfully, since 1986 the voters of Berkeley have strongly supported BSEP as a way to partly make up for the lack of state funding and provide more and better educational opportunities to Berkeley students. With local funding, Berkeley schools per-student funds place us somewhere near the middle nation-wide, though still nowhere near states where education funding is a top priority.

As you know, we had an extensive public process to engage parents, students, teachers, staff and community members in discussing how local funding can best support our students. The BSEP measure, now called Measure E1, builds on programs that are currently successful while allowing for the flexibility to focus funds where they are most needed in the future.

Measure E1 funds will provide support for lower class sizes, which in turn underpins differentiated instruction to help meet the district's equity goals. E1 funds are intended to foster educational excellence and enrich student learning by providing school libraries at every site, as well as instructional technology, an exceptional music program that serves all students in grades four through eight, and a rich array of expanded course offerings in middle and high school. Student engagement will be supported through counseling services in the middle schools and funding to support parent engagement to help connect students and families to their schools and our students to needed resources. In addition, E1 funds provide for professional development for teachers and district staff, and support our research and evaluation office to assist in the collection and analysis of data to focus and strengthen our educational programs.

Although this list is not comprehensive, it clearly illustrates the significance of this funding to the Berkeley Unified School District. The local resources provided through Measure E1 stay in our district and cannot be taken away by Sacramento. The funds represent 20% of the district funding, and the failure of this measure could be devastating to the education of our students.

We thank the Board and the community volunteers who have worked hard to ensure that our families and staff are informed and engaged in the planning process. People are continuing to get the word out to their neighbors and family members because this measure needs a two-third majority to pass. The BSEP Planning and Oversight Committee urges Berkeley voters who care about education to read through their ballot to get to Measure E1, so that they can be part of the essential decision about providing local funding support for our schools.

Thank you.