

BERKELEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

TO: BSEP Planning and Oversight Committee
FROM: Natasha Beery, Director of BSEP and Community Relations
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DATE: November 14, 2017
SUBJECT: Election, Diversity and Activity Report for School Governance Councils, Berkeley High BSEP Committee and BHS School Site Council for the 2017-18 School Year

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Each year the Board receives a report on the elections and membership of the School Governance Councils (SGCs) for the Pre-K Program, the K-8 schools, Berkeley Technology Academy (BTA), and the Independent Study (IS) Program; and the two Berkeley High School (BHS) committees: the BHS BSEP Site Funds Committee and the BHS School Site Council (SSC).

Principals and committee members were surveyed online to obtain a full picture of the conduct of elections for each site, including candidate outreach, nominations, election mechanisms, and community notification.

Candidate outreach and recruitment

Schools solicited parent candidates using:

- Paper flyers with an attached nomination form;
- Email and e-tree messages encouraging participation, in most cases with an online nomination option;
- Announcements and information tables at Back-to-School Night, PTA meetings, and other gatherings; and
- Outreach to specific individuals

While most principals used a combination of methods, more than half found face-to-face individual outreach itself “very effective.” Although this methodology could have been leveraged by parent liaisons or SGC chairs/members to make more personal pitches, outreach was largely in the hands of the principals. Only three sites reported using OFEE specialists or reaching out to a target group.

Principals also reported using a variety of messages to encourage participation, including:

- Have a say in school priorities and how BSEP monies are spent;
- Take the opportunity to learn more about the school and engage with staff and other parents and students;
- We need you – your skills and unique perspective; and
- Be a sounding board for the principal.

Although little used, the last option was suggested by the BSEP office several years ago as messaging reflective of SGC responsibilities. It was also meant to address an oft-expressed frustration from some members who felt the SGC’s are not truly

“governance” committees in the sense of the term used by, for example, charter schools where such committees have a wider role.

Our SGC/SSC in the BUSD have a more limited scope, but can become a meaningful “sounding board” when there are communication skills and specific intentions on all sides. The SGC can be a stabilizing and unifying influence where community members are invited to have important conversations in a respectful environment about the school and its needs. Additionally, with the proliferation of committees requiring parent participation, the hope is that the SGC or SSC will be a nexus for all the various groups that could otherwise be ‘pulled away’ from the table. More informed discussions can take place when all the various constituencies come to the table.

The compressed elections period coupled with the overwhelming amount of information disseminated at the start of the school year continues to be a dilemma, although many experienced principals have come up with different formulas to make it work. (While seven principals expressed the desire for an extended elections period, seven also said it was fine as is.) For those schools that struggled to constitute a committee, the low participation could be attributed to a number of factors, including a packed calendar, and other issues of higher priority. Instituting early and more personalized recruitment practices as well as more assistance from the BSEP department have resulted in some improvement.

In order to encourage greater participation, some principals have opted to blur the distinction between voting and alternate members and elect slates instead of individuals. Seven schools ended up with more than the required six parent members, with one having 10 additional “participatory members” and another parent slate of 15. The Board Policy Subcommittee and BSEP Office are working to address bylaws issues that could address the challenge of encouraging wide participation and ensuring the correct composition of each group.

Outreach at the high school level continues to be the most challenging, and despite renewed efforts by the PTSA at Berkeley High, nominations were not robust and the period needed to be extended. The struggle to get volunteers - both parent and staff - for its SSC continued, with the principal and BSEP office looking for options, including combining some meetings with the more active BSEP Site Committee. This issue will also be put before the Policy Subcommittee this school year.

Ballots and Voting: Parent candidates were presented via printed and/or online ballot statements, and only rarely in person at school meetings/elections. Seven principals reported conducting elections with paper ballots only, four with online only, and six with a combination. The parent community’s thoughts on the elections process roughly mirrored the principals, with half saying the process seemed rushed and the other feeling that it went fine. Seven principals expressed satisfaction at the outcome/turnout of their elections, but no approach or combination of approaches ensured higher turnout.

The transition to voting for slates over individuals may have contributed to lower parent voter turnout, a little over 8% across the district, ranging from no votes at two small sites/programs to a high of 37%. Voter turnout at Berkeley High School

matched the low 3% turnout of 2013, and we are looking at having the BSEP department take a greater role in running the school's election going forward.

Best Practices and Month-to-Month Agenda: A handbook for School Governance Councils is now available both online at the BUSD website and in binders for all SGC and SSC members. The handbook includes sections on "Best Practices" and Suggested Agenda items, as well as templates for submitting minutes and site plan changes. There is a section for bylaws and guides for all school committees and the various funds they oversee, including BSEP site and district-wide, LCAP, and Title I.

This guide is revised annually, as discussions with principals, committee members, and the Office of Family Engagement and Equity (OFEE) continue to improve ideas for outreach and recruitment as well as raise issues that are barriers or accelerators of equitable participation. Use of the Google Classroom tool has not proved an effective one for increasing staff participation in the nominations and elections process, as it funneled all information to principals instead of widening their support team. Based on the latest survey and election results, the BSEP office will revert to information dissemination that includes the past year's chairs, site coordinators and parent liaisons. Their more involved participation in the committee process from outreach to mentoring could improve results.

For example, when committee officer elections take place at a first meeting, new members may not feel ready to step into leadership roles. Can mentoring of new members increase/accelerate participation and improve distributed leadership? How can OFEE staff best support the SGCs? Are agendas constructed to ensure opportunities for discussion, and are meetings run so that wide participation is supported? How can the broader community be engaged with the work of the SGC?

Staff: Staff committee members were mainly chosen by consensus. Finding candidates, especially those to fill the classified seat, has become more problematic for sites, anecdotally because more and more staff live outside of Berkeley and commute some distance to their homes. Availability during SGC meeting hours, as well as a reluctance to serve without compensation has been cited as a barrier to participation. Conflict of interest concerns also dampens participation.

Roster: Attached as Appendix A is a roster of the approximately 262 parent members (including 10 called "participatory"), high school students, teachers, principals, and other staff members who have made the commitment to serve on their SGC, the BHS BSEP Committee, BHS School Site Council, or the P&O this year.

Diversity: Attached as Appendix B is a chart showing the ethnic/racial composition of the SGCs in Pre-K through 5 schools, middle schools and high schools, as well as a comparison with the district student body. This year the methodology of collecting these data followed these practices:

- Ethnic/racial categories match the federal and state categories which are used for the student CALPADS data.
- Race/ethnicity data was primarily obtained through self-report, rather than only asking the principal to supply the data as was done in prior years.

Given the relatively small numbers at each site, rather than providing counts and percentages for each school site, results were summarized by preK-5, middle school and high school levels.

Overall, 49% of committee members identify as non-white (Asian, Hispanic, African-American, multi-racial) and 51% are non-Hispanic white. This is a drop of eight percentage points in the White category. A few key findings:

Based on self-reporting, many members' race/ethnicity does not "match" their children's mixed heritage, potentially leading to a conclusion that the SGCs are leaning white and less representative of the student body. A closer look at these self-reported notes give the picture of a very diverse collective.

The use of the five categories used to identify students in CALPADS is also woefully inadequate to reflect who SGC parent members are, leading to many interesting self-reported classifications, such as "white-ish," "does not apply because I'm a foreigner," "White European...mmm I feel like I do not belong to American White," and one person who identified as "White, Jewish, multi-ethnic." Egyptian, Middle Eastern, and Filipino individuals also did not feel comfortable identifying with any of the offered categories. If the 5 category census report is the only means of portraying the diversity of the membership, as well as their many perspectives (as parents of children with learning disabilities, or as single parents, for example), we are missing both important dynamics for both outreach and inclusion. Furthermore, in hard numbers, it's also difficult to build a committee when parents of "unduplicated" students are pulled away to serve on the PAC and those of English learners to ELAC or DELAC. The BSEP office is looking at a proposal to review and revise the purpose of the election and diversity report to better serve the outreach and functioning of the SGCs.

Activities: On October 19, 2017 the annual School and District Committee Orientation was held at Longfellow Middle School. The format was changed from prior years in order to review best practices with respect to the Brown Act, Robert's Rules, and group norms. A brief presentation by Allison Krasnow of the DigiTech team was designed to give committee members a look at the kind of programming and tools used in the classroom and the intersection of skills building, testing, and data-gathering. A 60-minute period was also set aside for SGC mini-meetings by site, to focus on reviewing the school's Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA), discussing the meeting calendar and other initial business of the SGC.

In the past, the workshop evening has included options for new and returning members to attend an orientation and presentations on a variety of BUSD educational programs. This year, the orientation to reinforce good fundamental practices was provided in a plenary session, and additional workshops will be scheduled for January in concert with the Superintendent's State of the District presentation. At that session, attendees will have their choice of workshops ranging from needs assessments, leadership development, and "uniting goals and resources for an effective school plan."

The turnout of approximately 120 included SGC members as well as PAC and ELAC and DELAC representatives. Some schools fully utilized the mini-meeting time to conduct business while others that had already conducted first meetings did not push

their members to attend the orientation. New members received a Site Committee binder while all attendees received a customized folder including revised sections and their site's budget summary. Based on feedback from attendees, the mini-meeting time will likely continue next year, augmented with a round-table or Q&A session. The intent is to firmly ensconce site-specific time, while broadening opportunities for inter-school exchanges and more interactive participation for attendees.

This handbook is online at the BSEP/SGC and School Site Council webpage at the BUSD website. The handbook includes a suggested month-to-month agenda of suggested activities, attached to this report as Appendix C.