

April 20, 2020

Dear Berkeley High Families,

I'm writing today to tell you that after 22 years in BUSD, and these last 6 years at BHS, I have decided to move on to a completely different chapter of life. I will remain at Berkeley High (in the strange sense of what that means right now) through June. None of us could ever have imagined the circumstances of these last months of the school year, but I am particularly sad to have to share this news with our community while we are not even able to be together, or to have a proper goodbye.

I have lived and worked in Berkeley all of my career, and this represents a big change for me. I am moving out of town, though not too far, and I am not seeking out another site administrator position right now. The principalship at BHS, coming to me as unexpectedly as it did four years ago, was a gift and a joy, along with the challenges that come with this job, and it has been an honor to serve this community.

There is still much work to be done in these next months: you can expect ongoing communication about any needed adjustments to our distance learning plan, an update on some new resources and plans for responding to sexual harm incidents, concrete ways to celebrate our Class of 2020, and continued resources for families who are most struggling as we continue to shelter-in-place. Thank you to the many families who have reached out to share experiences, feedback, and their own resources to help others, or just to offer words of encouragement to me along the way. Those words are deeply appreciated.

Finally, I want to share that in the midst of planning for this transition, I am very happy to let you know that BHS Vice Principal Juan Raygoza has agreed to step up as Interim Principal for the 2020-21 school year. I believe this move will provide BHS much-needed stability in the midst of so much else that is uncertain about what school will look like in the fall. The Superintendent's message, attached here, has more details about that process. I hope you are all well, safe, and strong.

Erin

April 20, 2020

To the Berkeley High School Community,

In the letter above, Principal Erin Schweng shared her decision to leave Berkeley High School at the end of this academic year, and to leave Berkeley Unified after more than twenty years of

distinguished service to our community. Ms. Schweng leaves an extremely positive legacy behind her including strong support for students, teachers and staff; responsive communications; and building a cohesive administrative team. The district and Berkeley High School are better because of her work to support students and teachers.

In my work this year with Ms. Schweng, I have been most impressed with her compassion for others - for students, who go through so many formative experiences in high schools, and for teachers and staff, who experience students' emotional journey and are there to offer encouragement and patience. Her empathy helps to set a tone at the high school, as does her positivity and her belief in the young people she serves. I know that she will be missed, and I hope you'll join me to offer her our thanks for her service to the Berkeley community.

Ms. Schweng also shared that I have appointed Assistant Principal Juan Raygoza to serve as Interim Principal during the 2020-2021 school year. In this one-year role, Mr. Raygoza will help all of us make sense of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, whether this means we are back to school with social distancing conventions, or using some new combination of distance learning and limited on-campus time. I'm very appreciative that he has stepped forward at this moment.

I made the decision to appoint an Interim Principal after weighing the options. Under the current Shelter-in-Place orders, it seemed implausible to me that we would attempt a search for a new principal without the benefit of in-person interviews. Also, in the face of so much uncertainty, Mr. Raygoza is someone well-known to the BHS community, and who can help us find a measure of stability - something we all need right now.

In January of 2021, I plan to begin a formal and inclusive process to select a new permanent principal for BHS. This will give us time to work together to form a selection committee, recruit thoughtfully, and have time to engage our community in this process.

Please know that my central office colleagues and I are committed to supporting BHS through this transition, and that Mr. Raygoza will have our full support. And for our final eight weeks together, separated as we are, I look forward to working with the BHS team to bring this school year to a close, celebrate our seniors as best we can, and congratulate Ms. Schweng on her very notable accomplishments in Berkeley Unified.

Warmly,

Brent Stephens
Superintendent