

BERKELEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Resolution No. 20-064 in support of Black Lives Matter
June 10, 2020

WHEREAS, Black Lives Matters protests have swept the nation as demonstrators demand justice in response to the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and far too many other Black Americans to list; and

WHEREAS, the killing of Black men and women, including queer and trans persons of color, is an unacceptable violation of the human rights due to all people; and

WHEREAS, the Black Lives Matter movement, like the civil rights and Black Power movements before it, has effectively articulated the injustices that exist at the intersections of race, class, and gender; including mass incarceration, police brutality, poverty, unaffordable housing, income disparity, homophobia, gender inequality, poor access to healthcare, and educational outcomes; and

WHEREAS, in a 2019 Pew Center survey, 84% of black adults said that, in dealing with police, Black people are generally treated less fairly than whites; and 87% of blacks and 61% of whites said the U.S. criminal justice system treats black people less fairly; and

WHEREAS, nationwide, African American children represent 32% of children who are arrested, 42% of children who are detained, and 52% of children whose cases are judicially waived to criminal court; and

WHEREAS, research has shown evidence of systematic bias in teacher expectations for African American students and non-Black teachers were found to have lower expectations of Black students than Black teachers; and

WHEREAS, nationwide Black students are nearly two times as likely to be suspended without educational services as white students; Black students are also 3.8 times as likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspensions as white students; Black children represent 19 percent of the nation's pre-school population, yet 47 percent of those receiving more than one out-of-school suspension; in comparison, white students represent 41 percent of pre-school enrollment but only 28 percent of those receiving more than one out-of-school suspension; and even more troubling, Black students are 2.3 times as likely to receive a referral to law enforcement or be subject to a school-related arrest as white students; and

WHEREAS, the rate of identification of African American students in BUSD was 3.95 times higher than the rate for other student groups in the 18-19 school year;

WHEREAS, addressing the needs of African American learners requires recognition of the inherent value of Black students, families, and staff; and

WHEREAS, within Berkeley Unified School District there are still many structures and symbols that uphold a legacy of racism, oppression, exclusion, and inequality; and

WHEREAS, the annual Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action will take place during the month of February to coincide with, and augment, Black History Month;

WHEREAS, the Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action is intended to highlight, uplift and affirm the rich history and contributions of the Black community; to cultivate in Black students a sense of pride, self-worth, and self-love; and to develop a widespread acknowledgement and appreciation for the contributions of black people to our community; and

WHEREAS, the names of our schools are powerful symbols of our community values; and

WHEREAS, in 2005 a prior Berkeley School Board voted 3/2 against renaming Jefferson Elementary, in accordance with a past board policy, and after a divisive process which was acknowledged to be flawed, leaving the community with deep and lasting pain; and

WHEREAS, a call to rename Jefferson Elementary was reignited under a new board policy through which LeConte Elementary was renamed Sylvia Mendez, through a unifying and successful process.

WHEREAS, the Berkeley Unified School District has a long history of fighting for racial justice and specifically for the rights of African American students in its schools, including its pioneering work to desegregate its schools, the first and most long-running Black Studies department; the establishment of the African American Success Project in 2017; and the Office of Family Engagement, which seeks to support Black families in their work as advocates.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,

As a symbol of Berkeley Unified School District's ongoing commitment to focus unerringly on the success of African American students, families, and staff members, and to serve as a visible affirmation of the movement for racial equality in the United States, a "Black Lives Matter" banner shall be displayed prominently in the chambers of the Board of Education;

AND THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

That the Berkeley Unified School Board of Education encourages district-wide participation in the Black Lives Matter At School Week from February 1-5, 2021, through discussions in classrooms and at home;

AND THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

That the Berkeley Unified School District will continue to work with the Longfellow Middle School administration, staff, and community to create excellence and equity for Black students through a review of resources, procedures, and other forms of support;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

That the Berkeley Unified School District, through its Education Services department, will purchase and develop resources for educators and families for distribution and posting on the BUSD website that teach about, celebrate, uphold, and affirm the lives of Black people; and that support critical dialogue among students, staff, and community members about the impact of bias and racism in our schools, community, and nation; and these resources will be embedded in professional development as integral components of the districts work with teachers in all subjects;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

Berkeley Unified School District will launch a Black Joy campaign to celebrate the full experience of Black students, families, staff, and community members;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

That the Berkeley Unified School District's BREA department will consult with parents, educators, and community groups to identify additional measures of racial inequity in the district, and propose a method for the collection of this data; and that the district commits to the collection of this data for the purpose of illuminating and resolving areas of the district's programs that are still marked by racial disparities;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

That the Berkeley Unified School District's Office of Family Engagement and Equity will consult with parents, educators, and community groups to develop additional resources that focus on the well-being of Black families and caregivers, for the purpose of contributing to the ongoing need for healing;

AND THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

That the Berkeley Unified School Board hereby commits to a renaming process for Jefferson and Washington Elementary Schools, in accordance with our policy and in recognition of the fact that Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence and a Framers of the Constitution, was nonetheless an unrepentant slaveholder whose wealth was built on the labor of the enslaved, and who withheld his espoused values of liberty and equality from the hundreds of people of African descent he held and sold into bondage, whose descendants are continue to suffer unbearable injustices in a country that has yet to live up to the promise of the Constitution; and Washington, to whose selfless service to a new nation this country is forever indebted, nonetheless profited from the enslaved labor of hundreds of human beings, and signed the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act and relentlessly pursued the many enslaved people who attempted to escape bondage;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

This Board commits itself not only to address the symbols of institutional racism and white supremacy, but also to proactively identify and address biases, practices, policies, and institutional barriers that perpetuate injustice and inequality in our schools and our community, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board of Education vows to work to proactively identify class and cultural biases as well as practices, policies, and institutional barriers that negatively influence student learning, perpetuate achievement gaps, and impede equal access to opportunities for all students in order to eradicate institutional bias of any kind, including implicit or unintentional biases and prejudices that affect student achievement, and to eliminate disparities in educational outcomes for students from historically underserved and under-represented populations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Berkeley Unified School Board of Directors recognize the importance in disrupting a “business as usual” approach for African American students and their families, and using this opportunity to ensure our budget elevates the excellence for black students and their families; and mandats training across the organization including board members, administrators, teachers and staff.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Berkeley School Board of Education will revisit the aforementioned action items through quarterly reports by district staff.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Education on the 10th day of June, 2020 by the following vote:

AYES: 6
NOES: 0
ABSENT: 0
ABSTAIN: 0

KADIJAH A BROWN

Ka’Dijah Brown
Clerk, Board of Education

Signature: KADIJAH A BROWN
KADIJAH A BROWN (Jun 12, 2020 16:22 PDT)

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