

**BSEP PLANNING & OVERSIGHT STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES  
November 17, 2020**

**P&O Committee Members Present**

Nicole Chabot, *Berkeley Arts Magnet*

\*Jonathan Weissglass, *Emerson*

\*Weldon Bradstreet, *Rosa Parks*

\*Heather Flett, *Washington*

Prashant Jawalikar, *King Middle School*

\*Aaron Glimme, *Berkeley High*

Josh Irwin, *Berkeley High*

\*Shauna Rabinowitz, *Berkeley High*

\*Terry Pastika, *Berkeley High (Alt)*

Esfandiar Imani, *Berkeley High (Alt)*

**P&O Steering Committee Members Absent:**

*\*Indicates elected Steering Committee members. Attendance to this meeting is not required for all P&O members, only Steering Committee members who did not attend would be marked as absent.*

**Visitors, School Board Directors, Union Reps, and Guests:**

**BUSD Staff:**

Brent Stephens, *Superintendent of Schools*

Natasha Beery, *Director of BSEP and Communications*

Jay Nitschke, *Director of Technology*

Danielle Perez, *BSEP Program Specialist*

**1. Call to Order and Introductions**

The meeting was held online via Zoom. At 5:31 p.m. Chairperson Bradstreet called the meeting to order. Members introduced themselves.

**2. Establish the Quorum/Approve the Agenda**

The quorum was established with all 6 Steering Committee members present.

Chair Bradstreet asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Rep. Chabot moved to approve the agenda, Rep. Irwin seconded; the agenda was approved unanimously.

**3. Chairperson's Comments**

*Terry Pastika and Weldon Bradstreet*

Co-Chair Bradstreet thanked attendees for joining the meeting.

**4. Public Comment**

There was no Public comment.

**5. Board Changes to 2020-21 BSEP Plans: High Quality Instruction and Effective Student Support**

*Brent Stephens, Superintendent of Schools; and Natasha Beery, Director of BSEP and Communications*

Director Beery presented the [REV 2020-21 BSEP HQI Plan](#) and [REV. 2020-21 BSEP Student Support Plan](#) documents to the committee.

Director Beery explained that in the Spring, there was anticipation of drastic budget changes. Consequently, the Board decided not to approve certain expenditures that had been newly added for the upcoming 2020-21 school year. After reviewing the Board minutes, and recordings of the Board meetings, redline plans were created to show what changes the Board made to the plans that the P&O had already approved.

Director Beery summarized the revisions in the plan for the committee. Ms. Perez noted that page 4 of the HQI Plan Appendix B (Professional Development) contained a typo at the time that it went to the Board, stating the total of expenditures for Professional Development Initiatives as \$295,000 but it should have read \$225,000. The April Board document did have that typo in the text of that page, but the budget summary portion contained the correct dollar amounts. The redline version reflects the accurate total of all expenditures approved by the Board.

Dr. Stephens explained that at the moment of the Board's deliberations on these plans, the district budgetary picture was facing a projected cut from a catastrophic -7% to -10% reduction in state budgets. Ultimately, that cut did not come to pass, and in fact subsequently the district received unexpected learning loss mitigation funding that pushed the budget in the other direction. That mitigation funding was applied very quickly to student support purposes. In some ways, this reduced some of the anticipated need for a COVID equity fund, though that couldn't have been predicted. The urgency for the use of these BSEP funds is different than anticipated, though he did expect these BSEP funds to still be used over the course of this year.

Director Beery reminded the committee that in the 2019 planning process, these proposals were made to address new needs, and district leaders were adding a lot of new expenditures into BSEP plans to use up fund balances. But, as COVID hit and district budgets looked dire, the thinking at the time was to remove as many new expenses as possible. Dr. Stephens noted that in the counseling program, the district is still working on offering students additional consent education opportunities. At Berkeley High, we have started looking for a consultant, and an advisory committee of students there is in the process of vetting vendors.

Director Beery also added that there will be opportunities as the year progresses to make adjustments to BSEP budgets as needs change, whether schools reopen or not. The P&O Committee would hear of any substantial changes to plans this year. Remember that these documents are the plans as of where we stood a few months ago. Dr. Stephens concluded by stating that the district was right to adopt a cautious stance based on information we had at the time, and that he is grateful that catastrophic cuts didn't come and that the unexpended relief funds materialized. We may yet receive bad news from the Governor in the winter. But he noted that we will see advancement of this work, particularly around consent education, and with some modest mid-year adjustments and add-backs he expects to get back on track with work we had contemplated in March and April.

## **6. Workgroup Proposals for P&O Process Revisions**

*Natasha Beery, Director of BSEP and Communications*

Chair Pastika outlined the thinking behind the creation of the [P&O Workgroup Recommendations](#) document. She explained that this document was put together by committee members who met over the past summer: Reps. Rabinowitz, Chabot, Irwin, Babitt, Bradstreet, and herself. Their work revolved around thinking about what information flows to the P&O, what questions keep coming up, and focused on the goal of bringing specific ideas and proposals to create a starting point for further conversations. These preliminary proposals focus on how more big-picture information can come to the P&O, and on how BSEP and BERRA funds will last through the duration of the measures. The second proposal concerns looking at general goals of programs. The third proposal concerns assessment, outcomes, and evaluations of the budgets/plans the committee reviews.

Rep. Chabot added that they discussed themes and common questions that would come up every couple of meetings, particularly concern about whether budgets would last the full term of the measure. Also, the group tried to address how the committee might measure the efficacy of budget choices being made by budget owners. Lastly, understanding that data often comes to the committee members so close to the meetings, the group discussed how to help committee members absorb it and perform fiduciary responsibilities before and during meetings--specifically how we might change how the data is assembled to help in that work.

Chair Pastika explained that the workgroup's initial recommendations are in black text, and reactions and follow-up questions from Director Beery are in blue text. After these recommendations and reactions were shared, a meeting took place for a further discussion with workgroup members and Director Beery.

Director Beery thanked the group for all their work and time, and for the great discussion they had following up on this set of recommendations. She explained that she had hoped to take a crack at what a streamlined and focused approach to an actual BSEP Annual Plan might look like. Unfortunately, her workload is at an unprecedented level and she was apologetic at not having a work product to show. However, she was able to have a conversation with VAPA Supervisor Pete Gidlund, who along with Technology Director Jay Nitschke is one of the only staff to have been BSEP program manager for several years now. They discussed how we might go about achieving these shared goals, making sure that the committee has the context and information they need in a way that doesn't overwhelm, overload, or under-prepare committee members, while also including something measurable. The conclusion they reached is primarily a shared desire to implement these improvements, but also concern about how to implement a substantial change in this very challenging moment. They struggled to decide whether to try to make changes based on how the programs were pre-COVID, how we want programs to be once we get out of COVID, or based on the current reality? Practicalities at this moment are unlike any other needs in any other year. Gidlund was already thinking about orienting his plans based on what has to change and what has changed based on our current reality, highlighting what is not the same, but hopefully a year from now those considerations won't look the same. We're always thinking about whether the plans are sustainable and reaching those who need it, but the pandemic situation does change how we look at resources and getting them to students right now.

To address the issue of providing more context to committee members, Director Beery plans to use the January P&O meeting / Annual Report with program managers speaking about programs; where they were headed last year pre-COVID, what happened during COVID, what's happening

now, and where they think they're headed. The idea being that when the managers come back in February, March, and April with plans for 2021-22, committee members will have context to evaluate the new plans. Then, building in a measurable piece can be done. She noted that a concern with SMART goals in the past was that you can always pick something measurable, but it isn't always the most important piece of a program. She wondered if the committee members aren't actually looking for something to give them more of a sense of how the programs work overall, what funding is contributing to that program and why, what's available across funding sources, etc. Thinking about the question this way, if there's also an opportunity to include a SMART or equity goal, then great, but it may not be the most relevant focus for all the plans that the committee reviews.

Rep. Irwin shared that his concerns, based on hearing proposed changes to BSEP plans, are driven by reduced district funding. Over the course of the next 5 years the committee may end up being asked to approve a plan that isn't sustainable over the life of this BSEP measure, but taxpayers expect the committee to oversee that funds will last. The idea of Planning and Oversight, should function in some ways as an endorsement, assuming that the district and managers present plans to us, then we ask questions and explanations are given to some degree of satisfaction. While he understands that the district needs flexibility, the group needs additional information to know why one expenditure is funded over others, if it looks like funds might run out. That's where measurables come in; if things are measurable, then the committee has confidence that it's the way to go.

Rep. Flett shared that as a member of committee she sees her role as trying to understand the rationale behind decisions and be a meaningful representative to her school. She listens intently and goes with the will of the group, while raising concerns and asking questions. But then really big swings happen and this group is only seeing a small proportion of what really matters. Her hope is to raise concerns about being meaningful on the committee.

Rep. Imani expressed agreement with the thought process behind having program managers come to the committee in reports, because they are closest to the funded activities and programs. If there are red flags we can ask them in the framework of reporting, what challenges are ahead? He noted that SMART goals come with measurables or metrics and suggested, given the uncertainty of things changing day by day and week by week, maybe report-outs could happen more frequently to improve transparency of activities and results. This is not like other years, when things can run on autopilot.

Chair Pastika stated that within the workgroup's recommendations, she hopes that at least two could be implemented this fall. First, continuing the budget forecasting that we saw at P&O meetings last year, which looked at how GF and LCAP integrate with BSEP, on a regular basis. This improves our understanding of how money moves around and what trends are we seeing in the district. Second, the P&O regularly going before the School Board to give updates on what we're talking about in our meetings, what questions the committee has brought up, etc. Informing the Board on a regular basis of the issues coming up as well as which things are going well.

She also expressed concern with putting all potential plan format changes on the shelf--there will always be something that comes up, and if we don't commit to addressing this she fears it won't get done. She hoped for a way to say that we plan for more communication and understanding of

what's happening, and commitment to say that by some date we will circle back to have the conversation. This will always be difficult to figure out, and needs dedicated time to really make an impactful improvement.

Rep. Weisglass felt that, given the current situation, budget is where we need more information. Presumably the district is already dealing with that, and can provide information already as accounting and planning is being done for other reasons. He hoped that could be provided without undue burden. He was also wary of putting too much on staff particularly at this time, noting that the group has to be realistic. One suggestion is at the program level, given no certainty about the "best" way to do this, find one manager with bandwidth available and have them try something new to see if that is in fact a better approach, rather than have all managers sink a lot of time into this. Then, in the next go-round we can adjust that and expand.

Chair Bradstreet added, regarding point 4 of the recommendations: the aim is to give the Board a glimpse of what the P&O has been chewing on, and that doesn't have to come only from the co-Chairs. Any member of the committee can take that on, providing that they are officially approved by P&O. As a practical point, he delivered remarks to the Board from P&O in March 2019, and would caution the group not to draft long comments.

Rep. Glimme cautioned that often, drafting P&O statements to the Board can take a lot of time that we'll need to plan for. Ms. Perez noted that one idea from the workgroup/BSEP staff discussions about these recommendations was for one committee member or co-Chair to keep a list of pending questions that come up during meetings, and a summary of agenda topics from each meeting. Then, during the "For the Good of the Order" portion of that meeting, the committee could quickly review that summary for factual accuracy to be used as the contents of the next statement to the Board. We would only need to change that agenda item to "action" rather than "discussion" for this to be tested. The hope is that it could be streamlined to not take so much time for the committee to approve.

Rep. Chabot advised that Director Beery anticipate that in monthly meetings, conversations for each program/budget would follow the same pattern for every program manager: what was this budget last year, what is it this year, and if there are changes what are we doing differently? It would be great if there could be some rigorous way to have all managers come to the committee with the same information.

Director Beery shared that she believed recommendation #3 could also be implemented this year, VAPA Supervisor Gidlund was already planning to create some kind of executive summary of the program and its key priorities, and would add into that a discussion of any concerns with the program budget, tied to looking at the trajectory of the plans. Each will be slightly different based on the structure of the program, but each manager should be able to speak to basic points like what we're trying to achieve, highlights, challenges, etc. She would also suggest the P&O perhaps view their role as raising questions about how a manager determines what is measurable about what they're doing. For example,  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the HQI budget is class size reduction (teacher salaries), we can't do an experiment to test small and large class sizes, it may not be measurable, but it could be a value that the program or community has committed to. But the committee should still ask why is it that the program manager(s) choose to proceed in this way.

Chair Pastika asked which of recommendations Director Beery thinks are relatively possible to implement sooner rather than later. Director Beery responded that the first recommendation, about projections and forecasting, is constantly being done but not always at the micro level that might be desired or comparable to the Multi-Year-Projection (MYP) that the committee is used to seeing. Those MYPs are a lot of work, and many more variables are involved. But, she can bring the committee the report that Assistant Superintendent of Fiscal Services Pauline Follansbee makes on the budget big picture. How much we can do with the first recommendation is uncertain, and will need to be addressed in the Spring. She had significant follow-up and clarifying questions to resolve around the second recommendation about prioritization of expenditures, as some are fixed expenditures. The third recommendation, about executive summaries, is a great idea, and would help managers distill what they're doing. And for the fourth suggestion about P&O summaries to the Board, we can build time into the agendas to see if it's workable, and if it feels like it's value added, it should be kept. She felt that keeping the P&O committee in front of the Board and community at large is invaluable.

## **7. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 6:29 p.m.