

BSEP PLANNING & OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MINUTES
January 12, 2021

P&O Committee Members Present

Jerry Liang, *Pre-K Program*
Nicole Chabot, *Berkeley Arts Magnet*
Leda Dederich, *Cragmont (co-Rep)*
Jonathan Weissglass, *Emerson*
Nikhila Pai, *Ruth Acty (co-Rep)*
Heather Ball, *Malcolm X*
Carla Bryant, *Oxford*
Stefan Cohen, *Oxford (Alt)*
Weldon Bradstreet, *Rosa Parks*
Justin Randall, *Sylvia Mendez*

Heather Flett, *Washington*
Chetan Kamdar, *King Middle School*
Sarah Cline, *Berkeley High*
Aaron Glimme, *Berkeley High*
Shauna Rabinowitz, *Berkeley High*
Esfandiar Imani, *Berkeley High (Alt)*
Josh Irwin, *Berkeley High*
Terry Pastika, *Berkeley High (Alt)*
Martin de Mucha Flores, *Independent Study*

P&O Committee Members Absent*:

Vanessa Garza, *John Muir*
Prashant Jawalikar, *King Middle School*

Olivia Lim, *Longfellow Middle School*
Kate Jordan, *Willard Middle School*

**Alternates and co-reps are not marked absent if another rep is present. Currently there is no representation from BTA or Thousand Oaks Elementary, and only one representative each from Longfellow and Willard Middle Schools.*

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

Ana Vasudeo, *School Board Director*

BUSD Staff:

Brent Stephens, *Superintendent of Schools*
Bajé Thiara, *Associate Superintendent of Educational Services*
Jay Nitschke, *Director of Technology*
Natasha Beery, *Director of BSEP and Communications*
Peter Gidlund, *Visual and Performing Arts Program Supervisor*
Jessica Lee, *District Library Coordinator*
Adelita Martinez, *PD Coordinator*
Danielle Perez, *BSEP Program Specialist*

1. Call to Order and Introductions

The meeting was held online via Zoom. At 6:30 p.m. Chairperson Bradstreet called the meeting to order. Members introduced themselves.

2. Establish the Quorum/Approve the Agenda

The quorum was established with 16 voting members present.

Chair Bradstreet asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Rep. Irwin moved to approve the agenda, Rep. Chabot seconded; the agenda was approved with no objections by acclamation.

3. Chairperson's Comments

Nicole Chabot and Weldon Bradstreet

Co-Chair Bradstreet wished everyone a happy New Year and thanked everyone for attending. Co-Chair Chabot thanked Terry Pastika for her work as co-Chair in previous years, calling out her knowledge of public organizations and her commitment to the P&O Committee's work.

4. BSEP Director's Comments

Natasha Beery, Director BSEP & Community Relations

Director Beery thanked all for attending as well.

5. Approval of Minutes

December 15, 2020

Rep. Flett moved to approve the [12.15.20 Draft meeting minutes](#), Rep. Dederich seconded; the minutes were approved with no objections by acclamation.

6. Public Comment

Rep. de Mucha Flores reiterated his previous sentiments that if the committee and district are going to be committed to equity, it is vital to lead in both practice and accountability. He asked the district staff to come with data showing how the funds are supporting strategies and outcomes. He observed that this committee provides a place where we have the power to identify resources and hold people to account.

7. Superintendent's Report

Brent Stephens, Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Stephens provided the following district updates: Governor Newsom issued a plan, in the form of a press statement, around school reopening in California. There will be a grant available to districts that are able to submit a completed school opening plan and collective bargaining agreement by tough deadlines; the first round is due on February 1 and the second is due on March 1. Dr. Stephens stated that it is hard to say how well poised BUSD is to take advantage of these incentives, but he will continue to engage with the Board and community about how that progresses. The state budget also revealed that BUSD will be receiving an allocation of about \$2.5 million in one-time funding, which is welcome given expenses like facilities upgrades, PPE, additional staff, and testing that are ongoing for the district. Further additional funding will come through the state in the form of a retroactive 2.3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), equal to about \$2.5 million to cover deferrals and expenses in this current school year. The governor also pointed to 1.3% COLA for next year which, though not great, is better than the negative or zero COLAs we were prepared for last Spring.

He shared that in February, he will be bringing increased planning details to the Board about workforce housing. He also hopes to provide an update in February to the community on the Longfellow modernization project approved by the Board this past summer. At the Board meeting on January 20 he will update the board and community on the Middle School Assignment policy, efforts had been delayed by a year due to pandemic, but hope to restart

community involvement soon. Berkeley High formed a steering committee at the Board's request to examine the role of School Resource Officers, and there are plans to survey families and students about the impact of the SRO in their community.

Regarding Rep. de Mucha Flores's comments in relation to these 2019-20 Annual Reports: they are retrospective on a completed school year and are looking about 7 months into the past. After these Reports are done, staff will begin planning for 2021-22 SY. In the coming weeks BSEP program managers will come together to discuss the elements of plan documents that could best incorporate equity metrics and data.

8. 2019-20 BSEP Annual Reports Part One: Program Overviews

Introduction: Natasha Beery, Director of BSEP and Community Relations

Director Beery acknowledged that it may feel backwards to review Reports before looking at next year's Plans, but an explicit role of the P&O Committee is to review compliance with the terms of the measure. These annual reports used to be simple, bare bones compliance reports showing how much money was spent, how much was budgeted to be spent, and reasons for any variances. Over time they have grown to become a platform and springboard for committee members to understand the resources retrospectively, and to contextualize each resource's issues and challenges, before moving forward into future planning. An additional challenge in this process is that even though the school year ends in June, the fiscal year continues through July and books are finally closed in the fall. Preparing the financial information on a previous school year is sometimes possible to complete by the following December, but that hasn't been the case this year--a challenging year to be sure, particularly in Fiscal staffing. In this meeting we've chosen to expand this moment beyond dollars and cents, giving the committee an opportunity to hear from most of our BSEP managers about what they did in 2019-20, program highlights, reflections on how BSEP resources were adjusted through closure, updates on where they are currently, and use that as a beginning discussion point.

Tomorrow the Bay Area Consumer Price Index (CPI) will be released, which will set the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), or rate of increase for the BSEP and BERRA tax rates in the coming tax year. We'll then extrapolate how much we can allocate to each program in SY 2021-22 based on that projection, and managers can then begin constructing next year's Annual Plans.

She noted that the High Quality Instruction '19-20 Report will be presented at the P&O meeting on January 26th, including Professional Development (PD), Evaluation, Expanded Course Offerings (ECO), and Classroom Support. She thanked the managers for adding the slideshow presentations to their work for this evening's meeting.

Communications and Community Relations: Natasha Beery, Director of BSEP and Community Relations

Director Beery presented the [2019-20 BSEP Community Engagement and Public Information Annual Report](#) and [Overview Slides](#). She noted that the most money in any budget, true across the district and for this resource, is used to pay for staffing. See slides for more details.

Rep. Irwin, referring to previous concerns from committee members about the longevity of BSEP funding, asked if any of the three ballot measures passed in March 2020 might result in relieving

pressure on BSEP funds and improve the longevity of BSEP resources. Director Beery answered that one of the three measures was a bond, which the district puts forth on a continuing basis every 10 years or so and is primarily for construction needs, though it can also be a source for some aspects of non-personnel Technology funding. The second was a safety and maintenance measure, which has nothing to do with BSEP purposes. The third was BERRA, which has about \$500,000 going to recruitment and retention that incorporates a small amount of PD and oversight funds, but not a whole lot. BUSD's leadership and Cabinet are continually looking at all available funding in the district, asking how each resource can be best used to address our students' needs, and working to alleviate stress across all funding sources.

Rep. Dederich observed that printing and mailing was a big cost to this budget in 2019-20, and asked if Director Beery would consider online publication as a cheaper option that would also be easier to translate into other languages. Director Beery agreed that this is the largest material expense in this budget, and appreciated the great suggestion. She noted that they have dialed back this already to only once instead of twice a year. One idea is that we might send postcards to Berkeley residents directing citizens to find this information posted online. But we also want to reach all voters, even residents who don't use the computer/internet, to let them know how their funds are being used.

Rep. Pastika asked if the district's entire Communications budget is paid from BSEP funds. Director Beery answered yes, our very small Communications team is funded completely from BSEP, though we do have the Superintendent's Executive Assistant helping with some functions, and that position isn't BSEP-funded. Rep. Pastika asked if there is a reason why the General Fund can't contribute to the Communications budget. Director Beery responded that it is the same reason that we see across other BSEP-funded purposes: we always look to what the GF must support and what other room it has for more programs, and balance that against what BSEP funds are allowed to be used for based on what the voters approved in the measure, directing BSEP funds to valuable needs in the district that voters have indicated they care about.

Library Services Program: Jessica Lee, District Library Coordinator

Ms. Lee presented the [2019-20 BSEP Libraries Annual Report](#) and [Overview Slides](#). She noted that as was stated before, BSEP primarily funds staffing for the Library Program. See documents for further details.

Ms. Lee highlighted a major accomplishment during the closure: last Spring their department working with the Berkeley Public Schools Fund (BSPF) to get needed books to our students who would benefit most from receiving them. The Library program ordered lists from Mrs. Dalloway's, BSPF would pay for them, and they were mailed directly to each student. The most overwhelming change in the spring was that she and the district's credentialed librarians took on figuring out what online instruction would look like, in partnership with the Technology department in their combined "Digi-Tech" capacity.

Rep. Pastika asked Ms. Lee if overall her sense of the current 2020-21 year is that the Libraries budget will end with dollar amounts roughly the same but perhaps reallocated due to COVID, or did she expect a final expenditures from this year to be completely different than the 2020-21 planned budget. She also asked if Libraries were tracking or counting the number of students who opt in to services through the school closure, as that would be valuable to reflect back on,

particularly if next year is uncertain. Ms. Lee answered that with respect to the budget, the significant thing is that last year Libraries spent less and mostly on materials, but also understaffed a bit. Library Program expenses this year are more, but she feels confident that the program budget will be okay given its steadily-growing reserve. Regarding student attendance, there is tracking but there haven't been any identifiable patterns, and it varies by school. We are keeping track and varying how we try to keep students coming in to Library programs, but it's a part of the Superintendent's plan that these sessions be optional.

School Board Member Vasudeo commend the Library Program's work serving students through the pandemic. Rep. Liang suggested, as one way of addressing equity concerns, that the Library staff provide training for parents of early readers, covering topics like how to navigate the school and public library systems, how to find good reading materials for their students, and how to transition from parent-led to student-initiated book selection, because this is a learning process for parents. Ms. Lee thanked him for the suggestion, and added that at the Pre-K level there is normally a bookbag program running in person, where kids are helped to select books on a regular basis to read in school and at home. Unfortunately, this year it's different due to COVID.

Rep. Irwin asked how site librarians interact and coordinate with Family Engagement staff at their school, both to distribute books and to get them returned, in the effort to get more books to families that need them so kids don't fall behind and to support students who may not have as many parental supports. Ms. Lee answered that the lists of target students from last spring were built out by OFEE staff and Lit Coaches at each school, then librarians matched books to those students. This year, when book bags aren't picked up by families, many of the library staff are instructed to check with their site's Family Engagement Specialist to coordinate and plan, figuring out which students and families need focus. Volunteers have been driving all over to get books to students, wherever they happen to be through the pandemic.

Music and Visual and Performing Arts: Pete Gidlund, VAPA Program Supervisor

Mr. Gidlund presented the [2019-20 BSEP VAPA Annual Report](#) and [Overview Slides](#). He explained that this year, music is optional and there is no formal attendance mechanism at this time, though generally attendance is much more than was expected. There has been an overall drop in participation because it's optional in distance learning schedules. He was not sure how students will do coming back when schools reopen, both in ability to get back to much more regular in-person schedules, and when moving from elementary to middle school or from middle to high school. He shared that the biggest concern on his mind is that the program is losing a lot of kids of color, because in the 4th and 5th grades music is usually mandatory and built into the elementary school day, so we get all elementary students there. It's an issue that right now, with elementary music being optional we're seeing a disproportionate drop in students of color participating.

Rep. Weisglass expressed appreciation for the work being done by VAPA. He stated that he doesn't understand the rationale to limiting class to once per week for elementary music teachers. Mr. Gidlund answered that the schedule is set by the MOU between the teachers union and the district, which limits teachers' time in distance learning instruction; this agreement applies to classroom, PE, science, music, arts, and all other credentialed teachers across the board in BUSD. They are all represented by the same union, under the same contract. Chair Bradstreet reminded the committee that members could submit further questions for program managers via email, and

the managers will be returning at the January 26 meeting and can bring more information at that time.

Instructional Technology: Jay Nitschke, Director of Technology

Director Nitschke will come back at the January 26 P&O meeting with the full 2019-20 Technology Report presentation, due to lack of time in this meeting.

Student Support: Brent Stephens, Superintendent and Bajé Thiara, Associate Superintendent of Educational Services

Dr. Stephens and Associate Superintendent Thiara presented the [2019-20 BSEP Effective Student Support Annual Report](#) and [Overview Slides](#) See documents for further details.

Reps. Rabinowitz and Cohen both expressed that the quality and amount of information being reviewed in the meeting was very high, particularly given the level of detail about each program being presented.

Rep. Imani thanked all the managers for their presentations and focus on equity concerns and issues. He expressed hope that at a later point the committee will see how these are measured, and data-driven metrics.

Rep. Ball asked if there had been any feedback from school counselors about how well they feel they're reaching the students in need of extra support in this challenging time. Associate Superintendent Thiara answered that they were looking at student participation data, which comes in many forms in distance learning, to try to determine how well students are engaged. Counselors are working with Coordination of Services (COS) teams on-site and generating lists of students who need more help. They are also working on utilizing advisory periods at the middle schools, focusing on how we build school culture and interactions when everything is online. The counseling staff continue to work to figure out what it looks like to meet academic needs and mental health needs online.

Rep. Pai raised the issue of students using YouTube, a concern for many parents, because the amount of time students now need to spend online also leads them to become distracted with non-academic sites and videos, further exacerbated by the fact that many teachers also rely on academic YouTube videos for distance learning instruction. She asked if there is any district-wide thinking about how to keep students more focused or directed and less digitally distracted. Associate Superintendent Thiara responded that district leadership is having these conversations centrally, too. They learned early on that student engagement was critical as soon as the emergency shutdown hit, and had to shift instructional platforms so that they were more engaging to students. This has left the ongoing challenge of monitoring activity, which is a known issue.

9. For the Good of the Order

Rep. Pastika, for the coming School Board meeting, provided a brief overview of the summary she would present to the Board of the P&O's items of discussion and related questions.

Rep. Irwin moved to approve terry's proposal, Rep. Kamdar seconded, and the outline of the P&O summary to the School Board was approved unanimously.

Rep. Pastika pointed out that both the Library and Technology reports mentioned the work of BPSF, and proposed that there be an acknowledgement for the work they've done. She also suggested that if the Annual Report documents were sent to the committee with more time for review before the meeting, the managers would not need to spend as much time summarizing during the meeting, and there would be more time for in-depth discussion.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 8:35 p.m.