

**BSEP PLANNING & OVERSIGHT STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES
April 22, 2021**

P&O Committee Members Present

Nicole Chabot, *Berkeley Arts Magnet*
Nimota Abina, *Cragmont*
Jonathan Weissglass, *Emerson*
Weldon Bradstreet, *Rosa Parks*

Heather Flett, *Washington*
Terry Pastika, *Berkeley High (Alt)*
Shauna Rabinowitz, *Berkeley High*

P&O Steering Committee Members Absent*:

Aaron Glimme, *Berkeley High*

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

BUSD Staff:

Brent Stephens, *Superintendent of Schools*
Natasha Beery, *Director of BSEP and Communications*
Danielle Perez, *BSEP Program Specialist*

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was held online via Zoom. At 4:31 p.m. Chairperson Bradstreet called the meeting to order.

2. Establish the Quorum/Approve the Agenda

The quorum was established with 4 voting Steering Committee members present.

Chair Bradstreet asked for a motion to approve the agenda; Rep. Pastika moved to approve the agenda, Rep. Flett seconded, the agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

3. Chairperson's Comments

There were no comments.

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

5. BSEP/BERRA Public Oversight and Public Information Plan for 2021-22

Natasha Beery, Director of BSEP and Community Relations

Director Beery thanked all for attending the additional meeting. She introduced Trish McDermott, the Public Information Office (PIO) for BUSD, to help lend expertise around the district's communications and community relations. Director Beery explained that she wanted to get feedback around Oversight and Communications in advance because there is the possibility of a reorganization of these offices. She hopes that if the P&O is in agreement, that would facilitate bringing new job descriptions to the Board to be put into place expeditiously.

Director Beery presented the first draft of the [2021-22 Oversight, Community Engagement Plan](#).

The values in the budget are not final, from Fiscal Services staff, but are close enough to present preliminarily. She explained that the Director of BSEP and Community Relations position is most in need of a change, because the Community Relations aspects have been swallowing the time of the role, even since before the pandemic hit. The demands of Community Relations and Communications at times overwhelm the focus on the BSEP work, and now with BERRA as well to be dealt with, ideally the Director role would be a position to focus more intensely on oversight of local resources.

She shared that she will be leaving the position by early September, and feels strongly that the position needs to be adjusted to be realistically doable for her successor, to set them up for success. The proposal is that this Director of Local Resources (BSEP and BERRA) role would become a certificated position (rather than classified as Beery is). This change would attract skilled candidates who have education experience. Further, the ability of this new Director to be really connected to Ed Services can only strengthen the work. Up to this point, the BSEP Office is connected indirectly to Ed Services and Fiscal, and Beery feels that being connected more firmly with Ed Services would help the Director to be a stronger interpreter of programs for P&O committee, Board, etc.

Another change proposed is to fund .5 FTE of the BERRA TSA position from the BERRA 5% budget, and leverage the savings in BERRA oversight funds to strengthen communications goals.

Director Beery also explained that just prior to her taking the position, there had been a position study for the Communications Team, resulting in a recommendation to let go of the PIO position to adopt a Communications Manager role. This 21-22 Plan intends to finally implement that suggestion. This is recognizing that the communications leader for a school district like Berkeley isn't simply writing press releases, but is more of a strategic advisor and point person for crisis communications, leading the Comms Team, and serving as a member of the Executive Cabinet. This shift would make sure that we're communicating on multiple channels, utilizing social media, and overall being proactive and not reactive.

Another potential change is to the Interpreter/Translator position, so that it will be recognized for the community outreach that is already being done there (but could be done better and more, if the rote work for things like IEP translation are outsourced to contractors who are well suited to that work and can provide enhanced confidentiality). The BERRA TSA funding has been under-utilized, and here the Plan proposes a half-time Communications Specialist as a better use of oversight funds. Though the budget numbers are not finalized, these proposed shifts will be sustainable, between projected revenue and available fund balances.

Rep. Pastika asked if the Communications Manager would continue to respond to PRA requests. Director Beery responded that the district now has a fully staffed Title IX Office, which will handle most of the requests along with the Superintendent's Executive Assistant. Ms. McDermott added that requests may be made to various staff including the PIO, but now there is a team working on them and the work is shared as appropriate. Rep. Pastika added that it would be good to clarify a path of travel for PRA requests. She also asked why the Director of Local Resources would need to support BERRA PD and recruitment projects. Director Beery answered that "Local Resources" refer to local tax funding from BSEP and BERRA. Of the BERRA resources, 1% is allocated for oversight and supporting the P&O and its processes, while the actual

recruitment and retention work comes out of the BERRA 5% budget, approved by the P&O last year for the first time. We had thought in the first year that we would need to fund part of a TSA out of the 1% oversight budget. Over the course of this year, we found that we don't really need a TSA paid to support oversight, rather we need that TSA to do recruitment and retention work, thus the shift to funding that from the 5% budget. The oversight responsibilities can sit with the Director position.

Director Beery explained that she's been concerned about certain community partnerships such as those with the Public Schools Fund and the City of Berkeley, which now don't have a dedicated liaison. Other projects, also, like renaming schools, middle school assignment process revision, and larger civic engagement projects are roles that shouldn't necessarily sit with the Director of Local Resources, but could be located elsewhere, most likely under the Associate Superintendent and/or the Director of Student Services.

Rep. Chabot commented that she has always appreciated the way that Director Beery has occupied the BSEP Director role as a somewhat independent party. She felt that it is important that whoever sits in that chair is trusted and independent regardless of what's going on in the district. Rep. Pastika agreed. Director Beery answered that she really is only the second person to sit in this role for any length of time in its 35 year history, and agreed that it must remain a position of public trust. That would be what we look for in the next person, someone who takes the role of oversight very seriously. She added that at the Director level it is easier to be independent and advocate for what should be done, whether that Director is Classified or Certificated.

Rep. Weisglass felt that it is less important whether the next Director is Certificated or Classified, than the person is who fills it, and wouldn't limit it to one type of applicant if possible. He also expressed worry that this change to the Director role would make the PIO/Communications Manager position unmanageable. Director Beery agreed, The goal is to ensure that the Communications Specialist role is filled with a skilled person who can take work from the PIO/Comms Manager plate without needing constant management. She also noted that not all districts have their PIO as point person on PRA requests. She added that unfortunately, we have to choose between Classified or Certificated, and if it's posted as Classified, Certificated staff are very unlikely to be interested.

Rep. Pastika asked if the reorganization would help with the amount of work necessary to compile the information and budgets for the various managers' plans and reports. Director Beery answered that this has to be a core part of the job, but that's one of the reasons that a Certificated candidate would be a plus; they would speak the language of the managers they are working with. Applicants for a Classified role tend to be from nonprofits, and may have good management skills, but don't know school districts, the ins and outs of funds and programs. Certificated applicants bring educational vocabulary and mindset, which are benefits when working at the table with Ed Services, the Superintendent, the Director of State and Federal Programs, having discussions about the best ways to help kids with these funds. A Certificated Director would have the ability to be a really strong thought partner as the district looks critically at how funds are being used. When you're not an educator, you can try to interpret, but it's not on the same level.

Director Beery posed a specific question about the district's Annual Report, which will be released later than normal this year. It will be completed in May, and must choose between sending the full mailer to Berkeley residents as has been done in the past, posting it online only, or choosing an in-between method like mailing out a postcard to Berkeley citizens that directs them to look online for the full report. She and Ms. McDermott have to make a decision immediately. Rep. Rabinowitz supported the hybrid approach, noting that the district still needs to reach homes that don't stay on the internet all the time. Ms. McDermott explained that they don't have the overall costs from last year for comparison to this year's costs, but the plan is to still have some Reports printed and available to take to events, when recruiting, and to have available if requested. Rep. Abina supported the hybrid option, sharing that her experience is that some people will never look at online materials, so a multi-directional approach would be best. Rep. Bradstreet also favored hybrid. Rep. Flett observed that it sounds like the postage would still be a cost if postcards are mailed, and asked if the hybrid choice would save any funds. Director Beery confirmed that with hybrid they would only mail postcards, which is much less expensive. She added that full Reports could still be delivered by district staff to each school site, local libraries, senior centers, etc.

Rep. Rabinowitz, referring back to the proposed changes to the Director's position, understood the reasoning behind the shift to Certificated, but noted that Director Beery has done the role justice as a Classified employee. She noted that the committee has seen how Director Beery is doing all the Report and Plan presentations this year, which is new, having to explain absolutely everything, which is outside of the scope of a Classified staff person generally. However, her concern is that with a Classified person in the Director role who isn't represented by unions like UBA or BCCA, there is an amount of independence from perceived influence or bias, which is ideal. She also noted that so many of these upper-level district positions are paid only to Certificated staff, and she would hate to see a position at such a high level lost to the Classified employee pool. Director Beery noted that it is possible to have unrepresented Certificated positions, which would make the most sense for this new role. She also noted that Classified Directors are paid at lower rates, so if we offer the position at a Classified level it's hard to get Certificated candidates willing to take a pay cut to take the job.

Rep. Pastika shared that she is not yet convinced that you need a classified person to be able to look at things critically, because in part that's what the budget staff should also be doing. She does feel like whoever would have a little more independence is best for the oversight aspect of the job. Director Beery observed that the unfortunate flipside of independence is also being out of the loop, at times, from educational decision-making. She will look into whether it's possible to post simultaneously both Certificated and Classified positions. However, another complication with Classified roles is with the Merit Commission, that oversees the process of changing Classified positions which usually takes around 5 months to complete. In that time, the district could not hire a replacement, leaving the district without anyone in this capacity in the meantime. The only option, given when she plans to be leaving the district, would be to fill the exact same Classified job, and not addressing the issues that are known and should be fixed. Rep. Rabinowitz added that on top of that, once a new person is hired in a Classified role, they have to be in that position for two years before it's possible to request the position be adjusted. Director Beery confirmed that, noting that as the reason why the PIO position could not be updated sooner.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 5:18 p.m.