

BSEP PLANNING & OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MINUTES
May 25, 2021

P&O Committee Members Present

Nicole Chabot, *Berkeley Arts Magnet*
Nimota Abina, *Cragmont (co-Rep)*
Jonathan Weissglass, *Emerson*
Heather Ball, *Malcolm X*
Weldon Bradstreet, *Rosa Parks*
Justin Randall, *Sylvia Mendez*

Heather Flett, *Washington*
Olivia Lim, *Longfellow Middle School*
Kate Jordan, *Willard Middle School*
Aaron Glimme, *Berkeley High*
Terry Pastika, *Berkeley High (Alt)*
Shauna Rabinowitz, *Berkeley High*

P&O Committee Members Absent*:

Jerry Liang, *Pre-K Program*
Carla Bryant, *Oxford*
Nikhila Pai, *Ruth Acty (co-Rep)*
Prashant Jawalikar, *King Middle School*

Chetan Kamdar, *King Middle School*
Josh Irwin, *Berkeley High*
Sarah Cline, *Berkeley High*
Martin de Mucha Flores, *Independent Study*

**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:

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 6:33 p.m. Chairperson Bradstreet called the meeting to order.

2. Establish the Quorum/Approve the Agenda

The quorum was established with 10 voting members present, later increased to 12.

The agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

3. Chairperson's Comments

Nicole Chabot and Weldon Bradstreet

Co-Chairs Chabot and Bradstreet thanked all the members for their time and for participating in the P&O process in such an unusual year.

4. BSEP Director's Comments

Natasha Beery, Director of BSEP & Community Relations

Director Beery also thanked all the individuals in the committee for making space in their busy lives in these extremely strange times to do this group's work.

5. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Brent Stephens, Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Stephens was thankful for P&O participation this year, as members have all been stalwart in sticking through this process.

He shared that he and the School Board are in a stretch of approving General Fund (GF) allocations and supplemental grants for the coming year. Upcoming Board meetings will have reports on the progress of the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), which is the guiding document for BUSD in the next three years. The Governor's May Budget Revision was positive, indicating a 5% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), which will go a long way even with some of the other costs hidden in the Governor's proposals. He was also hopeful that negotiations between the district and Berkeley Federation of Teachers (BFT) would wrap up in the coming days. He noted that there is interesting language in the Governor's proposal around the future state of remote learning, pointing towards a version of Independent Study (IS) as the only permissible form of remote learning for the coming school year. District leaders are proposing revisions to our IS framework for the coming year, working through the impact of these changes to our IS program.

Rep. Flett asked if there is any plan to mandate vaccination as a condition for full school reopening. Dr. Stephens answered that he hadn't heard of anything to that effect at the state level. There is ongoing debate among public health experts about the status of the vaccine use in children in the Fall, because the vaccine(s) would still be under an Emergency Use Authorization. The District will defer that decision to the state and health leaders. There is hope that in August, better understanding of who is vaccinated and who is not could help blunt the effects of any necessary quarantine procedures.

Rep. Lim urged Dr. Stephens to gather data on vaccination rates at the elementary sites over the summer, in the hopes that transparency, even in aggregate terms of vaccination rates of the adults/staff on campus, would gain more buy-in from families currently hesitant to return to in-person schooling. She also asked if the survey of current Distance Learning (DL) families was distributed to Two-Way Immersion program (TWI) families. Dr. Stephens answered that the survey should have been sent to all elementary DL families, though not yet to those in middle and high school. He noted that state and local guidance around tracking and mandating vaccinations is evolving as we speak, both with individual counties and with OSHA. Director Beery stated that they can bring these questions up with the City of Berkeley Health Officer.

Rep. Nimota asked if that survey would also be sent to families with students currently on campus. Dr. Stephens answered that it was only sent to those still in DL. The district is still working on how the new state guidance will impact what is offered next year. Rep. Chabot asked, given that budgets are currently being finalized for next school year, how he is thinking about what resources will be needed to support an increase in IS students, and how it might also impact site budgets if on-campus enrollment shifts. Dr. Stephens answered that in the abstract, he doesn't anticipate extracting resources from sites to fund an expanded IS program. The district has a large

amount of one-time resources, and of the 35-40% of DL families who responded, only a very small number indicated a desire to stay in remote learning. The district may beef up staffing in a surge capacity for a year in the IS program, and he hopes to be able to present the new aspects of that program as parents weigh final decisions for next school year.

Rep. Lim asked if there had been any thought about applying what the district has learned in DL to preparing for the upcoming fire season, particularly if fire issues would have to close schools. Dr. Stephens answered that the main issues we've seen with smoke events are power outages and heightened concerns about ventilation issues, but in the pandemic so much work has been done to improve ventilation on our campuses that by the time we get to August we should be set up not to close schools due to smoke. If we must close schools, we now know how to do DL, though we haven't tested a very flexible model shifting from day to day quite yet. Rep. Glimme encouraged district decision-makers to consider that with all of the recent ventilation upgrades, BUSD classrooms will for many students provide cleaner air than they have at home, and that it will be better to let students stay in school even in a smoke situation when possible.

6. Approval of Minutes

May 11, 2021

Ms. Perez noted that the minutes have been corrected to include Kate Jordan as present at 5/11/21. The amended 5.11.21 Draft Steering Committee Minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

7. Public Comment

Rep. Pastika raised her concern with the use of RtI teachers to serve as Distance Learning classroom teachers when schools reopened. Particularly that the P&O approved spending \$550,000 in 2020-21 on RtI services but that these weren't provided after schools reopened. This impacted district budgets and also site-funded budgets. She recognized that this topic can't be discussed in this meeting due to its not being on the agenda, and requested that the co-Chairs convene a Steering Committee meeting to discuss whether the P&O should advocate for a proration of funds. She would also, in preparation for next year, want to get an explicit understanding of what the P&O is approving when recommending funding for FTE; if the committee can expect that recommending staff pay for a specific purpose will ensure that they only work toward this purpose or not.

8. SBAC Update

Reps. Chabot, Pastika, Irwin, and Imani

Rep. Chabot shared that the Superintendent's Budget Advisory Committee (SBAC) has a few more meetings yet to convene this school year. As mentioned earlier by the Superintendent, a higher COLA will be a help in the short-term, but doesn't address the long-term reductions anticipated starting in 2022-23. One of the big issues is that there's a very long list of incremental asks for new funding for '21-22, while looking at significant cuts to come in two years' time. BSEP budgets have almost nothing left to give, as we see in the Multi-Year Projection documents. Consent Education, SpEd Case Managers, and Behavioral Health, among other things, rose to top of the SBAC member survey. The Superintendent's top priorities include the increase in unemployment benefit costs that the district has to pay, putting in a new technology system for Business Services (which is expensive to license, train, and onboard, but the District's

current system is exceedingly old), and a significant increase in OFEE services, among other things. There isn't much overlap between the SBAC survey results and Dr. Stephens's priorities. She still feels that the SBAC and district is pretty far off from being able to give significant input, hence at least two more meetings are planned for this year.

Rep. Pastika asked if the SBAC votes on the overall district budget. Rep. Chabot answered that it has in the past on specific items to be recommended, but is ultimately an advisory body similar to the P&O. The question was raised in SBAC about when the group determines what will actually be recommended, but it feels like we're a long way away from that at this point. It's not only that the list is long, but the number of funding sources coming in is varied and large. There are more than \$15 million in one-time COVID funds, all linked to specific restrictions, representing a big puzzle to be figured out.

Rep. Chabot continued that the SBAC is hoping to get better clarity around decision-making timing and implementation; in a normal year we would have a much better sense of that, and we need to work harder to figure that out. Director Beery agreed that budgeting this year is quite complicated, but also that it has to come to an end at some point. Fiscal Services needs to build actual budgets in advance of the new fiscal year, and things need to be decided and built into systems so that we can hire and fill positions. That could be an element that the P&O points to, recognizing the current unusual circumstances but also recognizing that with clearer district-wide priorities, we would be in a better position to make some decisions sooner.

Chair Bradstreet proposed to shift agenda item #9 to take place immediately before adjournment, moving immediately from item #8 to item #10. That change was approved by unanimous consent.

10. For the Good of the Order: Looking Ahead to 2021-22

Natasha Beery, Director of BSEP & Community Relations

Director Beery envisioned this item as an opportunity to summarize her thoughts for the P&O on the upcoming year with the transition in BSEP and BERRA leadership. She shared that she anticipates scheduling a meeting in August, given all the strange situations with last-minute budget decisions that still need attending to through June, July, and August. An August P&O meeting will also help transition her successor into their role. *[Note: this ended up being scheduled for September.]*

She did want to make a few brief remarks before the discussion of P&O statements to the School Board. She shared her gratitude to committee members, noting that this committee is possible because individuals make decisions to make this a priority in their lives, and bring different perspectives to the group. She thanked Danielle Perez both for serving as co-Chair of this committee in the past and transitioning to the Program Specialist role to serve the district as an employee. She offered her thanks to all of the Chairs she has worked with, for being such wonderful partners. (The total number of P&O meetings she's attended is 132!) She also gave a shout-out to Rep. Glimme for being a BSEP and BUSD historian and giving his distinct perspective to this committee.

She recognized that this remarkable, rocky and uncertain year has taken its toll on us, our kids, our communities, and our schools. She acknowledged that turnover in leadership can contribute to the challenges, but stressed that her decision to leave has nothing to do with COVID, but is something that she has been considering and deferring for a while. Precisely because leadership turnover is so challenging, she pointed out that if this P&O Committee can hold steady as much as possible, that will be all the more beneficial to the district. She will be available to a degree even after the transition. She hoped that the committee members are thinking about next year, how best to bring new participants into the group with the necessary tools to grasp all the information and work. She hoped those elements can continue to be improved, and appreciated everyone's partnership in improving our templates, training, and processes.

She advised the group to think about how we want to meet moving forward. Zoom is hard in its own ways, but allows us more room to be together when we otherwise couldn't, but there is also huge value in meeting face-to-face. She proposed coming up with a hybrid schedule to get the best of both worlds. Her other suggestions when thinking about next year include remaining focused on the big picture, identifying key issues and biggest dollar-amount items that impact the most students.

She also highlighted that the key to committees providing the kind of direction that the Superintendent and managers can really take and use is to ask those decision-makers what their core priorities and beliefs are. For example, how do they intend to balance the elements of serving all students while holding equity at the forefront of work. The themes of quality, efficacy, equity, and sustainability are huge; at the same time she stressed that we can't spend dollars we don't have. Committee members must focus on shepherding these resources in equitable and sustainable ways through the end of our measures, and she asked that the P&O Committee to be partners in that sometimes-unpleasant process of budget reductions, with our kids and priorities at the forefront of the work.

She hoped that some of the current P&O members will be at the forefront starting next year in the planning for our next BSEP measure. In addition to the usual Plans and Reports, she encouraged everyone to consider what the committee may want to tackle right away, so that in '22-23 planning you have the right information and research ready to make choices about the shape of the new measure. Identify what can be measured, and also what can't be measured but is still highly valuable to the community. There may be questions about how we apportion dollars to sites, for example.

She advised members to keep notes about both their school and community, and to look for places where the P&O can be a voice at the Board meetings with the high profile that BSEP and BERRA deserve. She encouraged the committee to take the opportunity of that protected 5 minutes per Board meeting to share and press for responses to P&O concerns. Individuals should also bring their own concerns as well, during public comment, while being clear that they aren't directly representing the committee. She encouraged members to be sure to uphold the P&O in the public eye as guardians of Berkeley public funds, and also as a diverse community of citizens who have been digging deep into what will best serve our students.

Chairperson Bradstreet noted that with the plan to hold an August P&O meeting, there will be time to prepare a separate statement from the P&O to recognize Director Beery's work and

contributions to the district, allowing the next agenda item to focus on a statement in June about other issues important to the P&O.

11. P&O Statement to the Board for June 2, 2021: Recognizing Director Beery and Committee Notes on Important Issues

Co-Chairs Nicole Chabot and Weldon Bradstreet

Chairperson Bradstreet thanked Rep. Pastika for the incredible amount of work she has been doing to present regular meeting reports to the Board on behalf of the P&O this year. He explained that this discussion should focus on important issues and themes that have come up repeatedly in P&O meetings, which the Board should focus on as well. Some topics he wanted to recognize include concern about the sustainability of BSEP funds, making sure that the Board is making good decisions in spending BSEP funds through the end of the measure and into the next. Another topic is around equity, and the question of whether BSEP and BERRA funds are being used in a way that promotes equity in school sites. He commended Pete Gidlund and Jessica Lee as an example of budget managers who have heard this message and centered this concern in their work.

Chairperson Chabot explained that, building on Rep. Pastika's regular updates to the Board, it is now a great time to make an even more direct statement to the Board on major themes from the P&O this year. She proposed that the committee follow that statement portion with an "ask," in response to our ongoing concerns. She shared other themes she's heard through the year focusing on priorities, quality, equity, sustainability, and continuity. Regarding quality, the committee is always asking about the measurable output of a budget, how success is to be measured qualitatively or quantitatively to know that it's been achieved. There has been progress this year but it will continue to be a focus and goal in the coming years.

Regarding continuity, as we prepare for the next measure, taxpayers have supported BUSD for so long, but there has to be a limit to what we ask; we need to ensure that the next measure passes successfully. She also noted that the language of measure E1 has very clear priorities in what was to be achieved, but one of the committee's struggles is identifying the priorities of the district overall. This committee is asked to marry BSEP priorities and programs financially to the district-wide structure, and it's challenging without a clear direction of how they marry strategically. She proposed asking for clear district priorities: must-have programs and outcomes, themes that must be supported, and its most critical goals.

Rep. Glimme shared his perspective, specifically that as a long-time committee member he's seen several waves of these concerns through different BSEP measures. Now he sees fewer acute urgent issues, noting that the group is hitting all the key things we've always considered most important to look at. If there were easy answers to these big-picture concerns, they would already be found, but they're really hard problems with factors that we both can and cannot control. He emphasized that we won't stop looking for these solutions, and that we will continue to work on these problems with our absolute focus.

Rep. Pastika asked Rep. Glimme where he felt the P&O can be most effective in being able to push forward progress. Rep. Glimme shared that in his experience, this committee has two aspects where we can exert the most leverage. The first is in protecting the tax measure and

making sure it reaches its goals through its full lifespan. In the past, when it appeared that a measure might run out of resources early, the P&O noticed and sounded warnings, and there were fast changes in the district. We are uniquely positioned to monitor that, and we have multi-year projections to help in this oversight. The second high-leverage aspect of the P&O is having members with a particular focus on equity, which does help to remind all the budget administrators that this is a singular goal of the district. This is more productive than when the committee tries to focus too closely on individual programs which members don't have a great body of expertise with, which can then push the committee's work off-track.

Rep. Pastika suggested that the committee should take advantage of this transitional period to set our expectations, in the hopes that we can be a group that can get answers and push for better than the status quo. She encouraged the committee to be bold; we have been updating at every Board meeting, if they've been listening none of this should come as a surprise.

Chairperson Chabot suggested that the committee also emphasize how much we rely on the transparency and efficacy of Director Beery to fulfill our primary functions and obligation to taxpayers. She suggested that in addition to mentioning the themes of this year, the statement to the Board also outline vital characteristics of the new Director. Chairperson Bradstreet noted that the Board doesn't make the ultimate hiring decision, but it would be good to get the attention of all district administrators. For example: the statement could include that the committee would like to see that the new Director under all circumstances is appropriately resourced, with monetary and staff support to enable P&O to do its job. The new Director should also be very independent to largely represent the taxpayers. Further, with almost a quarter of the BUSD budget coming from local taxes, the new Director should also have a seat at the table, being a member of the Executive Cabinet with the Superintendent, Associate and Assistant Superintendents, and anyone who is making decisions about how local tax money is being spent. The next Director needs to understand and communicate programs and funding to the P&O, and be able to explain how it all fits together, including how the other pieces of the pie fit around our local tax resources to fully fund the district and its priorities.

Chairperson Chabot agreed, stating that this person can't do this work in a silo, but will need a seat at the table to understand what's going on and how it fits together. They will also need to be able to prioritize and make decisions that are more difficult than we've seen in the past couple of years. This committee and the public need to have faith that this person can navigate these waters. We need to feel confident that this person can lead the charge in renewing the BSEP measure.

Director Beery suggested that if there's room in the statement, include Rep. Weisglass's earlier point that the Public Information Officer should not be overburdened by the pieces removed from the current Director's roles in Communications. The PIO also needs good support to do their work for the district well. Further, the third aspect of Director Beery's current job is Community Relations, and that piece also needs attention separate from BSEP and BERRA oversight.

She also pointed out that the new Associate Superintendent of Ed Services will have lots of new people on their team next year; recall that when Mr. Scuderi was in this role he would be at the Director's side and BSEP-funded work in Ed Services was planned and presented to the P&O together. She would hope that this will be the case again, with a new Associate Superintendent,

she hopes that her successor will be well supported by the district leadership team above, next to, and with them from all sides.

Rep. Abina added that other common chords in these and other meetings include concerns with the Two-Way Immersion (TWI) program, and middle school enrollment policies. It may not be appropriate in this situation, though it does come back to equity concerns for both issues. Director Beery agreed that TWI and middle schools have been common themes this year. It would be appropriate to flag these concerns with respect to district goals and priorities. This goes back to wanting to hear from the Superintendent and other district leaders about how they will address key issues in the district. The P&O may not be able to solve these directly as a committee, but we have them in our view. We need to better understand the major district priorities and how our resources or others will solve them.

Rep. Ball added to the list of concerns continuing to increase resources supporting BUSD's full-inclusion model. We've made that commitment as a district, but leaders are always looking for funds to hire support for it.

Rep. Rabinowitz expressed concern about whether someone without Director Beery's knowledge base and history could fill this role. She noted that it's already hard to fathom how Director Beery has been presenting the Plans and Budgets for almost all of the resources this past year, and that is very concerning because that is not at all historically how these plans have been developed and shared with this committee and the Board.

Chairperson Chabot made a motion that the committee approve a two-part statement, the first portion expressing the themes of this year as articulated in this discussion, then the second portion making specific asks regarding the new Director's hiring given its impact on our ability to be stewards of these measures. The motion passed unanimously.

Rep. Pastika suggested that the co-Chairs represent the P&O in making this statement to the Board; the co-Chairs agreed. Rep. Pastika made a motion that the committee follow the same procedure that has been used for previous statements from the committee to circulate this new draft statement to interested members. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

9. BSEP Site Plans for 2021-22

Danielle Perez, BSEP Program Specialist

Ms. Perez presented the [2021-22 BSEP Site Fund Use Summary](#), the [2021-22 BSEP Site Fund Comparative Summary](#), and the [BSEP Site Fund Multi-Year Comparative](#). She explained that the School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) templates were not updated until the previous week, so Principals have had the deadlines for those full documents extended through June 1. As a result, this presentation does not contain the full SPSAs for each site, but only contains the set BSEP spending as established by the Budget Development Meetings and which have all been approved by the schools' SSCs.

The final SPSAs will be presented to the Board on June 23, then posted to each school's website as public record.

The [PTA Budget Comparisons](#) document contains only money that is committed in advance to the district, to be used at the start of next school year. That includes all salaried positions funded by PTAs, budgets for hourly work, and contracts for services at the sites (for example counseling/mental & behavioral health, etc.). PTAs may add funds for these purposes throughout the school year as needs arise, but the data shown in the PTA Summary are known expenditures as of right now. SPSAs do not need to include funds that PTAs hold for direct reimbursements to teachers or staff for out of pocket expenses like supplies, or PTA budgets for anything a PTA may purchase directly like food for meetings/events, etc.

Rep. Pastika stated that it will be important for Director Beery's successor to continue the liaison work with the school sites. She felt that this practice is really important and encourages it to continue, along with specifically allowing Ms. Perez the flexibility to work with sites, as she felt the schools have benefitted from that support.

Rep. Randall asked if it's possible to know what each site's PTA spends. Ms. Perez answered that it's been hard to get full pictures from each school. In the past when P&O members asked full budgets for each PTA were available, the PTA Council at that time declined to share the information. This is a request we could make again if the current P&O members have a sustained interest. Director Beery noted that there has been substantial turnover in the PTA Council, and its current composition might be more amenable to that conversation now. She wanted to flag that the practice of allowing PTAs to pay for salaried positions is long-standing but questionable. Previous district administrators have spoken out strongly against this. Another wrinkle right now is the special COVID funding given to schools for '21-22, it is not clear how those will be summarized and accounted for, though it will dovetail with other site-based funding like PTAs and BSEP site resources.

Rep. Pastika commented that as she has said in the past, if those PTA budgets have been shared with Principals they are public records that can be requested. PTAs also have to file their expenditures with the state, which is also public information. She understands preferring to be collaborative rather than confrontational, but those are public records.

Rep. Lim added that she felt the new PTA Council would be more open to collaborating with the P&O on this type of information sharing, and that it is something that should be pursued in the coming year.

Rep. Rabinowitz, as an item For the Good of the Order, invited BSEP staff to visit the SSC at BHS in the coming year. She felt that their SSC practices may need an outside eye, given the new administrator and a largely new group of committee members. The new practice of recording each member's individual vote on each funding proposal may discourage honest voting and communication in meetings. Director Beery noted that request, and added that it could be due to some confusion as the School Board has been doing roll call votes because of online meeting formats. She will be sure to follow up on this concern.

12. Adjournment

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