

BUSD Middle School Student Enrollment Policy Community Engagement Plan, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 School Years

March 11, 2020, Board of Education Meeting

Dr. Brent Stephens, Superintendent
Bajé Thaira, Associate Superintendent, Education Services

The Berkeley Unified School District Board of Education has directed the Superintendent to develop a plan for further engaging the Berkeley community on the topic of middle school student enrollment. Elements of this community engagement will include a review of a variety of indicators, the identification of key issues in the current enrollment policy, and recommendations for adjusting this policy.

This process will include the review of a variety of indicators, including demographic information about BUSD's three middle schools; outcome information about student learning; and educator, caregiver, and community input.

The purpose of this nine-month engagement process is to inform the Superintendent's recommendation to the Board of Education about the middle school student enrollment policy. Included in a possible Board decision about middle school student enrollment could be:

- Adjusting the current middle school enrollment system so that the middle schools achieve demographic parity (racial and socio-economic integration), as our elementary schools and high school currently do. Possible options for the middle school assignment plan could include
 - Leaving the current middle school enrollment policy in place
 - Creating attendance zones for all three middle schools; or

- Creating “feeder patterns” for each middle school - a cluster of elementary schools that would feed into a designated middle school

This engagement plan contemplates a Board decision about the enrollment policy in November, 2020. A Board decision in November 2020 could be to implement a new plan for the start of the 2021-2022 school year, or it could be to implement a new plan at a later date, i.e., at the start of the 2022-2023 school year.

The Board of Education has discussed the topic of middle school student enrollment in several previous public meetings. A list of these meeting dates is below:

Board of Education Meeting Date	Link
April 10, 2019 Item 15. Initial Discussion About Possible Middle School Rezoning - Discussion	April 10, 2019 Board of Education Meeting Agenda
June 12, 2019 Item 18. Update on Plan to Explore Revision to Middle School Assignment Process - Discussion	June 12, 2019 Board of Education Meeting Agenda

Equity Principles for Community Engagement

BUSD is committed to taking steps to ensure equitable participation in this process. This is to say that the plan must differentiate for factors that can inhibit participation in school events, such as speaking a language at home other than English; the need to work at times when school events typically take place; access to technology; and the effect of “white space” on people of color .¹

To this end, this plan proposes a number of affinity-based meetings, deliberate equity-centered norms in the meetings, and facilitation moves designed to ensure that all participants are heard. At school sites, the active involvement of staff from BUSD’s Office of Family Engagement and Equity will support parents who may not have equitable access to the school to be meaningfully engaged.

¹ Black in White Space, Elijah Anderson, Penn Institute for Urban Research, May 21, 2018. Available at <https://pennur.upenn.edu/publications/black-in-white-space>.

recommendations to the Board of Education in November - likely at both the first and second Board meetings in November.

Key Elements of the Middle School Student Enrollment Policy Community Engagement Plan

1. District-Wide Communication

At key moments in this process, the Superintendent will share with the broad BUSD community updates on the status of this work. At the outset, this document will be translated and distributed in as an overview of the total process so that members of the community are of the variety of opportunities to provide input.

Translated advertisements for community meetings will be distributed to parents through email, and in elementary schools, printed flyers will be distributed to students to take home.

2. Community and Parent Committee Meetings

At two points in this engagement process, BUSD plans to hold two rounds of community meetings at each one of the district's elementary attendance zones. Around the same time as these meetings, the district will also engage the Parent Advisory Committee, the PTA Council, and District English Language Advisory Committee on this topic. These meetings will include invitations to Spanish-speaking families, the TWI community, and African American students. In total, the district envisions that each of these two rounds will consist of six community gatherings - three large meetings in each elementary attendance area and three meetings with standing parent committees. These rounds are meetings planned for April-May and again in September-October.

3. Community Feedback

At several key junctures in this process, the district will broadly solicit feedback from the community, through surveys after we have identified key issues, and after a first recommendation to the Board of Education by district staff. We will also maintain a specific email address dedicated to feedback about middle school enrollment.

The district will send out these draft recommendations through School Messenger, and will utilize liaisons from the Office of Family Engagement and Equity to solicit feedback from families who may need support to respond.

All communications will be translated into English and Spanish.

4. Educator Engagement

To accommodate educators' schedules, the district will meet with teachers and classified staff from Longfellow, King, and Willard. These will be scheduled in collaboration with each school principal and leadership team.

5. Middle School Enrollment Advisory Group

For the purpose of securing ongoing advice on the overall implementation of this plan, and to support the development of draft and final recommendations to the Board of Education, the district will form a Middle School Student Enrollment Advisory Group that will meet throughout the engagement process. The Advisory group will consist of

- Community Members (4)
- Middle School Principals (3)
- BFT and BCCE representatives (1-2 each)
- BUSD Staff, including the Enrollment Office (3)
- One Board of Education member
- Senior BUSD Staff Member
- Facilitator

The Superintendent will propose to the Board of Education a slate of members for this Advisory Group. Meetings of the Advisory Group will be open, advertised, and open to the public.