

BERKELEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Board of Education  
1231 Addison St., Berkeley, CA 94702  
510-644-6206

Official Minutes  
May 27, 2020

President Judy Appel called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. She reported that the Board convened to Closed Session at 5:30pm.

Roll Call

Board of Education:

Judy Appel, President – Present  
Ty Alper, Vice President – Present  
Ka'Dijah Brown, Director/Clerk – Present  
Beatriz Leyva-Cutler, Director – Present  
Julie Siniai, Director -- Present  
Estella Hemp, Student Director, BHS – Present  
Edwin Castro-Romero, Student Director, BTA

Administration:

Brent Stephens, Ed., D, Superintendent  
Baje Thiara, Associate Superintendent, Educational Services  
Pauline Follansbee, Assistant Superintendent, Business Services  
Samantha Tobias-Espinosa, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources  
Lyz Chairez, Recorder

OPEN SESSION

APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

Motion to approve agenda:  
Appel/Alper and approved 6-0.

REPORT CLOSED SESSION

Vice President Alper reported out on closed session:

Collective Bargaining Government Code Section 54957.6(a) (District Negotiator:  
Samantha Tobias-Espinosa)

Berkeley Council of Classified Employees (BCCE)

The Board heard an update and discussed this matter. No action taken.

Berkeley Federation of Teachers (BFT)

The Board heard an update and discussed this matter. No action taken.

## Public Employment (Government Code Section 54957)

### Executive Director, Special Education

Motion to appoint Shawn Mansager as the Executive Director over the Special Education department:

Appel/Brown and unanimously approved 5-0

### Superintendent Evaluation

The board did not discuss this matter.

## PUBLIC TESTIMONY

A total of two people addressed the Board:

Natalie Orenstein shared that she will no longer be covering BUSD and will be moving on to Oakland where she will be covering issues around housing.

One comment from BHS student sharing some challenges students are facing as they adjust to distance learning.

## UNION COMMENTS

BFT President Matt Meyer commented on the kind of supports that need to be implemented for teachers, including professional development that allows time to collaborate.

## BOARD MEMBER AND SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

Director Sinai thanked Natalie Orenstein for her great work with BerkeleySide and wished her well. She thanked the student for her leadership in addressing the Board to voice her peers' concerns as they adjust to distance learning. She also thanked BGT President Matt Meyer for his comments and said she looks forward to collaborating with all union partners.

Director Brown shared that she attended the African American Town Hall hosted by PCAD and she was proud to share a space that acknowledged how the pandemic further exacerbates conditions for black and brown students and their families, as well as its widening effect on the achievement gap. She emphasized the importance of acknowledging that distance learning is not working everywhere, specifically for vulnerable students. She looks forward to tonight's update.

Director Leyva-Cutler thanked Director Brown for her comments and agreed that last night's town hall was full of rich dialogue and engagement. She announced that a Town Hall will be held tomorrow and it will be in Spanish. She encouraged the latinx community to participate.

Director Hemp reported results from a survey sent out to students last week querying them about their experience with distance learning. She shared that many students expressed feeling depressed and many seniors feel that putting forth an effort to finish meeting graduation requirements pointless. Many students also voiced their appreciation to the administration for all of the efforts to keep everyone safe.

President Appel thanked Director Hemp for sharing that information and asked that she share the results with the rest of the Board. She remarked that there are so many details that will need to be worked out all while continuing commitment to equity.

Superintendent Stephens thanked Natalie for her high quality reporting work on BUSD and wished her well in Oakland. He thanked all the participants in Town Hall meetings as they continue to address the changes next school year. He encouraged the community to continue to stay involved. He acknowledged all classified employees for their work. He concluded by wishing President Appel a happy birthday.

## CONSENT CALENDAR

Motion to approve the Consent Calendar:  
Alper/Brown and unanimously approved 6-0.

## ACTION ITEMS

### Update on COVID-19

Superintendent Stephens introduced this presentation saying that the focus is on process relative to planning for next year. This update includes a recommendation for the approval of June 8-12 as a student make-up and staff planning week, and for approval of Superintendent's solutions for 2020-2021 planning assumptions.

Director Beery provided an update on the number of confirmed covid cases. She noted that while some progress has been made in flattening the curve, there remains much to be determined in terms of how much testing needs to take place as directed by California's pandemic roadmap.

### Approval of June 8-12, Student Make Up and Staff Planning Week

The Superintendent introduced his proposed planning structure, noting that the intent is to meaningfully engage staff and the community. One component includes the creation of two new advisory committees to serve as a sounding board to the development of BUSD's reopening plan. His presentation highlighted survey results from the advisory committees, survey results from 6-12 graders, and themes that arose concerning how school facilities will be used. He also shared results from surveyed 6-12 graders. He also included some of the experience shared at the African American Affinity Town Hall. He noted that all of the data will be condensed and summarized over the next several days.

Approval of Superintendent's Recommendations for 2020-2021 Planning Assumptions  
Superintendent presented planning assumptions for 20-21 when distance learning will be at the core of our educational program for all students. Group size, group stability, duration of contract, indoor versus outdoor activity are among the other components taken into account as part of planning for next year. He emphasized that these are just assumptions. There will be additional opportunity for community engagement moving forward.

Questions and discussion followed.

Motion to approve recommendation to designate June 8-12 as student make-up and staff planning week with the following features:

- No new assignments from teachers are expected
- No Office Hours are expected
- Students may continue to turn in work; teachers will continue to accept this work.
- Grades are due on the same date as previously scheduled.

Director Sinai proposed adding specific language around what the expectations are for teachers responding to student inquiries.

President Appel agreed and suggested that it be added as part of the motion.

Superintendent Stephens said he would like to vet any major changes with BFT first.

Discussion continued around what would be a reasonable expectation for teachers to respond to student questions and concerns.

Superintendent Stephens proposed adding the following to staff recommendation:

- Teachers will continue to be accessible to students throughout the duration of the week
- This opportunity to catch up will be broadly communicated
- Specialize staff will assist in communicating with families

Appel moved to approve staff recommendation as amended by the Superintendent. Sinai seconded; motion passed unanimously on 6-0.

Motion to approve recommendation to approve Superintendent's proposed 2020-2021 planning assumptions:

Sinai/Leyva-Cutler and unanimously approved 6-0.

## DISCUSSION

2020-2021 BUSD Budget (General Fund, Supplemental Fund, BSEP, ASES)

Superintendent Stephens explained that the purpose of this presentation is to look at how various budgets have been impacted by school closures. For now, the intent is to focus on the budget building process as substantive ideas are still being vetted by staff. He noted that the

Governor's May revise resulted in -10% to the Base and Supplemental budgets, increasing BUSD's cut target to \$7 million.

Assistant Superintendent of Business Services Pauline Follansbee provided overview of reductions to several programs, particularly the after school and adult educational programs.

Superintendent added that among the number of concepts staff is exploring, is the possible identification of savings within BSEP programs to be applied to a teacher template so that BSEP can absorb a greater proportion of teachers' salary and provide some relief to the General Fund. The plan is to work with the BSEP team to review all programs for possible savings. A compilation of proposed solutions will be presented at the June 10 board meeting. Staff is proposing the addition of two board meetings on June 17 and July 1 to provide ample time for discussion and deliberation. Superintendent Stephens expressed staff's commitment to continue to prioritize equity as we grapple with making necessary reductions.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

9:43