

BERKELEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Minutes, Regular Meeting

Wednesday, February 11, 2009
Berkeley Unified School District
2134 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Berkeley CA 94704

UNOFFICIAL MINUTES

Roll Call 6:00 pm

Members Present:

Nancy Riddle, President
Karen Hemphill, Vice President
John T. Selawsky, Director /Clerk
Shirley Issel, Director
Beatriz Leyva-Cutler, Director
Eve Shames, Student Director

Administration:

Superintendent William Huyett, Secretary
Javetta Cleveland, Deputy Superintendent
Neil Smith, Assistant Superintendent of Educational
Services
Lisa Udell, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources

Prior to Closed Session, as necessary, staff/employee comments are taken per Government Code Section 54957. Recess to Closed Session (Government Code Sections 3549, 1(d), 54956.9(a) and 54957) and Education Code Section 49819(c)

President Riddle convened the regular meeting at 7:41 pm

Report on Closed Session Actions

The Board discussed public employee issues with no action taken.

APPROVE REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

Director Leyva-Cutler requested Items 4.5-C, 4.6-C and 4.7-C be pulled
Vice President Hemphill requested that Items 4.1-C and 4.8-C be pulled for discussion

Selawsky/Leyva-Cutler and approved unanimously on voice vote as amended

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Greg John, Principal, John Muir Elementary School and Kristy Smith, ULSS team member and resource teacher discussed monitoring student progress.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Ten speakers commented on the BHS Redesign Plan proposal, an item on tonight's agenda.

BOARD MEMBERS' REPORTS

Superintendent Huyett's first year of service was acknowledged by the Board.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Huyett had remarks about the recent Berkeley Alliance Workshop. He also shared the newest edition of the A+ newsletter.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Selawsky/Leyva-Cutler and approved unanimously on voice vote

PULLED ITEMS

Item 4.1-C – Contracts and Purchase Orders

Selawsky/Leyva-Cutler and approved unanimously on voice vote

Item 4.5-C – Application for REMS Grant

Issel/Hemphill and approved unanimously on voice vote

Item 4.6-C

Selawsky/Leyva-Cutler and approved unanimously on voice vote

Item 4.7-C

Selawsky/Leyva-Cutler and approved unanimously on voice vote

Item 4.8-C

Hemphill/Selawsky and approved unanimously on voice vote

ACTION ITEM

Item 1.1-A – Berkeley High School Redesign Proposal

Vice President Hemphill has the following changes:

Under **Advisory Program Goals and Outcomes** add:

Goal - to increase parent/school connections

Outcome – improved teacher/parent/student partnership for academic and personal success

Under **Evaluation** add:

Evaluation criteria will be submitted to the Board for review before implementation

Also, entire sentence about Green Academy, under **Staff Recommendation A**, should be eliminated.

Under **Staff Recommendation C, Proposal #2**: change block schedule to alternative schedule

Director Issel had the following comments:

This is a complex proposal and I think it is best that I begin in a business like way. Staff is asking that we support recommendations A-E. I will take these recommendations one at a time.

First, Recommendation A which I cannot support for the following reasons:

1. The plan calls for Academic Choice to break down into a house or core system. This is something I think each small school should be free to deal with in their own way.
2. The plan calls for BIHS to continue in a core/house system for all grades. This is also something I think each small school should be free to deal with on their own. I think that is consistent with small school principles.
3. The plan calls for a new small school to open in the fall of 2010 or 2011. Before I can support this, I will need a better understanding of the State budget, a financial analysis of the actual costs of our small schools structures and an evaluation of the effectiveness of our existing schools along three measures: behavior, attendance and achievement.
4. The plan calls for English, history, science and math teachers to be included as part of the Small Learning Community team as of fall, 2009. To support this I will need a rationale and opportunity for public review and comment. The proposal also calls for math and science teachers to be assigned to Small Learning Communities in February, 2009. Do you really mean this month? To support this I need a rationale, adequate public review and feedback from the science faculty.
5. The plan calls for additional schools to be added as capacity permits which I cannot commit to without evaluative data on our current efforts.
6. Staff asks support for the concept of a Green Academy which I cannot give until I understand the potential impact on SSJE.

Regarding staff Recommendation B which asks that we fully support all the outcomes and organization of Advisory as outlined in the school's proposal. This is a complex recommendation which I cannot support.

1. The proposal calls for all students to have a service experience in the community which I cannot support because I do not believe we have the capacity to implement this requirement. IB is having quite a bit of difficulty in this area.
2. The proposal also calls for all students to have a senior project which I cannot support because I do not believe we have the capacity to implement this.
3. The proposal calls for all certificated staff to teach Advisory which I cannot support. The Board does not have the authority to assign FTE of Librarians and others paid with BSEP funds to Advisory. Nor am I convinced that Special Education, Administrative and Counseling FTE should be given to Advisory when we may well have to cut these positions.
4. Finally, recommendation B asks that we fully support a student/teacher ratio between 19 & 20 students. In light of the funding and class size analysis presented to us by Dr. Cheung, I find this recommendation unsupportable.

Recommendation D addresses professional development.

The proposal is for four late start Mondays, but I am unclear how this time will be used. I am also concerned that three more late start Mondays could result in increased absenteeism, tardiness, and drug use. Before I can vote on this I will need to see the attendance data for staff and students for past late start Mondays. I would also like to see the high school collaborate with and receive support from the District's curriculum office to develop a plan to utilize this time and present it to the Board of Education.

I agree with Staff Recommendation E that BHS should collaborate with and receive support from the District's Evaluation & Assessment office in the design of evaluation criteria for all school programs.

Returning to Staff Recommendation C and the heart of the matter: Recommendation C asks the Board to endorse the concept of implementing a different schedule to provide time for advisory. I want to remind the Board that I did not vote in favor of the grant to fund this effort because I was not persuaded that Advisory or a schedule change was best for Berkeley High School. I also voted against accepting the grant because I could not accept the Principal's assurance that a properly constituted SGC had approved these reforms. I still feel the same way.

1. Fundamentally, I don't think scheduling and Advisory belong on center stage at Berkeley High School. The goals of Advisory are primarily directed at school climate and culture. A simple look at the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) data shows our students "school connectedness" scores are considerably higher than those of other 9th and 11th graders in California. Personalization is an area of strength at BHS, not weakness. But if you look further into the data we see extremely high rates of self reported alcohol and other drug use by students both during and after school. When we face this issue, which we can do with good leadership, I guarantee achievements gaps will close at BHS. And this is something we can do right now, with the resources we currently have in place. This is the work that should be on center stage at BHS when it comes to climate and culture.
2. Regarding strengthening teaching through professional development, I completely support it, but I think we can do a lot more with the resources we already have in place. I know that the B-PAR process is working well to support and improve teaching K-8. It is time to make it work in the high school. I know if we use this process we can improve teaching and learning at our high school.
3. Another reason I voted against accepting this grant was my concern about the financial costs at a time of economic crisis. Since then, things have only gotten worse. I cannot see proceeding with this reform in this time of fiscal crisis when we must come together around deep and painful cuts. This is not the right time to pursue a major high school redesign.
4. Finally, I cannot escape my responsibility to speak directly to Principal Jim Slemm and explain to you why you have lost my support. This is at least the 5th time you have been before the Board of Education regarding this proposal. Each time this Board has agreed to let you go ahead with the understanding that you will bring us a budget neutral plan and a curriculum for our consideration. I particularly asked for data and research to back up this proposal. I am very troubled that you have not worked within the guidelines the Board has given you, conveyed these guidelines to your committee, or responded to my requests. But most troubling is the painful divisiveness and upset we see present in this room. As a psychotherapist I know that this kind of splitting in the community and on the Board of Education means we have failed. If you want my support, you will have to bring me a plan that we can all get behind.

But I don't want to leave things there, so before I stop I want to say a word about our small schools and Bill Gates. I really don't agree with Bill Gates. I thought he was wrong when he said small schools were the answer. And I still think he is wrong when he says that they don't work. I don't think size has anything to do with it--or schedules! My sister remodeled her house throughout each of her marriages, but it never changed the outcome! Ultimately, what it comes down to is what's going on inside that house. And for us it comes down to what is going on inside that classroom--between the teacher and the student. That's what we need to put on center stage at BHS. We need to put the classroom back on center stage. And we don't need a redesign to do that.

President Riddle requested that the Board have more study sessions as this proposal moves forward.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

President Riddle -aye

Vice President Hemphill - aye

Director Selawsky - aye

Director Leyva-Cutler - aye

Director Issel - NO

Student Director Shames - aye

Leyva-Cutler/Selawsky and approved recommendations A-E on roll call vote of 4-1

INFORMATION ITEMS

Item 4.1-I - Enrollment

ADDITIONAL ACTION ITEM

Approval of Minutes from 1-14-2009

Selawsky/Leyva-Cutler and approved unanimously on voice vote

ADJOURNMENT by President Riddle at 10:02pm.

John T. Selawsky, Clerk

