

BRUCE

Idea Exchange Workshop on the Future of BSEP

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King Library

7:15 p.m.

A report on the house meetings...

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Since April of this year, Fern Tiger Associates has been working with the District to implement a community process on Measure A and school reorganization. (Process overhead)

This process included conducting more than 50 house meetings throughout the city between September 11 and November 15. Although these meetings were organized as a way to hear the community's views on grade configuration, and other issues related to Measure A ... we also discussed broad educational values or trends ... those things parents felt were most important in creating excellent schools... such as schools within walking distance, small schools, year round schools, etc.

Those of you who attended house meetings know that many of the things we talked about are relevant to BSEP ... and that is why I am here tonight; to give you an overview of some of the views, interests and concerns of the more than 400 people who attended house meetings. Their perception on selected issues may be of interest to you as you thinking about BSEP and its renewal next year.

Approximately 90 percent of those attending house meetings had not participated in any Measure A or school reorganization process prior, such as the Superintendent's Task Force or Measure A Site committees. This is important because one of the goals of house meetings was to outreach to parents and community members who were not previously involved in order to have a broader community review of these issues.

The average house meeting lasted 2 hours, with an average attendance of 8 people, these small-intimate settings afforded us the opportunity to really hear what people had to say.

The meetings were held throughout the City and were fairly evenly distributed (overhead of map) across town as you can see on this map. The number of participants that represent people of color was about 30%. Twenty-three of the fifty-three meeting were held at homes in South or West Berkeley. 14 meetings were held in the hills, and the remainder were located in the central area. 3 meetings were facilitated in Spanish so

parents with limited English speaking capability would be able to participate. We also had meetings with private school parents and parents of pre school children, to hear their concerns as well.

In summarizing the findings, I would like to acknowledge that they are qualitative rather than quantitative... but perhaps providing a "heart" that is difficult to portray with abstract numerical survey data. Quantitative data is obviously important, but this information, I believe, is also valuable... because it speaks to the interest and need people have to have a voice, to express their concerns, and to feel that their concerns and being heard, acknowledged and responded to...

I would like to introduce Carolyn Doelling, a member of our staff, and a parent at Emerson school, (who has facilitated more than 25 house meetings) who will give you a brief overview of a typical house meeting.

(Presentation by Carolyn.)

Now to the findings:

As Carolyn mentioned, participants were given 14 cardboard strips and were asked to select independently 5 trends or values they felt best reflected their educational priorities.

The items that ranked in the top five educational priorities most frequently were: **(overhead)**

1. **Enrichment programs**
2. **Racial and ethnic balance**
3. **Site based before and after school child care**
4. **Grade structures that allow students to progress at their own rate, and**
5. **Schools as community centers with social services attached or adjacent**

But although these are the top-ranked characteristics parents most often chose, they also brought up---on their own---issues they feel even more strongly about. Those issues are quality education and safety. By quality education I mean high academic standards and challenging programs. Public school parents say they wrestle with these two issues almost on a daily basis. Their decision to stay in public schools hinges on their own child's experience...which often boils down to a particular teacher...and their perception of the learning environment. These same two issues--quality education and safety-- were cited most frequently as the reason private school parents either leave the public school system or never give it a chance.

Enrichment programs:

Enrichment programs were defined as those classes and programs that are not part of the core curriculum such as art, music, performing arts, computer labs, science labs, field trips....