

Berkeley Unified School District

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SUPERINTENDENT
Jack McLaughlin

Charge of the Student Assignment Advisory Committee By Action of the School Board March 15, 2000

1. Alternative K-5 Assignment Plans will be developed by the new Student Assignment Advisory Committee for the 2001-2002 school year and beyond for consideration by the Board no later than the second meeting in November 2000.
 - a. A plan with multiple factors that includes the use of race.
 - b. A plan with factors excluding the use of race.
2. Committee formation and process will adhere to the following guidelines:
 - a. The committee will include parent representation from each of the affected elementary K-5 schools.
 - b. The committee will develop the alternative student assignment plans by October 31, 2000.
 - c. There will be at least one community forum.
3. In receiving its charge, the Committee will be provided with all relevant law affecting the legal parameters within which the committee must make its recommendations so as to comply with existing law.
4. The schools will be queried about the recommended plans.

Student Assignment Plan Mission Statement

The mission of the Berkeley Unified School District Elementary School Assignment Plan is to place all students in an integrated environment reflecting Berkeley's diversity in order to ensure equal access to: a strong core curriculum; enriched learning experiences; and individual, community, social and educational resources that promote success in a rapidly changing multi-cultural society.

Draft Proposal

For presentation to the public on November 28, 2000

Committee Members: Elizabeth Brusnahan (Rosa Parks), Lee Barry (Willard), Nancy Riddle (King), Louise Rosenkrantz (Malcolm X), John Selawsky (Willard), Ríoa Ferrazares (Malcolm X), Derick Miller (City of Franklin), Lilah Ibraheim (Malcolm X), Denise Lee (Oxford), Dru Howard (Berkeley Arts Magnet), Catherine Macklin (King), Noreen Axelson (Cragmont), Bruce Wicinas (Berkeley High), Cynthia Hallett (John Muir), Sheila ORourke (Community Member), Matt Lipner (Thousand Oaks), Julie Guthman (Emerson), Elaine Overstreet (Oxford), Jack McLaughlin (Superintendent), Catherine James (Associate Superintendent, Business), Irving Phillips (Director, Magnet Schools), Bernadette Cormier (Transportation Supervisor), Alex Palau (Principal, Alternative High School), Kathleen Lewis (Principal, Oxford), Rita Kimball (Principal, Washington), Kevin Wooldridge (Principal, Thousand Oaks) and Francisco Martínez (Parent Access Coordinator).

The Student Assignment Plan Advisory Committee met over the course of 12 weeks, hearing a presentation by the District's legal counsel, analyzing data on the current lottery system and reading literature on the value of diversity in the educational setting. The meetings were made public and recorded, and space was made for public comment at the beginning and end of each meeting. All motions were passed by consensus unless otherwise noted. Throughout the process, our primary consideration was the mission of the school assignment plan: to place all students in an integrated environment to ensure equal access to a strong core curriculum; enriched learning experiences; and individual, community, social and educational resources that promote success in a rapidly changing multi-cultural society. We asked ourselves:

- Is the plan effective in providing integrated schools?
- Are integrated schools ensuring equal access to opportunities for success for all children?
- Are parents and the community satisfied with the way their children are placed?
- Is the plan legal? Could we continue to hold out our ideals in the face of a possible legal challenge?
- Is there a viable alternative to the current assignment plan, which might be less vulnerable to legal challenge?

It was after careful consideration of these questions that the Committee made the following draft proposal:

The Committee recommends that our current zoned choice school assignment plan be retained. After careful review, the Committee voted not to recommend an alternative student assignment plan (with two abstentions noted). We concluded that our current assignment plan of maintaining integrated schools that reflect Berkeley's diversity, is currently the most effective way to ensure equal access to a strong core curriculum; enriched learning experiences; and individual, community, social and

educational resources. Additionally, to strengthen our current plan, we offer the following recommendations:

- 1. The Student Assignment Advisory Committee should be convened every 2-3 years, to assess the student assignment plan.** The Committee will need to reexamine the goals of the plan, whether the plan is still meeting those goals, and whether there are alternatives to the plan that will meet our goals as well.
- 2. For as long as a zone-based system remains in place, a thorough review of zone boundaries of both K-5 and middle schools, should be done at least every ten years.** It will need to be determined whether the zones are providing each zone's schools with an equitable cross-section of the Berkeley Public School population. The next ten-year anniversary of any zone change will take place in 2003.
- 3. The current plan should maintain its appeals process, which allows for individual review of particular student assignments to ensure that the criteria are properly applied.**
- 4. Because equal access depends on equal participation by all parents in every step of the Zoned Choice Plan, the District must identify and remedy factors which might cause under or over-representation of specific groups in each stage of the assignment process.**
- 5. Equity among the Berkeley K-8 schools is key to justifying our Zoned Choice Student Assignment Plan.** The Committee recommends that the District identify criteria with which to evaluate schools to ensure that all schools are comparable.
- 6. The Student Assignment Plan Committee should continue to meet on a monthly basis beginning in February 2001 and ending in June 2001, so that more complete study of tabled items can take place.** Continuity of members from the current committee is recommended.

The Berkeley Student Assignment Committee voted all of the above points with a consensus (unless otherwise noted).