

This is a draft that will go through an editing process and update in the fall of 2017.

Berkeley Federation of Teachers

Principles of a Quality Public Education

Our public schools belong to all of us: teachers, classified staff, administrators, students, families, community members. They are the foundation on which democracy is built, where all young people may learn to contribute to our civic society. They are the focal points of our communities: they welcome and bring together people of all backgrounds, races, genders, and classes. It is the responsibility of all of us to build the best possible public education system we can, one that honors the diversity of our community, that fights against systemic oppression including racism, sexism and classism, and that strives to help all our students rise to their full potential.

As stakeholders in our public education system we have created a vision for schools that meet the needs of all students and the community. This vision can help us prioritize the values that we collectively find important, and lead toward better partnerships focused on creating the best possible public education for students. A quality education is one that we build together.

Our Principles for Public Education:

Schools should be funded fairly, with resources going to where they are needed most.

Closing the achievement gap requires a commitment to equity across and within school sites. Resource allocation should reflect this commitment by providing our most struggling students the chance to access Berkeley's educational opportunities.

- Ensure access to current technology, teaching materials and books for all classrooms.
- Provide additional resources for all students who need them.

- Maintain high quality facilities and outdoor space at all sites accessible to students and the community.
- Create a better day for students, teachers and families by offering before and after school intervention, summer programs, and enrichment classes.

In order to achieve goals like the 2020 Vision, schools must partner with families and community members.

The 2020 Vision is a blueprint for addressing the well-being and academic success for all children growing up in Berkeley. Berkeley teachers have played an integral role in its creation and implementation. Given how vital families are to children's education, schools should be welcoming places for our families and should partner with them in the education process.

- Fund and support quality public preschool and Transitional Kindergarten programs for all students.
- Provide adequate, culturally responsive counselors, behavior specialists, nurses, social workers, and psychologists to all schools.
- Create representative community partnerships with families and build multiple systems for communication and involvement for families from diverse backgrounds.
- Create opportunities for parent education through diverse Adult School programs as well as and school site literacy and math events.
- Support bilingual parent communication and programs.

Public schools should meet the academic needs of all our students.

We are committed to the belief that all students can and should learn at high levels. All of our students deserve great curriculum, small class sizes, and cohesive structures to support their learning. Assessments are critical tools in improving lesson plans and framing instruction to meet students' needs—as such, they should be tied to instruction and used to measure growth, not to punish students and teachers.

Updated 11.3.14

- Continue to support small class sizes and ratios of certificated professionals to students.
- Ensure equitable access to math curriculum that is rigorous, focused, and cohesive across grade levels and that gives students a strong foundation higher-level coursework.
- Support the full implementation of the BUSD Master Plan for English Language Learners.
- Emphasize literacy across all content areas.
- Use of a variety of formative and summative assessments in order to communicate student growth.
- Replace standardized testing with ongoing, teacher created, curriculum- and skill-based assessments. Assessment should be used only to inform and improve instruction, not to evaluate or punish students and teachers.
- Maximize the instructional day by minimizing non-teaching duties for teachers.
- Intervene with and support students who are not yet proficient, providing site teams of teachers, counselors, and staff within the school day.
- Implement culturally responsive curriculum and teaching strategies.

All schools should educate the whole child.

In order for our students to develop creativity, leadership, and critical thinking skills our public schools must continue to provide more than just reading and math instruction. We must educate the whole child.

- Give all students a broad curriculum that includes history, science, garden and nutrition, cooking, PE and the arts K-12.
- Include curriculum that teaches life skills like emotional intelligence, perseverance and resilience, like the Toolbox curriculum in K-8 sites.
- Implement Positive Behavior Instruction and Support (PBIS) as a proactive system that builds a safe and welcoming school environment for all.
- Implement culturally responsive and restorative discipline practices as alternatives to suspension.

Educators must be both respected and given the chance to improve their craft.

We believe educators should be honored and compensated fairly. Teachers and classified staff are our schools' greatest assets and should have both time for planning and collaboration and opportunities to deepen their professional learning in service to our students.

- Fund paid time for teachers to collaborate, plan, and provide meaningful feedback to students.
- Implement and support authentic Professional Learning Communities at all sites, including paid time to teachers to participate in them.
- Invest in high quality, on-going, professional development and for all staff at sites, classified and certificated.
- Evaluate teachers using constructive, consistent processes, including district-supported alternative evaluations.
- Recruit, support, and retain more teachers of color.

Public education must be fully funded.

Education funding should reflect the real costs and importance of supporting and nurturing our young people, rather than budgetary convenience or political expediency. We must fight for the political will to fully fund an equitable public education system dedicated to success for every student.

- Finance schools fairly, in such a way that increases state money going to public education. California is currently ranked 49th in the nation in per pupil funding.
- Fight for progressive taxation and reform of Proposition 13.
- Support the parcel tax and use BSEP money to support all students in BUSD.

Corporate Education Reform works against our shared vision.

Over the last decade there has been a movement to privatize education driven by corporate leaders and politicians who are not educators and who subscribe to a profit- and competition-based approach. This free market

model of reform has created high-stakes standardized testing and the disastrous system of “merit pay” that undermines a collaborative approach to teaching that serves all students. It has led to closed schools, charter school networks that do not seek to educate all children, and a narrowing of curriculum due to No Child Left Behind. Public schools are part of the public commons. Public education is not a business and should not be run like one. Equity and opportunity should be at the forefront of our public education system, not profit incentive and competition. While schools in Berkeley have so far been reasonably sheltered from such policies, teachers believe that those of us who serve in and are served by public schools must clearly articulate our principles for what schools should be and what they should do.