

## ***Berkeley Federation of Teachers***

### ***Principles of a Quality Public Education***

Our public schools belong to all of us: educators, 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. 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, classism, homophobia and xenophobia, 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 opportunity 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.
- Students who need the most should receive more resources in order for us to strive for more equitable outcomes
- Maintain high quality facilities and outdoor space at all sites accessible to students and the community.

- Create meaningful supports and extended learning opportunities for students and families by offering before and after school intervention, summer programs, and enrichment classes.

**In order to achieve educational equity, schools must partner with families and community members.**

*The BUSD Local Control and Accountability Plan is a blueprint for addressing the well-being and academic success for all BUSD children. 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.*

- 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.
- Provide bilingual programs and translations of parent communications in order to build strong partnerships with bilingual families.

**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.*

- Continue to support small class sizes and ratios of certificated professionals to students.
- Ensure equitable access to curricula that is rigorous, culturally responsive, focused, and cohesive across grade levels and that gives students a strong foundation for higher-level coursework.
- Support the full implementation of the BUSD Master Plan for English Language Learners.
- Emphasize literacy across all content areas.

*Updated 3.30.18*

- Use 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.
- Intervene with and support students who are not yet proficient, providing site teams of teachers, counselors, and staff within the school day.
- Support teachers to 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 visual and performing 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.
- Provide robust mental and behavioral health systems for all students.
- Implement culturally responsive and restorative discipline practices as alternatives to suspension and expulsion.

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

*Educators 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.*

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- 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, ongoing, 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 believe educators should be honored and compensated fairly. We must fight for the political will to fully fund an equitable public education system dedicated to success for every student.*

- Fund and support quality public preschool and Transitional Kindergarten programs for all students.
- Finance schools fairly, in such a way that increases state money going to public education. California is currently ranked 41<sup>st</sup> in the nation in per pupil funding.
- Fight for progressive taxation and reform of Proposition 13.
- Teachers are an integral part of our community. Schools are of critical importance to our students and families. We need to compensate teachers such that they can make a long career in BUSD and provide the individualized instruction and attention every student deserves.

## **Corporate Education Reform works against our shared vision.**

Over the last two decades there has been a movement driven by corporate leaders and politicians who are not educators and who subscribe to a profit- and competition-based approach to privatize education. This free market model of reform has undermined the public's commitment to public education, replaced authentic teaching and learning with standardized testing, and given rise to undemocratic schools not held accountable to the communities they serve. Public education is not a business and should not be run like one. This model has led to closed schools, corporate charter school networks that do not seek to educate all children, and a narrowing of curriculum.

We cannot take for granted that public education is safe, valued and protected in the United States. A push towards school vouchers combined with proposed cuts to public education is a move towards privatization. Public schools are part of the public commons. 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. However, without organized resistance larger systemic forces will continue to dismantle our democracy's ability to support public education. 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. In these times, our very foundation is at stake.