

April 20, 2016

Dear Berkeley High School Community,

Over the course of this school year, my leadership team and I have been working with a group known as the “Design Team,” a representative group of teachers, staff, administrators, parents, and students committed to an inclusive process of learning, research, and design for school change at Berkeley High. I am writing with an update on the efforts to bring structural change to Berkeley High School, and to invite you to participate in the discussion.

I first informed you about our re-design process in [a community-wide email](#) last October, noting that any structural change being implemented would not go into effect until the 2017-2018 school year for entering 9th graders. While none of the proposed changes will impact current students or next year’s incoming 9th graders, we want you to be informed about our efforts and to have opportunities to give input.

### **Work of the Design Team**

Earlier this year, the Design Team worked to develop a shared understanding of [what the research says](#) about effective high school design, and then to identify the problems we are trying to solve with the re-design.

We recognize that Berkeley High School’s current structure does not align with research on effective high schools, and we have been unable to interrupt predictable and inequitable outcomes for students based on race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Berkeley High School must do a better job of preparing all students to graduate career and college ready.

To further guide the change process, the Design Team developed a description of what we want for all [BHS graduates](#) and used the research about effective high schools to design proposals for school-wide change. The Design Team has presented several possible models to staff, student, and parent groups, and is using community feedback to craft a final recommendation. We are committed to making changes that will provide:

- support for incoming students with the middle to high school transition
- opportunities for students to develop relationships with their teachers and peers
- access to academic rigor for all students.

Some specific elements of the proposals we are considering include:

- A regular advisory period for students
- Structures that facilitate stronger relationships between teachers and students
- A possible heterogeneous universal 9th grade with houses (smaller communities of students grouped together with teachers in common)
- 9-12th grade houses for all students
- Several proposals maintain the current small schools (CAS, AHA, and AMPS) as well as AP and IB classes while many offer a hybrid of the existing models
- All proposals focus on improving instruction in the classroom through culturally responsive teaching, performance based assessments, access to academic rigor, and college/career readiness
- The proposals also include collaboration time for teachers to work toward building rigorous content and curriculum for all students

## **Get Involved!**

We would like to share some of what we have learned so far in the re-design process, some progress we have already made in strengthening our services and supports for students, and to ask for your input, ideas, and feedback as we come together to consider proposals for positive change that will benefit future Berkeley High School students. Please join us at one of these upcoming workshops:

BHS Re-Design Family Workshop: May 4, 7:00 - 9:00 pm in the BHS Library

Chicano/Latino Bilingual Family Workshop: May 5, 7:00 - 9:00 pm in BHS College and Career Center

Chicano/Latino Spanish Only Family Workshop: May 22, 9:00 - 10:30 am in BHS College and Career Center

African American Family Workshop: Date and Time To Be Determined

Middle School Family Workshops: *the proposed re-design efforts will impact BUSD's current 7th grade students if they are implemented in 2017-2018.*

Longfellow Middle School: Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 6:00 - 7:30

Willard Middle School: Wednesday, May 18, 2016 7:00 - 8:30

King Middle School: Wednesday, May 25, 2016 7:00 - 8:30

In addition to a series of family workshops, Design Team student members will be organizing opportunities for current BHS students to give input and feedback. We will continue to create more opportunities for student, parent and community groups to participate as we move forward.

## **Next Steps**

The Design Team will use feedback and input from these workshops and meetings with staff, parent, and student groups to inform and strengthen the design of the final proposal that will be presented to staff for consideration. My hope is that ultimately our re-design proposal(s) will garner widespread support from BHS faculty and staff, and include robust engagement with the community before I make a final recommendation to the Superintendent and School Board.

We are already making important headway on unifying Berkeley High School within our current school structure. Examples include a new schoolwide math course sequence, our 9th grade Ethnic Studies / Social Living course and curriculum and important first steps in implementing Restorative Justice at BHS. In response to a racist threat left on a library computer, we "Took Back the Day" on December 9th and embraced anti-racism teaching across our campus. Another positive indicator is a 50+% decrease in suspensions from last school year. Whether or not we redesign Berkeley High for 2017-2018, there are initiatives under way that will continue to unify BHS and create a positive and inclusive school culture.

I have been truly inspired by the students, teachers, staff, parents, and community groups who have been willing to take up the work of making BHS better for all kids. While making large scale changes to our high school is a complicated and challenging process, I am hopeful that this school community will come together to make changes that will significantly improve the educational experience of every student at Berkeley High School. Please feel free to reach out to the Design Team by email: [designteam@berkeley.net](mailto:designteam@berkeley.net) with any questions or thoughts. We

value your input and participation in this process and look forward to the upcoming community workshops.