



BERKELEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

PTA/Parent Club

2134 Martin Luther King Jr. Way • Berkeley, CA • 94704 • (510) 644-6348

NEWS RELEASE

February 17, 1993

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS CHOICE MODEL FOR
BERKELEY SCHOOLS

The Superintendent's Ad Hoc Task Force on School Organization has recommended to the Berkeley Board of Education that a "controlled system of choice" method of student grouping replace the current "paired zones - two way busing" for Berkeley's kindergarten through sixth grade schools.

The Board of Education received the Task Force Report at its February 17, 1993 meeting. The Task Force, which met weekly through the fall and winter, was made up of 57 people who were representatives of parents, teachers, school site committees, support staff, community organizations, administrators, and students. Superintendent Dr. LaVoneia C. Steele charged the Task Force with reexamining the organization of the District in light of the Strategic Plan, 1992-96, which introduces new educational theories, expectations, and technologies to the District. These issues combined with changed demographics in the city suggest that school organization should be studied before the rebuilding of the District's facilities is undertaken with funds from Measure A.

The Berkeley Unified School District's continued commitment to desegregation became the underlying assumption for any recommendations of the Task Force. The committee developed an understanding that there are three separate but related topic areas: desegregation, integration and anti-discrimination. The term "desegregation" was used to apply primarily to distribution of factors such as staff, facilities, resources and grouping of students. The term "integration" was used to describe elements such as programs to help people develop understanding and acceptance of each other. The term "anti-discrimination" was used to describe the rules that would apply to processes and transactions, making sure they occur in a fair way.

The various recommendations of the Task Force on School Organization are as follows:

- **Desegregation Standards.** Desegregation standards will be maintained throughout the District so that each school will have a student population which reflects the district-wide racial balance at that grade level. The size of each of the assigned groups in a school should not vary more than plus or minus 5% from its district-wide total. Any racial group that comprises more than 25% of the student population is subject to this standard.
- **Student Enrollment Methodology.** The Task Force recommends that "controlled system of choice" be developed in which every family would have an equal chance to choose a school in the District, within desegregation guidelines. The motion passed by the Task Force on this issue states: "Whereas the Task Force recommends a choice-based system of desegregation, the Board shall conduct additional investigation of the implications, methodology, criteria and costs of a school choice system of desegregation...and shall conduct a further public process before adopting such a system."
- **Grade Configuration.** The Task Force recommends that a mosaic or variety of grade configurations be allowed, giving due consideration to the programs and choices of the school site.
- **School Size.** The Task Force recommends that the preference of each site be accommodated with the proviso that there be at least two classes per grade level.
- **Site-Based Management.** The Task Force recommends that the District implement a system of site-based management with all deliberate speed.

The Task Force Report also discussed the following issues:

- **Language Minority Students.** The Task Force recommends that the District permit students whose first language is not English be clustered at schools which have bilingual programs.
- **Enrollment Preferences.** The Task Force recommends that if a particular school has the physical capacity that an enrollment preference be granted for siblings.

The Board of Education plans to hold several public hearings regarding these recommendations in the coming months. Following these processes, the Superintendent will make formal recommendations to the Board for action sometime this spring. Copies of the entire **Report and Recommendations of the Superintendent's Ad Hoc Task Force on School Organization** are available for viewing at the BUSD Public Information Office, 2134 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, or at the Measure A Community Relations Office, Room D2, 1950 Carleton Street.

####

shs