


Office of the City Manager

April 5, 2011

To: Honorable Mayor and
Members of the City Council

From:  Phil Kamlarz, City Manager

Submitted by: Michael K. Meehan, Chief of Police

Subject: **BPD Recommendations to BUSD re Safety**

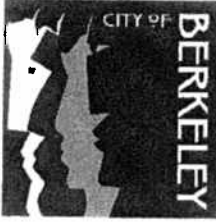
In light of recent events at Berkeley High School, Police Chief Meehan and I met with BUSD Superintendent William Huyett and Principal Pasquale Scuderi to discuss the upsurge of reported guns on campus.

It is paramount that students, faculty and staff feel safe when coming to school in order to ensure an effective learning environment. Recent incidents at BHS have eroded that confidence. Some parents and other members of the community have expressed concern that BHS is unsafe and that measures need to be taken to increase the level of safety on campus.

Attached is a letter that Chief Meehan sent to Superintendent William Huyett outlining recommendations designed to improve safety at BHS.

Attachment

cc: Christine Daniel, Deputy City Manager
Deanna Despain, City Clerk
Ann-Marie Hogan, City Auditor
Mary Kay Clunies-Ross, Public Information Officer



Police Department

March 31, 2011

William Huyett, Superintendent
Berkeley Unified School District
2134 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Berkeley, CA 94704-1180

The Berkeley Police Department has carefully considered various strategies on how to ensure and enhance safety at Berkeley High School (BHS). While the recent focus has been on students, faculty and staff are also at risk when weapons are brought into schools. Many of these recommendations are focused on Berkeley High but may also apply to other schools in the District. We also acknowledge that the current administration at BHS has been working to make improvements and we encourage the school to continue with these efforts.

We would like to make clear from the outset that we are not aware of any strategies that can completely guarantee that weapons, violence and crime will never occur. We acknowledge the complexities of human behavior and the inherent challenges of trying to guide free-willed young people away from crime and violence and towards positive conduct.

Additionally, there are many social factors at play that can contribute to this effort including stable, safe homes and jobs for kids. We leave recommendations on societal-level issues to experts in the field who are better trained to make them. We simply want to acknowledge that long term solutions surely exist and we encourage the BUSD to continue to work with the City and our Communities to address them. One valuable example of this collaboration is Berkeley's 2020 Vision for Youth.

In addition, while some of these recommendations may be less difficult to accomplish, many will require firm commitments of time, energy and resources. That said, the Berkeley Police Department stands both willing and ready to assist in the implementation of many of these recommendations. Our schools do not stand alone and as more of our community contributes to the effort more will get done.

We have strived to seek a balance between extremes. We are not recommending extreme security measures but we acknowledge and suggest that more than incremental changes are required. We support the desire to avoid creating a climate of fear—however; there is clearly an element of fear now. Our goal is that these recommendations strike a balance between extreme and incremental. These recommendations, virtually all of which can be found in other school districts throughout the region and the country, are reasonable and necessary approaches and are integral to any comprehensive anti-violence program.

- **Long-Term, Close the BHS Campus**

This is our highest priority recommendation and would positively affect most every other recommendation. We acknowledge there are logistical issues with this and would take time however it would be one of the single most effective strategies to improve student, staff and faculty safety. Many problems occur because non-students freely travel on campus and mingle with students. Berkeley High students should remain on campus during the school day. In the shorter term, we recommend that the campus be open only for upper level students (juniors and seniors), during lunch, wearing visible school identification, whose conduct does not preclude them from this earned privilege.

- **Improve the BUSD School Security Program**

BUSD Security personnel should be highly visible and easily identifiable. We recommend all security personal have a visible, uniformed appearance. Visible security personnel are a deterrent to non-students attempting to enter the campus for unauthorized or illegal purposes. Additionally, this increases security personnel safety by ensuring responding police officers can easily recognize and coordinate with staff during incidents. This is our top recommendation for the security program. Security training should be increased to a minimum of 24-40 hours per year. This training would be more valuable if it was conducted regularly throughout the year rather than in a single annual block. Security policies and procedures should be reviewed and updated to ensure they are current and in line with industry best practices. Finally, security should be equipped in a manner that allows them to maintain control of situations, particularly those where dangerous weapons may be involved. At a minimum, school security should be trained and equipped with either handcuffs or plastic flexcuffs.

- **Additional School Resources Officers (SRO's)**

We recommend that the Berkeley Unified School District materially support additional School Resources Officers at Berkeley High and Berkeley middle

schools. This would ensure five day a week coverage. Research has shown that middle school is a critical juncture for kids and is a time when life-long habits and behaviors, both positive and negative, are formed. Having SRO's as positive role models can help kids feel safe and can help administrators identify and deal with problems early on before they escalate. SRO's can also assist with truancy reduction efforts including home visits and supportive follow up with kids at most risk for dropping out.

- **Require Visible School Specific Identification Cards**

We again acknowledge the logistical challenges of implementing this recommendation. If, however, students beginning in middle school are required to have visible school-specific identification, the habit would more easily carry over to high school-aged students. Value can be added to carrying the cards by partnering with local businesses to provide discounts. In addition, the schools education and safety message and resource information could be placed on the back of the card ensuring students have ready and consistent access to this information. There are undoubtedly many ways to make this work.

- **Increase Attention and Support on Highest Risk Students**

Most BUSD students have little or no criminal or disciplinary history. Research has shown, however, that gun possession is higher among youth with a history of delinquency, gang membership, and other misconduct. Truancy and increased likelihood of crime are linked. A comprehensive anti-truancy program can help prevent crime and victimization. We recommend a data-driven early warning system designed to ensure that students starting down the wrong path receive increased attention in the way of support and enforcement. This can be aided by partnerships with local agencies including Berkeley Youth Alternates, Berkeley Police, Berkeley Health, Alameda County Youth Probation and District Attorney, and others.

Along with the above recommendation, the BUSD should have an advanced data collection, analysis, sharing and reporting program. Strategies that are data-driven are among the most logical ways for officials to stay informed, limit rumors and ensure staff is deployed in the most efficient manner possible. Along with that, ensure the Berkeley Police Department is notified of all incidents that require reporting to local law enforcement and all incidents that require suspension or expulsion. This sharing can also help improve response to crime and other issues in close proximity to schools.

William Huyett, Superintendent

March 31, 2011

Page 4

We recognize the challenges associated with these recommendations but we want to reiterate that we have strived to strike a reasonable balance between extreme and incremental. We also appreciate the BUSD's willingness to seek advice and make improvements. We all want the same thing—schools that are safe and able to focus on their core mission of educating children in the most positive environment that can be provided. We look forward to working with the Berkeley Unified School District on the many opportunities available to reach this incredibly important goal.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael K. Meehan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "M".

Michael K. Meehan
Chief of Police
Berkeley Police Department
2100 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Berkeley, CA 94704

cc: City Manager, City of Berkeley