

BHS Small Schools’ Guiding Principles

I. Introduction

Berkeley High School (BHS) is the only public high school in a community of over 100,000. Drawing from a diverse racial, ethnic and socioeconomic base, the student population embraces a broad spectrum of people and ideas. It is a diverse high school in a unique city. It has an enrollment of approximately 3,000 students in grades 9 to 12; it is a truly comprehensive high school.

BHS as a large comprehensive high school has many benefits and strengths including an incredible range of course offerings in multiple content areas, AP and honors courses, and a rich elective and co-curricular program. BHS boasts many academic successes, and a very high percentage of BHS graduates go onto college.

However, despite these notable achievements, BHS has been unable to provide the same level of success for all students. Many students do not thrive in the large, general high school population. For students who could benefit from a smaller, more intimate high school structure, various community and BHS-affiliated groups, including the Small Schools Advisory Committee (SSAC) chaired by Superintendent Michele Lawrence, have explored the concept of developing several small schools as options for students within BHS.

The development of small schools presents an opportunity to improve the culture and learning environment for the entire high school. Small schools can provide the intimacy, the accountability and the flexibility that is so important to a successful high school experience.

The purpose of this document is to present the guiding principles for how small schools will fit within and develop along side the comprehensive high school.

BHS has a range of programs that address the needs of various groups of students. If a program wishes to become small school, it will be required to go through a formal process that emphasizes evaluation and accountability, and meets the criteria for size and diversity. Programs at BHS may continue to exist without necessarily choosing to become a small school. However, because of the potential for success in small schools, many programs may evolve toward the principles expressed in this document.

Small schools will be part of the solution of improving the overall functioning of Berkeley High School. This means cooperation and coordination between all segments of both the comprehensive high school and the small schools must occur. Goals and objectives of small schools should be consistent with the overall goals and objectives of Berkeley High School as a whole, and in turn, the rest of the school must support the small schools.

If approved by the Board of Education (Board), 50% of BHS would be in small schools fully integrated into the comprehensive high school by the 2005-2006 school year. The concept of small schools is to allow students and parents to have the voluntary option of associating with a

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small school at BHS. Small schools size will range from approximately 200-520 students. Small schools will ultimately serve all grades 9-12.

Each small school’s core responsibility will be the total success of students admitted to their school, and may be a model for the large school.

The application process is detailed in this document. Small school status may be revoked if certain outcomes are not achieved, or if the small school does not comply with any of the guiding principles outlined in this document.

It is the mission of BHS to educate and inspire all students in a safe, respectful and supportive environment. The primary purpose of developing small schools at Berkeley High is to effectively implement the key objectives of our mission statement, specifically,

- Expect maximum achievement from each student
- Maintain high expectations for both students and staff
- Teach student to think critically, creatively and analytically
- Respect each member of the community as an individual
- Model and expect ethical and responsible behavior
- Provide a school structure, which is open and accessible

By decreasing the size of schools and creating principles that make the student the focus of the program, student achievement may increase and students will hopefully have a more successful high school experience.

II. Vision: Development and review of a Small School Request for Authorization (RFA)

a. Developing a Request for Authorization (RFA) for a new small school

Ad hoc associations of teachers and community members, the “small school design team,” may propose the formation of a small school by completing a Request for Authorization (RFA).

The impetus to develop an RFA can come from many sources. Existing programs may propose to become small schools, or a “small school design team” formed of teachers, staff members, parents and students may come together to develop a RFA for a new small school. In either case, the “small school design team should describe its vision, mission, character and, if applicable, thematic focus of the proposed small school.

b. Reviewing the RFA

The RFA will be evaluated on how it meets the guiding principles for small schools. A completed RFA will need to be reviewed and approved by the BHS Principal, the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, and the Superintendent before it is advanced to the BUSD Board for final approval.

III. Diversity

Each small school will be representative of the diversity of the entire school population—by race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation, learning ability, language status, socio-economic status, and academic achievement.

Since small school enrollment is dependent on parent and student choice, assignment will be made by lottery, according to district guidelines of controlled choice from the applicant pool. This controlled choice would mirror the assignment process at the K-8 schools, and additionally factor in student achievement. In order to serve the needs of students, flexibility in the application process will be allowed for students who may be referred to the small school by teachers and counselors.

Outreach efforts to all constituencies at BHS and all communities within the BUSD should be the responsibility of the central office, BHS staff and the small school. It should be a high priority to make special outreach efforts to the various constituencies who might not be familiar with all the options available for students including students enrolled in special education and their families, and English Language Learners (ELL). Small schools will ensure that, whenever appropriate, students with disabilities are provided with the supports, services and physical accommodations and assistive technologies they need to progress in the general education curriculum.

Small Schools need to reflect all ability levels of students. Classes for students needing additional academic support, including special education and ELL classes, need to be planned for, and any small schools proposal needs to include a strategy for meeting the needs of lower achieving students, as well as offering all students the opportunity to participate in AP and honors classes.

IV. Small School Leadership and Governance

The overall BHS site administration will be responsible for managing site usage and coordinating facilities schedules; for identifying economies of scale and supporting cross-fertilization between and among the small and large schools; for supporting the cross-school shared activities such as athletics and arts programs; for supporting small schools in adherence to state curricular guidelines and school board policy.

Although the BHS Principal would retain final supervisory authority, Small Schools would enjoy a high level of autonomy within the structure of accountability and responsibility identified below:

a. BHS Principal

The BHS Principal is the ultimate decision maker for the small school and works to ensure the compatibility between the various components of BHS.

b. Small school administrator

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The BHS Principal will assign administrative support for the small school. This may include either a full-time, part-time administrator, or lead teacher with release time. That administrator may have the overall responsibility for the operation of the small school in accordance with relevant school-wide policies and the agreements reached through the approval process of the small school application. This may entail a different type of shared governance, but one that is compatible with the comprehensive high school. The administrator will meet regularly with the Small School Leadership Council and report to the Principal.

c. Small School Leadership Council (SSLC)

A Small School Leadership Council (SSLC) comprised of the administrator responsible for the small school, parent and student representatives, teacher and staff representatives will manage the small school as defined in the small school’s RFA.

d. BHS support for the small school

The BHS Principal, Shared Governance Committee, and the school as a whole will support the small school. All BHS counselors and administrators will be aware of small school options at BHS as well as other approved BHS programs. Details of coordination and support will be clearly defined when the small school proposal is approved.

e. Authority of the small school

Each school may develop its own schedule, program, course offerings, staff and staff development, duties, leadership structure and activities calendar within a set of broad guidelines that are compatible with the larger school components determined by the BHS Principal.

f. Unions

Small schools are governed by the same union contracts as the comprehensive high school. However, there may be opportunities to work in collaboration with unions to modify agreements specifically for the small schools configuration.

g. Departments

As curriculum is developed for small schools, it is imperative that small schools work in conjunction with existing departments to ensure appropriate transition for students who exercise “passport” options or for students who may elect at some point to leave or enter a small school at any grade level (see also VIII, curriculum).

V. Structures

A. Staffing

1. Teachers

Small schools should work to provide teachers with common planning time, the opportunity to coordinate curriculum across departments as well as to share information about individual students needs.

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Willingness and enthusiasm of teachers to be in the small school is critical to its success. Consequently, the hiring of new teachers to the high school must be done through a shared decision making process with the school principal, members of the small school community, and those in the larger school (for example, department chairs). Because of fluctuations in enrollment and student selection, it is possible that some teachers will be teaching both in the comprehensive high school and the small school; therefore, joint decision making is critical to ensure balance.

Teaching assignments will be made as a negotiated settlement between the school principal, small schools leaders, department chairs, and will be done in accordance with the BFT/BUSD contract. Department chairs will continue to have a role in teacher and curriculum evaluation related to their content area whether teachers are connected with a small school or the larger high school. Whenever possible, teachers’ full assignments should be dedicated to the small school.

Each small school will articulate a plan, within the context of realistic budget constraints and collective bargaining agreements, for providing appropriate support and time for teachers to work together on: planning; curriculum development/integration; student advisory; student assessment; and training for learning new competencies relative to improving student achievement.

Teachers in small schools will “own” the success of individual students in terms of their social, academic, and emotional needs. Teachers will know their students, reach out to their students’ families, and direct appropriate resources like tutoring to ensure each student’s success.

2. Counselors

All school counselors should be familiar with all small schools and the coursework, focus, etc of each small school. Each small school will structure student advisories to provide consistent guidance and counseling to students throughout their four years of study. Where the small school’s size permits, a single counselor may be assigned to better facilitate counseling services. Specific requests for counseling may be made in the RFA application.

B. Parents/guardians and students

Each small school will structure strong parent-teacher partnerships, and provide structures to support parent and community involvement. Parents and students need to be a part of the decision-making structures. Outreach and communication to parents and students is an integral part of the school’s success and must be done frequently.

C. Facilities

Approved Small Schools will be located on the BHS campus. It is desirable that schools will be in contiguous space, when possible, to improve student supervision, student

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advisement and sense of community for students, teachers and parents. All small school classes must be accessible to students with disabilities. However it is important to be mindful that curricular articulation between small schools and other departments must continue to occur as well as the exchange of materials and supplies. It is understood that the principal will be the determining individual responsible to balance the needs of these groups.

D. Resources (Funding and resource allocation)

It must be understood that the development of small schools must be a cost neutral endeavor. District funding and resources available to a small school at BHS will be allocated on a similar basis as the entire school. A small school will be allocated the same student/teacher ratio, student/administrator ratio, and student/counselor ratio as is available to other students in the high school. Materials and supplies funding should be provided on a per student basis consistent with the rest of the school. Some funding may come through departments rather than directly to the small school (i.e. textbook funding). Staff development funds and teacher release funds should be equitably allocated among all teachers at the high school. In the event that a small school secures private grants or other non-district funding, such funding must be approved through regular district processes and balanced within the goals and objectives of BHS.

Every small school at the high school level in the District is guaranteed an equitable share of resources, technical assistance, leadership and support in meeting its goals.

VI. Standards

Each small school would be responsible for guiding freshmen through their graduation in accordance with State curriculum standards; Federal, State, District and BHS policies; and WASC Accreditation Standards.

a. Compliance with Federal, State, District and BHS policies

Small schools at BHS must adhere to Federal, State, District, and general BHS policies and procedures including, but not limited to, attendance policies and procedures; school rules and behavioral standards; health and safety standards; standard disciplinary procedures and consequences; the school calendar and bell schedule; grades, academic, high school graduation requirements; and compliance with Section 504 and IDEA.

Application for modifications/changes would go through the BHS Principal who may seek concurrence with the site governance team.

b. Compliance with WASC Accreditation Standards and WASC Action Plans

BHS will continue to be accredited as a comprehensive high school under the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), the organization that accredits California high schools. Maintaining accreditation of Berkeley High School is a priority for BUSD.

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Small schools will comply with the goals outlined in the BHS 2002 WASC Report’s Action Plans for the Ninth grade program, Attendance, Discipline, and Staff Development.

c. Compliance with State and District curriculum standards and requirements

Curriculum for small schools, and for the comprehensive high school as well, must be in compliance with California state content standards and BUSD curriculum standards. Course outlines and syllabuses must be Board approved and on file. A reference set will be available to parents, students, teachers, counselors, department chairs and administrators to help students and parents make appropriate decisions regarding small school and individual course selection. Curriculum review of course content should be an ongoing formalized process involving both the school (for example, department chairs) and central offices.

New courses developed by the small school must be reviewed and approved in the same formalized process as other classes or course at BHS. Such review and approval should include whether the course is designated as meeting the requirements for UC and CSU.

VII. Accountability and Assessment

New small schools must submit an annual plan to the BHS Principal and Superintendent with identified measurable student outcomes, and outline the method by which student progress in meeting the identified student outcomes will be measured. This must include a review of student work products. The measurable student outcomes must address overall student achievement and define goals for achieving racial equity in achievement. Regardless of the philosophy and approach of any small school, all students in that school will have the opportunity to meet the minimum UC admissions requirements, and be prepared for higher education opportunities if they so desire.

In addition to measuring student outcomes, small schools should perform qualitative evaluations of their programs, teaching methods or unique features. Regular evaluations, including identification of areas of success as well as areas needing improvement, should be documented and shared with the larger school. Each Small School Leadership Council will develop and use an instrument to periodically monitor and measure progress on annual goals and report on parent, teacher and student evaluation of the school.

To continue from year to year as an operating small school, the school must demonstrate that the school’s students meet or exceed the school’s identified student outcomes. In this way the experiences of small schools can be used to improve curriculum and program throughout the high school.

The Superintendent shall establish a system for collecting the data necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the BHS small schools model. All small schools shall cooperate in the keeping and collecting of data necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of small schools.

VIII. Curriculum

The Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, the BHS principal, and the small school leadership council, and department chairs will ensure articulation of curriculum among BUSD’s middle schools, the high school and curriculum within each small school.

(See IV. (g) for role of departments in small school curriculum development.)

IX. Recruitment, Admission and Enrollment

a. Admission

It is strongly desirable that each small school will be a school of choice for students and their parents. Choices should be based on interest in the unique program and philosophy of each school. Each school will identify and publish its philosophy and approach to teaching and learning.

Students will apply to small schools by order of preference. Choice will be granted for students by lottery, within district assignment guidelines that reflect demographics of the district as well as achievement levels and special needs.

b. Recruitment

Each small school will create and calendar extensive outreach and orientation sessions to parents, community and students during a spring enrollment period to ensure that all community members are aware of their options and able to choose the best school for their child. Information about small schools will be equally accessible by all students and their families (including non-English speakers) and the process for applying to a particular small school will be transparent.

The Board, Superintendent, BHS and middle school principals and small school administrators will coordinate advancement from the middle schools, ensuring procedures for equitable provision of information about the small schools, and providing choice within Berkeley’s policies on integration.

c. Enrollment

Students must be scheduled in that small school for a minimum of four (4) periods in order to be considered enrolled in that small school. Small schools may require certain course requirements for all students. It is encouraged that students invest their entire educational program in the small school to the extent possible.

While most students take core subjects that will be offered at the small school, the small school will identify what “passports” can grant students access to the offerings of the larger high school. Each small school must articulate its “passport” system, and how “boundaries” are permeable to the larger school or to other small schools, or to other education providers (VISTA, Laney, ROP, UCB, BHS Independent Studies).

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Cross-campus activities will be shared across the small schools, including athletic programs, arts, and clubs that serve distinct student interests. Other models of shared activities may emerge with the formation of several small schools.

X. Evaluation of the Small School reform effort

As stated in the introduction, the development of small schools presents an opportunity to improve the culture and learning environment for the entire high school. Within three years of implementation of the first small school, the Superintendent shall evaluate the effectiveness of the small school reform *effort* (not the individual small schools), and shall report to the Board with recommendations to modify, expand, or terminate the small schools reform effort at BHS.

The evaluation might consider such factors as:

- The pre- and post- small school test scores of students attending small schools and other student assessment tools (CAHSEE, STAR, GSE, etc.);
- The level of parental satisfaction with the small schools approach, and parent involvement;
- The fiscal structures and practices of small schools, including the amount of revenue received from various public and private sources;
- An assessment of whether the small schools model has resulted in increased student achievement (measured by AP and honors, third and higher year language, math and science) and student satisfaction (as reported by qualitative, survey, and focus group data, and measured by truancy, tardiness, dropout rates, etc.);
- The level of teacher satisfaction with the small schools approach;
- The existence of any discrimination and/or segregation in small schools and the existence of inequitable distribution of resources throughout the high school;
- The number of small school applications submitted and denied and the number and reasons for the revocation of small school status;
- The governance, fiscal liability and accountability practices and related issues between small schools, BHS and the District; and
- An assessment of the key success factors for BHS small schools.