

Berkeley Safe Neighborhoods Committee
Post Office Box 13665, Berkeley, CA 94712

November 7, 2014

TO: Police Chief Michael K. Meehan
Dr. Susan Craig, Director, Student Services
Via e-Mail

Dear Chief Meehan and Dr. Craig:

By this letter Berkeley Safe Neighborhoods Committee (BSNC) expresses its strong support for the immediate establishment of a working group composed of members of the Berkeley Police Department and administrative BUSD staff tasked with the goal of creating safer schools and safer neighborhoods. If at all possible, BSNC urges that the BUSD Consultant, Mr. Al Bahn of Edu-Safe Associates, be invited to be a member of this working group. BSNC regards the establishment of such a working group as an urgent matter.

While our concern has been prompted by the September murder of a 72-year old woman at 4:30 pm at Russell and Otis Streets in Berkeley by an alleged 18-year old non-Berkeley resident on probation from Contra Costa County who is said to be enrolled in the Berkeley Technology Academy, there have been many other disturbing incidents involving Berkeley students, both resident and non-resident. The seriousness of these incidents, their number and their persistence over a long period in our schools and neighborhoods make taking action to address them immediately a priority.

BSNC assures you that this is not just about non-residents enrolled in our schools, nor about Berkeley Technology Academy. It is about youth who are committing crimes in and out of our schools and in our neighborhoods. It is about safety, and whether these troubled youth are receiving the best possible services that would help deter them from committing more crimes in the future. It is about the lack of data and information that would aid in crime prevention, make providing services more effective and form a foundation on which appropriate policies and procedures can be formulated by both City and School District.

Specifically, BSNC makes the request that the working group immediately consider three central issues:

1. The establishment of an automated, two-way, data-sharing system and processes designed to ensure that troubled students are identified and receive increased attention in the way of support from both schools and law enforcement. Students in Berkeley schools who have been arrested, whether directly related to school attendance or not, cannot receive the necessary attention, services and appropriate placement unless both schools and law enforcement are fully aware of the student and his/her situation and needs.

2. The implementation of a Berkeley program based on models such as found in the city of Napa and Contra Costa County regarding school-linked services coordinated with county juvenile probation and the police department. Bringing school, probation and the police department together both formally and informally provides the best possible services for the student by the most appropriate agencies.
3. The provision of creating school-community partnerships including neighborhood watch groups, to develop school staff/neighborhood member relationships, and discuss neighborhood and crime prevention issues surrounding the school site.

BSNC is aware of the District Safety Assessment Reports Prepared for the Berkeley Unified School District in 2011 and 2013 by Mr. Al Bahn, Edu-Safe Associates. Among his numerous recommendations, we quote from one in the March 2011 report:

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.....

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. In addition with that, ensure that Berkeley Police Department is notified of all incidents that require report to local law enforcement and all illegal incidents that require suspension or expulsion. This sharing would help improve response to crime and other issues in close proximity of schools.

And from the 2013 Edu-Safe Report, which includes a repeat of the above, but also:

The school district should hold monthly meetings with administrators of each school and police, fire, district attorney, social services, public health, probation, and county office of education personnel. These meetings should be used to discuss current safety and security problems and find collaborative ways and means to provide solutions. The synergy of such a group would be very powerful, and would greatly enhance the safety of the entire school district.

The district should implement an instant reporting system for crime related matters.

...consider establishing a neighborhood watch group in each school neighborhood. The principal of the school should host some of the meetings on the school campus. Positive communication between the administrator(s) and the neighbors of the school is a powerful tool to be used to prevent crime in school neighborhoods. The principal should also

communicate regularly with the respective beat officer or community liaison of the Berkeley Police Department. This will foster communication lines with the police department and alert them to campus concerns. Requests for more police presence to deal with traffic matters, disorderly conduct, etc. can be met through regular meetings with these officials.

BSNC strongly urges that the City and School District move forward on addressing these issues. To that end we intend to inform existing neighborhood watch groups, neighborhood associations and individuals about our request and to place progress reports regarding your efforts on the agenda of our monthly meetings.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request. If you have any questions, please contact our Board President at 510-524-3223.

Sincerely,
Shirley Dean, President
Suzann Hagan, Secretary
Trudy Washburn, Treasurer
Barbara Allen, Board Member
Chadidjah McFall, Board Member
Jim Smith, Board Member

cc: Captains Upson and Greenwood, Sgt. Reece
City Manager Christine Daniel
School Superintendent Dr. Donald Evans
Albert E. Bahn, Owner/Consultant, Edu-Safe Associates