

11.9. Contract for Restorative Practices Consultant at BHS 15-16

Rationale:

BERKELEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

TO: Donald Evans, Ed.D, Superintendent
FROM: Pasquale Scuderi, Assistant Superintendent, Ed Services
Sam Pasarow, Principal, Berkeley High School
DATE: September 30, 2015
SUBJECT: Contract for Restorative Practices Consultant at BHS for 15-16

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Beginning on October 1, 2015, Mr. David Gibson (Ta-Biti) will work with the Berkeley High School Intervention Team to implement Restorative Justice as part of a larger strategy to improve school culture and build cohesion on the staff and within the student body, as well as to work to provide constructive responses and alternatives to behavioral issues at BHS as the site team seeks to address issues of disproportionality in suspensions of African-American students.

Mr. Gibson will also work very closely with Berkeley High's most at-risk students and provide intensive mentoring supports to ASI 3+ students who are often at the center of conflict on campus. Mr. Gibson's contracted duties will include conducting student, staff, and parent harm circles, one-on-one case-management, home visits, parent communication, and efforts to support teacher facilitation of both community-building and harm circles. Mr. Gibson will train and support staff in holding harm circles when one community member harms another. Restorative discipline helps develop empathy in community members when harm occurs as well as restores imbalances that communities suffer when one member harms another.

Aside from helping the BHS community respond to harm in an innovative and more effective way, Mr. Gibson will support Berkeley High implement Tier I community building Restorative Justice (RJ) practices. Tier I Restorative Justice is purposeful in the many community-building techniques that can be employed in the classroom and in other key community spaces on campus, including teacher and staff professional development. Tier I restorative practices will be integral to developing a cohesive and positive staff culture on the Berkeley High campus. Mr. Gibson will lead staff circles, which will build staff cohesion as well as model effective practices for community building in the classroom.

While Tier I emphasizes community building and Tier II emphasizes restoring harm, Tier III Restorative Justice involves a community's efforts to welcome students back to the community after a period of incarceration, a long suspension, or a long absence.

With the use of the circle process, Mr. Gibson will develop a team of peer mediators among the student body. The peer mediators, under Mr. Gibson's guidance, will accept the role of Circle Keepers. Circle Keepers are charged with the duty of getting acquainted, developing action plans, addressing issues thus building relationships across campus. Community building will be the focal point of the first year's work, however, as conflict in schools is inevitable, Tier II and III Restorative practices will also be a big part of Mr. Gibson's focus this school year. As conflict has its own schedule, Mr. Gibson will be on-site daily and into the evening providing prep, follow-up and home visits when necessary.

Due to BHS's recent challenges with 'clique' or 'gang' scenarios which carry violent possibilities, Mr. Gibson will also focus his work on youth involved in gangs and multi-city / multi-school violence. Mr. Gibson will work to build relationships with involved area youth, some of which are part of the BHS community.

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Mr. Gibson will lay the foundation for RJ Practices throughout the Berkeley High community in program design and implementation to aid Berkeley High's efforts to comply with the BUSD LCAP plan. Reducing discipline disproportionality will be a direct impact of Mr. Gibson's work as he will mentor and support Berkeley High School's most at-risk students. Finally, Mr. Gibson will help with the data input and tracking of disciplinary data, so the school can engage in cycles of inquiry to gauge the effectiveness of positive school climate strategies.

Mr. Gibson's expertise and experience make his work a pilot that, after further analysis, may result in a mid-year request for a permanent position of this nature at BHS.

Mr. Gibson's work will be used in tandem with existing school personnel and resources to reduce disproportionality among suspensions issued to student groups, to reduce overall suspensions, to provide documentable alternatives in lieu of suspension.

POLICY/CODE:

Board Policy 3310

FISCAL IMPACT:

Expenditures totaling \$65,000 for SY 15-16 jointly funded through LCAP Supplemental Funding and BHS BSEP Site Discretionary Funds

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the contract with Mr. David Gibson for fiscal year 2015-16.