

BERKELEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

PERSONNEL COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025



ADVANCING EQUITY, INTEGRITY, AND OPPORTUNITY THROUGH A MERIT-BASED SYSTEM

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COLLABORATION, GROWTH, AND SERVICE

This year has been one of renewed energy, innovation, and collaboration. Together, we've strengthened the foundation of our merit system while embracing new technologies and creative approaches that enhance how we serve our classified employees and the District community. We also want to extend a warm welcome to our new Commissioner, Soli Alpert, who joins us as the union-appointed representative. His background brings valuable perspective to the Commission's work.

Operationally, we experienced significant growth in engagement and participation across all areas of our work compared to the previous school year. Applications increased by more than 40%, rising from 2,264 to 3,216, showing stronger outreach and growing interest in employment with the District. We also administered 2,608 exams, up from 1,638 the prior year – a 59% increase and the highest total in recent years. Notably, written exams grew by 73%, and performance exams nearly quadrupled, reflecting both higher applicant engagement and an expansion of assessment opportunities. The number of eligibility lists also rose from 71 to 84, supporting timely hiring and advancement opportunities for classified employees.

We also navigated a challenging layoff process with compassion and collaboration. Of the 176 layoff notices originally issued, only 15 employees were ultimately impacted, with two resulting in a full layoff. This outcome reflects the strong partnership between HR, union leadership, and site administrators, who worked diligently to minimize disruptions and protect our workforce wherever possible.

In collaboration with the SPED Department, HR, and the District, we have confirmed the conversion of 48 contracted IA II SPED roles into classified positions, with approval for implementation in the 2025–26 school year. This effort will help reduce contractor costs, strengthen staffing stability, and improve support for students. To help fill these critical roles, the Personnel Commission hosted a successful hiring fair in August that drew nearly 90 attendees, many of whom were able to apply, test, and begin onboarding the same day. The event, supported by District staff, generated strong momentum in filling paraeducator vacancies before the start of the school year and set a solid foundation for future large-scale recruitment efforts.

Having worked for the Personnel Commission for over a decade, I am especially grateful to now serve in this role. It is a privilege to lead this team and continue building on the relationships and systems that have supported our classified employees for so many years. These accomplishments are a direct result of the dedication and teamwork of our classified employees, Commissioners, Human Resources partners, union leadership, and departmental colleagues. Their shared commitment to collaboration, problem-solving, and mutual respect continues to strengthen our workplace culture and ensure fair, transparent, and equitable practices across the District. Together, we are building a stronger, more connected community. I look forward to building on this year's achievements and continuing our progress in the year ahead.

INNOVATING WITH EQUITY: MEET OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Erin Ariñez was born and raised in San Francisco, California. She began her career in public education during high school as an After-School Instructor – a classified role that sparked her lifelong commitment to supporting school staff and student success.

With over 15 years of public service experience in Human Resources management and classified personnel administration, Ms. Ariñez is passionate about innovation and has led efforts to digitize recruitment, testing, and hiring processes. Since joining BUSD in 2013, she has played a key role in improving efficiency and promoting equity across classified personnel services. She continues to pursue professional growth and development for herself and the Personnel Commission team, fostering strong relationships and collaboration across the District to ensure their work supports the students and employees they serve.

Outside of work, Erin enjoys community volunteering, spending time with her rambunctious puppies, traveling, trying new foods, and listening to live music.



Erin Ariñez

Executive Director, Classified Personnel

ENSURING EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE IN EVERY HIRE

Founded in 1943, the Berkeley Unified School District Personnel Commission is one of the oldest and most respected in Northern California. For more than eighty years, the Commission has helped ensure that every employee in our schools is treated with fairness, equity, and respect.

The Commission oversees what's known as the Merit System—a process similar to civil service that applies to the District's classified employees (those who don't need a teaching credential). The goal is simple: to make sure every employee is hired, promoted, and supported based on their skills and performance—not personal connections or favoritism.

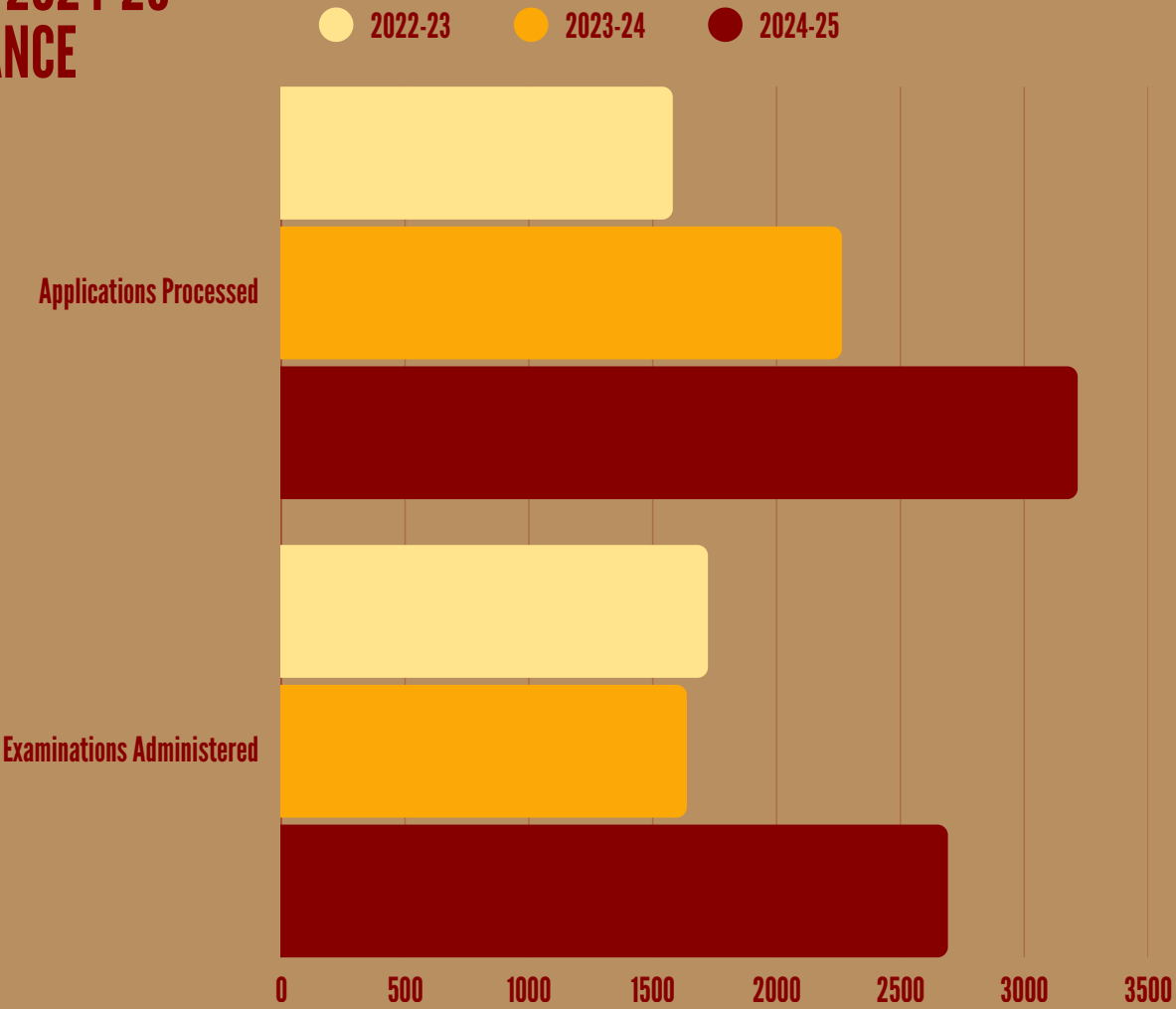
Operating independently from the District's Human Resources Department, the Commission provides fair and impartial oversight. It's made up of three appointed members: one chosen by the School Board, one by the largest employee union, and a third selected jointly by the other two. Each commissioner serves a three-year term, keeping a balance of experience and fresh perspective.

For generations, the Personnel Commission has been part of what makes Berkeley Unified strong—upholding integrity, opportunity, and excellence in every aspect of public service.



Brian, Olga, Sarah
Personnel Commission Staff

RECRUITMENT 2024-25 AT A GLANCE



FAIRNESS POWERED BY THREE: MEET OUR COMMISSIONERS



Heidi Goldstein

Chairperson, Term Expires 2027

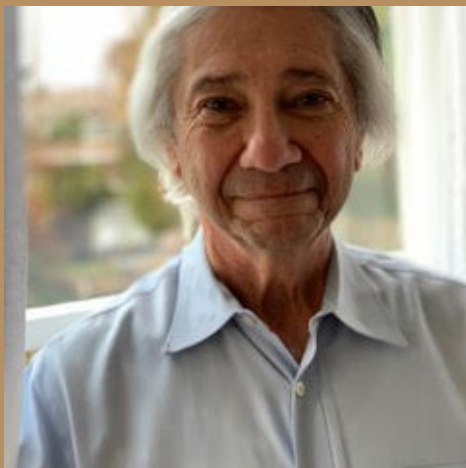
Chairperson Heidi Goldstein has lived in Berkeley since 1991. Her two children are BUSD alumni. She was appointed to the Personnel Commission by State Superintendent Torlakson in February 2016. She served as a board member of the Berkeley HS Development Group (2014-2018) and as a member of the BUSD Sexual Harassment Advisory Committee (SHAC) from 2014-2021. She is currently the board chair of Stop Sexual Assault in Schools. She was a founding adult advisor to the nationally recognized student-led grassroots organization BHS Stop Harassing, now an established club at BHS. Term expires 2027.



Soli Alpert

Vice- Chairperson, Term Expires 2026

Vice-Chairperson Soli Alpert has lived in Berkeley since attending Cal in 2015. He was appointed to the Personnel Commission by BCCE in October 2024. He serves as Chair of the Berkeley Rent Stabilization Board, having been elected in 2018 and reelected in 2022. Soli also served as a Legislative Assistant at the Berkeley City Council from 2018 to 2022. In that time, he also served as a Steward and Delegate for SEIU Local 1021. Legislatively, Soli has focused on workers' and tenants' rights, affordable housing and anti-speculation and anti-displacement policy, and open and transparent governance reforms. Term expires 2026.



Isaiah Roter

Commissioner, Term Expires 2025

Commissioner Isaiah Roter has lived in Berkeley since attending UC Berkeley in 1969. His son is a proud graduate of Berkeley High School, Class of 2004. Isaiah is a retired labor attorney and has served on the BUSD Audit Committee since its founding in 2005. He volunteered in a seventh-grade humanities class at King Middle School, to assist with distance learning during the pandemic. Isaiah also served on the City of Berkeley's Personnel Board for 16 years. He was appointed to the BUSD Personnel Commission by the School Board in October 2020. Term expires 2025.



WHERE MERIT GUIDES EVERY DECISION

The Merit System is a framework for fair and consistent personnel administration in California's public schools. It's guided by state law (Education Code Sections 45240–45320 and 88000–88180) and overseen locally by Personnel Commissions.

At its core, the Merit System ensures that employment decisions are based on what people know and can do, not on personal connections, bias, or favoritism. It rests on five key principles:

1. Hiring and Promotion Based on Merit

All hiring and promotions are determined through fair and competitive processes. Candidates are evaluated objectively so that merit and ability are the deciding factors. The Personnel Commission also designs outreach and recruitment methods to reach a wide and diverse pool of qualified applicants.

2. Career Growth and Retention

The Merit System encourages employees to build long-term careers within the District. By promoting from within, we retain skilled, experienced people who understand and support our schools' mission.

3. Equal Pay for Equal Work

Positions are clearly defined by their type and level of responsibility. This ensures that employees performing similar work receive similar compensation, supporting both fairness and transparency.

4. Fair and Impartial Appeals

If an employee faces disciplinary action—such as suspension, demotion, or dismissal—they have the right to appeal and request a hearing before the Personnel Commission. This process guarantees due process and fair treatment.

5. Commitment to Equity and Non-Discrimination

No one can be denied a job or promotion based on personal characteristics, beliefs, or affiliations. The Merit System upholds equal opportunity for all, as protected by the California Education Code.

RECRUITMENT TIMELINE AT A GLANCE

APPROXIMATELY 60 BUSINESS DAYS FROM START TO FINISH

STEP 1: REQUISITION & APPROVAL

Every recruitment begins when the Personnel Commission receives a Personnel Requisition (PR) and verifies budget approval. Once approved, the team identifies the type of posting – open, promotional, transfer, or vacancy.

STEP 2: POSTING & PLANNING

An internal posting runs for 15 business days per Education Code §45278. When needed, an external posting is shared at the same time. During this stage, staff finalize testing methods and collaborate with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to build fair, relevant exams.

STEP 3: SCREENING & TESTING

Applications are reviewed and screened to identify qualified candidates. The team schedules and administers exams, manages testing logistics, and keeps candidates informed at each step, including appeal opportunities.

STEP 4: ELIGIBILITY & SELECTION

Once exams are scored, the Commission creates an eligibility list, ranking candidates by performance. The top three ranks are forwarded to the hiring manager for selection.

STEP 5: HIRING & ONBOARDING

HR contacts the selected candidate to begin onboarding – including required background checks and TB testing. Non-selected candidates are formally notified once the process is complete.

OUR COMMITMENT

Every step reflects our dedication to fair, transparent, and merit-based hiring – ensuring that each selection strengthens Berkeley Unified’s mission and workforce.

PC: RECRUITMENT TRANSACTIONS	07/01/22 to 06/30/23	07/01/23 to 06/30/24	07/01/24 to 06/30/25
Recruitments Completed	108	76	79
Applications Processed	1581	2264	3216
Written Examinations	966	805	1397
Training & Experience Assessment	464	579	750
Oral Examinations	251	198	241
Performance Examinations	42	56	220
Eligibility Lists Established	88	71	84



PERSONNEL COMMISSION TRANSACTIONS	07/01/22 to 06/30/23	07/01/23 to 06/30/24	07/01/24 to 06/30/25
Summer School Assignments	104	156	136
Reclassifications	6	2	12
Step Advance Requests	17	25	14

CLASSIFIED SERVICE: EMPLOYMENT TRANSACTIONS

	07/01/22 to 06/30/23	07/01/23 to 06/30/24	07/01/24 to 06/30/25
Promotional Appointments	27	20	26
New Hire Appointments	94	87	72
Separation from Service	64	45	80
Layoffs	5 (partial)	1 (partial)	5
Rehires	2	1	7

Questions? Contact Personnel Commission Staff:

SUPERVISORS

- POST A VACANCY
- FIND A SUB FOR A LIMITED TERM ASSIGNMENT
- ELIGIBILITY LISTS
- CLASSIFIED EVALUATIONS
- NEW POSITIONS/ NEW CLASSIFICATION

CANDIDATES

- CLASSIFIED APPLICATIONS
- CLASSIFIED EXAMINATIONS
- EXAMINATION ACCOMMODATIONS
- ELIGIBILITY LISTS

EMPLOYEES

- STEP ADVANCE REQUEST *(WITHIN FIRST 6 MONTHS OF HIRE)*
- AGENDA ITEM REQUEST
- SENIORITY LISTS
- REEMPLOYMENT LISTS
- ELIGIBILITY LISTS
- TRANSFERS
- SUMMER SCHOOL
- RECLASSIFICATIONS
- APPEALS
- COMPENSATION
- WORK OUT OF CLASS
- BILINGUAL ASSESSMENTS