

## 9/4/15 Academic Choice Advisory Council (ACAC) Meeting

Sept. 4, 2015, 7:30-8:35AM Berkeley High School Conference Room B

### Minutes

#### In Attendance:

Who	Role	E-mail address
Amanda Green	AC Co-Chair and AC Lead English Teacher	amandagreen@berkeley.net
Felicia Phillips	AC Vice Principal	feliciaphillips@berkeley.net
Alecia Harger	ACAC Student Representative	aleciaharger@students.berkeley.net
Avi Peltz	ACAC Student Representative	avipeltz@students.berkeley.net
Sam Arriola	AC Webmaster	sarriola@gmail.com
Caroline Bettendorf	AC Parent	crbettendorf@gmail.com
Catherine Ference	AC Parent	candsfer@gmail.com
Wendy Heffner	AC Parent	wendy.heffner@gmail.com
Rene Kvidahl	AC Parent	
Sarah Mackay Lynch	AC Parent	s.mackaylynch@gmail.com
Johanna Reneke	ACAC Parent Rep at Large	j.reneke@gmail.com
Dobee Snowber	AC Parent	dobeesnowber@gmail.com
Christine Staples	AC Parent	Christineannestaples@gmail.com
Donna Storey	ACAC Secretary	donnageorgestorey@gmail.com

#### Introductions for the 2015-2016 Leadership

Amanda Green is the new English lead teacher for the Academic Choice Advisory Council. She teaches freshman composition and World of Media. Felicia Phillips is the new Vice Principal for Academic Choice and was the Principal of Bella Vista Elementary School in Oakland. Avi Peltz is a senior and the president of AC leadership. Alecia Harger is a sophomore on AC Leadership. AC parents also introduced themselves.

## Public Comments

One parent said that she had trouble reaching her student's counselor, Sandra Gomez, who is new to the school this year, because her name and contact information were not on the website. Ms. Green said the roster would be updated soon, but as a general rule, Berkeley High emails consist of the staff member's first and last name followed by "@berkeley.net" The AC counselors for this year are:

Sandra Gomez (A-Go) [sandragomez@berkeley.net](mailto:sandragomez@berkeley.net)

Brenda Kitagawa (Gr-Mu) [brendakitagawa@berkeley.net](mailto:brendakitagawa@berkeley.net)

Terrance Christianson (My-Z) [terrancechristianson@berkeley.net](mailto:terrancechristianson@berkeley.net)

Another parent offered feedback on the freshman welcome event and orientation on Saturday, August 29. She thought the event went well but suggested that incoming freshmen be provided with a map of the campus and given guidance on how to understand their schedules. Her daughter's Link Crew tour guide was very helpful in explaining these matters, but some of her daughter's friends were on tours where this was not explained and they were confused about how to get between classes. Ms. Green suggested we give this feedback to John Villavincencio, the coordinator for Leadership-Student Activities.

## AC Student Representatives' Report

Avi Peltz stated the goals of the AC student leadership for the 2015-2016 school year. He would like to strengthen the AC community and hopes to arrange for an in-school freshman picnic at the beginning of the year, because plans for a picnic later in the year last year fell through.

Ms. Green said she will help in contacting freshman teachers about the picnic and also suggested the AC leadership work on developing an AC T-shirt as a fundraiser.

Alecia Harger said that AC needs a greater sense of community because it has the image of being the default school with nothing going for it. She would like to re-brand AC and emphasize the positive aspects of the wide variety of classes offered. She also wanted to focus more on helping freshman adjust to the school as the current atmosphere is "sink or swim."

Catherine Ference asked if the new Link Crew program (enlisting upperclassmen to help with freshman orientation) was effective. The students replied that it helped, but needed to be more ingrained in the freshman experience and there could be stronger mentorship. Ms. Green said that there had been a mentorship program in the past, but the mentors were not well prepared. She proposed we discuss further what the students can do at the next meeting.

Ms. Harger suggested that there be more advisory for AC students before they choose classes so they can be introduced to the many options available in AC. Ms. Green suggested an AC Electives Fair in March so that students can have an understanding of which electives are available when. This topic will be further discussed at the next meeting.

Christine Staples asked if there was a regular check-in with counselors in terms of graduation and college readiness. Ms. Green said this isn't built in to the protocol but that we should try to reach out to families, especially those of color.

Sam Arriola and Ms. Ference, who are coordinators of the new AC etree, said that the new etree is a possible way to increase parent outreach. The coordinators said that they have input the email of every AC family, but that some have bounced back. Ms. Green suggested that AC teachers be put on the etree as well and Ms. Phillips suggested putting parents in touch with the Parent-Student Resource Center to leverage their relationship with the community. Leticia Amezcua (leticiaamezcua@berkeley.net) and Irma Parker (irmaparker@berkeley.net) are very experienced as liaisons with families of color and Spanish-speaking families. Ms. Ference volunteered to help coordinate outreach with the Parent-Student Resource Center.

### **Planning of AC Fall General Meeting**

Donna Storey explained that the AC by-laws require two AC meetings for the general public, one in the fall semester and one in the spring semester. The meeting in the fall semester focuses on an orientation for families new to AC and in the past has included presentations from AC lead teachers in English and history as well as math, student representative presentations and an ACAC fundraising and participation appeal. The spring meeting focuses on course selection and AP classes.

Ms. Green proposed Thursday, October 22 as a date for the general meeting. It will provisionally take place in the College Career Center from 7-8 pm. She suggested that it would be nice to have refreshments provided. Sarah Mackay Lynch volunteered to coordinate the food for the October meeting.

### **Report on Fundraising Efforts and Priorities for 2015-2016**

Ms. Storey reported that some of the ACAC parents met over the summer and determined that fundraising efforts are most successful in November closer to the end of the year. Therefore, ACAC will do the fundraising mailing in November. Ms. Ference and Ms. Staples will coordinate the donor letter, which will include a clear outline of our needs and goals. The donor letter will also be posted on the AC etree.

Ms. Green outlined the teachers' hopes for AC enrichment this year:

#### **1) Field Trips**

AC teachers are very interested in arranging for field trips for AC students. At the AC teacher retreat on August 24, several ideas were suggested—a guide-led mural tour of San Francisco and a trip for the entire sophomore class to see Macbeth on March 3 at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre. An upper-grade field trip to the State Assembly in Sacramento was also suggested. In terms of expenses, the guide for the mural tour costs \$250 per day and the students would provide their own BART fare with subsidies if required. Tickets for Berkeley Rep would be \$15 each.

Ms. Staples suggested an idea for funding field trips based on the protocol at King Middle School. Teachers send a note home with students telling parents the cost for their child. Although paying the cost would be optional, many parents readily donate

the funds and are often willing to pay extra to sponsor a scholarship for another student. Ms. Staples and Ms. Ference offered to get example letters from middle school teachers.

## **2) Status of AC Student Support Coordinator**

Ms. Green reported that we were not able to receive funding from the administration to cover the additional \$10,000 needed to cover the AC Student Support Coordinator position for 2015-2016. For the past two years, the coordinator has taken two periods per day to focus on students in the required AP courses and monitor the students who need extra help. BIHS has a mandated position of a similar nature, but this was new for AC. The administration objected to the focus on data analysis. Ms. Green said the AC leadership would try to rewrite the position with a focus on student support, while seeking a stipend for data analysis. Ms. Storey asked if the AP teachers would need funds for tutoring or grading. Ms. Greene said that there is an extensive tutoring program available in every subject after school already, but we need more communication to encourage students to make use of this resource.

## **Teachers' Wish List**

Caroline Bettendorf informed us about the "teachers' wish list" that some other small learning communities send out to invite parent donations of specific items. BIHS uses SignupGenius to handle teacher wish lists and Rene Kvidahl offered to set up SignupGenius for teachers. Ms. Green offered to spread the word to AC teachers.

## **New Funding Protocol**

Ms. Storey said that at the ACAC meeting at the end of the last school year, the committee had discussed changing the procedure for approving funding requests. In particular, the requests in the past had been presented in person and the requestor was present while the committee voted. The proposed change to the by-laws would require a written proposal in advance and a vote without the requestor present. This topic will be discussed further at next month's meeting. Ms. Storey also suggested that a clear outline of the method to receive funding be presented to those who are approved because many people have no idea the request must be made through the Berkeley High Development Group.

## **Report on Welcome Event on August 29**

All ACAC members present at this event had a positive report. Ms. Green was impressed with the good teacher turnout. Ms. Phillips, who organized the event, said it was the first time all communities came together and she welcomed feedback on how to make it better. Mr. Arriola said that at past welcome picnics the focus had been on the food, and he appreciated the focus on team-building and thought that should be encouraged.

## **Report on AC Teachers' Retreat**

Ms. Green said that the AC Teachers' Retreat on August 24 was the most positive start to the school year that she'd ever experienced. The teachers met at a conference room on the UC Campus with breakfast and lunch provided and the turnout was good.

The day included community-building events, discussions on how AC can define itself, especially through emphasizing electives, and conversations on how to reach all of our students. This year there will be a new approach to professional development in quality teaching circles, which involves groups of teachers meeting and planning a lesson together, teaching each other the lesson, getting feedback and reflecting and tweaking the material.

Ms. Phillips said the retreat had a very positive vibe. Participants were authentic about raising concerns. There was an urgency about defining AC's identity and supporting disconnected students who are feeling overwhelmed and invisible.

### **Additional Teacher Support**

We also discussed BIHS's custom of providing refreshments for teachers at some of their monthly meetings. Ms. Bettendorf and Ms. Mackay Lynch offered to coordinate this effort.

### **Next ACAC Meeting**

Friday, October 2, 2015, 7:30-8:35 a.m. in BHS Conference Room B in the D Building.