

10/2/15 Academic Choice Advisory Council (ACAC) Meeting
Oct. 2, 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
Sam Arriola	AC Webmaster	sarriola@gmail.com
Caroline Bettendorf	AC Parent	crbettendorf@gmail.com
Catherine Betts	AC Parent	
Catherine Ference	AC Parent	candsfer@gmail.com
Johanna Reneke	ACAC Parent Rep at Large	j.reneke@gmail.com
Elisabeth Ross	AC Parent	e@elisabethross.com
Christine Staples	AC Parent	christineannestaples@gmail.com
Donna Storey	ACAC Secretary	donnageorgestorey@gmail.com

VP Felicia Phillips chaired this meeting.

Public Comments

Regarding the AC e-tree newsletter, Catherine Ference said she welcomes new ideas is planning to follow up with the Parent Resource Center for a feature, and will send out the next newsletter before the Fall General Meeting to remind parents to attend. Ms. Phillips suggested she do this five days in advance of the meeting.

Sam Arriola, the webmaster, suggested that since MailChip allows us to do polls, we might include polls in the newsletter to help parents get more involved and feel they have a way of giving input. He said that 400 recipients had opened the newsletter already. The AC Teacher Wish List, as posted on the newsletter, has also gotten some attention from readers.

Caroline Bettendorf asked if MailChimp would accommodate RSVP's for the General Meeting. Ms. Phillips said that this might help parents feel a commitment to attend.

Several parents complimented the newsletter, especially the teacher interviews.

Planning of AC Fall General Meeting

Ms. Green has reserved the College Career Center on Thursday, October 22 from 7-8:30 p.m. for the AC Fall General Meeting. She has shared the Google Doc of the agenda with the ACAC parent leadership. Currently the agenda includes:

Official Welcome to Parents; a talk by AC guidance counselor Brenda Kitagawa; a talk by AC student representatives; an introduction of the AC Advisory Council and fundraising appeal (Catherine Ference volunteered to do this); talks by AC department heads in social studies, English, math and possibly science and foreign languages; a walk-through of the AC information packet and resources; and finally, Tim Zolezzi was hoping to have the parents break out into small groups for further discussion.

As discussed in the September 4 meeting, ACAC will also provide light refreshments for parents. Sarah Mackay Lynch will not be able to take charge of that, but other parents, including Catherine Ference and Elisabeth Ross volunteered to take on this task.

In terms of ways to encourage parents to attend, Ms. Green thought the meeting would help parents navigate the system at Berkeley High. Ms. Ross said we should extend a special invitation to freshmen parents. Johanna Reneke agreed and pointed out that freshmen parents have traditionally been well represented at the Fall General Meeting.

Ms. Green repeated the desire of the AC leadership to engage more families of color in the General Meeting. Ms. Phillips said we will look into providing a Spanish translator for Spanish-speaking families. She also said she is working with Irma Parker at the Parent Resource Center to organize a special assembly for African-American freshmen. At this meeting they would extend an invitation to the families to attend the AC Fall General Meeting.

Ms. Green asked Mr. Arriola to help her with formatting changes on the information packet and also asked ACAC parents to update the ACAC information sheet and fundraising appeal.

Ms. Ference pointed out that the break out discussion groups might be confusing to freshmen parents who have little experience with Berkeley High. This did work better in the Spring 2015 meeting when the topic was the AP program. Ms. Phillips asked what had been done in the past. Donna Storey replied that at the 2014 Fall General Meeting, parents had written their questions on a piece of paper which teachers then pre-screened and read and answered before the assembly. Ms. Green suggested we might do a small-group Q&A. Ms. Betts thought last year's approach of gathering questions from the group was a good idea. Ms. Ference suggested we might solicit questions through the AC newsletter.

Ms. Phillips said she would check with Mr. Zolezzi about the format of the meeting in order to emphasize the creation of an atmosphere where parents feel connected.

Teacher Appreciation Refreshments

Ms. Green and Ms. Phillips thanked Ms. Bettendorf and Ms. Lynch for providing refreshments for the AC Small Learning Community meeting in September. Refreshments included coffee and tea, frittata, bagels and sweet breads.

Ms. Green said that in the past there had been potluck lunches for AC teachers organized by AC parents. She said they could reserve the Community Theater gallery for the event. Ms. Phillips said she would like to include AP science and special ed teachers as well as English, social studies and math teachers. Ms. Reneke asked if EL (English Learner) teachers were included and Ms. Phillips said there was some overlap. There are about 25 AC humanities teachers but adding in teachers in other departments it would come to about 40 teachers.

Ms. Green suggested early November for a teacher appreciation lunch. November 10 was chosen as a provisional date. Ms. Reneke suggested we do another teacher appreciation lunch in the spring.

Ms. Phillips said the next SLC meetings are on October 26, November 9 and November 23 from 8-9:30 am. Ms. Bettendorf offered to bring refreshments to the October 26 SLC meeting. Ms. Reneke offered to help.

Long-term Substitute Teacher Issue

Ms. Storey introduced the topic of finding qualified long-term substitutes for AC classes. This fall one AP Language and Composition teacher is on eight weeks' paternity leave and an African-American studies teacher resigned shortly before the beginning of the school year.

Ms. Green said that it is difficult to find a qualified substitute, and the teacher must take the initiative to find and train his/her own substitute. When teachers are on leave, they are not required to support a substitute and some feel they don't have time; this is up to the individual teacher's discretion. Ms. Green is trying to help new teachers in particular turn in their paperwork early so the process of finding a qualified substitute can begin as soon as possible. As the lead teacher, she is especially focusing on helping younger teachers navigate this process.

Ms. Green had to leave the meeting to fill in as a substitute for another teacher in first period.

Ms. Reneke then spoke about the ACAC's efforts since last year to bring attention to the long-term substitute problem. Last year there were problems with Advanced Biology and Spanish classes that were brought to our attention by parents during the public comments period of the January 9, 2015 ACAC meeting. Ms. Reneke said that a subcommittee of the ACAC, including herself, Jeremy Thorner and Ms. Storey, attended a PTSA meeting where many other parents at Berkeley High and middle and elementary schools had experienced a disruption in their child's learning due to a lack of a qualified substitute in the classroom. Ms. Reneke said the subcommittee had met with BUSD School Board President Judy Appel and Berkeley Federation of Teachers President Cathy Campbell to discuss solutions. Ms. Reneke felt that with a planned leave, there should be a substitute in place and in particular with the push to have all AC students take AP Language and Composition, it was important to have a qualified teacher in the classroom.

Ms. Phillips clarified the current situation. Yoshi Saliverry, who teaches juniors and freshmen, is out on paternity leave. One problem with finding substitutes is that a teacher must be credentialed in the specific subject in order to stay more than twenty days in the classroom. The school needs special permission to hire a credentialed teacher and it is difficult to find one willing to take on a temporary position. Many want a job for the entire year and Berkeley High cannot offer that.

Also, Ms. Mitchell, an African-American Studies teacher, resigned right before the start of school and it is proving very difficult to find a qualified replacement.

Ms. Phillips said that the Berkeley High Vice Principals have been meeting to develop strategies to cope with the long-term substitute issue. They plan to compile a list of teachers who will be going on long- and short-term leave and encourage teachers to turn in their paperwork on time because they need a confirmation on the date of the leave to proceed with getting a substitute. They are also making up a go-to list of substitutes with teaching credentials, especially retired Berkeley High teachers. The credentialed substitute for Mr. Saliverry will start in mid-October pending his background check, and he will take over for Ms. Theodore when she goes on leave in the spring.

Ms. Ference said that it would be helpful if the administration would communicate the situation with substitutes to parents. Ms. Bettendorf said there had been no communication to her student's class at all. Ms. Phillips said they are planning to send out information to parents via the BHS or AC e-tree.

Ms. Betts asked if substitutes were hired based on their competence in the subject. Ms. Phillips said not on a very short-term or daily basis, but the regular teacher is required to provide some sort of work for students that they can do independently. Sometimes Berkeley High teachers serve as substitutes during their planning periods.

Ms. Reneke asked about developing online lessons, and Ms. Phillips said developing online resources was a union issue. Ms. Reneke wondered if it would be possible to find grants to pay for teacher compensation to develop these materials.

Ms. Bettendorf asked what would happen with Ms. Mitchell's classes in terms of catching up with the content they were missing. Ms. Phillips said the replacement teacher would accelerate the pace, and that the administration was currently discussing how to deal with grades in these classes. She said the administrative team was not at the point of announcing an official policy on substitutes, but they are talking and working on the problem.

Again she stated that it's hard to find qualified substitutes, especially on Monday and Friday, but it can be done with adequate advance notice. For long-term substitutes, it is hard to find people willing to work for \$150 a day.

Ms. Reneke asked if they could expand the hiring process from announcements on Edjoin. Ms. Phillips said they would look into expanding into more forums.

Ms. Ference pointed out that one problem is that students do not behave respectfully to substitute teachers. This seems to be part of the school culture. Ms. Phillips promised to be more visible in classes with substitutes.

Next ACAC Meeting

Due to the school holiday for students on November 6, our next meeting will be on Friday, November 13, 2015, 7:30-8:35 a.m. in BHS Conference Room B in the D Building.