

12/4/15 Academic Choice Advisory Council (ACAC) Meeting
Dec. 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
Avi Peltz	ACAC Student Representative	avipeltz@students.berkeley.edu
Sam Arriola	AC Webmaster	sarriola@gmail.com
Caroline Bettendorf	AC Parent	crbettendorf@gmail.com
Catherine Ference	AC Parent	candsfer@gmail.com
Rene Kvidahl	AC Parent	
Lisa Miller	AC Parent	lisa@classroommatters.com
Rakhi Rao	ACAC Treasurer	rakhiprao@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

Academic Choice VP Felicia Phillips chaired this meeting.

Public Comments

The public comment portion of the meeting was postponed until the end of today's meeting.

Student Representatives' Report

ACAC Student Representative Avi Peltz reported that it's been challenging to make arrangements for the AC freshman picnic at this time of year, so student leadership will

reschedule it for later this school year. The student leadership committee meets in Amanda Green's room at lunch on Thursdays.

Donna Storey suggested that the committee begin planning graduation activities early so that AC can have a good celebration this year for seniors.

Ms. Phillips added that the student leadership is working on some exciting activities for the freshman picnic, but there is a lot to negotiate with teachers, in particular excusing all freshmen for three periods on the day of the picnic. She thanked Avi for all of his hard work on this project.

Treasurer's Report

ACAC Treasurer Rakhi Rao distributed the latest Statement of Activities as of December 1, 2015. Academic Choice has a balance of \$75,231. We brought in \$11,400 in donations this year, thanks to the new AC e-tree and website. This is a promising start to the year.

A small group of ACAC parents met on Tuesday, December 1 to discuss how best to budget expenditures in the current year. They proposed setting aside \$25,000 to be spent this year on projects to be determined by the teachers, VP and parents and an additional \$10,000 (twice the expenditure of past years) for senior graduation festivities. We will continue to discuss the best ways to use these resources.

Ms. Phillips said that we need to be good stewards of our funds. AC has a number of priorities. Some teachers have technology needs, but some believe the school district should pay for technology. Ms. Phillips is in charge of technology needs for Berkeley High as a whole and hopes the district will meet various needs such as online testing.

World History Planning Session Funding

Crystal Rigley, a sophomore World History teacher, submitted a proposal to the ACAC for \$432.20 for three World History teachers (Sandy Nicholson, Tasha Jackson and Crystal Rigley) to plan the second-semester curriculum for 5 hours on the first Monday of winter break, December 21, 2015. They aim to rework the curriculum to make it less Eurocentric. Joe Poppas is part of the World History team but will be out of town that day.

Ms. Green said that we have an awesome World History team this year and that the planning session benefits the entire sophomore class. Ms. Phillips said this four-person team meets every Friday after school, and she would like to see this collaboration in other classes.

Sam Arriola asked if course planning was built in to teachers' schedules. Ms. Green said there is no time to coordinate, and any coordination is on the teachers' own time. Ms. Phillips said that teachers have a planning period, but that is for their own classes. On Mondays teachers have a school-wide obligation in the morning. She thinks it is a good idea to allow teachers time to plan and at her previous school they were allotted ten hours of planning time.

Ms. Green moved that we approve \$432.20 to fund the World History teachers'

planning session. Catherine Ference seconded the motion.

Action: The funding request was unanimously approved.

Funding Graders for AP Literature

Ms. Green presented another request for funding from Matthew Carton, who teaches four sections of senior AP Language and Literature. He would like to hire two graders at \$15 an hour so he can return essays more quickly to students. This would cost \$600 for each grader, maybe less.

Christine Staples said she would prefer to see this proposal in writing first. Ms. Green said that it would be better to vote today as Mr. Carton has two sets of essays he wants to return quickly and our next meeting is January 8. Mr. Peltz said that many essays are timed in class and it is helpful to get them back quickly so you know where you can improve.

Catherine Ference suggested that we make the funding of graders for AP classes a regular part of our budget rather than having to figure this out every year. Caroline Bettendorf said that in BIHS, parent volunteers help grade the extended essay, so maybe there is a way AC parents can help. Ms. Green said that English teachers realize they need to grade the work and it is not sustainable to train parents. Rather it is preferable to have a fixed team of graders. Ms. Ross asked if the teachers review the graders' assessments. Ms. Green said yes and that teachers assign grades to the students.

Ms. Green moved that we approve an amount not to exceed \$1200 to fund two graders for Mr. Carton's AP Literature classes. Avi Peltz seconded the motion.

Action: The funding request was unanimously approved.

Funding for Mr. Poppas' Field Trip to the State Capitol in Sacramento

Ms. Ference reported that Mr. Poppas had a wildly successful field trip to the Oakland Museum with his three classes of sophomore World History students. He has already received funding to take his Politics and Power class to Sacramento, but Ms. Ference overlooked the cost of a substitute to teach his classes when she made the original proposal. She wanted to request additional funding of less than or equal to \$200 to cover a substitute for that day. Ms. Phillips said that field trips do require the hiring of substitute as part of the total funds. She is trying to figure out how other schools fund substitutes for field trips.

Ms. Ference moved that we fund up to \$200 for a substitute for Mr. Poppas when he takes his Politics and Power students to Sacramento. Avi Peltz seconded the motion.

Action: The funding request was unanimously approved.

Revision of AC Funding Protocols

As discussed in previous meetings of the ACAC, Ms. Storey proposed amending the by-laws to state that during ACAC funding votes, the person requesting the funds

cannot be in the room while voting occurs.

Ms. Green moved to vote on the proposal. Ms. Staples seconded the motion.

Action: The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Storey also proposed that ACAC require a written application for any request for funds, due the Monday before the ACAC meeting when the vote would occur. Mr. Arriola put the application online, available through the AC website:
http://berkeleyschools.net/ac/?page_id=1003

Ms. Phillips observed that we can save time during ACAC meetings if we can clarify the requests beforehand.

Ms. Ference moved to vote on the proposal. Ms. Staples seconded the motion.

Action: The motion carried unanimously.

Study Skills Workshop for AC Students

Ms. Phillips introduced Lisa Miller, an AC parent and entrepreneur who runs Classroom Matters. Ms. Miller offered to donate a study skills workshop to AC in January before first semester finals. She is also willing to donate 90 minutes of a study skills session to other learning communities if there is an interest. This workshop is designed for a student and parent to attend together, because students don't always report what goes on in workshops to their parents and parents who come alone might not find students receptive to the material later. Ms. Miller said it is helpful to have a shared language around study habits. The workshop covers the what, how and when of preparing for finals. It has to be held two weeks in advance of finals because students need time for advance preparation. Ms. Miller has presented these workshops at public and private schools including King Middle School. She can handle 37 parent-student in one session. The workshop would be a donation as a community service and would not be a promotion. Ms. Miller herself would teach it or a veteran tutor.

Mr. Peltz said he had been to Classroom Matters and it was good to have a range of tutors who can answer different kinds of questions. He said he thought students would find this of interest, especially with publicity on the e-tree and through the College Career Center.

The workshop could be held from 7-8:30 in the evening in the library. The target students would be ninth and tenth graders. Ms. Green said ideally students who are identified as those who might need it most could be encouraged to attend. Ms. Phillips said we should set aside some spaces for targeted students. We could do outreach through the Parent Resource Center who connect with African American and Latino students, and BHS counselors.

Elisabeth Ross volunteered to be the parent liaison and help collect RSVPs. Ms. Phillips said she would check room availability for the first Thursday after break, January 7, 2016.

Long-Term Substitute Teacher Update

Ms. Phillips announced that Mr. Salaverry (English) has returned from parental leave. However, the ninth grade history and African American studies position is still open and she hopes to hire someone before the end of 2015. Ms. Bettendorf said her daughter felt that the first period history class did not have an organized curriculum. Ms. Phillips said the permanent substitute, Mr. Mateusiak, will take over 1, 2 and 4th period ninth grade history through December. Mr. Mateusiak will take over for Ms. Theodore when she goes on parental leave in the spring. Tasha Jackson and Amina Sheikh will also be going on leave in the spring. VP Erin Schweng is in charge of human resources and is looking into substitutes to fill these positions. One possibility is hiring student teachers completing their practicum or retired teachers for the history position.

For students who have had disruptions during first quarter, the second-quarter grade will become their semester grade.

Homework in AC Classes

As part of public comments, Ms. Staples brought up the topic of the amount of homework students are assigned, especially in science in math. She felt that there might be a confusion of academic rigor and workload as her sophomore had four hours of homework a night for two classes. She pointed out that the current science and chemistry progression means that the only choice for high-achieving students is AP Chemistry in their sophomore year. Many students turn to private tutors to help with the challenge and thus this is also an equity issue, because those who cannot afford tutors are at a disadvantage.

Ms. Ference suggested that we conduct a survey of students. Ms. Phillips reported that Berkeley High did conduct a survey of tenth-grade students concerning their ninth-grade experience. Ms. Green said that she looked at the data on teacher-student relationships in AC and was pleasantly surprised that AC students felt more supported than expected. Also students of color felt more supported than white students.

Ms. Phillips offered to bring the information that was available about the surveys to the next meeting.

Ms. Ference asked where Ms. Staples could take her concerns. Ms. Phillips suggested that the ACAC invite Glen Wolkenfeld (Science and Professional Development) to come and speak at a future meeting.

Next ACAC Meeting

Our next meeting will be on Friday, January 8, 2016, 7:30-8:35 a.m. in BHS Conference Room B in the D Building.