

## 4/8/16 Academic Choice Advisory Council (ACAC) Meeting

Apr. 8, 2016, 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
Angela Coppola	AC History Teacher	angelacoppola@berkeley.net
Tamara Friedman	BHS Design Team, Professional Development Co-Lead	tamarafriedman@berkeley.net
Hasmig Minassian	BHS Design Team, CAS History	hasmigminassian@berkeley.net
Sam Arriola	AC Webmaster	sarriola@gmail.com
Kathleen Crandall	AC Parent	kcrand1111@aol.com
Alan Dyck	AC Parent	alan@dyck.net
Catherine Ference	ACAC Parent Rep at Large	candsfer@gmail.com
Peter Kozelka	AC Parent	
Rene Kvidahl	AC Parent	
Lisa Miller	AC Parent	lisa@classroommatters.com
Candy Rupp	AC Parent	candyrupp@aol.com
Gay Pelletier	AC Parent	uangaj@paszty.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

Ms. Phillips introduced herself and asked attendees to introduce themselves. She then opened the meeting to public comments.

Christine Staples said she was thrilled with the turn out and response to the April 5 Spring Course Selection Meeting and grateful to Ms. Green and Ms. Phillips for pulling that together. She's heard from parents that they like the AC-recommended limit on AP/Honors classes (one for freshmen, two for sophomores, three for juniors and seniors) and some BIHS parents have said they would like the same policy. Ms. Phillips said that she and the AC counselors have 150 Advanced Placement/Honors Course Commitment forms to review from students who want to take more than the recommended number of advanced classes. Ms. Staples agreed it would good to have that oversight and intervention.

Peter Kozelka said that his daughter signed up for four advanced classes, and the form helped him figure out what was going on. He asked if courses are designated AP to draw students in. Ms. Phillips said no, it's because they are actually advanced placement classes and it reflects the college-level content of the course. Donna Storey said that some AP classes are year-long college classes, but others, such as AP Environmental Science, are semester-long college classes spread out over two high school semesters, and these classes aren't as overwhelming.

Another parent said that her son transferred from Oakland School of the Arts and wanted to take a math class for which he was not qualified and he was refusing to change it. Ms. Phillips said there is a period at the beginning of the school year when you can request a course change if the class is at the wrong level. Catherine Ference suggested that the parent email the counselor and copy their student with concerns, if the student won't take care of it her/himself.

Alan Dyck asked about two people coming in to Ms. Beard's second-period freshman Social Living class to ask the students how class is going. The students are uniformly not happy with the teaching in the class. Ms. Phillips said that she and OCI Coordinator David Luu are starting restorative justice practices with classes that are having larger issues, and the team started this before spring break. She invited parents to talk to her further about this after the meeting.

### **Ms. Coppola's Discussion of Recommendation Letter Challenges**

Angela Coppola suggested that Academic Choice needs a more organized program for writing college recommendation letters for students. She herself spent 60 hours of extra time writing letters last fall and is now being approached for next year's letters as well as letters in support of students' appeal to get off of college wait lists. In AC, students approach teachers, so the amount of work depends upon their requests. BIHS creates a spreadsheet with all student names. Teachers have a release day (substitute teachers are hired to cover their classes) to talk together, with junior and senior teachers consulting and sharing information about each student. In BIHS, the teachers decide who will write the recommendation, not the student. Everyone who wants a letter of recommendation gets one, and this is especially beneficial to shy students who are hesitant to ask for recommendations.

Ms. Staples said she heard from BIHS parents that students have approached teachers and been told they cannot choose two humanities teachers for their recommendations,

which was disappointing. Ms. Green said that most colleges require one letter from a humanities teacher and one from a math or science teacher. Catherine Ference wondered if it would be a good idea to give teachers a day off to write letters. Ms. Coppola said that it requires extra work to prepare for a day off, so it is preferable to have an organized process where teachers share the workload and information about the students. Students will get a better letter and those who are anxious about approaching teachers will have support. Ms. Green agreed that when a senior asks her for a letter in the fall, it would be helpful to talk to the student's junior-year teacher and be more informed. Ms. Coppola said she wanted to alert us that the AC teachers would be approaching us for funding for this. Ms. Green said they would take time in a Professional Development meeting to discuss the details.

### **Treasurer's Report**

ACAC Treasurer Rakhi Rao was unable to attend the meeting but provided copies of the latest Berkeley High Development Group's Cash Balance report as of April 1, 2016. Academic Choice has a balance of \$81,232. We brought in \$27,008 in donations this year so far.

### **Student Representatives' Report**

No student representatives were able to attend the meeting, so funding requests for this meeting would be voted on by email. Ms. Phillips said that she learned the District has funds available to pay for the graduation stoles, so the ACAC would not have to budget for that expense.

### **BHS Design Team Presentation**

Ms. Green introduced the leads of the school redesign team, Tamara Friedman and Hasmig Minassian. Ms. Friedman added that Ms. Staples is a parent representative on the design team as well.

Ms. Friedman began the presentation by saying that Berkeley High is starting from a position of strength with a good outcome for all students. However, there is room for improvement. Last spring, the school began to take a look at the level of fragmentation of the different programs and the lack of intentionality in the design. Research does not support our current structure of three small schools and two larger programs. Berkeley High wants to prepare all students for college, career and life and address the profound achievement gap. The design team was born to align the structure of Berkeley High with its goals. In particular, the system of choosing schools by lottery is problematic. For example two times as many students who could be accommodated applied to CAS last year.

Ms. Minassian described the process of the design team. The team was formed in cooperation with the principal and the teachers' union, who recommended teachers to serve on the team. Other members of the Berkeley High community include clerical workers, safety officers, the intervention team, students and parents. A total of 35 to 40 people met in two all-day meetings in August and January and then had meetings twice monthly, and four all-staff meetings were held to get feedback. The team made school visits to Oakland Tech, which has a universal 9<sup>th</sup> grade and Hillsdale in San Mateo which has a house system with 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade and 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade "looping"

(groups stay together for the first two years, then are reorganized with different students for the next two). The demographic for the latter school is different from Berkeley High's but the team found important takeaways.

The redesign would not impact current students, but would take effect with this year's 7<sup>th</sup> grade class. However, feedback from current BHS students is very important, as is feedback from current 7<sup>th</sup> grade families and students. Ms. Minassian referred us to the Design Team Overview handout, available on our website as "Design Team Handouts," for more details on outreach and the proposed timeline for decision-making. Once the team has a beefed up proposal to take to the administration, they will have a Saturday work group with the School Board, make an official report to the School Board in June and work on an implementation plan for the 2017-2018 school year. During a meeting with Superintendent Evans on April 5, he outlined his requirements: the redesign must be research-based, rigorous for all students, staff-driven, staff-approved, staff-desired and vetted in the community.

Ms. Friedman added that they are not just moving deck chairs, but taking a look at what is actually happening in the classroom. Teachers must teach to students with a wide variety of abilities, so differentiation is important as is personalization, which is the advantage of 9-10, 11-12 looping where teachers have the same students for two years. Teachers will learn to teach to all learning styles. There will be revision and redemption in grading so that students have different chances to show mastery. Anti-racist/culturally competent instruction will be emphasized and students will be asked to produce something to show mastery, such as a senior portfolio. This will replace ISB testing.

The two main proposals were outlined (see "Design Team Handouts" on the AC Governance page). Plan 1 was basically the same as our current structure, but with a universal 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The response from many was "why bother?" Proposal 1A has a universal 9<sup>th</sup> grade with 112-120 students per house, assigned for diversity. For 10<sup>th</sup> grade, students can apply to the California Partnership Academies (AHA, AMPS, CAS). The two large schools we have currently will be merged into one.

Proposal 2 eliminates all of the small learning communities as currently identified, with the best features taken from each. Students will be assigned to houses for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade, then reshuffled for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. There will be more collaboration across grade-level and inside each house.

Proposal 2A will keep the choice of AHA, AMPS or CAS and these will be chosen in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and kept separate from the rest of the school.

Advisories in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade will be part of the new design. The advisor will know and follow her/his group of students for the year. Advisories will address the academic, social and emotional needs of students. In 9<sup>th</sup> grade, study skills will be emphasized as well as the transition to high school. Lisa Miller volunteered to help with the development of advisories.

Alan Dyck said it sounded like there were many experts involved which was great, but he expected there would be objections because so many things would be going away and there would be a perceived loss. How did the design team plan to address that response and what exactly would go away? Ms. Minassian said that they would try to

keep what we currently do well, but they will look at the trade-offs and be transparent. Ms. Friedman said we would have to choose to be an IB school or an AP school and it is schizophrenic to do both. However, one possibility would be a hybrid where students could choose IB or AC as juniors. The design team is preparing to practice a non-defensive, compassionate response to the community's concerns.

Ms. Friedman and Ms. Minassian are happy to continue the conversation in person or via email at [designteam@berkeley.net](mailto:designteam@berkeley.net)

### **Macbeth Field Trip**

Ms. Green said the field trip to see *Macbeth* at the Berkeley Rep was awesome. 235 students, mostly 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders attended. She learned that a lot of kids don't go on field trips because they have a test or don't want to walk three blocks. We should keep in mind that all-grade field trips have about a 75% yield. She was happy that she heard kids explaining the play to each other. Some had never seen a professional production. She also thought the student Q&A went very well. She thanked Ms. Ference for making it happen and said they should hand out permission slips for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade Cal Shakespeare field trip earlier and add in other classes to use up all the tickets, as they did with *Macbeth*.

### **Continuation of Free Study Skills Workshops**

Ms. Miller wanted to schedule the two follow-up study skills workshops to AC students. Ms. Phillips said they could do April 26 or 27 for the first and May 17 or 18 for the second, either a Tuesday series or a Wednesday series. The workshop would take place from 7-8:30 in the library and a parent and student should attend together. The workshops would be advertised through the etree and to families that had already attended. Ms. Miller would also like to work on the fall workshop schedule so that families could plan to attend farther in advance.

### **Technology Report**

AC Webmaster Sam Arriola said that the district has decided to provide Chromebooks for all teachers, so the ACAC doesn't have to take on that responsibility. He also got permission to move the AC website to Google Sites and will migrate that over.

### **Student Surveys**

Ms. Staples said that she had 49 responses to our homework and stress survey so far. She'd heard that many people hadn't noticed the announcement about the survey in our last newsletter. Ms. Ference said she would send a stand-alone issue of the newsletter, which focuses on the survey. Ms. Staples said the majority of the responses so far were from 9<sup>th</sup> grade families. Many were saying stress levels average in the "7" range. Other SLC's at Berkeley High expressed interest in participating in such a survey and she would like to figure out how to share it with the rest of the school.

### **Next ACAC Meeting**

Our next meeting will be on Friday, May 6, 2016, 7:30-8:35 a.m. in BHS Conference Room B in the D Building.