

**10/7/16 Academic Choice Advisory Council (ACAC) Meeting**  
**October 7, 2016, 7:30-8:35AM Berkeley High School Conference Rm.**  
**G109**

**Minutes**

**In Attendance:**

<b>Who</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>E-mail address</b>
Amanda Marini	ACAC Co-Chair and AC Lead English Teacher	amandamarini@berkeley.net
Matt Carton	AC English Teacher	matthewcarton@berkeley.net
Felicia Phillips	AC Vice Principal	feliciaphillips@berkeley.net
Veronique Anxolabehere	AC Parent	anxolabehere@me.com
Caroline Bettendorf	AC Parent	crbettendorf@gmail.com
Karen Chapman	AC Parent	kechapman@comcast.net
Alan Dyck	AC Parent	alan@dyck.net
Catherine Ference	ACAC Parent Rep at Large	candsfer@gmail.com
Peter Kozelka	AC Parent	
Jodi Levin	AC Parent	jodi@sweetpickle.com
Rani Marx	AC Parent	
Lisa Miller	AC Parent	lisa@classroommatters.com
Eunice Paredes	AC Parent	eunice068@gmail.com
Elisabeth Ross	AC Parent	e@elisabethross.com
Candy Rupp	AC Parent	candyrupp@aol.com
Christine Staples	AC Parent	christineannestaples@gmail.com
Donna Storey	ACAC Secretary	donnageorgestorey@gmail.com
Hugo Wildmann	AC Parent	HLWildmann@yahoo.com

**Academic Choice lead English teacher Amanda Marini chaired this meeting. No AC student representatives have been selected yet for the current school year, so the committee was unable to vote on funding requests.**

### **Public Comments**

Rani Marx presented an issue her son faced with one of his teachers. Her son was going to be absent on a school-approved field trip, which means he would have as many days that he was absent to complete a homework assignment due that day according to school policy. The teacher told him he had to turn in the homework the day it was due and said she didn't care about school policy, that was her policy, and challenged the student to do something about it. Ms. Marx asked what a student can do in a situation like this? She said we need to address staff that does not create a positive classroom environment. (Discussion was deferred to the Student Voice agenda item).

Christine Staples said she is already hearing students complaining about homework overload. Some students, even in ninth grade, are reporting three hours of homework a night. Ms. Staples said we need to consider students' health and well-being. She also passed around a flyer encouraging voters to vote yes on measure E1, a special local tax also known as the Berkeley Schools Excellence Program (BSEP), which will provide funding for smaller classes, school libraries, music in elementary school and support for struggling students. Ms. Marini added that Proposition 55, an extension of Proposition 30, is an equally important measure on the ballot for Berkeley High and education in California. If it doesn't pass, schools will lose a big chunk of state funding.

Ms. Marx said she'd heard there was a student survey given and wanted details. Ms. Marini said a survey of the student experience was given on September 23. She said she could bring results here if parents were interested. Tamara Friedman was responsible for the survey and parents could email her for a copy ([tamarafriedman@berkeley.net](mailto:tamarafriedman@berkeley.net)).

### **Lisa Miller's Study Skills Workshops**

Last year, Lisa Miller of Classroom Matters had donated a series of three workshops for AC students on study habits, test preparation and time management. A parent and student duo attend together so they have a common understanding of the approach. Last year 20-25 families took advantage of this offer. Ms. Marini suggested that we put the first session on the schedule for early December and Ms. Miller could also announce the workshops at the Fall Information Night on October 18. Parents asked if there were resources Ms. Miller would share and she said she would make them available.

### **Report from Mr. Carton on ACAC Summer Grant**

Matt Carton reported to the ACAC about the work made possible by our grant over the summer. The sophomore World Literature team (Chernack, Theodore, Salaverry and Carton) are collaborating to make sophomore English the same across all classes. They are trying to minimize homework and maximize the use of the time in class. The readers developed for this year with the grant money have worksheets so teachers can see what the students are doing. The first paper assigned will be on the Akutagawa story "In a Grove" (the basis for the Kurosawa film *Rashomon*). The papers will be

written in class. Mr. Carton developed an AP Language and Composition prep unit for all sophomores because he believes all students should take AP Lang as juniors. The sophomore English team meets every Friday to look at data, the statistics on papers and assignments, and develop rubrics for grading. They compare evidence on how students are dealing with the material and the four teachers provide valuable, differing perspectives.

Caroline Bettendorf asked if the English teachers coordinate with the history teachers. Mr. Carton said not yet, and Ms. Marini clarified that core teachers coordinate in terms of the students they have in common, so the focus is on classroom environment but not cross-content curriculum. Mr. Carton said he would be back and report further on the progress of the sophomore English team.

### **Report from Ms. Marini on Advisory Grant**

Ms. Marini reported that she and Dagny Dingman used their grant money to develop a ninth-grade advisory program to train students to be self-sufficient in high school. She feels that advisory is working very well. AC advisory is a pilot that may be adopted school-wide. One recent assignment was for students to write a letter home to report on how the school year is going. Parents responded very positively.

### **Request for Funding for Computer Mobile Labs**

The day before the meeting, Ms. Marini was made aware of a serious shortage of computer mobile labs for AC. Four English teachers and three history teachers are all doing essays at the same time, and the current resources do not allow them to follow their lesson plan. The AC teachers are asking for approximately \$15,000 to buy mobile security carts and computers through the tech department, as outlined in the proposal she submitted the night before. This is an immediate need. (The proposal was later amended by email by Ms. Marini to include three carts and a remaining number of Chromebooks to have 35 on each cart for a total of \$17,000).

Donna Storey pointed out that we do not have a student representative and the by-laws require a student representative be present for a funding vote. She suggested we do an email vote when we have the student representatives enlisted. Other parents asked if the district could buy computers for the students and when the last computers were purchased. Ms. Phillips said that two carts were purchased in 2011 and two carts purchased this year.

Ms. Phillips suggested we put forward a motion to vote on the computers by email. Ms. Marini asked that we conclude the vote by Tuesday.

### **Vote: Email Vote on Mobile Computer Labs**

Catherine Ference moved that we hold an email vote on the funding proposal for computers and mobile computer labs for AC teachers. Ms. Marx seconded the motion, with a request that we explore alternative sources to fund this.

**Action:** The motion was carried unanimously.

### **Planning Fall Information Night (October 18)**

Ms. Phillips explained that she invited teachers from math, science, counseling, VAPA, English and history to come and speak to parents about the curriculum progression and an update on the redesign plans. The meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 18 from 7 to 8:30 pm in the Berkeley High Library. Teachers who attend will be offered a dinner voucher as set by our precedent last year. Elisabeth Ross, who provided refreshments last year, said there were many leftover snacks, so we don't need to provide a lot. Ms. Storey asked for volunteers to bring drinks and refreshments. She will follow up by email.

### **Field Trip to Berkeley Rep by Mr. Carton and Ms. Guzman**

Ms. Ference informed us that Mr. Carton and Ms. Guzman want to take their American Literature classes to see a performance of *It Can't Happen Here* at the Berkeley Rep on November 9. We will vote on the proposal by email due to the current lack of a student representative.

### **Vote: Create a Budget Subcommittee (Candy Rupp)**

As discussed at our last meeting, Candy Rupp prepared a proposal for a small budget subcommittee within the ACAC that would set a budget so that we don't have to discuss and vote on every small funding request. Many parents believe our time would be better spent on issues such as student voice. Please refer to "Attachment #1" below for the details. According to this model, only requests over \$2000 would require a discussion and vote by the ACAC. Ms. Marini agreed it would be more efficient to have a discretionary fund for teachers to use for minor expenses. Ms. Rupp said the subcommittee would need to meet before our next meeting to finalize the details. Ms. Staples suggested we approve this as a proposal at this meeting and then make a final vote after the details are settled.

Ms. Phillips clarified the fundraising process. Families give the ACAC money through the Berkeley High Development Group. As of last December \$11,000 of our money was sitting in a Berkeley Unified School District account, because the BHSDG transfers money there when we approve teacher stipends. We are now close to spending that money down because of our summer grants to teachers. Ms. Rupp asked if the BUSD fund was regularly replenished. Ms. Phillips said only when we ask the money to be transferred based on funding we approve. Ms. Staples added that if the money doesn't get spent, it sits in the account.

Ms. Marini moved that we create a provisional ACAC Budget Subcommittee. Ms. Marx seconded the motion.

**Action:** The motion was carried unanimously.

### **Student Voice Subcommittee (Rani Marx)**

Ms. Phillips said that since we had gone over time for the meeting, we could set aside 30 minutes for a discussion of student voice issues in November. Ms. Marx said it was ironic that student voice issues were once again not receiving due consideration. She requested a subcommittee meeting take place before the November meeting. Ms. Phillips said she would schedule a meeting for both the Budget and Student Voice Subcommittees before our November meeting. Ms. Marini said that we needed to have

a representative from the union so that our strategies would not result in teachers filing grievances. She recommended Matt Meyer who is the Vice President of the teachers' union. She said we need a neutral party who is not vested in AC and knows the contract.

Ms. Marx passed out two handouts, Attachment #2 BHS Administrator's Credo and Attachment #3 Student Bill of Rights Draft. A parent asked if the Dean of Students could be approached about student voice issues. Ms. Phillips said the Dean of Students managed the safety of the campus and didn't deal with matters inside the classroom.

A parent said there were intractable problems last year in a freshman math 1 classroom. A group of parents brought these problems to the teacher, administration and then to Mr. Pasarow, but the administration did not acknowledge or address the issues. A few, but not all, issues were related to the transition to Common Core. The problems continue this year and include lack of common core textbook and support materials, no direction from teacher on where to find additional practice materials, infrequent actual teaching of the material through lectures, refusal to answer student questions, students needing to hire outside tutors just to pass the class, homework not being reviewed and graded by the teacher as feedback for students, lack of practice tests, tests covering material which is significantly more difficult than students encounter in class, an unreasonable lag between tests and grades being posted on PowerSchool. The parent is unsure where to turn at this point.

Another Berkeley High parent who is a mathematician at Cal and has a student at BHS is creating a Berkeley High-specific website for Common Core math students (current freshman and sophomores) with explanations, sample problems and definitions. He started this project because his child and other students were having trouble getting information to do their homework. Also, parents were having trouble helping their students and the BHS tutoring center was not up to speed yet on the Common Core approach, so students were being sent away from this free source of assistance.

The site (<https://sites.google.com/site/bhsmathassist/home>) is organized in line with the Math 1 and Math 2 BHS math modules, and is meant to ease the transition to Common Core. The hope is that this community resource is a place that students and parents can contribute to as well, so that over time it becomes even richer and more helpful. The website address was to be included in Back To School Night math materials, but it seems many teachers did not know about it. It would be great to get the word out to families but so far Ms. Schweng won't let it be announced on the BHS etree.

Ms. Ference said she wonders if the teachers and administrators just wait for parents to time out with their complaints when their children graduate, then a new group of parents with the same complaints cycles through. It's hard not to feel we're being ignored.

Ms. Phillips said she won't make excuses, but the administration has a particular set of actions and strategies they can use with teachers. Most parents would find this toolbox woefully insufficient. The administration doesn't have unlimited power, but they are sympathetic to parent complaints. Given the box they are in, she would like to explore how they can do things differently.

**AC Webmaster**

Peter Kozelka created a teacher wish list so that AC parents can donate specific items. The wish list is available here: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/30e084eacac2aaaf58-acac> All donations from the community are very much appreciated and include items ranging from document cameras to colored pencils. Even a small donation can improve the classroom environment, so please consider a donation.

### **Next ACAC Meeting**

Our next meeting will be on Friday, November 4, 2016 at 7:30-8:35 a.m. in BHS Conference Room B in the D Building.

### **Attachment # 1**

#### **ACAC**

#### **BUDGET Process Revision 1 (10/3/2016) by Candy Rupp, AC Parent**

ACAC By Law provisions which are relevant:

1. Section VII – Treasurer has responsibility for presenting a budget in the first quarter of the new year for adoption by ACAC members
2. Section VIII – Allows for the formation of other committees as agreed to by membership
3. By laws may be amended by 2/3 vote of ACAC so long as at least 30 members are present

There is nothing explicit in the by-laws regarding the expenditure of funds for budgeted items. Current process is a request, review, present at ACAC, and all present votes to approve or disapprove. All requests are in writing and teacher requests the teacher is encouraged to attend to answer questions

#### **Suggested Revisions**

- 1) Undertake annual budget process and present budget to ACAC by the third meeting in the new school year – (by November meeting).
- 2) Create a Finance & Budget Subcommittee: this would be the group that develops the annual budget for ongoing activities of ACAC and the overall budget for special projects for the school year. The Finance & Budget Subcommittee would include:
  - a. AC VP
  - b. ACAC Treasurer
  - c. ACAC Chair
  - d. AC Lead Teacher
  - e. AC Student Rep
  - f. Up to an additional 3 at large ACAC members who volunteer (teachers, students, parents)
  - g. For meetings a quorum of 5 would be needed
- 3) This subcommittee would be charged with the following:

- a. Developing and presenting budget for review in first quarter of school year
    - i. First by ACAC Executive and ACAC VP
    - ii. Second adoption by full ACAC
  - b. Budget would need to address allocation of funds for on-going ACAC activities vs. one-time requests put forth by ACAC teachers ; some of the specific budgeted items may include:
    - i. AC Graduation
    - ii. Field Trip budget (per AC teacher, per grade level, per year)
    - iii. AC staff retreat
    - iv. AC teacher stipends
    - v. Freshman welcome
    - vi. Fall & Spring info nights
    - vii. Refreshments for meetings
  - c. Once the budget is adopted no further vote by full ACAC would be required for any of the on-going ACAC activities, and only on special teacher requests over \$2000
  - d. Treasurer with Lead Teacher and AC VP sign off would be empowered to authorize all disbursements for budgeted line items up to budgeted amount without further approval required by ACAC.
  - e. Discretionary Funds – those funds not allocated to routine ACAC budgeted items, in any given year, would be budgeted according to priorities developed by AC teachers and reviewed and accepted by the Finance & Budget Committee. Expenditures of these discretionary funds would be on an individual basis, based on receipt of teacher or student generated requests which fall under the agreed upon budget priorities. For individual expenditures in excess of \$2000 these would require approval of the full ACAC group. All other such discretionary fund requests (those under \$2000) would need to be reviewed and approved by the AC Lead Teacher, AC VP, and AC Treasurer or Chair for approval.
  - f. All expenditures from ACAC funds would require third party receipts, vendor invoices, or staffing proposals per BHS guidelines.
  - g. A deadline of April 15<sup>th</sup> would be set for these requests to be considered.
- 4) Finance & Budget would meet once a month and may convene meetings via telephone or email
- 5) Revenue, Expenditure to Budget updates to be provided by Treasurer to ACAC at regular meetings at least 3 times throughout the school year

## **Attachment #2**

### **BHS Administrator's Credo**

1. Though shalt welcome students, families, teachers, staff, and members of the community who want to voice their concerns.

2. Though shalt convey a sense of interest and enthusiasm in resolving supplicants' issues.
3. Though shalt respond to email, phone or other mechanisms of communication in a timely fashion such that supplicants may see you within 2 weeks in non-emergent situations.
4. If necessary, thou shalt delegate inquiries to another appropriate administrative person and/or delegate those tasks that interfere with these duties; if it is not possible to delegate though shalt speak with a supervisor to arrange delegation.
5. Though shalt not refuse small groups an audience.
6. Though shalt provide supplicants with a response such that they understand how you intend to resolve an issue and when.
7. The union shall not be invoked as a reason the problem cannot be resolved.
8. Though shalt hold office hours that are publicized.
9. Though shalt not ignore or deflect student/family complaints nor insist that students and families must address the teacher in question if they feel uncomfortable doing so.
10. Though shalt cultivate a culture of acceptable behavior in the classroom and act to enforce and rectify unacceptable classroom behavior in a timely fashion. Classroom visits shall not be taken as confirmation (or lack thereof) of a problem.

### **Attachment #3**

## Student Bill of Rights Draft

### **1. Teaching**

Students have the right to have a teacher who is well prepared to teach the lesson.

*This means:*

learning-oriented use of full class time

tutoring is not a requirement nor a substitute for effective teaching

exam and test results are not an indication of student failure

### **2. Grading**

Students have the right to be graded in a timely fashion.

*This means:*

transparency re: how grades are calculated

grades assigned and entered into Powerschool within one week of assignment or test

no public sharing of student grades or test information

minimum number of graded exercises and tests before the final

tests & quizzes only on materials covered in class; materials not covered can be extra credit

### **3. Classroom environment**

Students have the right to equitable and caring treatment in the classroom.

*This means:*

respect for students' right to ask questions

acceptable disciplinary procedures such that there is no public humiliation or harassment

no retaliation for feedback or complaints