

9/2/16 Academic Choice Advisory Council (ACAC) Meeting
September 2, 2016, 7:30-8:35AM Berkeley High School Conference Rm. B

Minutes

In Attendance:

Who	Role	E-mail address
Amanda Marini	ACAC Co-Chair and AC Lead English Teacher	amandamarini@berkeley.net
Amina Sheikh	ACAC Co-Chair and AC Lead History Teacher	aminasheikh@berkeley.net
Felicia Phillips	AC Vice Principal	feliciaphillips@berkeley.net
Alex Angell	AC History Teacher	currently on leave
Martha Belcher	AC Parent	mbbelcher@gmail.com
Caroline Bettendorf	AC Parent	crbettendorf@gmail.com
Lisa Cain	AC Parent	lisa@marketingu.com
Derek and Ramona Coates	AC Parents	rcnuttebuddee@yahoo.com
Kathleen Crandall	AC Parent	kcrand1111@aol.com
Sheryl Drinkwater	AC Parent	
Alan Dyck	AC Parent	alan@dyck.net
Catherine Ference	ACAC Parent Rep at Large	candsfer@gmail.com
Elena Gardella	AC Parent	e.gardella@comcast.net
Hilary Goldman	AC Parent	hilarygoldman@yahoo.com
Melanie Green	AC Parent	
Matt Harray	AC Parent	mattharray@yahoo.com
Shelley Horwitz	AC Parent	sahorwitz@comcast.net
Rachel Hurwitz	AC Parent	rehurwitz@comcast.net

Daniel Kamenetzky	AC Parent	danik67@hotmail.com
Karen Chapman King	AC Parent	kechapman@comcast.net
Peter Kozelka	AC Parent	
Susie Marcus	AC Parent	marcusdesign@sbcglobal.net
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
Bethany Schoenfeld	AC Parent	indigo9901@yahoo.com
Christine Staples	AC Parent	christineannestaples@gmail.com
Donna Storey	ACAC Secretary	donnageorgestorey@gmail.com
Manning Sutton	AC Parent	manno@yahoo.com
Adam Whyte	AC Parent	adamcwhyte@gmail.com
Hugo Wildmann	AC Parent	HLWildmann@yahoo.com

Academic Choice VP Felicia Phillips 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

Ms. Phillips introduced herself as the Vice Principal for Academic Choice. This is her second year in that position. Amanda Marini, who has changed her name from Amanda Green, is in her second year as the English lead teacher for the ACAC and has been teaching at Berkeley High for fourteen years. Amina Sheikh is the new history lead teacher on the ACAC this year. She teaches ninth-grade social studies and is in her second year teaching at Berkeley High. Ms. Phillips then invited the parents at the meeting to introduce themselves. Freshman parents were well represented.

Ms. Phillips observed that there was no ACAC student representative in attendance so we would not be able to vote on the one pending funding request for a media cart for an AC teacher. She then opened the floor to public comments.

One parent asked if the community would be notified about the status of changes in the small learning communities due to the redesign. Ms. Phillips replied that there would be small changes for next year's incoming class, the class of 2021. The day's schedule will be seven periods including an advisory period and there will be a universal ninth grade, rather than students choosing a small learning community as eighth graders. She said it will take more time to implement bigger changes in the redesign and funding considerations will mean a delay on this. She said we will hear more from the redesign team in October.

Alex Angell took the opportunity to give his comments on the redesign. He said the redesign team has done a great job reaching out to constituencies to get their input. He said AC has a stake in the redesign because one question is whether the school will continue to offer AP classes. He volunteered to be the AC teacher representative to the redesign team to advocate for keeping AP classes and invited an interested freshman parent to coordinate with him and attend redesign meetings together.

Ms. Phillips said that one important question under consideration in the redesign is whether we need both IB and AP classes and if not, which would be the chosen. Ms. Marini suggested that parents find out more about both before they make a decision. She's learned more about IB and is now feeling more favorably toward it. A parent asked if you take an IB class are you "all in for IB?" Ms. Sheikh said not all students get the diploma, but it's up in the air whether a student can only choose a few IB classes.

Guidance Counselor Issues

As part of public comments, Rani Marx noted that her son, a senior this year, had had a good relationship with his academic counselor, but she resigned over the summer without any notice to her students. Ms. Marx suggested that the administration consider informing students when a personnel change happens to ease the transition. Ms. Phillips said that two of the AC academic counselors (known in some other schools as guidance counselors) resigned over the summer, one in August. Therefore two-thirds of AC will have new college advisors this year.

Changes in ACAC in 2016-2017

Ms. Marini said that she was hoping to get more teachers involved in the ACAC this year. They have a lot to offer and she is going to encourage her colleagues to attend our meetings.

She also expressed an interest in reviewing our procedures for the budget and grant approvals. At this point, whoever is in the room can vote on an issue that may have been planned and discussed over many past meetings. Ms. Marini proposed we create a separate committee to decide on the budget like IB does. Candy Rupp offered to consult with parents and come back with ideas.

Ms. Marini mentioned that teachers really appreciated the wish list that AC parents created last year to solicit donations for specific items from the community. Teachers get \$300 each year for classroom expenses, which goes quickly, so the extra support was helpful. Peter Kozelka and Alan Dyck volunteered to take over the wish list for this year.

Ms. Marini expressed thanks for all the parents who volunteered last year and made so much happen: the graduation ceremony, wish list, field trips, Classroom Matters workshops, food for the AC teacher meetings. She invited parents to email her (amandamarini@berkeley.net) or Ms. Sheikh (aminasheikh@berkeley.net) if they have any questions or ideas about helping out. One parent mentioned that they'd like to help, but can't commit to regular volunteering. Lisa Miller suggested posting "this week's volunteer opportunities" in the AC newsletter.

AC Parent Event Before Back to School Night (September 22)

Because Berkeley High decided not to hold any welcome back event for families before school started this year, AC will hold a meet-and-greet reception for freshman parents on Back to School Night on September 22. AC teachers of freshman will be available to talk to parents. The event will take place from 5:45 to 6:45 pm, and the location is in the Berkeley Community Theater lobby. Suzy Marcus offered to help with refreshments.

Planning Fall Information Night (October 18)

Donna Storey proposed that we choose a date for the annual Fall Information Night in October. Ms. Phillips explained that this is an evening for parents to meet teachers from AC and other departments, hear more about the curriculum and an update on the redesign plans. The committee decided to hold the meeting on Tuesday, October 18 from 7 to 8:30 pm. The location is TBD, but likely in the library or College Career Center.

Treasurer's Report

ACAC Treasurer Rakhi Rao was unable to attend the meeting but she provided the latest AC Funds Report from the Berkeley High Development Group, which helps all small learning communities raise and distribute funds. Christine Staples is the co-president of the Development Group this year. Academic Choice has a balance of \$71,035. Ms. Storey said that the true total is closer to \$50,000 since we approved summer curriculum development projects and teacher retreat expenses that haven't yet been reimbursed.

Report on Class of 2016 Graduation Celebration

Elisabeth Ross, the parent coordinator of the AC graduation celebration last spring, reported on this very successful event. AC graduation celebrations had been casual affairs in the past, but last year the ACAC planned a more formal event to acknowledge student accomplishments. Approximately 210 to 220 students out of 297 attended the event with their families on June 7, 2016 in the Community Theater. Students received their graduation sashes at the ceremony. Ms. Marini said she did not anticipate how much it would mean to students. Bill Choi of Traveling Joe came with his waffle truck, and berries and cake were also served. Student and parent volunteers helped with set up and serving. It was a cold night, so the outdoor seating was not ideal, so hopefully we can hold the event inside in 2017.

Field Trips for 2016-2017

Catherine Ference was the parent coordinator for AC field trips last year. She asked the

lead teachers to let the other AC teachers know that parent volunteers are willing to help with the nitty-gritty organizational details of making a field trip happen. She explained to parents that the job requires a short period of activity such as phone calls and transportation details and then you're done, so it's a good way to help out.

Ms. Marini said she wants to push for more field trips by individual classes rather than an entire grade, which is like a military operation. A field trip accessible by walking or BART is preferable as bus transportation can be expensive. Ms. Phillips reminded parents that the school is always looking for chaperons for field trips.

AC Webmaster

Mr. Dyck, a sophomore parent, will be taking over as the webmaster for the AC website <http://ac.berkeleyschools.net/> this year. Besides upgrading the website, this job also involves handling online teacher funding requests and the teacher wish list.

Other Parent Volunteer Opportunities

Mr. Kozelka mentioned that last June we were told that the class of 2020 had a higher percentage of students who couldn't read and/or needed emotional support. He wondered what was being done about that and what parents could do to support these students. Ms. Phillips said that based on middle school assessments, Berkeley High received word that they would need to be prepared to support a double-digit number of students with extra needs. Currently there is an intervention team on campus that identifies students and recommends after-school or lunchtime support. During the AC teacher retreat in August, teachers discussed how to make students feel more comfortable in class and promote social-emotional learning to counteract anxiety and depression.

Ms. Marini added that the grade level teams are trying to be more consistent in teaching the same material to all classes. Freshman teachers will teach argument writing in January and teachers may be interested in having parents help out by tutoring students during this unit.

Next ACAC Meeting

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