

4/14/17 Academic Choice Advisory Council (ACAC) Meeting
April 14, 2017, 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
Felicia Phillips	AC Vice Principal	feliciaphillips@berkeley.net
Dan Plonsey	Math Teacher and AC Parent	danplonsey@berkeley.net
Karen Chapman	AC Parent	kechapman@comcast.net
Ramona Coates	AC Parent	rcnuttebuddee@yahoo.com
Sheryl Drinkwater	AC Parent	
Jodi Levin	AC Parent	jodi@sweetpickle.com
Rani Marx	AC Parent	
Lisa Miller	AC Parent	lisa@classroommatters.com
Elisabeth Ross	AC Parent	e@elisabethross.com
Bethany Schoenfeld	AC Parent	
Christine Staples	AC Parent	christineannestaples@gmail.com
Donna Storey	ACAC Secretary	donnageorgestorey@gmail.com

Academic Choice Vice-Principal Felicia Phillips chaired this meeting.

Public Comments

Karen Chapman said that her son's math teacher went out on maternity leave. The teacher made no mention of the upcoming event at the Open House, and the students had three substitutes in one week, which disrupted learning. Amanda Marini said that sometimes teachers have the baby early, so even if a long-term substitute is signed up, they need to fill in with temporary substitutes. Ramona Coates asked if there was support for teachers when a classroom was in chaos. Ms. Marini said there is support from lead teachers and administrators for a struggling teacher, but there is not

systematized support.

Rani Marx said that there have been problems with short- and long-term substitutes at Berkeley High for many years. Some has occurred even with advance knowledge of leave. Donna Storey worked on this issue a few years ago and had some suggestions for improvement such as having existing teachers support substitutes with lesson plans and using online resources. Ms. Marx and Ms. Storey spoke with former principals Glenchur and Pasarow about this problem, and we should bring this issue back to the attention of the administration.

Ms. Marini said it was hard to get substitutes because it's not a desirable job since it's not a permanent position. It is also hard to ask busy teachers to take on planning for substitutes. Ms. Marini spent a lot of time interviewing for her substitute when she went on maternity leave because she taught a class with specialized content—film studies. Most teachers aren't able to take the time to do that.

Ms. Marx said the idea was not that another teacher plans for the substitute, but that any packaged material can be brought into the disrupted class so that some learning can happen. Jodi Levin asked if the school could have a stable of qualified substitutes. Ms. Storey said they'd asked about that previously, but the administration said it was too expensive. Ms. Phillips said they manage well in terms of daily substitute teachers, but for long-term substitutes, it is hard to find qualified people in science, math or foreign language. Dan Plonsey said they have an excellent long-term substitute in place for Ms. Chapman's son's teacher.

Ms. Marx asked where she could bring up issues of teaching content, for example teaching world history without teaching the Holocaust. Ms. Phillips said they could discuss it after the meeting. Bethany Schoenfeld said the same class had some other issues. When the students complained that the teacher was not teaching important content, it was labeled as a discipline problem. They held restorative practice circles, but they were not successful. The teacher doesn't understand the student issues. Mr. Plonsey said it's important to talk to the teacher first. Ms. Phillips said that the restorative practices supervisor is Eddy Estrada, and this teacher called him and his deputies in to the class.

Student Voice

Ms. Phillips summarized the work done on student voice this year. Over the course of the current school year, she met with a small group of ACAC parents several times to discuss how students can raise concerns about issues in the classroom. "Student voice" in this case is not on a macro level involving students expressing political views, but rather the group spent time looking at documents related to the complaint process.

The first step is to talk directly to the teacher. Others don't get involved until there is no progress with the teacher on the issue. The counselor is the next stop for triage. Sometimes families pursue the more formal written grievance process. What hasn't happened is an exploration of how we can empower students and educate teachers more broadly about complaints.

Elisabeth Ross asked if the counselors had gone around to the freshman and sophomore classes to explain what to do when students had a problem, as had been discussed this

past winter. Ms. Phillips said there weren't special presentations, but the message was conveyed when counselors talked to students about course choices for next year. In her weekly meetings with counselors, Ms. Phillips said they typically talked about 15 students to make a plan.

Lisa Miller recalled that the student voice subcommittee had talked about making the complaint process public. Ms. Phillips said that the counselors believe the students know they are available to address problems. They wonder if putting this information out there will be problematic.

Ms. Schoenfeld had a specific student voice question—what do you do if a teacher doesn't teach? Students ask about concepts, but the teacher won't explain it. Mr. Plonsey, who is the parent of a freshman as well as a math teacher, said this issue points to a need for greater communication between parents and teachers. As a teacher he feels isolated and he thinks it would be nice to have more teachers attend ACAC meetings. His colleagues are wary of parents and administrators, and parents might not be aware of the pressures teachers face.

Math Celebration Night

Ms. Ross talked about her efforts, along with UC Berkeley math professor Zeph Landau, to meet with the math department leads to help with the transition to Common Core in math classes. They've decided to schedule a math night as an avenue for increased trust and rapport between parents and teachers. Teachers would explain Common Core and how parents can support it. Parents would be able to give written feedback and explain problems they're having. The ideal would be to have these meetings twice a year, including once in the fall to introduce Common Core to new parents.

Ms. Coates suggested that teachers, parents and students commit to a contract promising to communicate openly, so that everyone buys in. Ms. Miller wondered if the math department would consider starting the year with a neurological growth unit to show that the struggle is part of the growing process of your brain. Christine Staples observed that students have had to make a big transition between the way they have been learning math and the new curriculum.

Ms. Marini said she appreciates the value of struggle, but some kids need more scaffolding. There should be a way for students and parents to explain that they need extra support. Many of her freshmen are struggling with math. Ms. Coates said she didn't see evidence of teachers helping students if they can't figure out concepts on their own. Mr. Plonsey said there is tutoring after school on Monday through Thursday. He said math teachers are discovering that they are having some issues dealing with students who are having trouble keeping up.

Ms. Marini said there have been workshops sponsored by the teachers' union for grades K-8 where teachers gave parents tools for supporting their students with Common Core. The workshops came from the Daly City School District. Ms. Ross said she'd attended one and it was helpful.

Ms. Marx asked again—what do students, parents, teachers and administrators know about where they can go and what they can do when they have problems with math or

other classes? She suggested we have a meeting before the summer to make sure this information gets out to the community. While some of this information is available here and there, we must communicate it with more clarity and detail. Ms. Ross suggested we schedule another meeting of the student voice subcommittee with Ms. Phillips.

Treasurer's Report

Because time was running out, Treasurer Karen Chapman referred us to her financial reports. She said we would have to slow down on spending because we have only about \$4000 left to spend this year. Teachers had asked for funding for a field trip to the Shotgun Players Theater for \$3000. Ms. Marini said that was already planned for in the budget but she and Ms. Chapman would consult on new funding requests for the rest of the year. (Summary of the financial statements as of 4/14/17: Total Grants paid to date is \$26,383; Total Grants Paid, Pending Payment or Approval is \$68,620; Forecast of Ending Cash Balance for 2016-2017 is \$13,241.)

March Budget Committee Report

On Thursday, March 16, the ACAC Budget Committee held a spring meeting at 8 a.m. in G109 at Berkeley High. AC Lead Teacher Amanda Marini, Treasurer Karen Chapman, Budget Committee Member-at-Large Candy Rupp and AC Secretary Donna Storey were in attendance. Amina Sheikh joined us at the end of the meeting. The committee agreed to the following:

--We will change the categories in the AC budget to match the categories used by the Berkeley High Development Group to simplify the accounting process.

--Ms. Chapman will present an amended 2016-2017 budget and a draft of the 2017-2018 budget to the full ACAC at our April 14 meeting.

--Due to a lower amount of donations to AC thus far this year, we will put out a spring fundraising appeal. Ms. Rupp will write a draft of a fundraising letter.

--At the next ACAC meeting, the Budget Committee will review the process we put in place for grant requests and voting to remind everyone since the procedure is relatively new. (We did not have time for this).

Spring General Meeting in May

Ms. Storey said that in the past, if the spring general meeting was not advertised with a good topic to draw a crowd, attendance was minimal. Ms. Phillips said she thought a "Preview of Next Year" would be a good topic, and she was hoping to schedule the meeting during the week of May 29. We would hold elections for next year's officers at this meeting.

Ms. Staples said that AC needs to put the course selection meeting back on the calendar for next year. Ms. Storey said it would be much more helpful if that meeting were scheduled before the actual course selection happened, because in the past several years it was scheduled after the students selected their courses and parents were not happy with the timing. Ms. Ross said that she and Ms. Phillips plan to meet in May to decide on the schedule of important events for the 2017-2018 school year such as general

meetings and graduation.

Our next ACAC meeting is May 5, 2017.