

## 5/5/17 Academic Choice Advisory Council (ACAC) Meeting

May 5, 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
Caroline Bettendorf	AC Parent	crbettendorf@gmail.com
Sheryl Drinkwater	AC Parent	
Catherine Ference	ACAC Parent Rep at Large	candsfer@gmail.com
Shelley Horwitz	AC Parent	
Rani Marx	AC Parent	
Lisa Miller	AC Parent	lisa@classroommatters.com
Elisabeth Ross	AC Parent	e@elisabethross.com
Candy Rupp	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

Christine Staples announced that there would be a free showing of *The Mask You Live In*, a documentary film about young men and boys navigating America's narrow definition of masculinity, on Wednesday, May 10 in the Little Theater at Berkeley High School. (The documentary is also available on instant download on Netflix.) There will be a question and answer period with the filmmaker afterwards. The film is taught in Berkeley High Ethnic Studies classes. Rani Marx asked if they could arrange another

showing of the film in the fall. Ms. Staples said she would look into it.

Ms. Staples has a seat on the BUSD superintendent's budget advisory council and she is concerned about the budget cuts that need to be made for the 2018-2019 year. They are discussing cutting one and a half counselor positions and the position of dean of attendance. The budget will come up for full approval in January. Ms. Staples is concerned that with these cuts, it will be all the more likely that a Berkeley High student will complete four years here without ever meeting her/his counselor once. She would like every student to have a one-on-one meeting with a counselor by sophomore year, even if only to be asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" and get advice. Planning means fewer crises.

Ms. Ference asked why these cuts needed to be made. Ms. Staples replied that they are losing money because students are dropping out, they must contribute more money to pensions, and we will get less money from the state. We will find out how much less in late May.

Dan Plonsey said that state testing is coming up and he wanted to remind parents that they have a right to opt out of the testing for their students. They can read a book while other students take the test. He believes testing has damaged teaching because schools feel the need to teach to the test. Candy Rupp asked if there was an impact on the district if you opt out. Mr. Plonsey said, there is none, because students still come to school. Elisabeth Ross said there is fine print in the e-tree message about the tests informing parents they can opt out. Ms. Phillips mentioned that she worked in a school in Atlanta that was ground-zero for the test-cheating scandal that showed the harmful effects of testing.

### **Lead Teacher's Report**

Ms. Marini talked about some plans for support of AC students who were struggling. AC is trying to get a .4FTE position (two class periods) to teach one sophomore and one freshman class, each with 18 students who are getting D's and F's and don't feel connected to the school. In these classes, they will try to get the students back on track and give them a place in the school day to get support. They have enough funding for one class and will run a support class for sophomores. They are still trying for a freshman class. They already have programs like AVID and Bridge for student support, but nothing for failing students. They are trying to make equity decisions on which classes they will offer. They are considering making senior classes larger and cancelling electives like sociology that are taken by students who don't face as many challenges.

Ms. Ross asked if there was a way parents could help as in something along the lines of the Writer Coach program. Ms. Phillips said the issue was how we build trust in these students. They respond to one-on-one connection, but we're not sure how to make that happen. Catherine Ference said she works as a Writer Coach and will be the site coordinator for the program at Willard Middle School next year. She said the training is fabulous and it's a great volunteer opportunity. Ms. Ross asked if there was peer mentorship. Ms. Marini said BIHS has peer mentorship, but AC doesn't have anyone to coordinate that program. Christine wondered if AC could pilot an Ever Forward Club, which mentors young men of color in middle and high schools (an organization directed by Ashanti Branch). CAS has a group and maybe AC could have one. Ms. Marini said that Amina Sheikh, the AC co-lead teacher runs a boys' group after school.

Rani Marx said that it is hard to get data on how these programs are working, and she'd like more than anecdotal evidence. She believes we must look at data on intervention, which would be helpful in planning an effective program. Lisa Miller added that having data is useful in applying for funding. Ms. Marini replied that the support classes have data collection built in as they measure decreasing discipline incidents and increasing attendance. We have this data on the class of 2020 now.

Another issue Ms. Marini wanted to bring up was their effort to extend AC core groups so that ninth graders have three classes together with the same teacher—English, history and science—to create more community.

### **Student Voice Subcommittee**

Ms. Phillips expressed her appreciation to the Student Voice Subcommittee and their effort to give students and families information on what to do and where to go when they have a problem. The current information is generally in agreement, but there are some aspects that are at odds. Going to your counselor is the first step, but that information is not available anywhere in written form.

What needs to be done next? Everyone needs to have the same understanding of the process, and most of this falls on Ms. Phillips to implement. The parents need to monitor and support the effort. Ms. Phillips would like to add this information to the student planner, a “what do to if,” which includes consulting with your counselor. Ideally this information would also be posted in classrooms and on the e-tree. The teachers’ union (BFT) would need to be on board. Another possibility is a new club of students, run by students to assist other student when they have problems. It’s also important to shout out to teachers when things work well, so we’re not always focusing on the problems, but on the positive.

### **AC Graduation Celebration (June 7)**

Ms. Ross said they’ve created postcard invitations, which she passed out, and a poster of the same design to advertise the graduation celebration on Wednesday, June 7 at the Community Theater at 6 pm (seniors should check in at 5:30 pm). Ms. Phillips will do a robo-call to families of AC seniors to inform them about the celebration. Ms. Ross said the graduation committee still needs help on two projects: someone to put together a slide show and another person to help before or in the theater just on the day of the reception.

### **Honorarium for Lisa Miller for “Classroom Matters” Workshops**

Ms. Miller has donated popular Classroom Matters workshops seven or eight times in the past two years. Her next workshop, on May 23, is on preparing for finals. The ACAC would like to thank her for her service with an honorarium. Ms. Miller offered to donate two more workshops next fall. The ACAC would give her an honorarium of \$500 for the remaining workshops in the 2016-2017 school year. Since we haven’t submitted a request before the vote, Donna Storey will write up the request after the meeting and Ms. Phillips gave her verbal approval of the request.

**Vote:** Ms. Ference moved that we give Lisa Miller a \$500 honorarium for her Classroom Matters workshops for AC given in the spring of 2017. Caroline Bettendorf seconded

the motion.

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

### **April Budget Committee Report**

ACAC Treasurer Karen Chapman was not able to attend the meeting, but she provided a Budget/Cash & Spending Forecast and a Grant Detail Report as of 5/5/17. Ms. Phillips said that we expect to have \$16,704 left at the end of this school year. We've tried to honor the Berkeley High Development Group's request to spend down our balance to support our students and teachers. We've paid out \$26,383 in approved grants to date and \$37,977 in approved grants is pending.

### **Spring General Meeting in May**

Ms. Phillips said the window for scheduling our Spring General Meeting is the week after Memorial Day, May 30 or 31. The reason for this meeting would be to help people understand the work of the ACAC and to recruit new members for next year. Ms. Bettendorf thought it would be a good idea for our new principal, Erin Schweng, to come and talk at that meeting or an ACAC meeting. Ms. Schweng came and spoke to the BIHS parents' group and it was useful. Ms. Marx said the meeting could help AC parents understand how the ACAC can help them. Ms. Staples said she would reach out to the PTSA as they might be interested in co-hosting the event.

### **Funding for AP French Training**

Jennifer Wray, a French teacher who teaches upper-level French, will be taking over AP French now that Donatella Carta is retiring. Ms. Wray requested \$1600 to attend the AP Summer Institute in San Diego. Ms. Phillips said the District should fund this, but they've been having budget issues. Ms. Staples said if this is a long-term investment, maybe the Berkeley High Development Group could fund half of the tuition.

**Vote:** Ms. Ference moved that we approve \$1600 tuition for Ms. Wray to attend the San Diego AP Institute with the understanding she would seek \$800 from the Berkeley High Development Group. Ms. Staples seconded the motion.

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

**Our next ACAC meeting is June 2, 2017.**