

Academic Choice Fall Meeting
October 23, 2013, 7:00 – 8:00 pm BHS library

Meeting Notes

The Academic Choice Team held its fall general meeting on October 23, 2013. About 100 AC parents, teachers and students were present. Freshmen parents in particular were well represented.

Handout Package

The handout package addressed the AC website, AC course progression, Q&A on the AC AP program, the tutorial schedule, and PE waivers.

Why AC is a Great Choice at BHS

AC co-lead teacher Tim Zolezzi presented his reasons for why AC is such a great “small” school for BHS students and teachers:

- Its diverse student body
- So many different classes to choose from – lots of electives
- So many different types of learners
- Kids get the opportunity to start defining their path in life

AC Student Quinn Gaebler Speaks

Senior AC student Quinn Gaebler gave some of his thoughts on the AC experience. AC teachers connect with you on a personal level and provide lots of help. In particular, teachers helped him with freshman year issues. AC teachers really want you to do well.

His advice to freshmen: branch out. This helps you find out what you like and helps you pick the college you want to go to. AP classes can be great – but don’t take too many if this is not your thing, especially freshman and sophomore years. Know what kind of student you are and adjust accordingly.

Transition to Common Core - Math

Math teacher Philippe Henri reported that Berkeley schools are rolling out the common core program for math, starting with 7th grade this year. BHS will start the full implementation of common core math with the 9th grade in two years. The math common core puts greater emphasis on deep knowledge. Fewer topics are covered. There is an emphasis on proofs, explanations, and writing – this emphasis is already being reflected in current math courses.

The typical math sequence is geometry, algebra 2, math analysis (pre-calculus), followed by AP calculus or AP statistics in the senior year. For those less mathematically inclined the common math studies sequence is available.

Transition to Common Core – English

AC co-lead English teacher Matt Laurel explained that with common core there is a shift to more writing. Reading is more in depth – covering 2 or 3 novels, say, instead of 8 or 9. Studies have shown that students learn better if they write well – so writing is emphasized throughout common core, not just in English. Junior AP language an composition in particular will have lots of writing assignments. Students will be supported by UC “readers” who provide feedback and suggestions, and help with grading, under teacher guidance.

Transition to Common Core – History

AC co-lead history teacher Tim Zolezzi reported that common core history is quite different from the current California history standards, which focus on “discuss the impact of X on Y”. The common core focuses on skills such as document analysis, understanding bias, and historical perspectives. Classes are already incorporating more document based essays and questions.

Counseling Report

AC Support Intervention Coordinator Malhi Jasdeep , who also works at the On Campus Intervention (OCI), center reported that students should go to OCI for issues like theft, bullying, and safety. Malhi coordinates with the College Career Center for student support. AC counselor Anthony Smith told parents that counselors help students with their schedules, and point them to tutorial help. The schedule for tutors is available from the BHS website <http://bhs.berkeleyschools.net/>.

Advice to freshman parents: it is a myth that 9th grade grades don’t count – they do!

AP Courses

Economics teacher Ben Sanoff is also the AC AP Coordinator. This position is partly funded by the AC community through their donations to AC. Ben’s primary role as AP Coordinator is to encourage students to take more AP classes and to provide support for them so that they can succeed. Research has shown that students who take AP classes are better prepared for college. To meet the goal of all AC students taking at least one or two AP classes all seniors are now taking AP government, which is an AP class where all students can be successful. This has increased the diversity of students in AP classes, and the students are engaged and excited.

AP classes provide a one-point grade boost for the UC grade point average. The AP sequence is:

- 10th grade: AP chemistry – a rigorous class
- 11th grade: AP US History, AP Language and Composition, AP Chemistry, AP Biology, AP Environmental Science
- 12th grade: AP American Government (required), AP Macroeconomics AP Literature and Composition, AP Chemistry, AP Biology, AP Environmental Science, AP Physics, AP Calculus, AP Statistics

Students from UC Berkeley provide tutoring support for AP American Government **(Ben, for other AP classes?)**

AC Advisory Council (ACAC) Financial Report

ACAC Treasurer Olga Volodina gave the financial report. Each year the ACAC, a body of AC teachers, students, administrators and parents, decided which AC projects to finance. Teachers bring requests to the ACAC.

Last year parents donated \$30,000 to AC (down from \$44,000 the previous year). This money funded, among others:

- \$10,000 went to partially finance the position of Academic Support Coordinator. This position was created two years ago to provide help to AC students at risk of failing; it proved to be successful and has been renewed for the current school year.
- \$6,000 was spent to finance the UC Readers Project: UC Berkeley undergraduates are hired to read and evaluate 9th and 10th grade spring history research papers.
- \$2,800 for a tutor for AP English Language and Composition tutoring help.
- \$3,500 for AP US History tutoring help.
- \$1,300 for teacher professional development – summer training for AP history classes
- \$1,200 for a field trip – 163 students attended Electra at the San Francisco American Conservatory Theater
- \$4,300 for the AC Commencement, which included a sash for every senior.

Total expenses were \$31,000.

This year we hope to raise \$50,000 for planned expenditures:

- \$20,000 to partially finance the position of AP Coordinator
- \$10,000 to partially finance the ongoing position of Academic Support Coordinator.
- \$6,000 to finance the UC Readers Project
- \$4,000 to finance the AP language tutors
- \$3,000 for classroom support and field trips

- \$2,000 for professional development
- \$5,000 for the AC Commencement

If you wish to donate to AC to support these programs please send a check to:

AC Fundraising Coordinator Hilary Hoynes
1061 Miller Avenue,
Berkeley, CA 94708.

Make checks payable to BHS Development Group – and write “Academic Choice” in the notes section. Thanks for your ongoing support!

AC Academic Development Teaching Assistant

Erica Gratton is the AC Academic Development teaching assistant. She serves as a bridge between Jessie Luxford’s special needs 9th grade students and their teachers, provides individual tutoring, and provides mentoring in the skills needed to be successful at BHS as well as at college and life. She teaches study skills. ACAC pays for this position.

Questions and Answers

The meeting ended with teachers and counselors being available for small group discussions with parents who had questions.

Thanks to everyone who came to our very successful AC fall meeting. We hope to see you at the spring meeting.