

Academic Choice Spring Meeting
February 25, 2014, 7:00 – 8:00 pm BHS library

Meeting Notes

The Academic Choice Team held its spring general meeting on February 25, 2014. About 75 AC parents, teachers, and students were present; the quorum of 30 needed for voting was therefore met. AC Lead and history teacher Tim Zolezzi opened the meeting which was focused on helping parents and students choose courses for the 2014/2015 school year.

Matt Laurel – AC English

Matt Laurel is one of the two AC Lead Teachers; he teaches English. The new Common Core standards for English emphasize depth over breadth. We will therefore read fewer books, but go deeper into the books we do read. There will be more writing, especially constructive writing. AP Language and Composition is an excellent choice to prepare students for college level writing and for communication skills in general.

Mike Weitz – AC Math

Mike Weitz is the math team lead and has 9th grade AC students this year. The typical math sequence is spelled out in the course catalog. The Math Studies sequence is designed for students who struggled with Algebra 2. Students can test into honors – the tests are Monday, April 14 with sign-ups in late March.

Calculus AB is equivalent to one semester of college level calculus. Calculus BC is equivalent to an entire year of college level calculus. AP Statistics is useful for many disciplines.

Ben Sanoff – Representing AC Science

Economics and social studies teacher Ben Sanoff spoke for Science lead teacher Evy Kavalier. The typical science sequence is spelled out in the course catalog. AC 10th graders usually choose between “regular” chemistry and AP chemistry. The biotechnology program is available to juniors and seniors and gives students opportunities to do internships.

Alex Angel - Thoughts on Selecting Courses

AC social studies teacher Alex Angel provided tips on what to think about when making course selections:

- How will your transcript appear to the colleges you'd like to apply to?
- What are you interested in?
- What is required to graduate? (This is spelled out in the course catalog.)

- College evaluators will look at the level of rigor in the courses you have taken.
- Consider the larger interests in your life.
- Many universities look for abilities in math and science.
- If you are taking only one AP course in your junior year I recommend ALP Language and Composition.
- Electives: there are lots of them. Be balanced – find time for the arts. Consider taking a computer programming class.

Student Perspectives

AC senior Sebastian Moraga is taking AP Computer Science. He took 3 APs in each of his junior and senior years and isn't sure he would do that again. He isn't very interested in science so regrets having taken AP Environmental Science. His advice is to follow your interests – the main thing is to apply yourself and show that you are learning. Take advantage of Berkeley High's great teachers.

AC senior Evelyn Enciso recommends AP Language and Composition – it made her writing better. She took 4 APs her junior year and liked doing that because she was with motivated students. A downside was that she didn't have much time for herself since AP classes require a lot of studying. These classes are taught at a faster pace than non AP classes. She also pointed out that senior year is just as hard as junior year.

AC senior Haina Ina took AP chemistry her sophomore year – it was a lot of work. Her advice is to not take an AP in topics that don't interest you. Make sure you have time for other things.

Ben Sanoff - AP Classes for all Juniors and Seniors in 2014/2015

AC AP Coordinator (and social studies / economics teacher) Ben Sanoff thanked the AC Advisory Council for partially funding his AP coordination position. Traditionally only certain students took AP classes; this segregated students into two groups. AC's goal is to increase the number of students taking one or two AP classes in each of their junior and senior years. This will result in more heterogeneous and inclusive classrooms.

Following the success of all AC seniors taking AP Government, AC will require that juniors take at least one AP class starting with the 2014/2015 school year. It is recommended that they take one of AP Language and Composition, AP US History or AP Environmental Science. There will be additional support for these three AP classes, including an AP Scholars program for students with the most need, and study groups led by UC Berkeley students (assuming there is enough funding for these programs).

Seniors will continue to take AP Government in 2014/2015.

Vote for ACAC Parent Representatives

Four parents ran for positions on the 2014/2015 AC Advisory Council: Donna Storey for secretary, Rakhi Rao for treasurer, Jeremy Thorner and Johanna Reneke for at large. They were elected unanimously.