



**Academic Choice General Meeting Minutes – 10/28/08**

**Speakers**

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**INTRODUCTIONS**

- Maggie Heredia-Peltz: Vice Principal, AC Administrator, ACAC Member
- Irma Parker: Parent Resource Office (With Simon Tiles-not present)
- Alex Angell: Teacher, AC History, Teacher-Parent Liaison, ACAC Member
- Sherene Randle: Co-Lead Teacher of AC, AC English, ACAC Member
- Jane Wise: Parent, ACAC Member, Teacher-Admin liaison, BHSDG
- Jon Marley: Parent, ACAC Member, Fundraising, Outreach, School Governance
- Kate Spohr: Parent, ACAC Member, Parent Coordinator, Website, not present
- Lawrence Grown: Parent, ACAC Secretary, Events
- Karen Meryash: Parent, ACAC Member, Student Support, Events
- Ali Kashani: Parent, AC Treasurer
- Janet Delaney: Parent, ACAC Member, Events (not present)

**MINUTES**

**7:10 Jane Wise: Welcome, Introduction**

- ACAC is a grassroots run organization.
- Parent involvement has always been integral to our success.
- Please make your voice heard.
- AC is working on common goals with BIHS.
- Please get involved.

**7:15 Maggie Heredia Peltz, AC’s Vice Principal**

- Though we started the year short of staff, all teaching positions have been filled with one exception, a part time position working with Tim Moellering and we have an A+ candidate, pending final approvals.
- Feel free to email Maggie with any administrative concerns.

We are working on student support with staff members Christina Mitchell and Kristen Glenchur.

If you have Student-Teacher issues: Please email or contact the Teacher first.

If you get no response within 48 hrs, email again and cc Maggie.

Maggie will make sure the teacher emails back.

If you aren't able to work out the issue via email,

please set up a face to face meeting with the teacher.

If no progress is made, ask for a meeting with Maggie.

Maggie also welcomes students to drop by her office any time to say hello so she can get to know them.

### **7:22 Irma Parker**

The parent resource office is upstairs, just outside the library, Room D224.

Irma and Simon are available to help with any parent issues,

and to help connect with underserved communities.

Feel free to call her at 644.8524.

### **7:24: Alex Angell**

HISTORY OF ACADEMIC CHOICE:

Berkeley High hasn't always been up to the current standards of academic excellence.

AC was conceived by a small group of parents 7 or 8 years ago, to meet the need for rigorous academics. The Academic Choice program as it now stands was approved by the School Board 4 years ago.

Achievements: The program has been successful. It provides both student and teacher accountability, supports AP classes, supports the lottery to reflect the demographics of the community, provides student support resources and tutorials for the success of all students.

But AC is a work in progress.

Principal Jim Slemp is committed to the principles of choice.

Threats to the continued success of AC:

Problems with the master schedule and teacher shortages happen year after year.

We are now 3 years into a new curriculum that may be serving all students well.

We want to protect this stability from major renovations.

The BUSD school board election could affect the existence of AC

We may need to be vigilant, advocating to the school board to support AC

Our votes will be counted!

Mark Twain: "History doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme."

### **7:35: Sherene Randle**

Sherene is co-lead teacher of AC with Matt Carton

Sherene has been teaching English at BHS for 3 years

AC's original RFA charges us to provide a rigorous pre-college academic curriculum to every child.

The 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade program is rigorous enough to give choices in the upper grades with a variety of content, all with high rigor.

Sherene and Ben Sanoff are working with teachers on Professional Development:

Differentiated instruction: (please read the full definition on line)

[keeping all students engaged by providing opportunities for all kinds of learners]

Best Practices: sharing successful techniques and strategies that work.

Informal vertical teams: getting more and less experienced teachers together

Spiraling curriculum: revisiting topics each year in greater depth

Open classroom culture: colleagues are comfortable having other teachers sit in their class

Ben and Sherene spend a lot of their free time in classrooms observing, helping, mentoring.

Doug Powers (A highly respected teacher who is retiring) paraphrased: The political issues that come up have little to do with the actual task of teaching- but teachers are actually giving a quality education regardless of the politics.

On November 3rd, 4th, and 5th, the High School Program Design Team will be meeting to create an updated plan for Berkeley High.

email Sherene with any questions about the plan

**7:40: Kate Spohr , Parent Coordinator**

We, as a parent group, by working together make our big school smaller.

Kate is here to help, contact her with any questions or comments.

She has been contacted by many unhappy parents and students this year about schedules and lack of teachers.

We are working to assure predictable scheduling in the future, but we may need to make our voices heard.

During times of change, we need each other more.

Parent leadership will be getting out to the community any information about proposed changes as soon as that becomes available.

We'll be in touch.

**7:45: Jon Marley**

AC is actually only English and History, but we work with other departments as much as we can

We are proposing some changes to the by-laws, as posted on the website, unfortunately we are short on photocopies here at this meeting

Background: The bylaws were originally set up empower a group of 15 parents to form a PLC Parent Leadership Committee. That group has never been formally organized, though we have had 5 elected parent members on the ACAC (Academic Choice Advisory Council.) The changes we are proposing to the bylaws are to empower the larger group with oversight of the fundraising budget. That power will give the group a greater purpose and a reason to meet. That body is mandated to be a diverse group with representatives from each of the 4 grade levels, and the various demographic groups of our community. We feel this body will be a welcoming entry point to parent leadership at BHS, offering positions with importance

but less time commitment than the ACAC requires. The proposal is that PLC Representatives to the ACAC will be elected at the Spring AC General Meeting, giving time for incoming parents to get acclimated before committing to the ACAC. Newly elected members will have the Spring and Summer to gain experience so that in the Fall they can start the year fully up to speed.

The 4 main changes proposed are the following:

1. Move the ACAC election to the spring AC General Meeting.
2. Empower the PLC to meet at least quarterly and have fundraising budget oversight.
3. Allow the Parent Coordinator to NOT chair the PLC. (That job is already rather large.)
4. Add another position on the ACAC for the Student Support Coordinator.

VOTE: By a show of hands, 67 votes approved the amendments to the bylaws, 10 abstained, therefore the amended By-Laws are adopted as proposed.

8:05 The Academic Choice Income and Expense Summary  
for 2008-2009 Projected Year to Date

was handed out (A link will be provided here)

Jon made a Plea for parent donations, including the importance of new computer labs

8:10:Lawrence Grown

What's Up With College? Night will be coming up in January, probably Jan 8<sup>th</sup>

This is a popular event where a panel of recent BHS graduates tells the audience what it is like to actually be in college.

It is eye opening for current BHS students and parents alike.

A second panel of parents of college students then take the floor for an audience of BHS parents.

AC Gala / Jazz It Up / Spring Fling

In lieu of the AC Spring Fundraiser, we are joining forces with Berkeley High Live this year, which will be held on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2009 approximately, and will raise funds for all BHS programs and schools.

AC will hold a Community Celebration later in the Spring, possibly in May.

We intend this to be a grass roots event and we will want community input on what you'd like this to look like. There may be a small fundraising aspect to cover costs and add an element of fun. (Raffle)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

WHAT IS ADVISORY? Alex Angell, Jon Marley

Advisory is a class where one teacher meets with a small group of students with the intention of helping them on broad issues. The teacher will get to know those students and will be able to check in with them regularly on academic and personal issues. Sherene Randle is working on an academic curriculum including organizational and study skills. The proposal is currently 18-20 students per teacher for one weekly session of 90 minutes, or

two sessions of 45 minutes.

Many successful urban high schools have advisory programs.

Incorporating an advisory program at BHS has been discussed for a few years without successful implementation yet. There are many impediments. For example, contractual obligations that teachers need to be compensated for extra time teaching. Or, they will have to compress their curriculum to make time for advisory. There are also physical space limitations-currently all rooms are full with 30+ students, so where would advisories of 18-20 students physically fit?

In order to fit advisories into the daily/weekly schedule, and for other curricular reasons, some alternative schedules will be considered by the Design Team.

#### BLOCK SCHEDULE:

One extreme: 7 or 8 identical short periods every day, all year.

Other extreme: One subject taught intensively for 3 weeks, then on to the next subject.

(THIS IS NOT UNDER DISCUSSION-OFFERED HERE FOR EXAMPLE ONLY)

A 4 x 4 block schedule is where 3 or 4 subjects are taught in longer periods in each semester.

A modified block schedule could be as simple as allowing one subject to meet for 2 consecutive periods in one day but not at all on the next day.

#### DESIGN TEAM PROCESS

As Sherene noted, the On November 3rd, 4th, and 5th, the High School Program Design Team will be meeting to create an updated plan for Berkeley High.

On November 18 the plan will be presented to the SGC (School Governance Council)

The plan will be presented to the community in a series of meetings:

St. Joseph the Worker, St. Paul's Church, and here at BHS

The plan and community comments will go back to the SGC where it may be amended.

The School Board will have the final approval of the plan, likely on ?? date.

*Next AC General Meeting Scheduled for May 2009.*

*minutes submitted by Lawrence Grown, ACAC Secretary*