

2/5/16 Academic Choice Advisory Council (ACAC) Meeting
Feb. 5, 2016, 7:30-8:35AM Berkeley High School Conference Room B

Minutes

In Attendance:

Who	Role	E-mail address
Tim Zolezzi	AC Co-Chair and AC Lead History Teacher	timothyzolezzi@berkeley.net
Felicia Phillips	AC Vice Principal	feliciaphillips@berkeley.net
Sam Arriola	AC Webmaster	sarriola@gmail.com
Caroline Bettendorf	AC Parent	crbettendorf@gmail.com
Alan Dyck	AC Parent	alan@dyck.net
Catherine Ference	AC Parent	candsfer@gmail.com
Suzanne Marr	AC Parent	suzannemarr@yahoo.com
Lisa Miller	AC Parent	lisa@classroommatters.com
Rakhi Rao	ACAC Treasurer	rakhiprao@gmail.com
Johanna Reneke	ACAC Parent Rep at Large	j.reneke@gmail.com
Elisabeth Ross	AC Parent	e@elisabethross.com
Candy Rupp	AC Parent	candyrupp@aol.com
Christine Staples	AC Parent	christineannestaples@gmail.com
Donna Storey	ACAC Secretary	donnageorgestorey@gmail.com
Deborah Thompson	AC Parent	debnz@aol.com

Academic Choice VP Felicia Phillips chaired this meeting.

Public Comments

Ms. Phillips introduced Tim Zolezzi, the history half of AC teacher leadership, followed by self-introductions of the other attendees. Ms. Phillips said the Mr. Zolezzi was the co-architect of the new Social Living/Ethnic Studies course for freshmen.

Caroline Bettendorf asked for volunteers to help her cater the AC teacher meeting on the morning of Monday, February 8.

Ms. Phillips reported on parent feedback she'd heard at the Open House on February 4. Some parents reported on the stress their students were experiencing related to homework. Others were disappointed that some teachers were not present at the Open House and asked if there was a better way to communicate teacher absences.

Lisa Miller asked if long-term substitutes or new teachers were connected to PowerSchool. Ms. Phillips said yes, these teachers are connected and you can communicate with them through PowerSchool, but student teachers don't have access as they are not employed by the district. She said the administration would make sure student teacher contact information is shared.

Alan Dyck commented that the ten-minute sessions with each individual teacher went so quickly, parents had no time to figure out if they had questions. Christine Staples pointed out that in elementary school, parents have one-half-hour teacher conferences; in middle school they get fifteen minutes with core teachers; but in high school they only have ten minutes in a larger group. Students could benefit from more guidance in course selection, more individual feedback, and more coordination with their counselors.

Ms. Phillips said these were relevant concerns. Mr. Zolezzi pointed out that Berkeley High used to have an advisory program where students met once a week or once every other week with their advisory teacher to talk about course selection, careers, and stress management. This was also a way for students to talk to their advisor about problems with other teachers. However, this program was cancelled. It would be nice to have one-on-one parent conferences with teachers but time is the issue. Ms. Staples asked if this would be possible if parents came up with funding. Mr. Zolezzi said requiring teachers to stay after school would be complicated.

Ms. Staples asked if the district could schedule days off for conferences in high school. Ms. Phillips said it might be possible to arrange this for ninth and tenth grade students with their English and history teachers, perhaps using minimum days to accommodate conferences. She said since Berkeley High doesn't have a homeroom structure, this does present challenges. Also, parents commented that teachers seldom fill in comments on report cards. Ms. Phillips said it is reasonable to discuss ways to give feedback.

As for course selection, counselors gather with students in March in English classes to discuss the coming year. At this time of year there are many requests from juniors and seniors to drop classes and ideally this could be minimized with proper course selection. Ms. Phillips will be reviewing all AC students' course selections, in particular for too many AP's. The College Board now has an AP Potential metric based on PSAT scores and she will be using this to proactively address the AP issues, both to encourage students who should take them and help other students limit the burden on their schedules.

Donna Storey suggested that we hold the AC General Spring Meeting before course selection takes place so that parents can ask teachers and counselors about classes. Ms. Phillips said that currently the priority is on events for incoming eighth-graders, but that this is a good idea. Would the ACAC be willing to fund stipends for teachers who

attend the informational meeting? The ACAC parents in attendance all agreed, informally, that they would support funding stipends. Ms. Phillips said that she would share the course selection thoughts with AC counselors.

Deborah Thompson said that there is a lack of official channels of information for parents. Her student's teacher suggested that she go to Berkeley Parents Network for advice rather than the school. Some of the counselors are new and not very knowledgeable. She feels she would like to know more from the school. Ms. Phillips agreed these were good points. Candy Rupp suggested that the course information meeting happen soon for it to be worthwhile for families.

Rakhi Rao asked if PSAT scores were finally available for Berkeley High students. Ms. Phillips apologized for the delay and said there were two reasons. The first is that the College Board delayed the release of the scores nation-wide. However, there was an additional hold on Berkeley High's scores because of an irregularity with one test. The school addressed this, but scores were delayed for 10 more days. Berkeley High now has the data. Juniors can use their ID and password, but sophomores cannot. Ms. Staples said that two sophomores were able to access their scores last week. Ms. Phillips said the administration has the access codes and the paper score reports will be distributed in second period next week.

Treasurer's Report

ACAC Treasurer Rakhi Rao distributed the latest Statement of Activities as of February 1, 2016. Academic Choice has a balance of \$81,359. We brought in \$26,650 in donations this year so far, which is \$650 more than our budgeted goal.

Ms. Rao again thanked the AC newsletter editors for getting the word out about fundraising and encouraged them to keep up the good work. She suggested that we try to increase business contributions and keep an eye on expenditures.

Technology Report

AC Webmaster Sam Arriola led a discussion of technology issues for AC. Ms. Phillips recapped tech issues from our last meeting—our funding of half the price of a new computer for Phil Halpern's video production class and the fact that BUSD Superintendent Donald Evans did not want to provide laptops to teachers with district funds.

Mr. Arriola added that an AC teacher requested a used laptop on our Wish List on Signup Genius and received one. Since then two more teachers have requested a new Windows laptop. In an optimal world, all teachers would be provided a laptop by the school, however the budget doesn't allow that. From a techie perspective, providing all teachers with a Chromebook is a better option. A Mac laptop costs as much as four Chromebooks. He would like to explore piloting Chromebooks for AC teachers. We know that teachers prefer a Mac or a PC, but Chromebook technology has evolved. A Chromebook only runs a browser to get to the Internet, but teachers can see the value of all applications being "web-ified." If we buy three or four for the pilot program, it will only cost \$150 to \$200 per Chromebook. Mr. Arriola also believes that providing all freshmen with Chromebooks will help close the achievement gap and the digital divide. The gender gap would also be addressed by helping girls become more comfortable

with computers. Moreover, Chromebooks are like a Zipcar, they can be shared.

Ms. Rao reminded us that the Berkeley High Development Group funds laptops and could be a place to pilot the program. Mr. Dyck suggested that such a program would need preliminary assessment in the form of a survey of AC teachers to learn what they need the laptop for as some might have projects that require Macs or PC's.

Mr. Arriola asked his student's teachers at the Open House if they use a laptop in class. They all said yes, but there is also a PC in each classroom. There are other needs, but the Chromebook could be the baseline.

Mr. Zolezzi said a needs assessment is a good idea. He uses his laptop to format handouts, draft lesson plans and give lecture presentations. One problem with transitioning to Chromebook would be that teachers would need to transfer all documents to Google docs, which would be difficult, but not impossible. Teachers are attached to their own preferred device, so perhaps the ACAC could offer them either a Chromebook or a stipend to use toward a different purchase.

Mr. Dyck asked how teachers would get reimbursed. Ms. Phillips reminded us that the Berkeley High Development Group allots each teacher \$250 for supplies per year.

Mr. Arriola said that for an extra \$25 Chromebooks can be attached to Google for Education and if the device is lost or stolen, it can be managed to put up a "lost or stolen, please return to" screen.

Ms. Phillips said that there are currently 600 to 700 computers on campus for general computing use. Teachers use the classroom desktop for attendance, not teaching, because they aren't convenient for that.

Mr. Arriola and other interested parents will follow up on a teacher needs assessment.

Habits of Successful Students Workshop

Elisabeth Ross said that 22 students had signed up for the free Classroom Matters workshop through the AC announcement sent to families of freshmen and sophomores. The workshop will take place on Tuesday, February 9 at 7pm in the Berkeley High Library. Ms. Ross will provide refreshments. Lisa Miller, the workshop leader, suggested water and fruit and perhaps cheese and crackers and nuts.

Ms. Phillips said the school was holding spots for targeted students and was asking the counselors to do outreach. Ms. Miller said if any teachers were interested, she would invite them to attend as part of the group. Mr. Zolezzi said this might be a good opportunity for new teachers. Ms. Ross asked if we could extend the invitation to students in other SLCs or if she wanted to schedule another workshop for later. Ms. Miller said ideally the workshop consists of three different meetings on separate topics—habits of successful students, time management and test preparation.

Mr. Dyck said his son attended the first of the workshops elsewhere and said he "knew it all already." Mr. Dyck suggested that Ms. Miller give a sense of the goal of each workshop. Ms. Miller said the goal is to start a conversation between student and adult. The struggle is the implementation, not the concept. When both parent and student

attend, they can dialogue with a common understanding.

Student Surveys

Ms. Staples agreed to chair the subcommittee on surveys on homework load and use of tutoring. Mr. Zolezzi said that all history teachers in AC have given their students surveys. Although this can't be required according to the teachers' contract, teachers were strongly encouraged to do so. All students in grades 9-12 have been given the surveys.

Next ACAC Meeting

Our next meeting will be on Friday, March 4, 2016, 7:30-8:35 a.m. in BHS Conference Room B in the D Building.