

## 10/18/16 Academic Choice Fall Information Night

October 18, 2016, 7:00-8:30 PM, Berkeley High School Library

### Meeting Notes

The Academic Choice team held its Fall Information Night on October 18, 2016. AC Vice Principal, Felicia Phillips led the meeting. Amanda Marini and Amina Sheikh represented the AC teachers with Nakia Baird representing the Math Department. Brianna Brooks spoke for the AC College Counselors. Six AC Advisory Council parents were also in attendance along with approximately 70 AC parents. Parents of freshmen were particularly well represented. The AC Advisory Council provided cookies, fruit, and water for refreshments.

#### Handout Package:

A handout package was provided that included information on the a-g requirements, counselor information, student schedule planning, AP requirements and support, the teacher tutorial schedule, an invitation to participate in the Academic Choice Advisory Council, information on a grassroots parent website with materials to support Math Core students (<https://sites.google.com/site/bhsmathassist/home>), and a fundraising appeal for Academic Choice. The packet is available as a separate file on the AC Governance page.

The speakers were as follows:

#### AC Vice Principal Felicia Phillips

Felicia Phillips ([feliciaphillips@berkeley.net](mailto:feliciaphillips@berkeley.net)) introduced herself as the Vice Principal for AC (Academic Choice). This is her second year at Berkeley High and she finds it an amazing place to work. She is happy to have interacted with so many parents here in various capacities. She provided an overview of tonight's program, which would give parents a chance to hear from AC faculty, the counseling department and AC Advisory Council parents. She invited parents to write down questions on the index cards that were available at every table and said that the cards would be collected and the questions answered at the end of the meeting.

Ms. Phillips mentioned how to access our online resources for the AC community: go to the Berkeley High School general website at <http://bhs.berkeleyschools.net/>; click on "Communities" on the menu header and choose "Academic Choice" on the drop-down menu. From here you can access our website or go directly to: <http://ac.berkeleyschools.net/>

Our website provides information about AC including back copies of our newsletter and minutes from our community meets on the AC Governance page: <http://berkeleyschools.net/ac/governance-acronyms/>

1,200 students at Berkeley High are in AC, which is 40% of the student body. Berkeley High is planning a campus-wide redesign, which will reconfigure the small learning community system, but these changes won't impact students currently at Berkeley High. The earliest class affected will be the class of 2022.

**AC English Department Lead Teacher Amanda Marini ([amandamarini@berkeley.net](mailto:amandamarini@berkeley.net)) on the Fall Night Information Packet**

Amanda Marini (who changed her name from Green since last year) introduced herself as the teacher leader for AC English. She first reviewed the Academic Choice Fall 2016 Information Night Packet. Ms. Marini said most of this information was also available online or in the student planner.

The first page outlines the UC/CSU a-g requirements. If your student is interested in a college in the University of California or California State University system, s/he will need to have completed these courses to apply. She recommends you work with your student early in his/her high school career to make sure they understand the requirements.

The next page is a list of counselors who serve AC students. Our academic counselors are Juan Rodriguez (A-Gh) and Debra Clark (Gi-Ng) who are new to AC this year. Terrance Christianson (Nh-Z) joined the AC counseling team last year. Emam Nashwa and Malhi Jaseep are Intervention Counselors. The AC college counselors for eleventh and twelfth grades are Melanie Aguas (A-Sm) and Angela Price (Sn-Z). They help students with the college application process. Any senior who wants an appointment with her/his college counselor can sign up now. Brianna Brooks is our new college counselor for ninth and tenth grades and we are very excited to have her on board to help prepare underclassmen for college. Sophina Jones is our McKinney-Vento Counselor who works with homeless students.

On the next page in the packet is an individualized learning plan worksheet with information on AP course offerings. Ms. Marini recommends students look at the courses they are interested in and consider how they fulfill a-g requirements for long-term planning. Students can bring this sheet to their academic counselors to discuss options. Students are not allowed to take more than three AP classes per year without special permission from Ms. Phillips to avoid an overly stressful course load.

Ms. Marini invited parents to attend AC Advisory Council meetings on the first Friday of each month from 7:30-8:35 **am** in Conference Room B of the D Building. During public comments, any parent can ask questions or talk about issues of concern. All parents are also invited to help out with AC parent volunteering such as field trip chaperones and teacher appreciation events. Parents can also propose items for the meeting agenda up to a week in advance by contacting the ACAC Secretary, Donna Storey at [donnageorgestorey@gmail.com](mailto:donnageorgestorey@gmail.com)

Finally, Ms. Marini announced there would be a special community-building breakfast at the next Professional Development (PD) day on November 7, which is a day off for students. She wanted to invite the parent community to contribute food and beverages for the teachers. If a parent is interested in doing so, please contact Ms. Marini by email: [amandamarini@berkeley.net](mailto:amandamarini@berkeley.net)

**AC English Department Course Progression**

Ms. Marini then described the English department course progression. Courses for freshman and sophomore year are fixed, but students have more choices for junior and senior years.

In ninth-grade English students are exposed to different kinds of writing. This year the teachers are working together to align the curriculum.

Tenth-grade English is World Literature. They have a great team this year that is also meeting regularly to align curriculum. They end the year with an AP Language and Composition preparation unit.

Eleventh-graders start to have options. In addition to the two courses listed in the packet under “Academic Choice Progression”—American Literature and AP Language and Composition—students can take African American Literature or Chicano-Latino Literature for “b” credit (not “g” credit as listed).

Twelfth-grade English offers a range of choices including Reading and Writing the Short Story, World of Media, which is a film theory class, AP Language and Literature, African American Literature and Chicano-Latino Literature.

The English department encourages all juniors to take AP Language and Composition, which is excellent preparation for college writing. In the junior-year African-American Literature, they are teaching the AP Language and Composition curriculum with an American literature focus.

### **AC History Department Lead Teacher Amina Sheikh ([aminasheikh@berkeley.net](mailto:aminasheikh@berkeley.net))**

Amina Sheikh introduced herself as the teacher leader for AC History. She teaches ninth-grade Ethnic Studies classes.

In ninth grade students take one semester of Ethnic Studies, which focuses on themes of race, culture and immigration. The second semester focuses on gender studies.

In tenth grade, students take World History and Cultures. This year’s team of teachers is focusing on making the curriculum less Euro-centric.

In eleventh grade, students can choose between US History, AP US History or African American History.

In twelfth grade, all students are required to take AP US Government and either Economics or AP Economics to graduate. There are also a variety of electives such as Politics and Power, Anthropology, Sociology and Psychology.

### **Math Department Lead Teacher Nakia Baird ([nakiabaird@berkeley.net](mailto:nakiabaird@berkeley.net))**

Nakia Baird outlined the sequencing for math at Berkeley High. Incoming students now take Math 1 or Advanced Math 1. The sequence continues with Math 2 and 3, which prepare students for AP Statistics, AB Calculus or Math Studies. The Advanced Math sequence prepares students for BC Calculus. The new math core sequence covers the

same material as the traditional Geometry, Algebra II and Math Analysis classes, but in a different order.

Thanks to funds from the Berkeley High Development Group, there is an after-school Tutoring Lab for Math 1 and Math 2 students. The Tutoring Labs are held Monday through Thursday after school. The Math 1 Lab takes place in room G-210A. The Math 2 Lab is held in H-306. Students work with teachers and their peers. The teachers who are teaching the respective classes rotate over the week, so that students might work with their own teacher or build a relationship with another teacher who they may have in the future. Mr. Baird encouraged parents to mention the Math Lab to their students. If you have any further questions, Mr. Baird invited parents to email him.

### **Ninth- and Tenth-Grade College Counselor Brianna Brooks** ([briannabrooks@berkeley.net](mailto:briannabrooks@berkeley.net))

Brianna Brooks is the new college advisor for ninth and tenth graders. Her goal is to ease underclassmen into the process of considering and applying to college. She will spend the year making presentations to classes and getting to know the students. It is important to start the conversation early in a student's high school career and catch them early so they are in good shape to apply to college as seniors. She invited parents to send her an email with questions, and if a parent feels his/her child needs more support, please send the student her way.

Ms. Brooks also spoke about other services provided by the College Career Center. The staff provides a lot of support to juniors and seniors as they apply to colleges. The Berkeley High e-tree announces college visits and workshops.

### **Health Center Services**

Ms. Phillips reminded parents of an important resource, the on-campus Health Center. It is open to all students who submitted the blue consent form, which is available from the front office. The Health Center provides everything from flu shots and mental health services to first aid. They are open all day, except fourth period, when the staff goes to lunch. The staff also goes to ninth-grade classes to talk about health issues. Ms. Phillips encouraged parents to fill out the consent form, if they haven't already. Learn more at: <http://bhs.berkeleyschools.net/resources/health-center/>

### **AC Advisory Council Representative-at-Large Catherine Ference**

Catherine Ference is the parent of an AC senior and at-large representative of the Academic Choice Advisory Council (ACAC). Ms. Ference described the ACAC as the PTA for Academic Choice. The group does fundraising, plans activities like appreciation lunches for teachers and AC graduation, and helps teachers plan field trips. In addition, parents often come to ACAC meetings with questions or problems to discuss about their student's experience at Berkeley High, and the committee does its best to provide support and information.

The AC Advisory Council meets on the first Friday of every month from 7:30 to 8:35 am in Conference Room B of the D Building. Ms. Ference encouraged parents to come and get involved.

Another way to stay involved is to read AC-related posts on the BHS e-tree and especially the AC newsletter. Unlike the BHS e-tree, the AC newsletter only comes out a few times a month and has AC-specific content. The AC newsletter will inform parents about opportunities to chaperone field trips, help with events and contribute to the teacher wish list: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/30e084eacac2aaaf58-acac> Our school needs you and our kids need you. Please get involved in any way large or small.

Finally, Ms. Ference asked parents to consider making a financial contribution. In November, families will receive requests for contributions both from the Berkeley High Development Group and the ACAC. The Development Group is a non-profit organization that raises money for all of Berkeley High, including classroom grants, support of the College Career Center and providing planners free of charge for all students. Last year the ACAC used its own funds for AC-specific projects such as field trips, our annual teacher retreat, graduation events, curriculum development grants, and maps for history classes.

The small learning communities and the Development Group work together on fundraising. It would be great if parents could give to both organizations. All checks or online donations go through the Development Group so you will be able to designate where you would like your donation to go. For example, if you donate \$100, you can divide it 50-50 or 60-40 between the two organizations (write this on the check or make a note online). Ms. Ference encouraged parents to give some to both. She concluded by saying she hopes parents will get involved in one way or another.

Ms. Phillips added that she invites parents and guardians to volunteer to chaperone "Red and Gold Day," which is the new name for the event traditionally called "Rally Day." This celebration of school spirit will take place in the afternoon on Friday, October 21.

### **Classroom Matters Workshops for AC Students**

AC parent Lisa Miller who is the director of Classroom Matters ([www.classroommatters.com](http://www.classroommatters.com)) has offered to facilitate free study skills workshops for AC families. A parent and a student both attend these workshops so that they have a common language around these skills. The first workshop on time management will take place during the first week of November. The second workshop on test-taking skills will take place in early December. Be on the lookout for more information in the AC newsletter and the BHS e-tree.

### **These presentations were followed by a Q&A Session**

#### **Questions for Nakia Baird (math)**

#### **Math 1 is too easy for my student. When can s/he start honors math?**

There is an Advanced sequence in math that moves at a more rapid pace. In the spring, students who are in regular Math 1 this year can apply to take Advanced Math 2 for sophomore year.

Math 1 may seem easy now because teachers realize that students are coming in with different skill sets. Teachers need to build skills at first, but the sequence gets more difficult in later months. The depth of learning happens in the lessons in class, and especially freshman year, students may not have a lot of homework.

### **What is the difference between Math 3 and Advanced Math 3?**

Math 3 prepares juniors to take AP Statistics, AB Calculus (which covers the material of one semester of college Calculus), or Math Studies during their senior year. Advanced Math 3 prepares students to take BC Calculus (two semesters of college Calculus).

### **Are there specific requirements for taking in AP math class?**

Our classes prepare all students to take AP math, either AB or BC Calculus or AP Statistics. AP classes offer a college-type experience, and it is important that a student decides where s/he wants to focus his/her efforts, whether in math or other subjects. Three AP classes constitute a college course load. BC Calculus is demanding, rather like taking an AP class plus math as an extra-curricular sport. The advantage of taking an AP class is that colleges like to see them on a transcript and a student can engage at a challenging level with the subject matter.

### **Can students in Advanced Math 1 and 2 go to the Math Labs?**

Yes, and you should encourage your student to make use of this resource. Advanced students sometimes have the most trouble asking for help.

### **My student's math teacher said s/he should not spend more than 50 minutes a night on math homework. Is this okay?**

It depends on the class. Twenty minutes of homework for Math 1 is a reasonable amount. The accelerated classes have more homework. The amount of homework increases in later years. If the students finish early and are still interested, they can explore other areas. If a student is spending two hours a night on homework, that's too much for freshmen and sophomores. If they are spending too much time on homework, consult with the teacher.

### **Where and when are the Math Labs?**

Math Labs take place from 3:30-4:30 pm, Monday through Thursday. The Math 1 Lab is in room G-210A and the Math 2 Lab is in H-306. Teachers rotate on different days.

If you have other questions about math at Berkeley High for Mr. Baird, he encourages you to email him ([nakiabaird@berkeley.net](mailto:nakiabaird@berkeley.net)).

### **Questions for Brianna Brooks (ninth- and tenth-grade college counselor)**

#### **What are "a-g" courses?**

"A-g" is a set of courses that the UC and CSU colleges want students to take to be eligible to apply. The rule is to take eleven a-g by eleventh grade for a total of 15 by the

end of senior year. Students must earn a “C” or better for the class to count in the total. A “D” grade is passing for Berkeley High, but doesn’t count for UC/CSU. For more information google “UC Doorways” and you will see a website for the a-g course list. Type in “Berkeley High” for our school’s list.

When the UC/CSU guidelines say “four years are recommended,” she recommends that the student do four years of the subject because college entrance is competitive. She also recommends doing three years of foreign language in high school because then you satisfy the college foreign language requirement.

In addition, for an “f” class (visual and performing arts), you have to take the same course for a full year, not a different class per semester.

### **Can parents meet with you?**

My first priority is meeting with students, but I can meet with parents as well. I’m on campus from 8 am to 4 pm.

### **Are there workshops for parents to prepare for college?**

The College Career Center held a workshop for the parents of seniors in September. Next semester, Ms. Brooks will hold a workshop for parents of freshmen and sophomores.

### **Are student college workshops held during the day?**

Yes, the counselors visit students in class to give workshops because of the open-campus lunch policy.

### **Questions for Ms. Marini (AC English)**

#### **Are all AC students required to take an AP class?**

Yes. AP US Government is required for all AC seniors. There are no other AP requirements. Students are encouraged to take AP classes according to their interests, but should not overload their schedule.

### **Questions for Ms. Sheikh (AC history)**

#### **Is AP US Government required?**

Yes, every student is required to take the class, but is not required to take the AP exam in the spring.

#### **Can you take an AP test without taking the course?**

You may do this, but it is not encouraged. Studying for the test will be a lot of work and usually results in a score that does not please the student.

**If you come into Berkeley High as a sophomore and don't take the Ethnic Studies class, are you missing anything?**

The class is new, so not really.

**What sort of credit does a student get for the Economics class?**

A student gets "g" credit, but the course is required for graduation.

**Questions for Ms. Phillips (Academic Choice Vice Principal)**

**Are students still taking the CAHSEE?**

The California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) is no longer required for graduation. Ms. Phillips didn't know if there would be a replacement. Now the state of California is having students take the Smarter Balance Assessment (SBA) in third through eighth grade and eleventh grade. The subjects tested are English and math. The test provides feedback for the school and if students score a certain value on the eleventh-grade test, they are exempt from placement tests at CSU colleges.

**Many colleges require three years of a lab science. Do Berkeley High science classes fulfill that requirement? Any suggestions for the third science class?**

Berkeley High science classes do fulfill the requirement. Ninth-grade Advanced Biology and tenth grade Chemistry are lab science classes. AP Biology, Honors Anatomy, AP Environmental Science and Physics and AP Physics all meet the US/CSU requirement.

**How do students access counseling?**

We have a lot of counseling resources. For questions about courses, or if you need advocacy support with a teacher, a student should go to her/his academic counselor. Intervention counselors works with a caseload of a couple of hundred students who are identified as requiring extra support. College advisors are now focusing on the needs of seniors. For mental health issues, students can go to the Health Center.

**Is the academic counselor the gatekeeper to other resources?**

No, but the academic counselor is often the most accessible to a student.

**After the first year of required foreign language at Berkeley High, are other foreign language classes counted as electives?**

Yes, but we would prefer a minimum of two years and ideally three years of foreign language.

**Is there any feedback that requiring students to take an AP class has had a positive effect?**

We are still gathering data on that. AP classes do give students a bump in their GPA because you add one point to the grade (an "A" counts as 5, a "B" as 4). We realize that

it is important to give students the support they need in a required AP class, but the jury is still out.

### **When a student is having trouble with a teacher, where do you turn?**

The first step is talking to the teacher about the problem. We want to promote self-advocacy in our students. Also the teachers' contract encourages parents and students to talk to the teacher first.

If that doesn't work, the next step is talking to your academic counselor. If neither of those work out, come to Ms. Phillips, in particular for English and history classes.

Some parents aren't happy with the current protocol. The ACAC has created a subcommittee on "student voice" to look at ways to improve the grievance process. If you would like to give feedback on this issue, contact AC Secretary Donna Storey ([donnageorgestorey@gmail.com](mailto:donnageorgestorey@gmail.com)) and/or come to an ACAC meeting.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Ms. Phillips encouraged parents to take the additional handouts about after school tutoring, Ms. Brooks' services and a grassroots parents' effort to provide supplemental materials for students in Math 1 and Math 2 through the **BHS Math Assist** website: <https://sites.google.com/site/bhsmathassist/home>. The site is an ongoing project designed to provide supporting materials for students and parents at Berkeley High School who are taking the common core curriculum. The material is being assembled by a research mathematician, but all parents are encouraged to contribute to this effort to support our math students.

### **Berkeley High Development Fundraiser**

Christine Staples, the co-director of the Berkeley High Development Group, encouraged parents to attend the Development Group's fundraiser at the Cheeseboard on Sunday, October 23 from 4-6 pm. A Berkeley High Jazz combo will be performing and it will be a fun event, plus you'll help support our school.