

**12/2/16 Academic Choice Advisory Council (ACAC) Meeting
December 2, 2016, 7:30-8:35AM Berkeley High School Conference Rm. B**

Minutes

In Attendance:

| Who | Role | E-mail address |
|---------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Amanda Marini | ACAC Co-Chair and AC Lead English Teacher | amandamarini@berkeley.net |
| Felicia Phillips | AC Vice Principal | feliciaphillips@berkeley.net |
| Dan Plonsey | AC Teacher and Parent | danplonsey@berkeley.net |
| Caroline Bettendorf | AC Parent | crbettendorf@gmail.com |
| Karen Chapman | AC Parent | kechapman@comcast.net |
| Milan Drake | | misterdrake44@gmail.com |
| Catherine Ference | ACAC Parent Rep at Large | candsfer@gmail.com |
| Shelley Horwitz | AC Parent | sahorwitz@comcast.net |
| Jodi Levin | AC Parent | jodi@sweetpickle.com |
| Rani Marx | AC Parent | |
| Lisa Miller | AC Parent | lisa@classroommatters.com |
| Eunice Paredes | AC Parent | eunice068@gmail.com |
| Elisabeth Ross | AC Parent | e@elisabethross.com |
| Christine Staples | AC Parent | christineannestaples@gmail.com |
| Donna Storey | ACAC Secretary | donnageorgestorey@gmail.com |

Academic Choice Vice-Principal Felicia Phillips chaired this meeting. She distributed copies of the agenda and the November minutes.

Public Comments

ACAC Secretary Donna Storey read an email exchange she had with a parent who

could not attend today's meeting, but had an issue with the selection process for the Bio Tech program. Her daughter, currently a junior in AC, applied and interviewed for the program in April 2016 and thought she had been accepted, but when she got her current year's schedule, she had not been assigned to any class. She had to wait two weeks to be assigned to AP Biology. Efforts to contact Principal Pasarow, the Bio Tech program coordinator and the school board received no response. Although the school claimed they tried to email and call, there was no record of such a contact. This parent strongly urges Berkeley High to make sure this situation is handled more appropriately in the future.

Ms. Phillips explained that Bio Tech is a two-year career and technical program run by an outside partner. Students have training to start working in a lab after graduation.

Ms. Storey asked how students are notified they are in the program. Ms. Phillips said that Erin Schweng is in charge of the master schedule. She agrees that there are lots of ways the administration can communicate more effectively with families. Staff assignments are decided in April and student assignments are decided in June and August. There are strategic reasons that students don't know the schedule before. Amanda Marini added that counselors might get a barrage of parent demand that would be overwhelming. Rani Marx said that families at Berkeley High know very well they can't get everything they want, but the school should make it clear where you can go for information and what you can do. The school should be prepared for common issues that come up and have a system where students are reliably notified.

Ms. Phillips said that Tamara Friedman (tamarafriedman@berkeley.org) is the Vice-Principal in charge of science classes and Wyn Skeels (wynskeels@berkeley.org) is in charge of Career Technical Education. They would be the people to contact on this matter.

Christine Staples added that many parents don't know where to go with problems and their research efforts come up dry. She has a friend who couldn't get in touch with her child's counselor at all in a crisis situation. Karen Chapman asked Ms. Phillips what she should do since she's been trying to contact her child's counselor with no reply. Ms. Phillips said she should feel free to copy her on the follow-up email.

November Budget Committee Report

Ms. Marini said that approving expenses is much easier and speedier with the new Budget Committee system. Lead teachers have more authority, and they've created a spreadsheet where they track requests. She felt that the requests were coming in at a good pace.

In November the following requests were authorized:

\$17,000 for computer carts

\$150 for a media cart

\$260.76 for Ms. Rigley's world history class

\$50.76 for Ms. Rigley's update for the test maker software for Economics

\$240 and \$140 to Mr. Stevens and Mr. Day to personalize their classrooms

\$1582 for Uri Skowronski's class field trip to Cal Science

Ms. Phillips reported that in November we had logged a total of \$2460 in donations and spent \$21,493.

Catherine Ference expressed concern about the trend for the future of AC fundraising. She senses that AC families don't feel brand loyalty and a desire to give. This might be fine if AC will be absorbed into a bigger entity in the Redesign. Ms. Phillips suggested we have someone from the Redesign Team come and update us. Jodi Levin was also concerned at the low level of contributions and wondered if we could track which email appeal brought in which amounts. Ms. Phillips agreed it was important to figure out how to get our message out. Ms. Staples, who is co-president of the Berkeley High Development Group, said that it is not uncommon to take longer for contributions to come in after the initial appeal and reminded us that we have a generous reserve of funds.

"Classroom Matters" Family Workshops

Lisa Miller reported that the workshop in November on time management had a good turn out and on Tuesday, December 6 from 7-8:30 pm, she would be giving a workshop on test preparation. The workshop was free and open to the entire school, not just AC. She said the ideal student for this workshop is someone who frequently has assessments such as in math or foreign languages. Up to 30 families (or 60 people with one parent and one student) can be accommodated.

Ms. Marx asked if the AC counselors were aware of this opportunity, and Ms. Phillips said in their weekly meeting she had encouraged the AC counselors meeting to offer this information to students who would benefit.

Ms. Miller said she would provide handouts, but handouts alone might not be enough. She said she could fine-tune the handouts with the idea that they would be used independently of the workshop.

AC Graduation Celebration Planning

Elisabeth Ross, who coordinated the successful AC graduation celebration last year, said the ACAC needs to find student representatives for this committee—seniors or even juniors. Caroline Bettendorf, Karen Carpenter and Susie Marcus volunteered to help on the committee. Ms. Marini said she would try to find 4 or 5 seniors who are excited about planning a party. Ms. Ross proposed a first meeting of the committee in the second week of January. She also suggested it would be ideal if there was another teacher on the committee who could serve as a contact. Ms. Marini said she would think about teachers who had seniors this year for that position.

Student Voice Subcommittee

Ms. Marx said we'd recently had an excellent discussion when the Student Voice Committee met with Ms. Phillips on November 15, and she wanted to summarize where we stand. A priority is that we need a way to systematically inform students and

families what the process is for contacting the school with an issue and encourage the school to act early rather than wait for a crisis. When a student has an issue, what should they do and what should they expect? This information implies the staff knows the system and that it works. She urged the school to put a functional system in place.

Ms. Phillips reported that at the November meeting we discussed counselors doing triage. They should be the first point of contact. Counselors have drop-in hours, although there might be a delay if they have a big caseload at any particular time. She said counselors were planning to visit 9th and 10th grade classrooms to inform students of their services, but now the visits were moved to January.

Ms. Marini said we should encourage teachers to have a more transparent grading policy.

Ms. Phillips showed us a video made by the students participating in the Student Summit in the spring of 2015. One of the top issues students identified was a problem with communication among students, teachers, staff and administration. Ms. Phillips said that moving forward we can work with the Student Leadership Coordinator, John Villavicencio, to try to figure out how students can work with us on this issue. She also said she had the go-ahead from the administration to consult with the school's Berkeley Teacher's Federation liaison, Matt Meyer. He can meet with our subcommittee and students.

Ms. Marini added that this year they developed an advisory program for freshman. An important part of the curriculum is training students to advocate for themselves, teach them who their counselor is and the Vice-Principal of their small learning community. She said they give students a handout with a list of contacts and they practice role-playing.

Ms. Levin said that the idea of what a community thinks of itself is important. The community image of Berkeley High is that it is big and unresponsive. We feel that much of the school dynamics are kept hidden from the community. Everyone needs to step up to make a change including students, teachers and the administration. Perhaps we could create a facilitator position to manage this. Ms. Marx said that Mr. Pasarow and Ms. Phillips have put an emphasis on improving student culture. The same thing needs to happen with the staff.

Ms. Marini said teachers are working on changing the culture, but it's hard to feel part of the community under criticism. Ms. Levin and Ms. Marx said it's unfortunate that bad teachers are the focus, but this overshadows the good teachers because there is no place to go with complaints. Ms. Ross added that in the subcommittee discussions it became clear that parents are terrified to file complaints because they fear retribution, but the District office wants parents to file complaints.

Ms. Phillips said that on Monday, December 4 teachers will be working on building trust. You can't hold people accountable if you don't have trust and if someone feels attacked, it's hard to get them to change.

In terms of the next step in addressing the Student Voice issue, Ms. Phillips said she would create a paragraph explaining what students and families do when they have an issue with the classroom or the school.

All-School Breakfast on November 7

Ms. Staples thanked the ACAC for approving \$750 for food for the all-staff community breakfast on November 7, a staff development day. She said the school-wide breakfast was a great event.