

**2/3/17 Academic Choice Advisory Council (ACAC) Meeting**  
**February 3, 2017, 7:30-8:35AM Berkeley High School Conference Rm. B**

**Minutes**

**In Attendance:**

<b>Who</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>E-mail address</b>
Felicia Phillips	AC Vice Principal	feliciaphillips@berkeley.net
Caroline Bettendorf	AC Parent	crbettendorf@gmail.com
Karen Chapman	AC Parent	kechapman@comcast.net
Kathleen Crandall	AC Parent	
Milan Drake	AC Parent	misterdrake44@gmail.com
Catherine Ference	ACAC Parent Rep at Large	candsfer@gmail.com
Peter Kozelka	AC Parent	
Jodi Levin	AC Parent	jodi@sweetpickle.com
Susie Marcus	AC Parent	
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
Candy Rupp	AC Parent	
Mica Scott	AC Parent	micascott@icloud.com
Christine Staples	AC Parent	christineannestaples@gmail.com
Donna Storey	ACAC Secretary	donnageorgestorey@gmail.com
Hugo Wildmann	AC Parent	HLWildmann@yahoo.com

**Academic Choice Vice-Principal Felicia Phillips chaired this meeting.**

**Public Comments**

Donna Storey passed along a suggestion from AC Parent Erica Etelson that we organize a screening of the film "Race to Nowhere" about the pressures on students to achieve and what we can do about it. Christine Staples expressed an interest in helping to plan the event. Anyone interested should contact Erica at [ericaetelson@gmail.com](mailto:ericaetelson@gmail.com).

Ms. Storey also encouraged parents to write a letter to California Assemblymember James Cooper expressing opposition to his bill AB165, which would make an exception to the Electronic Communications Privacy Act, so it would be legal for school officials (K-12) to obtain digital information from students and teachers without a warrant. This reduction of the civil rights of students could be abused by school authorities to invade the privacy of the children of immigrants or Muslims. Any serious concern could be addressed through a warrant, so the bill deprives students of their rights unnecessarily. The ACLU was asking for letters to oppose with personal stories by February 10 or one could send one's letter directly to Assemblymember Cooper.

Elisabeth Ross gave an update on her work on math at Berkeley High. She and other parents filed a Williams Complaint, which deals with situations when there aren't enough textbooks for students. Common Core math students (all BHS freshmen and sophomores) have no textbooks or other supports, and students are finding this challenging. The parents wanted to draw attention to this serious matter. She filed the complaint in December but has gotten no response from Berkeley Unified School District so far.

Zeph Landau, a U.C. Berkeley math professor, has developed a website called Math Assist ([sites.google.com/site/bhsmathassist/](http://sites.google.com/site/bhsmathassist/)) to provide a module-by-module set of online resources for study and homework learning for freshman and sophomore students. The site offers explanations, practice problems and definitions for students in Common Core math. Parents and students can also contribute math problems and solutions to the site.

Mr. Landau and Ms. Ross met with the math lead teachers, Nakia Baird and Kate Garfinkel. The teachers said they'd welcome parent input. They suggested developing an FAQ in response to student and parent questions about math. This would not be a survey, but a way for teachers to get information about student and parent concerns.

When Catherine Ference announced Math Assist through the Berkeley High School etree, the website had a surge of 240 hits. Ms. Ference offered to mention Math Assist on the AC newsletter and also to post the link to the FAQ.

Ms. Phillips said that the math and science departments don't have the opportunity to connect with parents in the same way that English and history teachers do through the ACAC.

Rani Marx said that there are serious problems with the way the math department teaches students. There is a disconnect between the math teachers' ideas of what's going on and what students and families experience. She is grateful for Ms. Ross's efforts and thinks we must go to the School Board about this issue. Students' interest in math declines and their skills decline. This puts students at a disadvantage in a time when math skills are crucial for good jobs.

Eunice Paredes agreed 100%. Her children did not have good experiences with math at

Berkeley High. She felt that teachers had low expectations because her children were Mexican. She spoke with the teachers when she saw her son was in trouble, and the teacher didn't help. This problem has been going on for years.

### **"Classroom Matters" Family Workshops**

Lisa Miller announced that the next free Classroom Matters workshop on time management will take place on March 8.

### **Recruiting New ACAC Officers for 2017-2018**

Ms. Ference said that it is time to start thinking about recruiting new parents to take on duties for the ACAC. The positions include:

- Editor of the AC newsletter
- Webmaster to update the AC website and keep it updated
- Field Trip Coordinator (not a lot of work, just a short planning period)
- Hospitality for Teacher Refreshments
- ACAC Secretary (take minutes, create monthly agenda, etree announcements)

Ms. Ference asked Ms. Phillips and the lead teachers to decide what sort of parent support is most helpful to them. She said she could use the AC etree to put the word out to parents to get new volunteers. Ms. Miller said it would be good to recruit from the wider AC community and pull in other volunteers. Ms. Phillips said she would present this request to the lead teachers at their next Wednesday meeting.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Karen Chapman, our new ACAC Treasurer, provided us with the Berkeley High Development Group financial report as of February 2, 2017 as well as an updated ACAC Budget Report as of January 31, 2017.

She said that we are behind on our annual fundraising goal by about \$5500 (current donations total \$14,370), and maybe we could make another appeal to parents. Thus far, we have spent \$23,790 and the BHSDG Treasurer has warned us that we are supposed to spend our funds in the year they are collected. She may begin to impose a penalty if we maintain a large balance. Ms. Chapman pointed out that sometimes the budget doesn't match the BHSDG reports due to a lag in processing the payments. She will always provide us with both the updated budget and the updated BHSDG report.

Ms. Chapman said she thought it was valuable to thank donors with a handwritten note. Ms. Staples said that the BHSDG sends out acknowledgments, but an additional handwritten note is a good idea. Ms. Chapman wondered if donors would mind if they were acknowledged in the AC newsletter. Candy Rupp said we would need the donors' permission first. Ms. Storey said perhaps we could add a question on our online form about whether we had the donor's permission to acknowledge them and how.

Ms. Ference said that some parents have expressed interest in forming a fundraising

committee to make it a year-round effort and encourage more parents to donate smaller amounts. Hugo Wildmann asked if the computer cart we'd funded has arrived yet. Ms. Phillips said it has and it will be in the classroom by February 15.

Ms. Miller said with regard to our surplus of funds that it makes sense to have money for a rainy day and maybe the BHSDG could acknowledge our right to have that savings.

### **January Budget Committee Report**

Ms. Phillips reported on requests that were authorized by the Budget Committee in January:

\$55 for classroom supplies for Ms. Rigley's World History class

\$500 for Mr. Colon to attend the California Council for Social Studies conference

\$2606 for Mr. Carton and Mr. Chernack to purchase new texts for tenth grade English

Ms. Phillips pointed out that the committee did not fund the BioTech request on the BHSDG report and that the \$800 *Birth of a Nation* field trip request was replaced by a \$1200 request for the same field trip.

### **AC Graduation Celebration Planning**

Ms. Ross said the tentative date for AC graduation is Tuesday June 13, although that has not been confirmed. Amanda Marini said that the graduation celebration is owned by students and parents. She has recruited three seniors to be on the committee, and they've expressed a desire to make the celebration a little different from last year. Five parents have also volunteered. The first meeting of the graduation committee will be on Monday, February 6 at lunch in Ms. Marini's room. Ms. Ross asked Ms. Phillips what she thought the parents' role should be. Ms. Phillips said parents should hear what the students on the committee have to say, but emphasize they need parent support. Ms. Ross said it would be great to develop a list of responsibilities for students, parents and teachers.

### **Food Donations to the Newcomer Small Learning Community**

Peter Kozelka had volunteered to be in charge of AC's efforts to provide food donations for the Newcomer Small Learning Community that serves students who have been in the United States for less than five years. The director, Marcela Taylor, is very grateful for our offer of support. Berkeley International High School will cover donations through the beginning of March when AC will take over.

### **Berkeley High Homework Policies**

Ms. Staples reminded us that the PTA Council has supported a new model homework policy at Thousand Oaks Elementary School and that the Berkeley Unified School District is looking at expanding this policy to other K-8 schools. They are also working with Jen Corn and Hasmig Minassian of the Berkeley High Redesign Team and parents to communicate with the staff about the purpose of homework at Berkeley High and

develop a high school policy. The principal at Thousand Oaks was responsive to the PTA's interest in developing a new homework policy, so this shows that parent involvement works. Ms. Minassian said that the Redesign Team had been thinking about homework reform for a while.

Ms. Staples reminded us about the results of the AC family survey on homework from the spring of 2016. The survey had 215 respondents. 62% said homework routinely causes stress and interferes with sleep. The amount of time tenth, eleventh and twelfth graders spent on homework ranged from 11-30 hours per week. Ms. Staples said that the national PTA endorses the ten-minute rule, which suggests 10 minutes of homework per day per grade starting with 20 minutes for grades 1-2 and ending at 120 minutes for high school seniors.

Results of the AC survey show stress levels going up each year. 63% said their child required the help of a tutor. 55% used a private tutor. 27% used a paid tutoring service. This is a serious equity issue and shows that the after-school tutoring provided by the Berkeley High Development Group is not providing enough support.

Mica Scott said that we must also address the underlying issues of why students are stressed including time management. Her son, a junior, transferred to Berkeley High from a private high school in Texas, and he remarked how resistant Berkeley High students are to homework. He is in AP Language and Composition and he has no homework or writing assignments. She worries he will not be prepared for college.

Ms. Chapman asked why students aren't learning in the classroom. Why do so many need tutors? Why are so many hours of homework needed?

Ms. Marx said that case studies around the world show that the amount of homework is not related to the quality of education, as in Finland, for example. This is also a student voice issue. Ideally we would get feedback from students and put money into a pilot program to solve egregious classroom practices.

Susie Marcus said her freshman has very little homework, so it obviously depends on the teacher. Ms. Scott added that there are cultural differences in schools and communities in terms of their attitudes toward homework. Some data proves that homework is essential to prepare students for college and graduate school.

Ms. Phillips said that AC English and history teachers try to minimize work outside of class to things that can't be done during class time. She also added that counselors would be visiting ninth and tenth grade classrooms this month to explain options to students if they have problems.

**Our next ACAC meeting is March 3, 2017.**