

Minutes of November 19, 2013
BHS School Site Council
Conference Room B, D Building
4:15 – 6:00pm

Present:

BHS Staff: Pasquale Scuderi, Anne Busacca-Ryan, Mark Griffin, Dharini Rasiah, Robin van der Vegt

Parents: Landi Ehnle, Iris Grace, Sandi Hunt, Satish Rao, Margit Roos-Collins

Students: Jesse Barber, Kevin Flood-Bryzman, Sophia Olaya-Hermes

Absent: Sophie Andrews, Alejandra Nuñez

Call to order

Beginning Business Items (Decision)

- **SGC Members sign in**
- **Establish a quorum**

At the beginning of the meeting, only 8 members were present – one short of a quorum. However, an additional 5 members arrived late but in time for voting on officers.

- **Approve agenda**

Review of October minutes inadvertently omitted from agenda; members agree to add it.

Comments from members of the BHS Community (Information)

Donna George Storey: Her son is freshman in an honors math class. All honors math students at BHS are required to spend a certain number of hours each semester tutoring other students. This requirement was created nine years ago in an effort to help close the math achievement gap, according to the BHS website on the program. The required hours grow, from 8 hours per year for honors geometry students to 24 hours for AP Calculus B/C students. Students who do not do the mandatory tutoring hours are subject to a reduction in their own course grade.

However, the gap has not closed during this period [she cited the data in the BHS 2012 WASC self-study] so there's no indication that the program is working and meanwhile, students have difficulty finding other students who want to be tutored by them. She's found research establishing four criteria met by successful peer tutoring programs: 1) the programs are voluntary for tutor and tutee, 2) the student tutors get training in how to do the job, 3) the student pairings are deliberate and sustained over time and 4) the individual tutoring relationships are monitored and supervised by teachers. None of these criteria are met at Berkeley High.

As practiced, the program significantly burdens students in honors math, especially in the upper grades when the hourly requirement is high, but it does not appear to help struggling students, who seem to be making more use of the older after-school tutors in the College/Career center. Honors math students used to be allowed to reach their hours by making themselves available in

the library over lunch hour, but so few students came for tutoring that that option has been dropped. Recently, her son went to a lunch-time tutoring session and helped tutor one student while the regular tutor was busy with another. But her son's teacher said that that time would not normally count because her son had not found the student on his own. [Scuderi made clear that is not right and the time should have counted]. The single biggest problem (apart from lack of detectable impact) is that there aren't enough students who want to be tutored by the honors math students.

Ms. Storey brought three Jacket articles, by Lapiroff [10/29/04], Baptista [10/09], and Grigsby [10/10], all pointing out the continuing problems with the program as implemented. The Grigsby piece says that the SSC and BSEP both have been working on solutions to make the tutoring program work better. It cites the head of the department, Amy Burke, as focusing energy on improving it. Nothing seems to have come of that. The Vice Principal in charge of Math, Ashley Milton, told Storey today that the department intends to review the tutoring requirement this spring. But given that that process would be internal and not subject to public oversight and given the department's failure to act over such a long period, Storey believes that it's important for a group of parents, students, and teachers to form a committee to solicit information from the full community about the ways that this program is and isn't working.

NOTE: Ms. Storey also submitted written comments, which are attached, with the Jacket articles, at the end of these minutes.

Jesse Barber: used to fill his requirement through drop-in tutoring at Mr. Bloomsburgh's lunch and after-school math sessions.

Pasquale Scuderi: Unfortunately, those sessions were funded by a one-time grant that was not renewed.

Landi Ehnle: She received a letter explaining that students can now attend the after-school tutoring program as a way to clear absences from the prior month, so demand for tutors may increase.

Margit Roos-Collins: Efejon Ustenci has resigned from his position as SSC student alternate.

Principal's Report (Information)

The entire staff has now completed Day Two of the three-day Constructed Meaning training, and there will be a Day Three training in the spring. Classes are doing the second piece of Constructed Response [CR] writing this week, this one in their social studies classes. It's a persuasive expository piece responding to his letter to parents explain the cancellation of Rally Day. On October 28, the staff scored the first round of CR essays.

Regarding assessments in general, there will be no STAR/CST testing this year except for the 10th graders taking science classes. Scheduling it will be somewhat difficult but it will only involve one day.

He doesn't know yet whether BHS will be a test site for the new state assessment from the SBAC [Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium]. When it launches, only 11th graders will be tested at the high school level. He thinks eventually, it will become the high school exit exam, replacing the CAHSEE.

He's hoping to see an uptick on the writing portion of the CAHSEE this spring as a result of the investment the school has made in writing. The assessments will be logged into Illuminate and a summary of the data will be made available for public consumption.

Teacher leadership is exploring concepts in school design. They are considering a comprehensive school with three houses. A coherent curriculum for grades 9 – 12 would promote accountability. The role of the small schools is being examined. The pathway to an IB diploma would be preserved.

He has a big problem with how ethnically segregated the honors IB and the AP classes are. Questions the validity of offering advanced courses if they stay segregated.

Wants everyone to have exposure to curriculum about health, wellness, substance use, Chicano and African American studies before graduation, perhaps through an online component. Wants the curriculum to have an embedded portion that explores alternate ethnic viewpoints.

Going to Culver City with Superintendent Evans and a few other staff to study Culver City High School, whose African American students have achieved a large and steady gain in their test scores.

Principal's Question and Answer (Information)

During this period, the principal answers questions from SSC members, beginning with questions submitted in advance. Each questioner can ask a brief follow-up for clarification.

- 1) How will the requirements of the Common Core curriculum mesh with the requirements of the IB curriculum? Answer: The Common Core [CC] is more about how a subject is taught and what skills are taught, rather than about required content. The IB curriculum may be fairly well aligned with CC requirements. The state has not yet clarified what happens if CC requirements conflict with IB requirements.
- 2) What grades will get the SBAC tests? Answer: only grades 3, 8, and 11. So, there will be fewer grade levels tested. Biggest problem he sees is that there's still no incentive for high school students to take their test performance seriously.
- 3) Do we have Response to Intervention [RTI] in the high school? Answer: Yes. The high school has all the services and they are allocated in a rough pyramid: The great majority of students (70-80%) get a standard set of services. The next group, with more needs, (such as the McKinney-Vento [homeless] kids) get more intensive services. And at the top of the pyramid, 5% of kids get the most intensive interventions – a case manager, a move to BTech, etc. Where the school falls down is in making sure that the relevant kids

get the services they need. Coordination is a challenge. Can't have just a counselor trying to do it all.

- 4) How does the school assess who needs what services? Answer: Usually the top 5% of students have been identified before they get to high school. The hard part is finding the next cohort. They are using the risk factor index developed by Dave Stevens and ranking kids that way.
- 5) What's the reason to look at school restructuring? Answer: The push is to have common final exams in each subject.

Iris Grace: concerned that any restructuring not lose the strong student support from teachers that has been the hallmark of the small schools. Mark Griffin: large classes, large groups, can be difficult for some students. He had a relative who had been a high performing student in elementary school and fell off as an IHS freshman. Iris: they have tried but failed so far at getting enough African American parents engaged in their kids' high school matters, so whatever changes are made, we need to keep the support of school staff for individual students, because that's the support those kids get.

Election of Officers (Decision)

Sophia Olaya-Hermes expressed willingness to serve again as a Co-Chair. *Sandi Hunt nominated her, Iris Grace seconded, and the members voted for her unanimously, with 12 votes (parent alternate did not vote, since all member parents were present).*

Kevin Flood-Bryzman expressed interest in serving as Co-Chair. *Iris Grace nominated him, Jesse Barber seconded, and all members voted for him unanimously, with 12 votes.*

At first, no one volunteered to be Secretary. Margit Roos-Collins expressed willingness to serve as Co-Secretary but only if another member shared the job. Sandi Hunt expressed willingness to do three sets of minutes as Co-Secretary. *Satish Rao nominated the pair, Mark Griffin seconded, and all members voted for the two Co-Secretaries unanimously, with 12 votes.*

Review and adoption of October minutes (Decision)

Members provided corrections to their own descriptions in the Introductions section. As amended, minutes adopted, with 11 voting yes and one abstaining (hadn't been present at the October meeting).

Discussion of SSC members' Goals for 2013-2014

Anne Busacca-Ryan wants to work on the local control funding formula and ways to increase sign-ups for free and reduced lunch, since that increases school funding for the intervention services the kids need. Lots more kids sign up for the lunch program in their junior and senior years because that makes them eligible for a reduced price on the prom tickets and on the AP and IB tests. Need to find a comparable incentive for freshmen and sophomores.

Sandi Hunt: how does this connect to the role of the SSC?

Anne: SSC may be somewhat in charge of the moneys that come in through this process.

Pasquale: It's not clear what the SSC's new role will be. BHS will need to provide four people to the district-level committee in the future. Currently, the District is asking him what he wants to do about the SSC.

Sandi: Seems like figuring out how to generate more money for the school is a good goal for the school but not clear how it is the SSC's job. The second part –looking at how the extra money is spent – seems like a logical SSC topic.

Pasquale: The BSEP Committee is saying that our problem is that we have a lot of folks on the payroll who should be paid by the District out of the general fund, most notably the OCI support staff.

Iris Grace: We need a way to have more oversight on this campus of the support services we're supposedly offering.

Mark Griffin: He's been at BHS for 22 years. Kids of color ask him what has become of various support programs that have been publicized.

Sandi Hunt: So, as to goals: one is to form a subcommittee to enhance the level of lunch signups.

Landi Ehnle: Is the Site Plan crafted to maximize funding to the kids who need it most?

Pasquale Scuderi: In large part. There's widespread agreement that an anger management counselor is one of the most significant things we should be funding. School has a plan for making that happen. Funds are directed to foster kids, English Learners, and low income students.

Mark Griffin: English Learners seem very well supported.

Pasquale Scuderi: wants the SSC to work on the five general goals of the WASC plan.

Moved by Anne Busacca-Ryan and seconded by Kevin Flood-Bryzman: The SSC will explore the concept of transitioning to an ongoing advisory committee. 12 votes for, none against.

Ideas for next meeting (December 3) and possible move of January meeting to January 21 (Discussion)

MRC noted that Superintendent Evans had offered to come speak with SSC in January, but that the 3rd Tuesday would work better for him than the first Tuesday. Members noted that the third Tuesday was the day before exams and would not be a good date for the student members.

MRC agreed to check with the Superintendent's assistant and provide some alternate dates to the SSC for his visit.

Sufficient agreement expressed for idea of having Javetta Cleveland speak at next meeting about funding changes, despite unresolved issue of whether SSC should spend its time on increasing free-and-reduced-lunch-eligibility signups.

Adjournment