

Minutes of April 29, 2014
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, Sandi Hunt (co-Secretary), Satish Rao, Margit Roos-Collins (co-Secretary), Alejandra Nunez

Students: Sophie Andrews, Kevin Flood-Bryzman (co-Chair)

Absent: Iris Grace, Jesse Barber, Sophia Olaya-Hermes (co-Chair)

Others Present: Kevin Kunze, BHS Media Technician

Call to order: 4:30 p.m.

Beginning Business Items (Decision) – 5 minutes

- SGC Members sign in
 - Establish a quorum
- Quorum established.
- Approve agenda
- Agenda approved.

Comments from members of the BHS Community (Information) -- 10 minutes

Kevin Kunze, Media Technician for BHS, spoke in opposition to the BSEP budget, which cuts out funding for his position. He brought letters of support from various faculty members. He mentioned Daniel Roose, who appreciated his help in creating an attendance video that Roose showed to each grade at the beginning of the year. Tamara Friedman, John Villavicencio, and Alan Miller had also written about media help they had received. He noted that the Superintendent had recently sent out a letter commenting on how important technology and media are in education today.

Robin van der Vegt noted that in her government class, she has used audio cassette recordings of Supreme Court arguments which have been very helpful in bringing the cases to life for the students. Kevin transferred the cassettes to MP3 format for her, which made them both easier to use and made it possible to share them with the other government teachers.

Kunze noted that people do not realize what work goes into providing media resources and that it really is a full-time position.

Dharini Rasiah noted that 50% of the media tech's time goes to CAS and the other 50% goes to the school at large. She described Kunze's position as "the infrastructure of media services at BHS" and noted that it is completely different from what she does. The school has had this position for 16 years.

Principal's Report (Information) – 5 minutes

The BHS data presentation to the School Board was last Wednesday, April 23. There were incremental gains in CAHSEE pass rates and among English Learners. The big change was the drop in suspensions. That rate has dropped from around 600 in 2008-2009 to about 300 so far this school year. But the disproportionality has not changed much; 60% of the suspensions are still of African American students. So the factors that dropped suspensions overall may not help change disproportionality. He's encouraged the Board to do a special study session on this disproportionality. 9th and 10th grades have the highest rates of suspensions and then it tails off in the upper grades.

Principal's Question and Answer (Information) – 10 minutes

Is the structure of the 9th and 10th grade changing? No. They'd had an idea to use the IHS model for more of the school, in order to reduce segregation. But there was too much pushback because of the highly prescribed IHS curriculum that doesn't leave enough room for electives. There was concern that students would not have space in their schedules to sign up for such things as African American studies.

How are things looking for the school in the proposed LCAP budget? Heidi Ramirez-Weber's position will be LCAP funded. Our enrollment is down, but the 1.0 FTE looks like it will hold. Jasdeep Mahli's position will be LCAP funded. It looks like it will be for what she's currently doing in addition to coordinating intervention. The Student Support Advisors look like they will be funded out of LCAP. And LCAP will fund 1.27 FTE for the Parent Outreach office – Irma Parker's and Letty Amezcua's positions. Later in the LCAP process, the school may get funding for cultural competency training and other initiatives. The school spends \$450,000 per year on its current leadership structure and there is pushback to send more of this to other expenditures.

Would it be helpful to him for the SSC to pass language regarding LCAP funding recommendations? Yes.

When will the school get a career counselor, including for non-college pathways? Alameda County has a career pathways grant and we are 90% sure we'll get 1.0 FTE from that for a career coordinator for career and tech pathways. Kate Trimlett has been representing the school at the county meetings. This is a consortium model so the coordinators would be working with each other across school districts to share information. It will be a certificated position. Mark Griffin noted that he thinks it should be a position open to classified personnel as well.

Adoption of Minutes from April 15 (Decision) – 5 minutes

One change made to supply a missing term. Motion to approve as amended, by Mark Griffin, seconded by Robin van der Vegt. Passed unanimously by those who had been at the April meeting (9), remainder (3) abstaining.

SSC Member Topics relating to WASC Categories and SPSA Goals (Discussion) – 50 minutes

Sophie Andrews' topic: the dysfunctionality of the mandatory tutoring requirements imposed on students in advanced math courses.

Roos-Collins began with an update from conversation with Ashley Milton (VP in charge of math department) right before the meeting. Milton said that the department has already made it easier for students to figure out where they can go to find tutees, and they have discussed two changes for next year: providing some training to students and trying to have more supervision.

Andrews: Honors math students are required to tutor – 2 hours per semester in Geometry and 6 hours by the time one gets to Calculus B/C. As a freshman and sophomore, she went where she was told to go and didn't find anyone who wanted to be tutored. It was a big waste of time. The students being told to tutor are already working very hard; she doesn't think they'll have time to also be trained in tutoring skills.

Roos-Collins: Voluntary programs appear to be more effective, per the research cited by the parent who spoke to SSC on this subject in the fall.

Scuderi and Roos-Collins: School has no data showing that the program is effective in helping those who are tutored (tutees). By same token, there's no data indicating that existence of requirement acts as a barrier or discouragement to kids considering taking advanced math.

Nunez: What was the original goal for the tutoring program?

Scuderi: Seems to have been in the spirit of 1) this would be good for the tutors, in that they would gain from explaining math concepts and 2) it would help build community spirit.

Rao: Research shows students do benefit from tutoring others. His students (at Cal) who've tutored in high school tend to be more sophisticated math thinkers.

Busacca-Ryan: Are there any incentives for kids to get tutoring?

Scuderi: Teachers can individually define grading requirements and can choose to take into account whether or not a student has spent time being tutored.

Likewise, individual teachers have the right to require students to tutor in connection with their own grading requirements.

Nunez: The program is not being managed in a way that is consistent.

Van der Vegt: Seems like part of the problem is kids who would benefit from tutoring need to be more aware of its availability.

Ehnle: Kids don't always seem to know about it.

Andrews: It can feel condescending to tutor someone close in age to oneself. It's uncomfortable. She thinks kids at BHS know student tutoring is available but they don't want it. She's done her math tutoring outside of the high school, to younger students.

Griffin: They are using peer tutoring on the football team. He's had the high performing students help keep the other kids eligible for the team by helping them keep their grades up. They have an affinity with each other.

Roos-Collins: And mutual incentive to make it work. The social awkwardness that Sophie described is something she heard about from her own daughter as well.

Busacca-Ryan: It would be good to have an incentive program on both sides. She gets asked to sign off on tutoring hours but she can't tell if there's been actual math tutoring going on. It's a joke. The math teachers who want this should commit to spend the time to supervise the tutoring and to provide space for tutoring and supervision.

Scuderi: One way would be to make a requirement that if a teacher makes tutoring part of a student's grade, the teacher must provide the structure.

Flood-Bryzman: The program could be useful if done with a teacher.

Rao: One on one is more effective, even when the tutor isn't too sure about the math. The data suggest that being close in knowledge levels is effective.

Flood-Bryzman: But it's not all that helpful if both students are unclear on the math.

Busacca-Ryan: There are studies of the success of both heterogeneous and homogenous groupings.

Griffin: The tutors need clear rules to follow.

Nunez: She thinks it should be a voluntary program for extra credit and that teachers should match tutors and tutees. It's a total waste of time when no one shows up to be tutored.

Ehnle: If her son got a low math grade, he could get credit if he showed he'd gone to a paid tutor to work through the problems. Apply this to student tutors/tutees?

Flood-Bryzman: It's too easy to game the system if there's a requirement for some tutoring. There's not necessarily learning going on. There's so much copying of math work. Doesn't think the system works as is.

Roos-Collins: Sounds like we need to write up something that puts the burden on the math teachers who want to do this program, to make it work and create incentives for tutor and tutee.

Andrews, Bussaca-Ryan, and Roos-Collins volunteer to work together as a subcommittee for this purpose, to bring a draft back to the SSC as possible SSC advice for the principal.

Andrews: She's really talking about shutting down the current program.

Rao: One on one is 40 times better than learning in a large class.

Busacca-Ryan: Student tutoring could be integrated into Wyn Skeel's after-school program.

Next topic: Roos-Collins' topic is reducing barriers to expanded enrollment in advanced/AP/HL classes.

Roos-Collins: Currently, students are told they can't drop AP/IB HL classes once they sign up for them. So much of being willing to sign up comes from having friends or knowing people who've taken a course and recommend it. If we want to expand the pool of students who are willing to challenge themselves with these classes, especially when we're trying to attract students who may not have friends who've already taken them, we need to make it less scary. Right now, if you make a mistake and get in over your head, there's no recourse.

Scuderi: Met today with counselors and discussed this. Earlier, students could drop AP classes. The problem was that under that system, students signed up for lots of AP's, chose their favorites and dropped the rest, with the result that the AP class sizes ended up small and the regular classes ended up too big.

Andrews: She's never had a problem dropping an AP when she had to. The counselors help students out.

Nunez: Her daughter had a different experience.

Rasihah: The small school AP teachers are successful with their kids. She would advocate for more of that approach.

Busacca-Ryan: This year AC is offering AP Scholars. It's a program for struggling students in AP classes. At lunch and at other times, she's available to help them.

As to dropping courses, we need consistency so whatever the approach is, it is equitably applied. The ability to get schedule changes is highly correlated with the social capital of the student, with knowledge of how to work the system. She struggles to balance her time in that she gets high communication pressure/lots of emails from high-achieving parents and she needs to respond to those but at the same time, she has other students who need more of her attention and time but don't communicate as intensely. Some parents expect private school level of service.

Ehnle: Counselors are uneven. Not all kids get their schedules reviewed by their counselors.
Nunez: If there is a policy, it should be fully enforced so it is consistent. The decision about which AP's to take needs to be made at home. Parents of kids who are overextended end up having to hire private tutors.

Roos-Collins: Is there a way to offer more AP augmentation to regular classes? Her daughter had an excellent experience with taking a regular 10th grade social studies class, augmented by voluntary lunch sessions for those who wanted to attend. It prepared her to do well on the AP World History test. And some of the small schools have had good experiences with AP augmentation for the English classes.

Scuderi: The move in AC is towards more augmentation. They are looking to have an IB type approach for AC.

Hunt: In IHS, everyone takes two higher level [HL] courses in junior and senior year.

Roos-Collins: We should look at how the kids are doing in those. How is it going for the struggling students?

Busacca-Ryan: This year every senior in AC is required to take AP Government, with the AP Scholars program available to help kids who struggle with it. Later, the plan is to ask every junior to take one AP course and add more support to help them. We now have an AP coordinator in AC. We need to get back to requiring kids to sign up in the spring for the AP's they want to take in the fall. There used to be a requirement to attend a talk about the course and what it would involve and then sign up. The AP coordinator could manage that process.

Andrews: Kids do NOT know what they are getting into when they sign up for these courses.

Subtheme on email volume:

Rao: It would be interesting to understand/analyze the email volume that teachers get. Wonders if there would be ways to better support them institutionally.

Bussaca-Ryan: She wants to be able to respond to all the emails. Just has to decide how to focus her time.

Scuderi: The challenge is addressing the privilege premise. They have changed the school's focus to high risk kids and are having some success on the discipline front.

Scuderi: Is there a recommendation from the group about advanced classes? More flexibility?

Scuderi: to end on a high note: the school's graduation rate overall is the highest it's been, and the graduation rate for African American students is up 6.5 percent from last year, to 87.9%, which is about 20 percentage points higher than the state or county graduation rate for African American students.

Discuss topics for next meeting, on May 6 – 5 minutes

Roos-Collins noted that the SSC needs three more meetings before the end of the year: May 6, May 20, and June 3. The BSEP budget will be presented to SSC on May 6, then the SSC will vote on it on May 20, and then if it votes it down, the SSC can vote on a revised version at the June 3 meeting.

Adjournment at 6:13.