

**Minutes of June 3, 2014
BHS School Site Council
Conference Room B, D Building
4:15 – 6:00 p.m.**

Present:

BHS Staff: Pasquale Scuderi, Mark Griffin, Robin van der Vegt

Parents: Sandi Hunt (co-Secretary), Satish Rao, Margit Roos-Collins (co-Secretary)

Students: Jesse Barber, Sophie Andrews, Kevin Flood-Bryzman (co-Chair), Sophia Olaya-Hermes (co-Chair)

Absent: Anne Busacca-Ryan, Dharini Rasiah, Landi Ehnle, Iris Grace, Alejandra Nunez

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)

There was no public comment.

Principal's Report (Information)

Graduation: UC Berkeley is handling the ticket sales this year. Prices keep rising; tickets are \$22 this year. Graduation costs around \$65,000 to \$80,000, very roughly. The cost includes the use of the Greek Theater and the security services of both the UC Berkeley police department and the city's police department.

Staffing: The search is still on for the new BHS principal.

Daniel Roose will move into a Vice Principal slot and they are looking for his replacement in the attendance position, pending District approval. Kristin Glenchur will be back in the fall, but Vernon Walton is leaving to become principal at a middle school in San Leandro.

They have hired three new social studies teachers.

Adoption of Minutes from March 4, May 6, May 20, and May 28 (Decision)

Amendments made to May 6 and May 20. Van der Vegt moved to adopt all four sets of minutes, as amended, and Hunt seconded. Approved unanimously.

Principal's Question and Answer (Information)

Principal search details? Scuderi will be at the school until the end of June and the hope had been to have his replacement chosen by end of May. Now they are hoping to select someone by mid-June. He will not be available during July.

How is he implementing the 3.0 FTE cut from reduced enrollment? Five to six teachers are leaving, and some of those who are retiring had worked out part-time positions over the years. He's requested an additional 1.0 FTE that he can divide among those positions so he can hire their replacements, since it is difficult to fill parttime positions.

They are trying to get more teachers of color, but not enough of them are applying. When the school has tried to recruit back east from traditional teachers' colleges, then they are competing with job offers from closer to home. When idealistic teachers apply in this area, they tend to choose schools or districts that they perceive to have greater need.

Discussion and Decision on draft BSEP budget (Discussion/Decision)

Review by Roos-Collins, Van der Vegt, and Scuderi of what happened at the BSEP meeting on June 2 – namely that the BSEP committee voted to stick with its original budget rather than adopt the alternative proposed by SSC or any other change. Roos-Collins noted that just as SSC has Rasiah as a member, explaining the importance of the Media Tech position, so BSEP has the Jazz program director as a member and she's been explaining to them the importance of getting funding help for that program.

Scuderi believes that bylaws require that he come up with a good-faith effort to compromise between the BSEP committee budget and the SSC budget if SSC sticks with its budget proposal.

Roos-Collins moved and Van der Vegt seconded:

Motion that the SSC reaffirm its proposal for the alternative BSEP budget as described in its May 28 meeting notes.

9 votes in favor, 1 opposed, no abstentions. Motion approved.

This means that all three budgets will go before the School Board for decision. Roos-Collins agreed to notify SSC members when she gets notice that the item has been calendared, so members can speak at public comment and in case Board wishes to hear directly from SSC about its thinking.

SSC Member Topics relating to WASC Categories and SPSA Goals (Discussion/Decision)

Members brought five draft SSC Recommendations to the meeting, covering four topics.

Peer Tutoring in Math:

Roos-Collins: Tutoring subcommittee proposes to remove one sentence from their draft recommendation, namely "Research suggests that one critical component of successful peer tutoring programs is that the tutoring be voluntary." She contacted the parent who had asserted this to the SSC and they determined that she did not have a source that compared outcomes from voluntary and involuntary tutoring programs. Rather, the research has focused on programs that tend to be voluntary in that would-be tutors have to apply and meet certain standards in order to be accepted. She read the meta-analysis that Rao had circulated and noted that the best outcomes were for low-to-average-performing math students in peer reciprocal tutoring programs. That's what school should be pursuing. Benefits run primarily to the tutors so you want to give each struggling student a chance to be in the teaching role. Benefits to the tutors were lost when the tutees are more than 2 or 4 grade levels below the tutor (depending on the experiment), as easily happens when kids in Calculus are tutoring 9th graders or below. And peer tutoring was most effective in lower levels of math and

results started to fade as kids got into algebra. We should be basing math tutoring at BHS on these results.

Hunt: Kids at BHS do a lot of group projects which is a close approximation of the peer tutoring discussed in the articles.

Roos-Collins: But that's not the same. The studies call out the importance of the struggling student taking on the teaching role specifically.

The meta-analysis also noted that it can be hard for struggling students to be tutored by advanced students and can reinforce stereotypes.

Rao: But the study's primary outcome was that peer tutoring is good. It works. It's very good for the tutors. Students typically don't know what's good for them.

Hunt: But the process at Berkeley High is broken. And I agree that students don't often know what's good for them.

Andrews: There just aren't enough tutees. She thinks Rao doesn't understand the extent of the problem of the absence of tutees. They aren't choosing to be tutored by advanced math students.

Barber: This is being tested right now. The administration is surveying advanced math students right now, asking about their experiences with the tutoring requirement. In student Leadership, they did a survey and found that 50% of students in Leadership had forged signatures themselves to meet their tutoring hours.

Rao: His kids solved the problem of not enough willing tutees by tutoring at the middle schools.

Rao: His version has an opt-out feature so parents can choose to let their students opt-out of the tutoring program but only after they've been informed of the benefits of tutoring.

Roos-Collins: Let's add an opt-out to the original subcommittee proposal. Want to keep the focus on making math teachers who want to offer tutoring, take responsibility for making it work. We all heard Anne talk about the awkwardness of being pressured by students to sign off on their tutoring hours when as a social studies teacher, she's not in a position to know what they've been doing. Want the math teachers to make their own classrooms available for this and do their own signing off.

Van der Vegt: But if middle school after-school programs or RISE counselors or BHS after-school tutoring program want to have tutors and are willing to sign off on the students' hours, then we want that to happen. And how can the math teachers supervise that directly?

Hunt: If the math teachers do eventually take ownership of the tutoring program and make it work and decide that it's a fundamental part of their curriculum, then families should not be able to opt out at that point.

Olaya-Hermes: Tutoring didn't work well for CAS and other small school students because the after school program tutors didn't understand the IMP math that is taught in the small schools.

Roos-Collins: Common Core is coming – should solve that.

Flood-Bryzman: But in CAS, small school students could stay after school to see their teachers for 15 minutes, so that's how they solved that currently.

Roos-Collins moved and Hunt seconded:

That the SSC adopt the subcommittee recommendation on math tutoring. 4 in favor, 4 opposed, 1 abstaining. Motion failed.

Rao moved and Flood-Bryzman seconded:

That the SSC adopt the Rao recommendation on math tutoring.

Five votes in favor and four opposed. Motion approved.

Stereotype Threat and Psycho-Social Intervention:

Roos-Collins: This intervention is the brief writing exercise on values that Satish told us about earlier and that Frank Worrell also listed as worthy of attention. Seems to provide lasting benefits to the struggling students who wrote for twenty minutes about a value they hold.

Rao: Ideally, and the way he wrote it up, the school would run this intervention in the same way that it was done in the original experiment – with half of each class getting the essay prompt to write about their own values and half getting the prompt to write about a value someone else cares about.

Important that the teacher not know who gets what prompt. Each student gets his/her prompt in a sealed envelope with his/her name on it and turns it back in in a sealed envelope that goes directly to the administration, not the teacher. That way, after a year, we'll be able to see whether or not the exercise did in fact help raise the academic performance and engagement of the struggling students who wrote about their own values, relative to the others.

Scuderi: We should target a specific level of the school if we do it that way.

Rao: 9th grade would be best.

Scuderi: This could fit in well with the idea the administration is considering to limit 2nd period announcements to two days a week and capture those extra minutes for these types of things.

Roos-Collins moved and Van der Vegt seconded:

That the SSC adopt the recommendation on the Psycho-Social Intervention.

8 in favor, 1 opposed. Motion approved.

Class flexibility:

Discussion of how difficult it is for some students who have a bad personality fit with a particular teacher. Rao drafted a recommendation on this topic for Hunt, with her agreement. Scuderi noted that it would be hard to know what to do with the recommendation as drafted. He struggles with this issue. 98% of the time that counselors come to talk with administrators, they want to change a course in response to a student's or parent's request. He can't promise any action based on this recommendation, since it doesn't clarify what the school could do that it isn't trying.

Members wanted to make the recommendation anyway, to make a record that the issue has significant consequences and needs attention. Members noted that even just in the SSC group, at least three members had had experience with bad "fit" issues and bad experiences with the complaint process.

Roos-Collins moved and Rao seconded:

That the SSC adopt the recommendation on Class Flexibility.

5 in favor, 1 opposed, 2 abstained. Motion approved.

Parent Pledge:

Too many members had to leave; a quorum was not available to vote on this issue.

Form summer subcommittee for draft revision of SSC bylaws (Discussion)

There was insufficient time to discuss this item.

Adjournment: 6:12 p.m.

SSC Recommendations follow on subsequent pages.

SSC Recommendation: Advanced math tutoring requirement.

Input from students, parents, and teachers.

The School Site Committee has received significant input from students and parents communicating the following.

- Tutors have difficulty finding eligible students who wish to be tutored by them. For example, some students complain, that in the afterschool tutoring program in the College Career Center, they are not guaranteed access to a willing tutee.
- Teachers in non-math subjects complain about being put in the unfair position of signing off on tutoring hours despite their unfamiliarity with the subject and regardless if whether they were able to supervise the interaction.
- Some suggest that a potential tutee who is struggling with a math course is unlikely to voluntarily choose a student as a tutor when s/he has access to an adult or a college student tutor in the afterschool program. We believe the school's current emphasis is on increasing students' access to qualified tutors.
- Some complain that the math teachers under the current system are not responsible for making the system work for both tutor and tutee.

Recommendations.

The SSC recommends the following enhancements to the program:

1. Parents should be allowed to opt their students out of the tutoring program. The parents should be informed of the possible benefits of tutoring prior to opting out. We attach a sample opt-out form.
2. Math teachers should provide tutoring opportunities and/or guidance for tutoring for their advanced math students. For example, they can offer times in their own classrooms after lunch or after school, or by arrangement with the various coordinators for tutoring programs such as R.I.S.E., the AC academic coordinator, ELL program, and the college preparatory classes, or by referring the tutors to specific elementary, middle or community tutoring programs.
3. Math teachers should also consider recruiting tutees to specifically match to tutors.

Tutoring Program Information and Opt-Out Form.

Research has shown that tutoring provides significant academic and social benefits to students, particularly to the tutors. See, for example, [1] for a broad survey of research on numerous peer tutoring programs which suggests that nearly any formulation of a program is helpful. Furthermore, psychological research shows the explaining is a particularly helpful mechanism for understanding material at a deeper level. See, for example, [2].

Finally, there is reason to believe that students admitted to selective colleges and universities have nearly universally participated in tutoring programs as tutors.

We, thus, have a tutoring “requirement” for students in the advanced math classes at Berkeley high.

Ultimately, however, each parent is responsible for doing what is best for their child, so we are happy to allow a parent to opt-out of the tutoring program for advanced math.

Please sign below to opt your child out of the advanced math tutoring program.

Child’s Name: _____
Parent Name: _____
Parent Signature: _____

We would greatly appreciate any input on the tutoring program in general or why it is or is not a good fit for your child. Please let us know in the space below.

References

- [1] Katrina L. Steers-Wentzell Debbie R. Robinson, Janet Ward Schofield. Peer and cross-age tutoring in math: Outcomes and their design implications. Educational Psychology Review, 17(4), December 2005.
- [2] J. J. Williams and T. Lombrozo. The role of explanation in discovery and generalization: evidence from category learning. Cognitive Science, 34:776–806, 2010.

SSC Recommendation: Stereotype Threat and Psycho-Social Intervention.

Research and Site Committee Discussion.

The School Site Council discussed the issue of stereotype threat which is the underperformance of an individual in a context where that underperformance was stereotypically expected. Member Satish Rao presented data that indicated that this may be a particular issue at Berkeley High; in particular, that African American performance in English Language Arts plummets in ninth grade, even relative to state and similar school performances.

The School Site Council considered material on a psycho-social intervention [2] shown to be effective in addressing stereotype threat.¹ The example in [2] suggests that a short writing assignment can be effective in significantly improving grades months later for African American students. We note that this writing assignment had no effect on European American performance and thus it may have specifically ameliorated the effects of stereotype threat.

Recommendations.

We suggest that Berkeley High run the psycho-social experiment presented in [2].

In particular, that it places writing such as those assignments A and B (see attached) in envelopes specifically labeled and provided to a student in their ninth grade English classes. The students should complete the assignment in class and return it in the envelope. It is crucial that the teacher and parent of the student not know which version of the assignment that they received. This should only be known to the personnel running the experiment.

Mid semester and end of semester grades should be analyzed to see if there is a significant difference with respect to which version of the assignment. The analysis should be done for each demographic group separately.

If there is evidence that one intervention is effective, Berkeley High School should incorporate this intervention and perhaps others into its normal practice.

We refer the school personnel to the supplementary material to [2] in [1] for implementation purposes.

References

- [1] Supplementary material for psycho-social intervention.
<http://www.sciencemag.org/content/suppl/2006/08/29/313.5791.1307.DC1/Cohen.SOM.pdf>.
- [2] Geoffrey L Cohen, Julio Garcia, Nancy Apfel, and Allison Master. Reducing the racial achievement gap: A social-psychological intervention. *Science*, 313(5791):1307–1310, 2006.
- [3] David S Yeager and Gregory M Walton. Social-psychological interventions in education; they are not magic. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(2):267–301, 2011.

¹This intervention was also one suggested in an article provided to the principal by Frank Worrell [3].

DRAFT: Version A and B, page 1.

Consider the values of

- athletic ability,
- being good at art,
- being smart or getting good grades,
- creativity,
- independence,
- living in the moment,
- membership in a social group (such as your community, racial group, or school club), music, politics, relationships with friends
- family,
- religious values,
- sense of humor.

Please reread the list of values above and think about each one. Mark the value that is most important to you with “M” and mark the value that is least important to you with “L”.

DRAFT: Version A, page 2.

Look at the value you picked as most important, and think about when this value was important to you.

Write a few sentences why the value was important to you. Focus on your thoughts and feelings and don't worry about spelling, grammar, or how well written it is.

DRAFT: Version B, page 2.

Look at the value you picked as least important, and think about why this value might be important to someone else.

Write a few sentences why the value might be important to someone else. Focus on your thoughts and feelings and don't worry about spelling, grammar or how well written it is.

DRAFT: Version A, page 3.

Write the top two reasons why this value is important to you?

DRAFT: Version B, page 3.

Write the top two reasons why this value might be important to someone else?

DRAFT Versions A and B, p. 4

TO DO!

The material suggests writing for each value, four easy to agree with statement about each value and having the student agree or disagree with each for his/her chosen value.

I can try to do this, but I would suggest that the school does this based on the supplementary material.

SSC Recommendation: Class Flexibility.

Input from students, parents, and teachers.

The School Site Committee has received significant input from students and parents communicating the following.

- For some students, a teacher can be a very bad fit. Students complain of different styles and personality clashes that can make the classroom an unpleasant environment, which results in suboptimal learning.
- The complaint process is overly cumbersome and subjects students to possible retribution and is therefore not a reasonable method for addressing problems created by poor personality match. Some have indicated that even after going through an involved process they have failed to reach a solution that was good for their child, and that their learning suffered as a consequence.
- The principal noted that requesting a class or teacher change causes significant problems, including a material difference in class size. It may lead to “teacher shopping” and scheduling difficulties and would disproportionately advantage higher performing students who know how to advocate for themselves.
- The principal also noted that changes do occur on limited occasions.

Recommendations.

The SSC recommends that the principal work to find a way to more flexibly and equitably address the issue of poor teacher/student “fit.” The SSC believes more flexibility and a mechanism that is student-centric and provides for resolution without the need to file a formal complaint with the district is advisable. Perhaps allowing counselors to have more flexibility is one aspect of a solution.