

Berkeley High School Site Council (SSC)
Minutes
December 15, 2015

SSC Members Present:

Parents:

Lea Baechler-Brabo, *BIHS*
Shelly Ball, *BIHS*
Rani Marx, *AC*
Elena Condes, *CAS*

Students:

Nava Bearson, *BIHS*
Alessandra Cao, *BIHS*
Isabella Donato, *BIHS*
Zeariyon Griffin, *AMPS*
Petra Silvey-Karvounis, *AC*
Jannya Solwazi, *AMPS*

Staff:

Sam Pasarow, *Principal*
Samantha Borg, *Languages*
Jennifer Campbell, *AC*
Matt Carton, *AC*
Kimberley D'Adamo, *BIHS/VAPA*
Carol Dorf, *BIHS Math*
Claudia Gonzalez, *AMPS*
Steve Saunders, *Classified*

Visitors:

Natasha Beery, *Director of BSEP and Community Relations*
Cleo Osheroff, *Liaison from BHS BSEP Site Committee*
Alecia Harger, *Liaison from BHS BSEP Site Committee and Co-President, BSU*
Nebeyat Zekaryas, *Co-President, BSU*
Hasmig Minassian, *Co-lead, BHS Design Team*

Beginning Business Items:

1. Meeting called to order by co-chairs Bearson and Cao at 4:10
2. Quorum existed [though not enumerated]. New student rep members Solwazi and Griffin were introduced.
3. Minutes from 11-17-15 were approved by motion: Condes, second: Pasarow
4. Request for Nomination of Secretary to the SSC. There has been no success yet in finding a staff member. Natasha Beery offered to take minutes for this

SSC Members Absent:

Parents:

Kolondra Harvey, *AMPS*
Marcus Jamal Fields, *BIHS*
Babalwa Kwanele, *AMPS*

meeting in order to relieve a SSC member of having to do so. Pasarow will continue to seek staff assistance. Matt Carton volunteered to act as time keeper and Jen Campbell as process observer.

5. Agenda was approved with the change of moving Design Team item to 4:30. It was noted that there had been a prior request to include an item about the Election of Chair – this could go into “for the good of the order” or to next meeting. Marx requested that there be a review of SSC Priorities and invite Professor Darling-Hammond for future meeting.

Public Comments

No comments

SSC Member Opening Comments

Marx: Honors math tutoring has been discussed – there is also a proctoring requirement – students need instruction in how to do this – but their grade drops if they don’t do it. This would be discussed next time.

Baechler: Great response from staff who stepped up for Take Back the Day.

Dorf: Wants to bring up safety issue around Gate between A and H building – needs to be a way for that to open safely so no need to bend to open padlock. Requests it for next agenda.

Ball: Would like to hear report about lockdown drill.

Pasarow: Excited about how school has taken up issues such as how the racist threat and the sexual harassment training.

Cao: Liked the SH teach-in, overall it went well.

Bearson: At student leadership discussed follow-up to discussions in class re [racism] and SH – training should include info on intoxication.

Silvey-Karvounis: Agrees should focus on intoxication and also focus on support for victims.

Gonzalez: The SH mini-lesson was a good first step – need to have follow-up as there were a lot of questions.

Solwazi: The SH mini-lesson was a good idea but there should have been more training with the teachers, maybe have professionals with the SH expertise would be helpful.

Griffen: SH talk was good – good to know about harassment, battery and assault differences. There were still more questions.

Borg: Felt comfortable since she teaches social living – there wasn’t enough time as there were lots of questions on the PPT – no time for video – even juniors and seniors didn’t know about school protocol. Class will watch video and do survey next day. Maybe have an all-school assembly or o it by class as there may be different issues at other levels. Maybe get a grant for professionals to lead that every fall.

Campbell: Shout-out re the decision to do ethnic studies that 9th graders felt like it was the student curriculum that was brought to the school. Felt powerful and cohesive.

Condes: Went to assembly, good to see all the students together. Noticed the segregation of community as they came in. Also noted that there was an intruder on campus in October.

Saunders: if someone gets past a campus monitor, they are escorted off by campus safety officers.

Carton: Lockdown drill – no way to lock door from inside classroom.

Saunders: Has been a safety officer for 10 years, looking forward to participating in SSC.

Design Team Update

Hasmig Minassian, co-lead of Design Team

Design Team is looking at how to redesign BHS so it works for more kids/all kids. Looking at the research around schools that meet current needs. If starting from scratch, wouldn't have constructed a school with 3 large programs and 2 small schools. The team was selected by BFT and school administration members last year, list confirmed this year.

Tamara and Hasmig are writing a strategic impact grant to the Schools Fund for \$30-\$35K to fund staff members to be excused all day from school (pay for subs). Can't do it in 2 hour meetings once a month. Want to up to twice a month and some all-day retreats including a 5-day retreat in the summertime.

Yesterday reviewed 12-month timeline and benchmark dates for outreach and input for stakeholder groups. Need to build it enough so there is a design to respond to, and yet leave room for input. So "build a little – show – get feedback – revise – edit" as a cycle. Who needs to be asked for input? Who needs to be in the room – plan is to add 3 parents, 3 classified staff members and 7 students. Want to create connections to other groups – so ask for an SSC member to join to provide input and to share the work. Want to ensure that group is representative of the entire school.

Question was raised as to the role of the group. The team will come up with a proposal that will go forward to decision-making bodies such as SSC, to student surveys (and look a role of student perception surveys). Will this group be a consensus, majority, etc. body?

Working with Peter Ross and Linda Darling-Hammond. Look at issues such as: personalization, Advisory, do we want heterogeneous groupings of students?

The School Board would like a plan by April that has been vetted by other groups. If the plan is ready to go, the hope would be to set this to go with the seventh grade cohort who will be the 9th graders who are first affected by the plan. So who should provide the input?

Discussion: Students have six courses. That is a lot to manage. Would the design team look at other configurations such as 4 x 4 classes? Response: Yes, could look

at integrated “block” classes of English/History. Or modified block schedule. Need to look at what to do if starting from scratch. Can we create a system that isn’t about surviving the system, but about really addressing learning with knowledge of how we learn. If interested in joining, should contact hasmigminassian@berkeley.net

Questions: how do departments have a voice if teachers are representing certain interests (their own, the union, etc). Answer: Tamara and Hasmig could have office hours and give people places to find them to give input. That way members don’t have to worry about also being the only representative of any particular group.

Note: Different subject areas probably have different approaches as to what’s best to learning – block learning vs. daily.

Comment: Do we know who is on the team – share that schoolwide so people know who’s on – send this out school-wide – send out via e-tree. [and have a blog with updates?]

Question: will you revise current membership so improve diversity of representation? Answer: Will be looking for a lot more members in order to be more representative. The meetings are not public currently, but are thinking of videotaping meetings so it becomes documented as a process.

Suggestion: Consider alumni who will have a perspective in what has and hasn’t worked. Answer: Working alongside Peter Ross is a BHS graduate who is on the design team.

Question: Would you consider piloting pieces of the model – could get funding for that. Answer: Original idea was small pilots vs. a whole school redesign. There was much more momentum for the latter. However some ideas have been piloted – some math approaches, 9th grade curriculum. It could be that an entire redesign might be too much to take on ultimately. It could also be an issue as to who is chosen to pilot a new program.

Comment: There is a burden on staff and students to be the representative of a community on top of multiple other demands. Answer: So the onus is to go out to the stakeholder groups – give us your voice – go to BSU, or Teachers of Color, etc.

BSEP Site Committee Report

Cleo Osheroff & Alecia Harger, Liaisons from Committee

The Committee talked about the process for evaluation of “grants” - it’s a cumbersome process. The programs themselves already often produce self-evaluations. Right now prepping for spring, will have more to say with actual budget proposals.

Report from Sankofa Assembly and “Take Back the Day” on December 9

Alecia Harger, Co-President, BSU

Nebeyat Zekaryas, Co-President, BSU

Purpose was to strengthen Black culture and pride, as well as a sense of security and safety, both physical and emotional. After talking with Administration, settled on

having a curriculum that paralleled what was going on in 1st period classrooms – watched a video which defined terms and concepts that would be used in discussions. Also had dance performances, singing, speakers, food, discussion, and then opened up to the Unity Assembly. Also took feedback on what people who haven't been in BSU would like to see. Also announced demands that night at the School Board.

Pasarow:

591 students identify as African-American (AA). For the assembly, present were 246 AA students (some may have gone in and out) 223 AA students were absent from school

Some students didn't come to school, partly exacerbated by social media, partly their own concerns, and some students didn't have permission slip forms.

21 Latino, 15 White, and others, two or more races who may be black-identified also attended.

Zekaryas: Feedback was frustration voiced at BSU for what they haven't done – maybe students need to be more involved rather than depend on BSU to do everything. It was also an emotional day, and there times when people may have needed an outlet, so there was a need to express frustration, so the BSU was perhaps the target. There were comments about the African-American Studies Department, why wasn't it as strong, why aren't there more teachers of color. Several of those items are included in BSU demands made to School Board. Also there is an issue around how to report racist comments/incidents made in classrooms. There is a format for that for SH but more convoluted for racist experiences. There is a process that can be used in the Parent Resource Center, although Pasarow recommends going to the VPs use that avenue. There is a bullying/harassment form/process that can be followed, and it needs to be filed with Admin.

Solwazi noted that for those who are not members of BSU, we are divided in other ways, such as divided by small school, by socio-economic status. Could feel like have something in common w/in small school vs. someone of same background in one of the large academy. While BSU is open, those in the small schools can feel belittled, or like there is some paternalism. Want every black student to have a voice, not necessarily just the BSU as the voice. Admin needs to go to others than BSU for input. Report on classes: Some teachers did not follow through on curriculum.

Pasarow: Question, did the school ultimately come together more than we were before? Answers: There was great intent behind it, and shows that people can come together and are passionate about it. It may have created some confusion. Also we have other groups, Latinos, Cambodians, and others of color, where do they go? And the panel didn't necessarily represent everyone's experience and that can confuse students, for example being told "go read a book".

Borg: Polled her classes for their feedback. Students of color who weren't black felt invisible. Felt unrecognized. Realized that black students were the target,

understood that, but felt invisible. Students also felt the absence of black students when talking about racism. Wanted them to have their space and also have a conversation. The teachers leading were mostly white so it felt awkward.

Students felt that they were allies. Didn't like the comment someone made that "you were comfortable in your white classes" since they aren't all white. They loved the unity, and loved the performances, wanted to learn more. Those who attended Sankofa felt it was a little long.

Saunders: Felt that some of the speakers answers didn't represent how he felt. It was their opinion. Didn't want this to be thought of as all black people. Daughter is Asian, her friends (many of them white) didn't feel like they didn't get a lot of it as unifying, wasn't all that informative. Didn't learn a lot about unifying the different cultures.

Campbell: As a teacher of ethnic studies, want to say that perfect is enemy of the good – we are fumbling toward something. There was one person who was "off" was not from BHS. There was a sense that we are doing this together – lots of shout-out to students for leading. This community isn't unified yet, and we are going to be uncomfortable, and yet we are going to be safe.

Marx: Would you share the demands that you sent to the school board? Answer: Will be published in Berkeley Times in full.

Pasarow: Mr. Stevens could follow-up survey of students.

Silvey-Karvounis: As someone who wants to be an ally, didn't know what to do, appreciated the leadership.

Pasarow: I take negative feedback as my job, so you all as student leaders have really done an amazing job, even if it was not perfect, and you caught some heat.

Zekaryas: Agrees that there is division with the small schools, and with just seven members were AC/IB, but now it's growing, but still not representative. Regarding other students of color: Talked to president of the Chicano/Latino club to talk through why the focus was on black students. In reference to black students being out of classroom during decisions on racism, frequently a student may be the only one, which can be a burden as well. Agree that panel didn't represent everyone, didn't agree with things the way they were said. Harger: Maybe should have had a disclaimer – some are facts and some are opinions of just one person – as for what allies can do, recognize that the day was really focused inward. We didn't provide and don't currently have concrete actions for allies, other than using white privilege. Wanted to keep people feeling safe and centralized that day, but we could do more all-school assemblies – do cultural assemblies – those used to happen. Can't expect

one assembly to do everything. And hopefully the design team will lead toward something more unifying.

Pasarow: I do think it did unify this. Saunders: Why isn't learning about other cultures a requirement – learning about Jewish culture, other cultures. Campbell: We are “building it while driving it” – we just talked about race as a concept and see each others as individuals and celebrate each others. There are core themes, and we're meeting once a month. We start every day with a multi-lingual poem, create a classroom space which brings in many voices. Kids say “why didn't I know this?” Have gone through AP history textbooks and see what is missing – very little representation of black and latino history except what is negative. Saunders: Can we have speakers come in? As going out into the real world, good to learn about other cultures. Why isn't it mandatory to learn something every year about other cultures, and have staff members of different backgrounds to teach their history and their experience. Zekaryas: Really important to learn other histories – Dominican, Puerto Rican, don't want to go out into the world without that understanding.

Sexual Harassment Mini-lesson

Many female students felt that the film about the tea really belittled the situation. Not everyone felt that way, the humor was actually okay. Needed more time. The intervention team (three students arrested for harassment/battery this year) wanted to notify students of definitions of battery, harassment, assault, consent. The objective for today was know what the rules are. You can't say that you don't know the rules – if you get in trouble. Suggestion that this was best for teachers who are trained to teach this. Maybe better if humanities teachers teach it? Comment: there were people not taking it seriously, joking about it out of class. There was some confusion about issues such as sending naked pictures, not just saying it's okay above age 18, or in certain situations. There are a lot of complicated issues that happen in relationships that have gray areas that need to be addressed. Also boys can be assaulted/battered. In the second period class the students had to read the slides, which was awkward. There were some student reactions during the lessons (winking).

Question raised as to where the legal information comes from – this began with topics SPARK assembly, then had lawyers vet the presentation. Started with the BHS Stop Harassing and the SHAC, and then got advice on information such as due process, but that was not the central issue so much as understanding the definitions, examples, and consequences. Certainly when there are issues that arise there is a school process as well as a possible police process.

Donato: Want to see places to report. Personally knows dozens of incidents. Don't want to get people in trouble, but really need to be able to know safely where to report. D'Amato: Thanks for the time for curriculum development, and there are developmental differences as for what people are ready for, but have started some of these conversations.

Process Observer

(Campbell)

Kudos for students going first, also for a student bringing up difficult topic. Principal did a good job of reframing an issue, also growing in terms of when to step up/step back. Time check worked well. Co-chairs ran things well. [NB - one parent was never called on - one co-chair could scan table for hands up]. Shelly Ball will take minutes next time if no staff is found. D'Amato will bring name cards.

Meeting adjourned at 6:10

(Forgot to note motion to extend)