

**Re: Minutes, Academics Advisory Committee
Meeting of April 17, 2014**

From: Tom Armbruster

To: Distribution

Date: April 17, 2014

The meeting started at 7:01 pm in the High School's College and Career Center, Shelley Enger presiding.

Members Present: Louise Hindle, Shelley Enger, Jason Kurtenbach, Gary McGuigan, Larry Wong, Yu-Wen Taylor, Strefan Fauble, Sally Newman, Mary Johnson, Loren Kleinrock, Julia Greer, Chris Norgaard, Brinton Young, Tom Armbruster.

Board and District Update: Chris reported on the search for a new superintendent. There have been 31 search inquiries, and 15 completed applications. They are impressive with respect to their experience and qualifications. Among the applicants are four current superintendents, one deputy superintendent, and two assistant superintendents. The earliest selection would be an action item at the second meeting in May.

High School Update: Jason reported for Keith. We have nine days to complete our application for National Blue Ribbon School. The WASC process is complete. Regarding the local performance tasks needed to carry out local evaluations of how well students are mastering the Common Core Curriculum, Math, English and Social Science Department Chairs have put together performance tasks, to be administered twice per year. These have not been written from scratch; rather they have been drawn from other sites, in particular the New York State web site. That is, the process is more like adapting and adopting, not writing from scratch.

Huntington Update:

Jason said he's "proud of the Math guys . . ." They have settled on a textbook series, one by McGraw Hill, to be adopted. This was a series particularly advocated by Claudia Brown, the HEH teacher of Honors Algebra.

All disciplines at Huntington will carry out two summative assessments next year, related to the Common Core Curriculum.

Celebrate Arts will be this Saturday, from 1:00 to 3:00.

Orchestra won top honors in a competition in Hawai‘i.

LCAP Update: Gary reported on the District’s efforts to comply with the requirements of LCAP, the Local Control Accountability Program. Seventeen individuals serve on the LCAP committee. Gary told us about the parent survey, and passed out handouts and showed slides depicting the results. There were 556 responses; of these, 196 were from parents of high school students. These results can be found at the District web site¹. In addition to the summary statistics, Gary said that all the comments that were received are displayed, except for about 10% which were “too personal.”

The next step is to write goals. In the first part of May, there will be a public hearing on the goals. The end result will be a “Local Education Agency Plan.” Part of this will be the formation of an “English Language Advisory Group”; we will have eight parents of English Learner students in this group.

Loren then said that this is a classic case of having the cart before the horse, because Los Angeles County does not have a rubric in place for evaluating yet how appropriate our goals are. The L.A. County Office of Education says it will not reject any LCAP’s that are submitted with “complete information.” Still, Loren added that “Less is more.” The whole LCAP concept is well-intentioned, but it’s “one size fits all.” For example, we should presumably try to improve our graduate rate. But since our graduation rate fluctuates between 98% and 100%, there’s little we can do along the lines of what other schools are doing.

One member asked, “Did anything surprise you?” Gary said that the responses confirmed what we felt: Parents want more access to AP courses and to science courses.

Most schools do not perform the big survey that we did. Arcadia conducted such a survey, but most schools did not.

College Matriculations: Tom presented summary statistics about college matriculations for the Class of 2013. Mary said that there is a problem with too many parents doing applications for students, and too many students apply to schools they do not want to go to. A further problem, Mary said, is that students have difficulty in their essays and interviews: They “can’t speak from their heart.”

¹It is at www.smusd.us. Pull down <District Info>. Click on <News and Announcements>, the eighth of the twelve items listed. The first three items listed deal with LCAP: Local Control Accountability Plan Executive Summary, LCAP Parent Survey Results, and Local Control Funding Formula and Local Control Accountability Plan Update.

AP Access and Success:

Tom brought up the study of AP access and success done on the Class of 2012 that was integrated into our WASC accreditation self-study, and into the AAC's report to the Board in May 2013. According to the AAC report to the Board, in general, students with B's in prerequisite courses who were admitted to AP courses in the fall of 2011 did acceptably well in the courses, in terms of course grade and AP exam score. Some departments appeared to have implemented the Board's liberalized AP policy, others seemed not to have done so. Tom said that if the Board wants to have a follow-up study performed on the May 2014 AP exam and course results, he is willing to carry it out.

There will be five Honors U.S. History sections taught this coming year. The High School is looking at possibly a 7:00 a.m. section for U.S. History.

Internships and the Research Class:

Shelley E. reported on internship placements last summer and this coming summer. Last summer she, Betsy, and Ananth placed 3 students at USC Keck School of Medicine, 2 at Caltech (including one with Sally Newman), 1 at a food-development company with a PhD food scientist, and one job-shadowing an otolaryngologist. One student applied to and was accepted at Camp CHLA and one student obtained a JPL internship through a family friend.

This coming summer, Shelley E. has placed 2 students at USC Keck School of Medicine, 1 at Caltech (thanks again to Sally Newman), and Julia Greer will take one student and is helping place another in a lab at Caltech.

Julia said that it is really important that high school students looking for science and engineering internships "know how to code," that is, how to perform basic computer programming. "Troy [High School] blows them out of the water. They would be a lot more competitive [if they knew how to code]."

Tom said that when he taught Computer Programming, 1996–2010, there was a two-year sequence. In the first year he wanted students to become "fluent coders." The last quarter of the course involving students working in teams of two, bringing up a major programming project of their own design. The second-year course covered the AP curriculum. Tom said that in contrast to Calculus and Statistics, he was "not enthusiastic" about the AP curriculum in Comp Sci. In a typical year, about 25 students took the first year course in summer school, and another 15 took it during the school year. The second-year (AP) course attracted anywhere from 5 to 15 students. The second-year course met concurrently with the first year course, Monday and Wednesday evenings from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.

There was a general comment that we should do more to support teachers who are providing special opportunities in STEM.

Adjournment: At 9:00, we adjourned to 15 May, 2014.

Remaining action items from prior meetings: Mary will investigate getting a catalog of our curriculum offerings together, and getting it up on the web site. Loren or someone he designates will assemble information on students who have left the district at the 6th and 9th grade transition levels.

The AAC's On-Going List of Possible Topics: (1) Follow-up on the implementation of the recently adopted AP and Honors course access policy. (2) Assembling and reviewing data regarding improved instruction. (3) Making better use of parent volunteers to support instruction, broadly. (4) Follow-up on improving students' interviewing/oral communication skills. (5) Student retention when moving to the 6th and 9th grades. (6) Partnerships with other institutions. (7) Internship and career presentations and opportunities for students. (8) Assemble and review data on the impact of scheduling on programs and college placement.

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