

Redwood High School

Department Chair Council

Minutes of the March 18, 2009 DCC Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 3:32 p.m. Present: Erik Berkowitz, Nancy Malcolm, Dave Plescia, Fran Bozdech, Julianne Schrick, David Goldsmith, Jennifer Harris, Ann Jaime, Skip Lovelady, Keith Murray, Nancy Neu, Chris Gilmore, Greg Stevens, and Steve Hettleman. Parents: Elaine Bengle and Ashu Sikand. Students: Anders Miltner, Amy Bettencourt, and Mitko Radonov. Minutes taken by Sam Miller.

Minutes of 3/4/09 DCC Meeting (N. Neu)

Minutes were accepted as amended.

Proposed Final Exam Schedule (J. Schrick)

Per the outcome of the department votes at the last DCC meeting (3/4/09), we will pilot the new final exam schedule for this year (*see attached schedule*).

Applied Tech – 3 yes; 0 no; 0 abstention

English – 10 yes; 4 no; 1 abstention

Fine Arts – 6 yes; 2 no; 0 abstention

Mathematics – 12 yes; 0 no; 0 abstention

Physical Education – 0 yes; 4 no; 0 abstention

Science – 0 yes; 12 no; 2 abstention

Social Studies – 7 yes; 2 no; 3 abstention

Special Education – 3 yes; 2 no; 0 abstention

World Languages – 2 yes; 6 no; 2 abstention

Leadership (students) - not available

Classified – 5 yes; 4 no; 0 abstention

Counseling – 5 yes; 0 no; 0 abstention

Total yes votes – 53

Total no votes – 36

Total abstentions - 8

This schedule will be mandatory for all students.

Field Trips (N. Neu)

Sam distributed the 2008-09 Field Trip spreadsheet that show the teachers who have submitted field trip paperwork and been approved to go. Along with the names of the teachers, the spreadsheet also shows the date(s), period(s), and location of the field trip. Ann Jaime commented that there have been more field trips taken than what's listed on the spreadsheet. Nancy said that the field trips that are listed on the sheet are only field trips that are taken outside of their own class period. Julianne Schrick said that this list helps to demystify that not all teachers take field trips. Skip Lovelady pointed out that we don't see all the kids that are going on field trips and the other teachers that are affected by it. Steve Hettleman said no where on the permission form is the burden placed on the teachers to meet the Board Policy. Nancy clarified by saying that this is a district form. She also commented that not all field trip requests that are submitted get approved and some requests have been questioned to make sure that the field trips are matching the curriculum. Some requests have been denied based on that criteria. Sam also distributed copies of the Board Policy regarding field trips and the field trip forms. Nancy reviewed the policy with the DCC, stating that Board intent is for students with poor academic achievement (the D or F student), not the student who has a B and yet is capable of achieving an A. Steve commented that there seems to be an assumption on the part of the teacher taking the field trip that their field trip is more important than Steve's class. Skip agreed and said that if you deny a student then that assumption automatically becomes apparent. As the policy states, a teacher can say no to a particular student going on a field trip, but the student has the right to appeal to the principal. No students should be denied going on a field trip unless for those reasons listed in the Board Policy. Chairs reported out any discussions they had about field trips at their department meeting. Erik Berkowitz commented that not all important learning takes place in the classroom. Some life changing experiences take place outside of the classroom. Field trips are important part of the Drama program, for example the Ashland trip. Skip responded by saying that most of his class time is lab time that can't be created outside of the classroom. In lab-based courses, they are losing kids not just to field trips, but also to other absences. Life changing experiences might also happen in the classroom. Elaine Bengle commented that most field trips are a hands-on culminating experience for students that may be the most remembered experience for that student. She continued by saying that the B student who takes a field trip can do the work to get up to an A and the failing student who is denied the field trip may miss out on enhanced learning experience that may turn it around or inspire that student. The parents said that some field trips are important and necessary. The students should be able to determine which field trips are important to go on. It was stated that it's an expectation that

students go on the field trips, but some teachers let students stay behind to do other work if they don't want to go. The students commented that for some classes they have been on the same field trip several times, but on the other hand, some field trips are important and meaningful and shouldn't be missed. Nancy Malcolm asked why we are discussing this topic again and what are we expecting to resolve. Steve answered to look at the way field trips are approved and possibly change it. Jennifer Harris said that when any of her students go on a field trip that they are expected to make-up the time that was missed. A suggestion was made to list all field trips at the start of each semester that way students can choose the field trips they want to go on. Skip said that at his department discussion, there was one person who agreed with no restrictions for going on field trips, but the rest of the Science department agreed that once a student enters high school, the field trips should start to taper off. It can be very difficult for students in hard core classes to miss that classroom instruction. This doesn't include the other absences that students incur. Skip said that this discussion has been going on for years and that some field trips are inappropriate. He believes that there is an underlying theme that you can't say no to a student. The counseling department suggests that some field trips should be taken on the weekends or after school when possible. Steve agreed with the counseling department, especially for museum trips. He also asked what happens to students that choose not to go on field trips. Do teachers have a follow-up activity to the field trip? Ann reported that one person in the Social Studies department said that if a teacher is willing to go through all the paperwork then they should be able to go, but comments were that they get a lot of emails about teachers going on field trips. Some students don't expect to have to make-up the work that they missed. She would like to see better education of the community at large regarding attendance. Possibly address it at Back to School Night. Julianne said that the math department is fine with the current procedure as long as Board Policy is followed and notices are emailed out to teachers in a timely manner. Teachers taking field trips are responsible for emailing out the list of students going on field trips within five days of the trip. Nancy stated that once testing starts (STAR and AP Testing), no field trips are allowed unless it is only that teacher's period. The decision for the field trip approval process was made last year rather than going through the DCC for approval. The concern was that the DCC was just a rubber stamp for approval of field trips and it also slowed up the process. Since Nancy has been in charge of approval, the process has become streamlined. Skip says that change in the process, the communication piece has been lost. Nancy asked that the departments take this subject back to their departments for further discussion.

First Day Schedule (L. Aliano)

Louise and Kim Stiffler reported to the DCC on October 1, 2008 about the first day back to school schedule. At that meeting, Louise reported about the survey that was conducted in the 9th grade Integrated Science classes. The minutes from that meeting state, "*Louise said that a survey consisting of open-ended questions was conducted in the 9th grade Integrated Science classes regarding the first day schedule and student orientation. She distributed hand-outs to the group. Louise talked about how this project initially came under the Site Council and that their concern was the transitioning of new students to Redwood. Louise worked with Kim and the Site Council members to develop this survey which was given to the department chairs to take their departments and bring back. Louise did the raw data count (169 student responses). 50 % return of the survey is statistically good. Louise is looking for feedback to fine tune the schedule and see how it can be redesigned. There were some concerns regarding mixed level classes, but Nancy reiterated that at this time we need to collect feedback and then address the issues, keeping in mind that we need to make this transition easier for 9th graders. Louise asked the chairs to get the feedback to her by Oct. 10th. This survey will also be discussed at the Site Council meeting as well. A suggestion was made to get feedback from the 10th, 11th and 12th graders. The DCC students commented that looking back they wish they would've had the same opportunity as freshmen. Dave Goldsmith commented that maybe the periods should be shortened to 10 minutes rather than 15 minutes, as it became boring for both him and the students. Louise reminded him that the ice-breaker activities that were given to all teachers were designed to use up the entire time*". Louise distributed two hand-outs; Faculty Survey to Evaluate Opening Day Activities and Last Year's Schedule. Louise said that 52 teachers responded to the survey, 36 of those teachers taught 9th graders. Data was collected within a few weeks of the first day. There was a wide range of opinions. They commented that overall it was a good experience for the freshman, that it was easy, and what they tried to accomplish was done. Louise said there were fewer 9th graders in tears in the attendance office. Some areas to address are; looking at the 15 minute periods, classes that are not all 9th graders, the logistics of keeping other grade level students out of the building, and pressure on freshman teachers. Louise said that it was more difficult for teachers who have mostly 9th graders. Dave Goldsmith commented that it was difficult for teachers with multi-level grades and that the figure of 76% of freshmen is not comparable because there is nothing to compare it to. Some teachers commented that they did not like the ice breaker activities. There were seven different activities, a different one for each period. Amy commented that being a part of the Link Crew, she heard nothing but positive comments about the experience. They worked with the freshmen and had Q & A time. Skip commented that his 9th graders were very relaxed compared to previous years on a regular schedule. Julianne said that having 14 periods, made for a very long day for the teachers. One of the hand-outs showed two different schedules for the first day, last year's schedule and a proposed schedule with shortened (10 minute) periods. Louise said that for next year the Link Crew students can help run the ice breaker activities and assist the teachers. Brainstorming ways for Link Crew to help teachers is an important way to help make the process easier. The question of why we can't release the schedules early was brought up and both Nancy and Fran reiterated that it's not possible as the classes are still being balanced and added/changed. Fran pointed out that having those two additional days to work on the schedule makes a big difference. Nancy Malcolm said that there was still a 'mad rush' of students to the counseling office with schedule issues, so the new schedule made no

difference to that office. Steve Hettleman suggested the first day be more like Open House. Students could sign-in, but Nancy said that in order to comply with the instructional minutes, we would have to take an actual attendance. A suggestion was made to have the first hour of the morning more like an Open House model and add the 60 minutes somewhere throughout the day. Nancy asked the chairs to bring back to their departments for discussion.

D & F List (N. Neu)

Nancy said that at the last staff development day, teachers were given a hand-out with the breakdown on the number of D's and F's in each department by semester. Nancy said that it is important to look at in the departments and we will be speaking with different teachers. Nancy said we will continue to look at interventions.

Announcements:

Open House (N. Neu)

Nancy talked about the Redwood 50th Celebration and asked the chairs to talk to their departments about classroom displays. She would like the classrooms to look good for Open House. Nancy said that there maybe guided tours into the classrooms as part of the 50th Celebration, but reinforced that at no point classrooms will be left unlocked or unattended. Nancy said the tours should be every 20 minutes from 10 – 3 p.m. and she will speak with Marilee Rogers about manning the classroom. Students are also signed up to help with the tours.

Schedule Change (S. Lovelady)

Skip said that due to pressure from the parent community, the Kentfield School District changed the start date for the first day of school to August 31st. This change will start for the next school year.

Warranted Absence Forms (S. Hettleman)

Steve wanted to reiterate the signature process for warranted absence forms. Per the directions on the form, students are to have the appropriate grade level assistant principal sign the form before the teachers sign. Bring back to departments.

Meeting adjourned at 4:52 p.m.