

Hawthorne High School

2/16/2010 Faculty Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting notes taken by D. Barnes. Minutes written by Daniel Barnes. Possible edits by Sandra Goins.

CVSTA Representatives Present: Steve Anderson, Daniel Barnes

CVSTA Representatives Absent: Pedro Martinez

Administrators Present: Elizabeth Hirata, Mark Knapp, Michael Martinez, Mark Newell, Karma Nicolis

Administrators Absent: none

1. ROOM CLEANING: FAC PROCEDURAL CHANGE

BULLETIN: As an inter-union courtesy, from now on, the first complaint FAC receives from any given teacher about room cleaning will be sent to the head custodian (currently Sean Brown) for forwarding to the custodian who cleans that teacher's room, rather than being sent directly to the administrators. To protect complainer anonymity, the identity of the complaining individual will be left out of the missive sent to the head custodian, and, instead, the origin of the complaint will be referred to only by building number. If FAC receives a second complaint from the same teacher during a subsequent FAC cycle, the problem will then be brought to the attention of the administrators at the next FAC meeting. Therefore, because this is becoming a two-stage process, classroom teachers are encouraged to re-complain and re-complain and re-complain to FAC as long as any problem persists, in order to make sure that cleaning deficits are actually corrected. At the point where the problem needs to be brought to the attention of the administrators, the plant manager will probably need the complainer to reveal his/her identity to him, along with all other relevant details, if any formal action is to be taken against the complainee. However, as stated in a previous edition of the FAC minutes, the plant manager (M. Knapp) has sworn that he will keep the identity of the complainer a secret so that the complainee can not carry out a campaign of focused vendetta against the complainer.

This procedural change was initiated by a recurring and strenuous suggestion made to the FAC chair by SBUT director Sandra Goins, and was further midwifed into being by a fact-finding discussion that occurred between the FAC chair and a high-ranking official of the UFCW regarding how that very large union handles complaints made by their members against members of sister unions (such as the Teamsters). The UFCW official said that it is policy for UFCW to contact the alleged offender directly by phone, and then by letter if necessary, and inform management only after these two attempts fail to correct the sister union member's alleged deficits/violations. Often, this can save a responsive complainee from having his record besmirched by an official complaint, and it can save the time of busy managers/administrators who have millions of things to do besides fielding the complaints of one employee against another.

SBUT director Sandra Goins also advocates that teachers who have complaints about other teachers inform those union brothers/sisters directly and allow the colleague in question a chance to remedy the concern on his/her own before using any method, FAC or otherwise, to bring the complaint to the attention of the administrators. Therefore, FAC will be making complaints by one CVSTA member against another a two-stage process as well. It is hoped that the various benefits of this re-tooling of the process will outweigh any new bureaucratic load it creates.

If you have already attempted to address any given issue directly with the complainee in question but that direct request has met with at least one month of failure to resolve the problem, then feel free to say so in your correspondence with FAC and your concern will be brought before the administrators at the next FAC meeting without further delay.

That being said, specific room-cleaning complaints aired at this FAC meeting concerned the 9, 18, 20, and 22 buildings. Complaints included sweeping and waste basket issues as well as one complaint about a custodian smoking in his car. On the bright side, one teacher praised Keion Wiggs' fine work in the 16 building. Two teachers reported that the 23 building is getting better cleaning lately. An anonymous individual submitted a note praising the custodial staff in general. One teacher expressed distress at Shawn Brown's recent extended absence and hoped he would be back soon. Mr. Brown is, in fact, back on the job [cue applause], and, being the current head custodian, was a key player in setting up the procedural change mentioned earlier in this item.

Plant Manager Mark Knapp said that he almost has a full night crew again. Mr. Knapp said that he has been inspecting rooms and calling custodians back in to them to make them finish half-completed work. He also suggested that if a teacher allows students to eat in the classroom, students should deposit food trash in the large garbage cans outside the rooms rather than in the small waste baskets inside the rooms. Knapp said that he told custodians that it's okay not to change liners if the only trash in them is dry paper, but that if there is any liquid in a waste basket, its liner must be replaced. Mr. Knapp said that over the next 3-4 weeks, there should be improvements in dry mopping effectiveness due to special treatments being carried out on the mop heads, as well as the securing of an alternative means of laundering the mop heads. (Apparently, the machine used to launder them had been destroyed by non-custodial use of the washing machine.)

2. HEATERS: Buildings 9 and 22 added to the heater non-function complaint list this month.

Heater news from Mr. Knapp:

- Building 6's heater is now back online.
- By Friday 2/19/2010, M. Knapp should be done with his campus-wide heater survey.
- Immediately following the survey, quick fixes will be instituted immediately where possible, and, where money allows, outside contractors will be brought in to deal with tougher issues.
- Building 22's heater has been shut down by order of the Gas Company due to serious safety concerns.

3. INAUDIBLE BELLS UPDATE: Mr. Knapp said that over Spring break, small but very audible ringers will be

installed in each room in the 23 building. I believe the same will be done for the other two new two-story buildings, 3 and 11.

4. CUSTODIAN TASK FREQUENCY LIST: M. Knapp said that by the time you are reading the brown paper hard copy of these very minutes, he will have already e-mailed faculty a list of just how often various room-cleaning tasks are to be done, including sweeping, waste basket emptying, damp mopping, and other tasks. M. Newell said that we need clearly defined responsibility lists for both teachers and custodians. UPDATE: M. Knapp e-mailed the list on 2/25/2010. Thanks, Mark!

5. MUSAK REMORSE: Two teachers recanted their "yea" votes on piping music in over the PA speakers after hearing music in the pre-8 AM hours one day recently. Mr. Martinez said that this was just a one-time test, and that any actual playing of music will be restricted to nutrition break.

6. INTERRUPTIONS: (This one is becoming almost as frequent as room-cleaning complaints.) Some teachers are becoming so infuriated by the frequency of P.A. interruptions that they're ready to physically disconnect their speakers. Teachers complained that (1) kids are hard to rein back in after announcements; (2) announcements disrupt the teacher's train of thought; (3) announcements in 6th period tax time from the shortest period of the day. Nonetheless, various teachers feel that the principal's presence on the P.A. is a positive factor here. One teacher mentioned that predictability/consistency of announcement timing would make it easier for teachers to make sure they have wrapped up their lessons before the announcements begin.

7. WEST GATE: Two teachers complained that the west gate is only half-opened, forming a bottleneck which stifles the flow of pedestrians and vehicle traffic, who must share the narrow aperture. Two teachers complained about the new 4:30 PM west gate closure time as well.

In response, M. Knapp said that the problem of parents driving like speed demons makes it unsafe to leave both halves of the gate open. When installation of speed bumps was suggested, Knapp countered that since the back road is a fire response vehicle access road, speed bumps are against the law. (Fire trucks just don't have the suspension that monster trucks do.) Knapp and M. Martinez said that if they can spare the security manpower, they'd like to post an officer at the gate in the mornings and afternoons to let parents know in person that they are not to use that access point to drop off or pick up students. They mentioned the possibility of placing a removable sign in the driveway during peak pick-up/drop-off hours advertising (in English and in Spanish) that the west gate is an employees-only access point, that parents must use the main parking lot only as their drop-off/pick-up zone. Admin present were friendly to the idea that perhaps a pool parking lot drop-off/pick-up zone could, perhaps, be established to relieve the traffic pressure created by the closing off of the west gate to parents. Because of habits already ingrained in the parents, it was mentioned that perhaps this policy might have to wait until the beginning of the next school year to go into effect.

Regarding the 4:30 pm closing of the gate, Knapp cited widespread vandalism once again. The official position of admin regarding teachers getting locked in remains that if a teacher knows that he will not be leaving until rather late on any given night, he should park (or re-park) his vehicle in the main lot out front.

It occurred to this author after the FAC meeting was already over that SRLA runners come back onto campus awfully close to 5 pm, and a 4:30 pm closing might shut them out. Considering, though, that these hard-core athletes are training for the glorious punishment of the LA Marathon, making them re-enter campus through the main gate after their runs should only make them stronger and actually do them a service.

A tangential but related discussion ensued about teachers and others driving cars across the center of campus, which is a clearly unsafe practice, not to mention that it spreads dirt all over the concrete and creates mud bogs where there used to be level grass. Parents and teachers are simply not allowed to do this, but, once again, the availability of security personnel is a limiting factor in enforcing this rule with regard to either parents or teachers. Since teachers often need to carry large amounts of materials between their vehicles and classrooms, the possibility of a teacher loading zone between the cafeteria and building 4 was discussed. Mr. Anderson talked with Mr. Knapp about the difficulty of getting from the east side parking lot into nearby classrooms, especially if one is carrying a heavy load, thanks to the chain (cable?) there and the lack of any decent walkways. Knapp suggested that "decomposed granite" could be used to create less soggy walkways in the area.

8. TARDIES: One teacher lamented that on a day we had an 8 AM tardy sweep, 220 kids were caught, and that was on a day when they knew the sweep was occurring. That teacher wondered with consternation how many more are tardy on days when there is no advertised sweep in motion, allowing habitually-tardy students to slack off uninhibitedly.

9. STUDENT RESTROOMS CLOSED: One teacher complained that the west boys' room in particular is closed during passing periods far too often, and at other times when it should be open. Knapp said that it should be closed only once in a blue moon and that he would look into it. Regarding closures after school, Knapp said that if any teacher is going to have an after-school activity of any kind, please e-mail him and he'll make sure the student restrooms are open. This should continue to ensure that teachers supervising after-school activities are not tempted to allow students into faculty restrooms.

10. DRACONIAN GRADE SUBMISSION DUE DATE: One teacher felt that the Monday 9 AM grades deadline occurred a little too soon after the last final exam. Students who are legitimately absent on final exam days have no time to make up those tests before the hard deadline expires. In the old days, the process had a stage that has now disappeared: the printing, teacher examination/editing, and returning to data processing of grade verification rosters. Now the initial grade submission and verification process happens in a single, combined stage, since teachers input grade info directly

into PowerTeacher, the very application from which grades are directly downloaded. This is a sleeker process, but it does remove the two or three-day time buffer that used to make grades submission a little less stressful than they have just become. Admin stated that teachers are contractually required to put in full work days during the two days of final exam schedule, despite the fact that the students go home earlier than usual. Also, the no-student day (typically a Friday) after exams (misleadingly referred to as "mid-semester break" when it should be called "inter-semester break") is to be used as yet another full work day for grade processing purposes, though this work can be done at home according to teacher preference. Therefore, the processing of last-minute assignments and tests should be easily accomplished in time for a Monday morning deadline such as what we just had.

11. PRAISE FOR OFFICER MENDEZ: One teacher appreciates Officer Mendez being tough on students when it's needed. This teacher suggested that the fact that he has two students attending here adds to his seriousness. Perhaps everyone should conduct themselves as though their own kids were students here. (On second thought, if you're MacKenzie Phillips' dad or Andrea Yates, please disregard the previous sentence.)

12. VOICE OF HAWTHORNE: One teacher complained that the "Voice of Hawthorne" should only ever be the principal. This proposition was loudly rejected by many present at the meeting, including both M. Martinez and M. Newell.

13. WALKIE TALKIE CONTROVERSY: One teacher complained that two certificated employees, who aren't administrators, have been issued walkie-talkies. This complaining teacher feels that if they aren't administrators, they should stop being treated as though they are. (Although only one teacher officially complained about two teachers carrying walkie-talkies, FAC chair learned after the FAC meeting that the one teacher is not alone. At least one other teacher feels the same way.) M. Martinez said that the two teachers in question carry out special functions that make carrying a walkie-talkie appropriate. For one example, the two teachers double as athletic coaches, and don't have access to phones when on the field during practice. M. Martinez said that if any teacher has a valid request to be issued a walkie-talkie and there is one available, that teacher will be issued one. He mentioned that having one can be as much of a burden as it is a privilege. It might seem to follow that unless someone really needs a walkie-talkie, he'll probably get

sick of the thing and gladly return it, the device amounting to both a distracting noisemaker and a leash. FAC chair confesses that he failed, at the meeting, to bring up the consideration that privileged information may be aired on the walkie-talkie network, and that some parents and other entities may take issue with substitutes being put within electronic earshot of sensitive information. FAC chair also failed, at the meeting, to mention the complainer's implication that allowing substitute teachers to have access to sensitive information may actually be a violation of the law. Since walkie-talkie carriers have those devices turned up to audible levels when strapped to their belts, they're pretty leaky devices anyway, and, therefore, perhaps sensitive information should never be transmitted over the walkie-talkie network. You never know who's standing nearby those things when they start to squawk. This issue may be as much a matter of how they are used as of who uses them.

14. ODD/EVEN SCHEDULE DAYS = DOUBLE BLOCK HELL: One teacher said that full school days where only three classes meet for two hours each should be 1/2/5 and 3/4/6 rather than 1/3/5 and 2/4/6. If you're teaching an intervention class, it typically meets periods 1 & 5 or periods 2 & 6. Therefore, on such oddly-scheduled days like what we had during the SLC/Special Programs Fairs in the cafeteria, intervention teachers had to see the same [^&%&] kids for four hours in the same [\\$%#^] day. That's a little much, so the complaint went. (Although only one teacher formally complained, several others have essentially made the same complaint within earshot of this author over the years.) K. Nicolis and E. Hirata said that we will take this complainer's suggestion seriously and switch to the proposed schedule as early as the 3/16 CAHSEE administration and all through next year.

15. WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE: One teacher complained that there's a lot of brazen pot smoking and groping/kissing (not necessarily at the same time by the same people) behind the 22 building (and perhaps in other areas?). The teacher requested that the back of the 22 building be swept by security more often. M. Martinez said that he will direct security to patrol that area. He also said that he will direct maintenance to re-paint the lines on the pavement to more clearly delineate the boundaries of the lunch/nutrition no-loitering zones. It was also suggested at the meeting that teachers wandering the halls during their prep periods should, whenever possible, inform the teachers of students they see loitering. The fact that our hall pass clipboards typically have room numbers stencil-painted onto their backs should make this easier.

If you have any complaints, suggestions, or praise that you would like added to the next FAC meeting's agenda, please email misterbarneshhs@socal.rr.com. You may also leave a note in Dan Barnes' box. Also, please let Mr. Barnes know your observations of how well the promises made in these minutes are being enacted.