

Hawthorne High School

4/21/2010 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, Pedro Martinez
Administrators Present: Mark Knapp, Michael Martinez, Mark Newell,
Administrators Absent: Karma Nicolis, Elizabeth Wilson

1. AP APPLICATION PROCESSING:

The contents of recommendation letters written by teachers that should have been kept in confidence were revealed to the very students from whose eyes they were supposed to be hidden. Several angry students subsequently accosted teachers who had written frank, critical comments about them. If protocol had been followed, these confrontations would not have been possible. M. Newell said that this mistake will never happen again. Also, teachers complained about multiple instances of AP course applicants being handled tactlessly and/or brutally enough that they broke down in tears, frustrated at their inability to rise to their highest possible academic potential, dejected at having been told they would never go to college, etc.. M. Newell responded to these allegations by saying that students who failed the round of appeals in question have yet one more round of appeals to go, but that this will not occur until after (STAR?) testing. There is yet hope for many. M. Newell said that we need to write up a clearly stated and fairly crafted policy/procedure for AP application handling so that these issues do not arise again next year. M. Newell said that he, personally, has a very accommodating attitude toward marginally/dubiously qualified students taking AP courses. He likes to give ambitious students a chance. The picture of rampant exclusionism forming from the cluster of anecdotes about traumatized applicants will, it is hoped, be replaced by something rosier when our AP application process is re-tooled and clarified. AP courses are difficult, and kids need to know what they're getting into, but, at the same time, we must take care not to unnecessarily/wrongfully exclude those who are actually quite qualified to take on the risks and burdens, especially when declining enrollment makes it especially important not to force ambitious students (the very students our sagging API desperately needs) to go elsewhere to get what we refuse/fail to give them here. In news somewhat related to the AP issue, M. Newell said that he talked to a specific counselor who had reportedly told a student that he should not be in a certain SLC because it would decrease his chances of college admissions. The counselor denied the allegation, said Newell.

2. WEST GATE:

Complaints have continued to come in from teachers who have been locked in when the west ("Bally's") gate is closed. M. Knapp said that M. Newell's directive from the last FAC meeting is being

followed, that the gate is, indeed, being closed at the new, later time of 5:30 pm. Even though this allows for one more hour of easy vandal access to the west side of campus (facilitated further by all security personnel going home by 4:30 pm), Knapp said that the amount of vandalism now is still much better than when the gate was left open until 10 pm. It's looking like the new 5:30 pm locking time is good enough to be stable. Realistically, teachers need to give themselves about a ten minute margin for error or so in getting out before the gate is locked, because it is being locked punctually. If a teacher is ever locked in, in spite of having tried his darnedest to get out before 5:30 pm, that locked-in teacher should locate custodian Jose Estrada, who works in the 19 building vicinity, and, therefore, is the employee chosen to lock the gate every day. Shawn Brown, the head custodian, also has a key. Teachers who find themselves needing to locate a gate key possessor more than once or twice need to make a more stringent effort to get finished, packed up, and out the door by 5:20 or so. Don't be tardy going home! Regarding the issuance of gate keys to teachers, M. Knapp reminded FAC that the gates were re-keyed at the beginning of the school year because of negligence and abuse last year. On one occasion, the superintendent came by HHS on a weekend and found that the gate was wide open, the campus vulnerable. This was just one instance within a broader pattern of weekend gate abuse. Because admin, at both the site and district level, have been spooked to the point of death grip reticence, teachers who need to leave campus in the middle of a school day need to park in the main lot, not in the west lot. No gate keys will be issued this year, or next year, to teachers.

3. CUSTODIAL ISSUES:

Initial complaints that were given to FAC this month have been forwarded to the head custodian for subsequent forwarding to the custodians in charge of the classrooms from which those complaints originated. If complaints re-occur during the next monthly cycle, those complaints will be given to admin during FAC, as per the new policy, so keep re-complaining if your cleaning needs remain un-addressed. Even if you feel like the system is failing, make sure that if it does fail, it doesn't fail because of you. Keep documenting, and keep complaining.

One issue that seemed too dangerous for the new one-month courtesy reporting delay policy was an

incursion of black widows in the building 6 faculty restrooms. This was reported immediately and directly to M. Knapp, but it was not discussed at the FAC meeting due to various distractions and time challenges. However, M. Knapp had already acknowledged the black widow report when it was forwarded to him, a week or two before the FAC meeting, so it is assumed to have been physically addressed by now. If anyone reading this is still seeing black widows, please keep re-reporting the problem, or no news will be assumed to be good news. If you're seeing pink elephants, please call your AA sponsor.

While discussing a heated difference of opinion regarding the thoroughness of the custodial servicing of a particular classroom, FAC visited the general topic of teachers allowing students to eat in classrooms. Almost everyone present was vocally in support of the practice of teachers building a stronger, warmer, more nurturing community by allowing teachers to allow students to eat in their rooms during lunch and/or nutrition. However, FAC members all recognized the extra burden this places upon the custodians who service these rooms, since eating generates extra trash and extra messes. While no official policy was crystallized in definite terms, it is likely that while teachers will probably continue to be allowed to make the decision about whether or not to allow eating in their own classrooms during lunch/nutrition, any teachers who do make such allowances will have to compensate for the extra trash and mess by emptying their wastebaskets into the outside garbage cans themselves, or, perhaps, having the very students who benefit from this policy do it themselves. The point is that the custodians have barely enough time to clean up the amount of chaos and filth created even when food is not eaten in rooms, so they really need us to help shoulder any extra load we create by allowing eating.

In a related matter, M. Knapp brought up specific obstacles that teachers are placing in the way of custodians that make their job more difficult, such as extension cords draped across floors, books left under desks, piles of chaotic mess left in various places on the floor, etc.. We need to help the custodians help us. We need to work as a team. The custodians have a list of responsibilities that many teachers feel is not being honored. The teachers also have a list of responsibilities which is likewise not being honored by everyone. M. Knapp said that yes, he would be happy to visit teachers in their classrooms to bring to their attention specific items that impede their custodians' ability to carry out their duties. Increasing communication in a frank yet diplomatic way when there is little time to do so may be difficult, but it seems to be a

necessary part of the solution to the general uncleaned filth problem.

4. CAHSEE SUGGESTIONS:

Mya Caruso collected a cornucopia of suggestions from a handful of teachers who thought of ways that the CAHSEE could be administered better next year. Before the FAC meeting even occurred, M. Newell had already established that a new committee would form and meet in the week following the FAC meeting to discuss CAHSEE issues. M. Caruso and other teachers will be in that committee. Due to the way things take time to happen, it's possible that by the time you're reading these minutes, the meeting will already have occurred. I hope that some mass communication will be sent out notifying the general faculty of the upcoming meeting so that all interested parties can have would shown up and put in their two cents. My verb tense is getting really strained here, so having would forgive me if I have stumbled.

5. HEATERS/AC:

M. Knapp said that the malfunctioning climate control in the 10 building is due to the antiquated thermostat, not the heater itself, but that a low-tech, labor-intensive workaround can and will be implemented. To wit, a maintenance worker will show up in person on cold mornings and turn on the heater for a few hours in advance of school starting to keep the colder room from freezing, but that worker will come again to turn it off to keep the hotter room from boiling.

The three newer, two-story buildings (3, 11, 23) seem to have a construction flaw involving an iron weld somewhere in the heater that is suffering widespread, lemon-style, multi-unit failure. (But, of course, as Murphy's Law would have it, the failures occur only *after* the warranty period has expired.) The 23 building's heater has had this problem fixed and is up and running again. Overhauls are planned.

6. MISSING STUFF:

Over spring break, custodians did some major cleaning in the 18 building, but because it was raining, they couldn't just leave stuff piled outside their rooms of origin. Instead, they had to move stuff to adjacent rooms in adjacent buildings (such as 16-3). Unfortunately, this resulted in mix-ups during the repatriation process, and several building 18 teachers reported missing furniture and other items upon their return to work. M. Knapp said that most of the reported missing items have been returned to their classrooms of origin (ex: 1.5 cases of paper), but that some items have not yet been found (ex: foam core poster board). M. Knapp will stay on the lookout for as-yet unreturned items. Knapp also said that a pencil sharpener reported broken off from

its moorings was, indeed, broken by the custodial crew during the spring cleaning, and a work order for repair has already been initiated. As a side note, during the discussion of the disappearances, M. Knapp brought attention to certain furniture items whose presence/ location/ arrangement make custodial cleaning more difficult.

7. WEST STUDENT RR CLOSED:

Although security has been following a policy of closing the west restrooms during nutrition and lunch, this is intended to be only a temporary countermeasure against a recent spate of trash can fires and similar incidents. However, this author just yesterday had to pour a jug of water on a flaming trash can in the west boys' room, so it doesn't look like the problem is over.

8. BELLS DISAGREE WITH BULLETIN:

All admin and a few other site employees (6 or more total individuals) will soon be trained in bell programming so that on days when Rushdi Bolous is absent or detained, there will be someone who can re-program the bells as necessary to reflect whatever bizarre schedule variant may be in effect that day. After this training, ostensibly, we will never again wonder whether we should obey the printed weekly bulletin or the sound of the bells when the two contradict one another, because they will simply never contradict one another ever again. Yes, things will be perfect from now on. Consider yourself warned.

9. 420 86'ed:

One teacher reported a big improvement in the pot-smoking situation behind the 22 building. Bravo, security!

10. MASTER SCHEDULE SURPRISES:

One department head requested that Dr. Newell make sure to include dept heads in the collaboration to determine the master schedule for next fall. This should prevent an "August surprise", as happened last year. Admin has been more ambitious about

getting the master schedule determined earlier than ever this year, so it's looking like a meeting with dept heads should be possible sometime in Mid-May or thereabouts, although this meeting cannot occur until Dr. Newell meets with the Superintendent. In part, keeping dept heads in the loop was more difficult last year due to the inordinately large number of RIF's, a problem which should be of much smaller magnitude this year thanks to all that extra money we've got now. (You know -- the money that helped fund the Superintendent's recent pay raise. Thank God the recession is over for us here in CV!) With fewer RIF's, the number of sections of each course will be less in doubt, and the schedule will be much easier to set in stone much earlier.

11. MIKE'S GOT YOUR BACK:

One anonymous teacher praised assistant principal Michael Martinez for filling in on an emergency basis on multiple occasions for absent teachers. In a nearly suicidal display of further generosity, M. Martinez declared at the FAC meeting that if any teacher ever needs him to show up and take over the class for any reason, just give him a call. Need a break? M. Martinez' extension is 4403.

12. TARDIES:

One teacher thought that random tardy sweeps were working great, but only for the period during which they were enacted. This teacher knows of a school that solved a major tardy problem similar to ours, but the solution required the stalwart, patriotic buy-in of every teacher on campus. M. Martinez stated that he would love to know more about that other school's miracle cure. If the anonymous teacher who submitted this enticing, elliptical anecdote could come forward and provide admin with more details of that other school's success story, I'm sure all admin, not just M. Martinez, would be keen to hear about it.

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.