

# Redwood High School

## Department Chair Council

### Minutes of the November 5, 2008 DCC Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 3:33 p.m. Present: Dave Plescia, Fran Bozdech, Julianne Schrick, David Goldsmith, Jennifer Harris, Ann Jaime, Skip Lovelady, Keith Murray, Nancy Neu, Chris Gilmore, Nancy Malcolm and Steve Hettleman. Parents: Elaine Bengle, Ashu Sikand, Suman Vyas. Students: Amy Bettencourt, Anders Miltner, and Jill Waxman. Minutes taken by Sam Miller.

#### Minutes of 10/1/08 DCC Meeting (N. Neu)

Minutes were accepted as amended.

#### Feedback Item – Proposed Final Exam Schedule Change (N. Neu)

- **Applied Tech** – Yes, they value finals. They have no problem with having senior frolic earlier in the year. They are strongly against having a day of reflection.
- **Students Activities** – They like having the finals at the same time. It is unreal to move senior frolic, but liked the idea. They are not interested in a day of reflection. If graduation is moved to Friday, still have a final on that day instead of a day of reflection.
- **P.E.** – No feedback available. Will bring back at next DCC meeting.
- **Students** – Most students thought a day of reflection was pointless and should be optional, and not meant for academics. Graduation should be held on Thursday.
- **Science** – They unanimously value finals. They like the idea of a rotating final exam schedule. Possible even look at some scenario where the seniors take their finals with everyone else and taken at the same time.
- **Parents** – They like the idea of a rotating schedule. They suggested having one final on the last day of school in order to have time to reflect; if needed or start the finals one day earlier.
- **Classified** – Nancy made several points that should be addressed prior to making changes to the schedule. They included: the bell schedule would need to be reprogrammed; having the finals earlier might cause more parties to take place in the classrooms; the senior check-out process would be impacted; how would senior fees be collected; the custodial staff would be impacted; if the graduation was held on a Saturday, the custodians would have to be paid overtime; Summer School would be impacted as they would have less time to set-up; and Community Ed program might be impacted.
- **Counselors** – They believe that finals are a good idea when actually given. A day of reflection may not be workable. Having senior frolic earlier would be fine, but different locations should be considered to make it worthwhile.
- **Social Studies** – They think that a Friday evening graduation may work, but would like to have a minimum work day on that Friday. Half the department had no opinion on the day of reflection and the other half agreed to it. They agreed about valuing finals and want to give finals. They prefer to have senior frolic at the end of the year.
- **Math** – They value giving final exams. Julianne talked to several students about having a day of reflection and they said they would like to have it. The department is in favor of a rotating final exam schedule and would like to move graduation to the Friday.
- **Special Ed** – They support giving final exams, but they have problems with the amount of points given for a final exam. They don't want a day of reflection or moving the graduation to a Friday. They believe that senior frolic should not be moved earlier.
- **English** – They agreed that senior frolic should be moved to May and agreed to trying a rotating schedule. The English department does not give summative finals.
- **World Languages** – Greg polled 8 members of his department, asking if they value finals and want a week of dedicated to finals with full 2-hour blocks for each final. The vote was unanimous with 8 yes votes. Greg asked his department about a rotating schedule and the vote was again unanimous with 8 yes votes. Greg then asked his department if they support starting finals a day early to accomplish two goals: to allow seniors to take all finals with the rest of the school and thus avoid the inconvenience of administering early finals to seniors; and to create a school day after finals to allow for reflection, closure, and a final contact between teachers and students, especially for seniors. The vote was unanimous with 8 no votes.

With a rotating schedule, final exams will be rotated each semester. Since some teachers teach both 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> periods year to year, a rotating schedule would allow for those teachers to not get stuck with the last final exam of the school year every year. It was said that in previous years, the final exam schedule was rotated each year. Nancy clarified that if we had a day of reflection, attendance would be mandatory in order to meet instructional minutes. Skip believes that having a day of reflection on the Thursday would be worth it and that student attendance would be decent. If graduation was moved to Friday, we would have to check with the middle schools regarding their calendar to avoid any conflicts. The Board has already approved the

2009-2010 school calendar reflecting graduation will be held on the last day of school. The P.E. department will bring feedback to the next DCC meeting. If it is decided to move senior frolic to earlier in the year, the concern was that this may set the wrong tone for the seniors for the remainder of the year. It might be hard for the seniors to get back into the swing of school again. Nancy suggested looking at a rotating final exam schedule for this spring.

### **Feedback Item – DCC Student Elections (N. Neu)**

Department chairs reported feedback from their departments regarding the process of electing students to DCC:

- **English** – They believe students should be elected.
- **Applied Tech** – They have no opinion on the matter.
- **P.E.** – They have no opinion on the matter.
- **Leadership** – Students said that it would be more work for them as far as passing out and counting ballots. They pointed out that historically it has been leadership students that are interested in being on the DCC.
- **World Languages** – They have no opinion in the matter.
- **Science** – They believe it should be open to all students and there should be an application and interview process.
- **Parents** – They agree with the Science department. They think students should apply then be interviewed.
- **Classified** – They believe it should be open to all students through an application and interview process.
- **Counselors** – They agreed with the open application process and then a screening that would include a short interview with a committee who would then choose.
- **Social Studies** – They had no opinion on the matter.
- **Math** – Julianne reported that her department was split. Half agreed with an open access for all students and the other half thought that they should be students in Leadership.
- **Special Ed.** – Chris said that there was no discussion in her department about it, but she likes the idea of opening it up to all students. Chris talked about how it can sometimes be intimidating for some students to get involved, especially for students in Special Ed. She believes in an easy selection process that takes place in the spring and involves students from Leadership, parents, and staff.

### **I.B Visit Debrief (S. Hettleman)**

Steve said that we are now finished with the two-day I.B. visit. Steve is cautiously optimistic that we should hear back in late December if we are becoming an I.B. school. The panel was most impressed with the students. When they asked students why they were interested in the I.B. program, they all answered differently, but not one student said that they were interested because it would look good on their college application. The I.B. panel was also impressed with the Math department's leadership and commitment. They gave many suggestions. Some suggestions included exploring offerings in other areas and emphasizing the diploma program over the certificate program. One of the visitors on the I.B. panel was formerly an I.B. coordinator and very knowledgeable about the program. They were also impressed with Nancy's leadership and commitment. Nancy said that in comparison to the WASC visit this was a very different experience. The I.B. visitors were very business-like. The personalities were very different. They followed their protocol and asked scripted questions. Nancy said that there was no paper trail, no paper work given. Nancy said that they pass along the information and they don't make the actual recommendations. Nancy commended Steve for a job well-done.

### **Foundation Feedback (Parent Allocation Grants) (N. Neu)**

Nancy said that the allocation meetings have taken place over the last three Mondays and the Foundation has given an estimated \$129,000.00 in grants. Nancy is proud of the teachers who presented grant applications. She also said that this year we had the most students on the panel than in any previous year. She believes that the student feedback adds to the decisions. Student's perspectives added a lot to the conversation and overall decisions. Nancy said that with the current questionable economy, it is not sure how much money will be raised, but the parents have been working hard making phone calls in order to raise \$750,000. Nancy said that the Foundation will be funding the replacement of the computers and updating the downstairs computer lab. The work will be started right away. The computers in the lab will be recycled back into classrooms or donated if still usable. Hopefully, the upstairs computer lab will be updated next year. Another grant application that was agreed to be funded was one submitted by John Mattern from the Music department. He requested that the 1923 piano that he wants to be restored. The cost for the restoration is \$25,000. The Music department has raised just about \$5,000 towards that cost. The allocation panel has agreed to pay for the difference. Nancy said that a list of the grants that have been approved by the allocation panel will be made public. Nancy also reminded the departments to take advantage of labeling all the items that were purchased by the parents.

### **D & F Grade Lists / Student Interventions (N. Neu)**

Nancy talked about how the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade support programs (Alpha and Academic Workshop) are making a positive impact. We are seeing improvement in student attendance, academic performance, and behavior. We will still continue to work on different interventions and ask ourselves the question, "What more can we be doing?" Nancy said that we are still looking for teachers with areas of expertise. When students drop out of an AP class, one of the options can be that the student would then become a peer tutor in and Academic Workshop class. This can be very helpful especially in Math. Nancy is

looking for teachers (i.e. Math) who would be willing to help by working with a student in the Academic Workshop class during their prep time only once or twice a week to help work with individual students. The teacher would be paid for that time. Julianne commented that it would be difficult to find any math teacher who is willing to give up their prep time. Nancy said that it may be difficult, but we need to see if it is a possibility. We can also look at having retired teachers help out. If there are any suggestions or ideas, Nancy asked that you speak with an admin or a counselor. Nancy said that the admins are currently working on the D and F lists. They are calling in students, asking why they are struggling, and working with them to find solutions. Some students appreciate the fact they are being tracked, as they claim they had no knowledge that they were slipping. The Special Ed. department is working through their PLC group to find commonalities. They are also looking at students whose STAR scores are at basic and below basic and on the D & F list and working with the district office creating a spreadsheet to identify and track these students. We need to look at what kind of program we need to develop to support these students.

### **R2 Grades (N. Neu)**

Nancy reminded everyone that as we are now coming to the end of the grading period, please make sure to include comments for every student with a C- or below. Teachers are not supposed to be giving No Marks, only in extenuating circumstances and if approved by an admin first, per Board policy. Nancy also clarified that the R2 grades are cumulative and this may be misleading to parents. She said that she would put out an email to all teachers reminding them that the R2 grades should be cumulative.

### **Announcements**

- Julianne Schrick asked that if a DCC meeting gets canceled that there be at least one day's notice.
- Dave Plescia announced that during diversity week, there will be a speaker on Thursday, February 12<sup>th</sup>. Dave asked that we flip flop the block days that week in order to accommodate the speaker's schedule. As there is plenty of notice, the department chairs felt no need to take to a vote and approved the schedule change for that week. Nancy asked Dave to make sure to give notice to the parents.
- Keith Murray reminded everyone about the assembly next week and said that he would be sending out the schedule and assignments via email tomorrow.

*Meeting adjourned at 4:44 p.m.*