

Redwood High School

Department Chair Council

Minutes of the January 21, 2009 DCC Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 3:33 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, Ashu Sikand, Suman Vyas. Students: Anders Miltner, Jill Waxman, and Amy Bettencourt. Guests: DeeAnn Ezcurra and Donna Tranchina. Minutes taken by Sam Miller.

Minutes of 11/19/08 DCC Meeting (N. Neu)

Minutes were approved as submitted.

Redwood Foundation Grant (G. Stevens)

Greg Stevens proposed to the department chairs putting through a grant application to pay for department copy costs. Copy costs eat up a large part of each department's budget. Greg said that he would be willing to write the grant proposal from the majority of the teachers or department chairs. Fran said that given these uncertain financial times, writing this grant would be a good idea. Elaine Bengle said that as officer of the Foundation, she would also appreciate teachers acknowledging the parent's contributions to their departments for various materials at Back-to-School Night and Open House. Greg said that he would also be willing to list the names of each teacher in support of the grant if the department chairs want to email him that information or department chairs can also just give him the number of teachers in their department.

Text Tracks (D. Ezcurra and D. Tranchina)

DeeAnn came to the DCC meeting to discuss the importance of teachers checking out books using Text Tracks. She said that keeping an accurate inventory and control of our books is important. DeeAnn said that currently there are five departments with 69 teachers that need to check out books. Of the 69 teachers, 38 use a check out system and 31 do not. If you assume an average class size of 20 students and if each teaches an average of 5 classes, then there are 3,100 books that are not recorded in the system and there is no way of knowing where they are. The price of these books average \$75.00. DeeAnn has been to the classrooms and met with teachers regarding the process of checking out books. Some departments check out using the online process. The English department uses smaller reader books; therefore it is more difficult to track those books. Some of the teachers are not as good as others with regards to technical applications. DeeAnn said that some of the teachers do not know how to use the Blue Bear software, so they try to use their own method instead and don't tell DeeAnn about it or some teachers don't trust using the software. This results in a large number of lost books, an even larger number of books that have an unknown status, and an incomplete and inaccurate inventory of books. Nancy Neu said that this also causes a problem with regards to senior check-out. If the books are not accurately accounted for when checked out, this creates an argumentative situation with some students at check-out time. Steve Hettleman said that teachers are constantly in the book room grabbing books and he has no time or authority to ensure that things will change. There was a suggestion to have a cadre of parents to help with the check-out process. Skip said that there really needs to be one person who checks out directly to the students. DeeAnn believes the easiest fix to this problem would be for teachers to use the Blue Bear software, but as an alternative, DeeAnn suggested using a simple spreadsheet where the teachers can record the books they issue and she will input the data into Blue Bear herself. There was one concern that there are no consequences for teachers who do not participate in the process. A suggestion was made to have it be part of the teacher evaluation process. DeeAnn will be reporting to Admin those teachers who continue to be resistant and following protocol. Nancy Neu said that she would be following up one-to-one with those specific teachers. DeeAnn plans to continue to try to improve communication between teachers and the Service Center and will hold students responsible for the books that are properly checked out to them.

Proposed Final Exam Schedule (J. Schrick)

Julianne said that when the final exam schedule committee got together they had four schedules; three of them were drafted by Julianne. Julianne carefully took into consideration the feedback that was given at the staff meeting. There was another schedule with an inequitable number of hours, which was a concern. Math comments included a lot of changes for little bonus. Steve reported that the English department opted for the schedule that was presented at the staff meeting, but there were concerns about too many days of individual classes and that the English classes have mixed grade levels and that could present a problem. He suggested having Thursday a regular day and Friday an odd block day with finals (like Friday on the old schedule). Dave Goldsmith reported that his department liked the new schedule, but they were not crazy about the Thursday mandatory day. He likes a seven period minimum day with 35 minute periods. Not an optional day of attendance. He suggested to shorten the block periods and make office hours a tutorial, so students stay on campus. He likes that the new schedule feels more like a finals week schedule. Dave said that he would email Julianne his comments and suggestions about the schedule. Nancy Malcolm's concerns included the reprogramming of the bells, and custodial staffing issues. The district custodians are shared between the sites for the graduation preparation. Nancy said that with this revised schedule, the issue

with senior check-out seems to be corrected. Skip says the majority is to have everyone take the finals together and have the teacher work day on the Thursday and graduation on the Friday; two finals on the Friday before and two finals each day there after. He said the senior activity can be on the Thursday. He wants a weighted vote. Nancy Neu commented about having the graduation on Thursday. The concerns about the custodial staff and how the D.O. coordinates the various graduations would have to be discussed and it won't happen for this year. Drake has their graduation on Friday historically. Nancy continued by saying that she is willing to ask the other sites about trading the graduation day, but it will still need to be discussed amongst the staff and they would have to also be willing. Chris Gilmore had a number of problems with the old schedule, but likes the new one. She doesn't like the senior activity on the last day of finals and is not in agreement with the day of reflection, but okay with a minimum day of reflection. Greg agrees with the new schedule and says that the day of reflection was not popular in his department. Greg reported that the current schedule has a Monday with one final followed by six abbreviated periods. It is difficult to teach after a final has already been administered. The proposed schedule would have three such days, days where students take finals and then go to classes. It would be very difficult to make those periods productive, certainly no new material could be presented. It seems that we are left with three review days instead of one and an additional activities day after the final. He also states that most of his department feels that the closure they need can be accomplished the day of the final itself and that the suggestion of a school-wide assembly the day after finals was unanimously rejected. Fran reported that the counseling department had questions about the day of reflection, but agrees that this schedule is something that can be piloted for this year. She wants to know if we can avoid having that first final split. Ann Jaime agrees with Fran and says we should just give it a test run and see how it goes. Erik Berkowitz said his department was split on the reflection day. They like that seven period is not a split final. The next steps now are to take back to and have a weighted vote. Comments can be emailed to Julianne, so she can make the needed tweaks on the schedule. If there are not enough votes for the new schedule, then we will default back to the old one. Julianne can send it back out for changes. The schedule will be discussed at the next meeting and then we'll have a weighted vote.

STAR Schedule (K. Murray)

Keith reported that STAR testing will begin the week we come back from spring break. The schedule will be the same as last year's only changes to the dates. Redstock and the Redwood 50th Celebration will also be happening that same week. There were some questions regarding the office hours on Wednesday not needed or used by students. If we cancel office hours for that week we need to check with all the departments first, as some students may use that time for make-up activity time in P.E. The English department agreed to leave the office hours there. If students don't come, then they don't come. Another suggestion was to shorten the day to 3:11 PM. Nancy Neu said that the administrators will soon be going into the U.S. History classes to discuss the seriousness of the test with students.

Digital Signage (D. Plescia)

Dave Plescia and Kim Stiffler have been working together with Joel Hames on digital signage. They have been looking into digital media software, so information can be presented on a digital projection screen in various locations. Dave said that it's very simplistic. They are currently looking into two different companies that provide software to schools. Having this technology available would help disseminate information to students much more efficiently. Information can be streamed off the internet. Dave and Kim will be writing a grant to the Redwood Foundation for approximately \$16,000. This will cover the cost of two screens, but more screens can be implemented later. Dave asked that this information be taken back to departments as an information item only.

Additional Items:

Consensus (N. Neu)

Nancy announced that the IB courses were approved by the Board at the meeting last night. She said that we may get notice possibly next week from IB if we have been authorized. Steve called IB to find out and when they would be making the announcement and they said by the end of this week we should hear.

Sub Badges (S. Hettleman)

Steve said that it was mentioned to him by another teacher in his department that it might be a good idea to create ID badges for the substitutes. All agreed. Sam will create badges for the subs.

Scheduling for Next Year (F. Bozdech)

Fran said that Nancy Neu will be sending out dates for scheduling next year for 9th, 10th, and 11th. People should be preparing. March 12th is the 8th grade night.

AP/Honors Matrix Meeting (N. Neu)

Nancy and Fran reminded everyone about the AP/Honors Matrix Meeting on January 26th at 2:30 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 4:52 p.m.