

Redwood High School

Department Chair Council

Minutes of the April 1, 2009 DCC Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 3:34 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, Suman Vyas, and Ashu Sikand. Students: Anders Miltner, Amy Bettencourt, and Mitko Radonov. Guests: Louise Aliano and Kim Stiffler. Minutes taken by Sam Miller.

Minutes of 3/18/09 DCC Meeting (N. Neu)

Minutes were accepted as submitted.

First Day Schedule (N. Neu)

Science Dept. – They liked this year’s schedule the way it was. Skip commented that the supervision in the morning needs to be tighter than it was. The 11th and 12th graders were hanging out on campus.

Applied Tech. Dept. – They do not like the 14 period option. Dave would like to try the Open House format. He believes that would achieve the goal with just having 9th graders there. If that’s not an option, then he would like to stick to a normal first day schedule. It was too difficult with mixed classes.

Special Ed. Dept. – They had no strong opinion, but they prefer the 10 minute periods.

Leadership – Dave reported that the upper classmen liked coming in late, but the 9th grade students unanimously liked the 15 minute periods. The 10 minutes periods would be too short. They liked the structure of the 15 minute periods.

Social Studies Dept. – They were okay with the change. They have one teacher who works part time that may have some difficulty with the change. They were okay with either the 15 or 10 minute periods.

P.E. Dept. – They said the altered first day schedule was useful and good thing. They believe the Open House idea is a better plan. They like the shorter 10 minute periods.

English Dept. – They empathized with the 9th grade teachers. They like the old first day schedule and believe the 10 minute periods are too frantic.

Classified Staff – No specific feedback. They will work with whatever schedule.

Math Dept. – They are not for it. They prefer the Open House format. There should be an additional 60 minutes left in the instructional minutes. She would like to have a weighted vote.

Students – the 9th graders liked the first day schedule. It helped to relieve the first day nerves and helplessness feeling.

Fine Arts Dept. – They were split. Some didn’t care if the periods were 10 or 15 minutes. Having 14 periods was difficult for some, but others were okay with it. Need to vote in order to be fair. Erik also commented that Link Crew thought the schedule worked well.

Counseling Dept. – Fran said that the 9th graders had nothing to compare it to. The schedule didn’t have an impact on the counseling office.

Nancy said to bring back the 10 or 15 minute day vote. Nancy said that she would have to look at the total instructional minutes in the school for the 60 minute Open House schedule to be considered at a later date. She also said that we tried the 15 minute schedule this year, evaluated it, and can address teacher issues should we go with either of the two options. Louise said that Open House option didn’t go through the Site Council. Dave Goldsmith said that he would like to have the Open House option as part of the weighted vote. Nancy reiterated that the issues that are currently being addressed are the 10 and 15 periods. The Open House is what they would do the Friday before school starts during orientation. The only difference would be that students would have their schedules. Dave believes the same thing can be achieved with the Open House schedule.

Chris Gilmore says that may be too chaotic. Jennifer Harris commented that having that schedule may be too hectic on teachers. Erik Berkowitz said the Link Crew is trying to find ways to make it easier for teachers. Link leaders can have set activities to be done in the 15 minute schedule. Regardless of what is decided, Link Crew will work it out. Julianne said that she wants a 7 period day with 50 minute periods for the first day. She wants to set the tone for the first day. Nancy reminded everyone that this was a pilot and to bring back to departments for input. Realistically, we would need a two-year commitment to work on it and that’s why it is called a “pilot”. We survey and bring back with the intent to make adjustments and then bring back for a second year. Ann Jaime commented that it was very easy for teachers who don’t have freshmen, but inequitable for teachers with mixed classes. Kim Stiffler asked that in the big picture what is 10 or 15 minutes if it will help alleviate anxiety for students. Both Nancy and Louise agreed that they value the idea of the purpose of the first day schedule for the 9th graders and understands the overwhelming sense that the 9th graders feel on the first day. Nancy Malcolm asked if the needs of the student outweigh the needs of the teachers. She said that she felt the relaxation of the teachers rather than the anxiety of the students. Erik Berkowitz asked where we were in the process. Louise commented that the Open House format puts the burden on the students. It is less structured and some students may wonder off campus. There is less supervision as the classified staff are busy with schedule distribution, emergency cards, etc. Some elements of the Open House format have flaws. Nancy said that the Open House format was not an initial option. Steve Hettleman said that the Link Crew can help direct the freshman.

The purpose of the new schedule is so that the freshman can meet their teachers and learn their way around the school. A comment about sample schedules given to students was made. This would help students with timing their way around to rooms. Nancy said that she likes the idea of a time limit on pilots. Nancy said to bring the 10 or 15 minute options back to departments for a vote and email Sam with the numbers.

Field Trips (N. Neu)

Greg said that his department brainstormed ideas regarding field trips and said that students who have D's and F's should have to automatically attend office hours and not go on a field trip. That should be a blanket rule for any student with D's and/or F's. A comment was made about graded field trips. Nancy said that she is not aware of any graded field trips. Skip commented that David Nash had 31 Physics students gone a field trip on the same day. Field trips for teachers with lab-based courses are difficult. There are also all the other reasons that students miss class (i.e. sick, college trips, athletics, etc.). Skip reiterated that we do not have an attendance policy that says something happens after 10 days of absence no matter what the absence is for. We control the absences for field trips, but not for the other reasons. Kim Stiffler said that they talked about it in Leadership and did not see the issues with regards to field trips. She said that out of 60 students, 15 went on a field trip this year; maybe 5 students out of the 60 went on two field trips. The students said they are not impacted negatively by field trips. Field trips engage them and give some of them an experience that they may not otherwise be able to experience. It also gives students the experience to negotiate with their teachers. They didn't see the issue. Ann Jaime said that her department said that they have habitual field trips. They are constantly signing warranted absence forms. It is difficult for students to make up the work when they miss class. Students do a lot of independent study, including Mock Senate. The feeling is that attendance is not a student's priority. Nancy said that if teachers want to start checking student's grades for D's and F's, they have the responsibility to check the last grade report and pull kids so that they don't go, but that teacher must make arrangements for those kids for that period. We may want to consider, as it doesn't put the burden on the other teachers. Fran commented that grade checking can take a long time and may not be a viable option. She says it should be the teacher of the kid who determines a yes or no for that kid. She said that she will be conscientious of the teacher field trip advisement list being out five days in advance and Julianne suggested adding a statement on the field trip form that says the student is responsible for getting the make-up work. Steve said that if we are making changes to the form we should make sure to put the burden on the teacher by adding a department chair signature line. Nancy said that it is a district form and we can not make changes to it. We can look at the academic achievement piece, but can't change the form. A question was asked if we can make an addendum to the single page form. Steve said that it puts the responsibility on the kids like a warranted absence form. He said that he will bring back other suggestions regarding field trip procedures to the next DCC meeting and possibly mock-up a form.

Open House (N. Neu)

Nancy reminded teachers about picking up and posting the postcards for the RHS Foundation in their classrooms for Open House. The math department will be together as a group in Kreps with displays. They will all post signs on their doors to direct parents. The math department believes that this may help with aggressive parents and the comfort level. We will get feedback to see if it was a positive experience and will reevaluate. P.E. will meet with parents in the new mini gym and pool area. Rooms will not be open that day. Nancy will send out a reminder email. Classes won't be open unless someone is in the room. We may have 8th grade students coming. Nancy said that we have 404 9th graders currently entered in the system so far. Elaine Bengle asked the chairs to tell their departments to please post signs to help encourage parents to donate.

Announcements:

Budgeting & Staffing Update (J. Schrick)

Julianne asked Nancy for an update on the budget and staffing. Nancy said that there will be a 10% cut and staffing guidelines will come out in Instructional Council. It may not change too much and we will get our carry over. She said that catagoricals will be pulled back. The State results will come out in June.

Classroom Conditions (S. Hettleman)

Steve said that several of the English classrooms were in disarray after the weekend. Nancy said that there was a Rotary event over the weekend here. LaSandra addressed the issue and Nancy will follow-up with her. Chris Gilmore asked that they be told in advance if their rooms will be used, as they have confidential material in her classroom.

Meeting adjourned at 4:37 p.m.

First Day Schedule Vote Results:

Leadership Class

16 – 15 minute periods
0 – 10 minute periods

15 Minute Periods - 46

10 Minute Periods - 43

Abstentions - 2

Special Ed. Dept.

0 – 15 minute periods
7 – 10 minute periods

Science Dept.

14 – 15 minute periods
0 – 10 minute periods

Applied Tech. Dept.

0 – 15 minute periods
3 – 10 minute periods

English Dept.

5 – 15 minute periods
4 – 10 minute periods
2 – abstentions
4 – undecided/no response

Counseling Dept.

0 – 15 minute periods
5 – 10 minute periods

P.E. Dept.

0 – 15 minute periods
4 – 10 minute periods

Social Studies Dept.

5 – 15 minute periods
10 – 10 minute periods

Parents

2 – 15 minute periods

World Languages Dept.

0 – 15 minute periods
8 – 10 minute periods

Classified

No responses

Fine Arts Dept.

4 – 15 minute periods
1 – 10 minute periods

Math Dept.

No responses