



BEVERLY HILLS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Educational Employees Working Together

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CONSENSUS

A Newsletter for BHEA Members
May 3, 2007



Board of Ed. Summary

Additional highlights from recent Board of Ed. meetings:
March 27:

- Supt. Kari McVeigh said she received a letter from a parent commending BV teacher Marcy Landres for her hard work. McVeigh praised Landres for 'setting the standard.'
- Board Pres. John Millan said that grades 1, 2, and 3 in our district are just over the state-required minimum number of annual instructional minutes. Asst. Supt. of Ed. Services Ilene Straus said that HS instructional minutes also need to be looked at, although Millan said later that the HS minutes looked OK.
- Asst. Supt. of Ed. Services Ilene Straus said our district may look at 'banking time' as a way to create collaborative planning time for teachers.
- There was discussion about the HS ASB accounting practices, which were

flagged in a recent financial audit.

- Board member Nooshin Meshkaty congratulated BH City Council members Jimmy Delshad and Barry Brucker for assuming the roles of mayor and vice-mayor. She spoke highly of ER's Science Team.
- Board Vice-Pres. Myra Demeter praised the HS musical and the National Honor Society.
- Board member Myra Lurie talked about a professional development opportunity this summer for teachers related to development of student character.
- Board member Alissa Roston thanked former mayor Steve Webb and welcomed new city council member Nancy Krasne, who Roston said is a 18-year veteran teacher.
- Millan referred to the HS's recent WASC accreditation process as an 'independent evaluation.'

April 24:

- Asst. Supt. of Ed. Services Ilene Straus said that our district will focus on math in 07-08 and that any proposed changes to science courses/sequencing would not be implemented until 08-09.
- A community member spoke out in opposition to the recently erected Hawthorne mural on the front of the school, accusing BHUSD of not allowing public input before giving it approval. PTA Council Co-Pres. Stacy Raskin voiced support for the mural via a card read into the record.
- HS teacher and ASB Coordinator Jamie Marrs won praise from students for her commitment to ASB.
- The HS Robotics Team presented their recent awards and accomplishments.
- The 7th grade HM team of teachers—David Siskin, Michael Morrison, Allison Leggett, and Caitlin Carter—presented an interdisciplinary project, with two students praising its success.

Two Members Elected As Delegates to the 2007 NEA Meeting

• HM Instructional Assistant to represent CTA in Philadelphia.

BHEA Certificated Pres. and HS science teacher Chris Bushée and HM instructional assistant Claudia Bushée were elected in March to represent BHEA at the 2007 NEA Representative Assembly this summer in Philadelphia. Both members ran unopposed.

Both members also ran in the state delegate election hoping to represent CTA this summer. Unfortunately, neither member initially prevailed in those races. However, enough of the victorious candidates in the ESP race subsequently chose to go to the RA as local delegates so that Ms. Bushée is now eligible to attend the RA as a state delegate for CTA. ESP stands for educational support personnel, or classified employees. Mr. Bushée will represent BHEA.

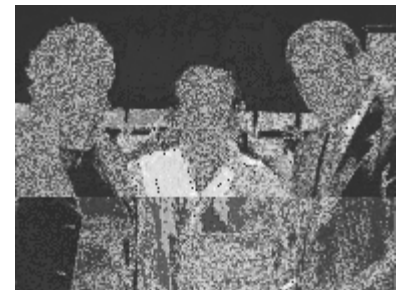
More Technology News

Here are some technology highlights from the Apr. 24 Board of Ed. meeting:

- BHUSD technology consultant Darryl Vidal presented recommendations to the Board, to be considered for approval in May. He recommends: installing higher capacity wiring, creation of a 'policy committee' to develop rules and regulations, and leasing most computers on a 3-year refresh cycle.
- He said an example of a policy committee recommendation might be to offer different levels of access to different kinds of users.
- Board member Myra Lurie asked how much the recommended webmaster consultant might cost annually. Vidal said it is 'unknown' and would depend on usage.
- Vidal said that old, purchased computers are hard to get rid of due to the presence of toxic substances.
- Vidal said that the fiber optic drop ca-

bles in HS classrooms that were installed many years ago can no longer be used.

- HAW technology teacher Craig Davis said he feels that Vidal's technology recommendations lack sufficient detail. Davis said he is concerned about the select nature of the proposed policy committee and about adopting a single PC platform. He said he supports purchasing, not leasing computers and would like BHUSD to explore off-site e-mail hosting.



BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée accepts a Teacher Appreciation Week resolution from Board of Ed. Pres. John Millan and Supt. Kari McVeigh.

'Open Access' Proving to Be Highly Controversial

- **Even Board members don't agree on level of access to courses.**
- **Straus says exposure to high-level courses benefits students.**

Hints of broadening access to Honors and Advanced Placement courses at BHHS began as early as last school year when the term 'open access' began to be bandied about. Board of Ed. members began dropping hints at their public meetings, referring to students have every 'opportunity' to achieve their potential. Then, on Mar. 28, an outside agency called WASC, which is responsible for accrediting BHHS, put the issue on the front burner by issuing the following 'finding:' "It is essential that BHHS establish a formal written school-wide open access policy for all Honors and AP classes whereby *any* student is allowed to take an Honors or AP class."

Flash forward to the Apr. 24 Board of Ed. meeting. Highlights:

- Asst. Supt. of Ed. Services Ilene Straus said that BHUSD will be looking at open access in 07-08.
- Presented an overview of middle school Honors prerequisites and HS Honors/AP prerequisites. Comparisons and contrasts were drawn regarding both the nature of prerequisites and the number of students in various Honors/AP courses.
- Straus said it's not a problem if a student earns a 1 or a 2 on an AP exam, saying that it is more important for students to be exposed to a rigorous curriculum. (A score of 3, 4, or 5 is considered a passing grade.)
- Last year, 504 HS students took 1,098 AP exams.
- Straus said that Peninsula HS uses open access, knowing that there is no guarantee that all students will pass.
- Straus referred to the WASC committee's open access recommendation as a 'mandate.' Board Vice-Pres. Myra Demeter corrected her later in the meeting, emphasizing that it is just a 'recommendation.'
- Straus said that the high school's appeal/waiver process for students denied access to Honors/AP classes is not always accessible.
- Straus said BHUSD should explore the creation of a district policy on open access.

- Straus said that open access does not mean 'no requirements,' although Straus' interpretation appears to differ from the more absolute language put forth by the WASC committee.
- Straus said that there are interesting 'legal interpretations' about denying students entrance into particular courses.
- Straus asked to look at our current practices and to look at other schools.
- Supt. Kari McVeigh said that the term 'open access' is open to different interpretations.
- Board member Alissa Roston said that the HS Honors/AP system is currently too restrictive but is philosophically opposed to complete open access. She said she would like to take a look at how students enter 9th grade Honors classes. Said this issue needs 'wider discussion.' Said she wants to talk with teachers and students.
- Demeter asked if perhaps we need to focus on our Honors courses, not AP. She expressed concern that our district may not be challenging a particular segment of our student population enough. She said it is too much responsibility to hand to teachers to expect them to provide support to *any* student who wants to take an AP class.
- Board member Nooshin Meshkaty said our district should look at Honors course requirements. She suggested softening the 'previous course grade' requirement and giving more weight to cumulative GPA. She said she opposes complete open access.
- Board Pres. John Millan asked that eligibility requirements not be overly precise, that the gray areas be given more consideration. He said he is more in favor of access based on the desire of students and parents.
- Student Board member Sami Pop asked to look at 9th grade Honors prerequisites. She said she is not in favor of complete open access.

In a Apr. 17 meeting, McVeigh told BHEA that she would like to build on commonalities as open access is discussed.

Also, BHEA asserted its right to consult on the educational mission behind open access via a letter sent to BHUSD. BHEA and BHUSD are planning to meet to discuss open access by the end of this month.

Concerns Grow Over Likely K-8 Flexible Schedule Proposal

- **Talks are three months behind due to delays in the Human Resources Dept.**

BHEA has begun to receive a great deal of feedback over the direction of talks on creating a flexible schedule at K-8 sites in 07-08. As more details emerge from the committee looking at this subject, many teachers, particularly at the primary level, are voicing strong objections to a proposal that would institute a Wed. late start every week. Among their concerns:

- They believe that younger children learn better in the morning, so they question taking away morning instructional time.
- They would like to reduce the *amount* of meetings every month, not just rearrange them to fit into Wed. mornings.
- How would district-wide grade level meetings work on Wed. mornings? Would teachers drive to one site in the morning, have a meeting, then drive to their work site?
- Will students who are on campus be adequately supervised on Wed. mornings?
- Some expressed skepticism that after-school meetings would really go away.
- Some are not in favor of increasing the length of the school day in order to make a flexible schedule.
- Some feel that it is too late to institute such a change for 07-08.

Originally, BHUSD and BHEA agreed to start the committee meetings in December, which would have given more time for feedback on any proposals. Unfortunately, the Human Resources Dept. did not make this issue a priority and delayed the start of the process by three months, despite reminders from BHEA to get the ball rolling.

In recent site visits to HM and HAW by BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée, opposition to the proposal was far, far greater than was support. Although BHUSD has the right to institute a new schedule that conforms to our contract, even over the objections of staff, it is BHEA's hope that by participating on the flexible scheduling committee, a compromise can be reached.

BHEA talked recently with Asst. Supt. of Human Resources Sal Gumina, who participates on the committee. Gumina is in favor of a Wed. late start because it would line up with the HS late start day. He said he feels that the committee will present one single option (a Wed. late start), not multiple options. His response to concerns about losing morning instructional time was that other factors were more important. He said that the committee has agreed to focus on late starts, as opposed to early dismissals.