



BEVERLY HILLS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Educational Employees Working Together

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CONSENSUS

A Newsletter for BHEA Members
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New Practice Allows BHHS Students Who Fail College-Prep Courses in High School to Recover Credits by Enrolling in College

BHEA has discovered that Beverly Hills High School is engaging in a new practice to deal with seniors in jeopardy of not graduating. With the elimination of developmental classes at the HS, some students who have been programmed into college-preparatory classes are not succeeding. HS teachers have spoken out about this...saying that the HS now lacks the support structures necessary to assist these students. So, one way that the HS administration has responded to this problem is to allow seniors at risk of not graduating to enroll at West Los Angeles Community College to recover credits that they need for graduation. BHUSD will count one semester of West L.A. college credit as a full-year of HS graduation credit. Recently revised Board policy allows for the transfer of community college credit in some circumstances. The HS administration says it supports exploring all options possible for credit recovery...even off-campus options...but also believes that BHUSD should provide adequate support and class variety to meet the learning needs of all students.

There is increased accountability that is new this year. The HS administration has informed students that, starting with this year's graduating class, those seniors who have not completed all HS graduation requirements will not be allowed to "walk" with their peers on graduation day. The old practice allowed seniors who lacked up to 15 units of credit to participate in the graduation ceremony with their peers with the requirement that they make up their deficiency over the summer.

BHEA finds the new credit recovery practice both ironic and misguided. Encouraging our own HS students to enroll in college to make up graduation credits for high school "college-prep" courses that they failed is entirely backwards. Our high school should be providing for the learning needs of all of its students. It is not the responsibility of West L.A. college to do so. It also speaks volumes to the failure of our district administration to properly implement an alternative support structure for hundreds of HS students who, in the past, could earn their graduation credits by taking non-college-prep developmental classes.

BHEA renews its call for the district administration to collaborate with our members on curricular matters so that our input and suggestions may be incorporated when changes to the status quo are contemplated.

BHEA and BHUSD Find Agreement on Intervention Pay Issue

Earlier this year, BHEA discovered that five of our members at Horace Mann who are teaching early morning intervention classes were being paid at the certificated hourly rate of \$39.51 while high school BHEA members who provide similar intervention services are being paid at their salaried, per diem rate of pay...which ranges from \$49.07 to \$91.96 per 50-minute period taught. The actual per diem rate depends upon the teacher's step-and-column placement on the certificated salary schedule.

Within days of discovering this discrepancy, BHEA initiated the grievance process to address the matter. BHEA is happy to report that a memorandum of understanding between BHEA and BHUSD was signed on Dec. 9, resolving this issue. Retroactive to the beginning of this school year, K-8 teachers of intervention classes that meet a particular set of guidelines will be compensated at their per diem rate...the same as high school teachers. This includes all five of the HM teachers that were the initial focus of the grievance.

You may view the signed MOU and the intervention class guidelines at: <http://bhea.org/MOU.htm>.

High School Staff Discusses Open Access

HS teachers and administrators met twice recently to talk about the subject of open access. Open access is a philosophy that allows students to sign up for classes with little or no prerequisite requirements. In its last review of BHHS, the WASC accreditation organization recommended relieving restrictions placed by the high school on students wishing to sign up for Honors and Advanced Placement courses. The HS administration implemented the principles of this recommendation this school year...and HS teachers have expressed concern over these changes. The following is a summary of the recent meetings:
October 28:

The HS administration said that open access is not intended to place students in situations where

they'll be unsuccessful. Administration said that the WASC recommendation does not provide the HS with additional money to implement open access. Administration said that the HS does not have to do away with *all* prerequisites. Administration said that it can "mandate" students to show up during non-structured time on Wednesday mornings. Administration mentioned possible HS bell schedule changes.

The DO administration said that the HS AP program grew by 11 sections and by over 200 students as compared to last school year. Administration asked to look at deadlines for dropping courses. Administration said that open access is a "site issue."

HS teachers said that the HS does not have a system in place to meet the needs of the increasing numbers of students in AP classes

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

due to already loosened entrance requirements...and that such a system is urgently needed. Teachers said that the question of academic readiness is important. Teachers said that the old drop deadline was 2 weeks into the course...but is now longer and there is also the relatively new "withdraw/fail" option. Teachers said there has been a lack of communication on open access. Teachers recommended reprogramming struggling AP students into either Honors or regular courses. Teachers recommended that the district fund extra periods for AP classes as a way to meet learning needs for struggling students who are sticking it out in AP courses. Teachers said that more work with regard to differentiated instruction cannot be squeezed into the same amount of time. Teachers said that some of our students are spread too thin when Honors and AP course loads are combined with their extra-curricular obligations. Teachers said they themselves feel "stretched thin" and that the current approach to open access "falls on the teacher" to resolve. Teachers said that our professional time is a "finite resource." Teachers said that having students sign up for extra classes to supplement their learning needs impacts the HS elective program. Teachers suggested looking at a summer AP learning seminar for students. Teachers asked about whether different intervention models would be needed based on the specific students in need.

November 13:

HS administration said that open access does not mean "no prerequisites." Administration asked to look at establishing enrollment deadlines and to publicize deadlines. Administration said that WASC was concerned with policies that did not allow some students to take the qualifying exams for AP courses. Administration said that the current waiver form is too easy for students to procure an override into an AP course and that perhaps a deadline to apply for a waiver should be instituted. Administration said that WASC does not care if BHUSD does not provide financial resources to support an open access policy.

Teachers said that some subject areas do not have an Honors course...only regular and AP. Teachers said that it's hard to make a uniform open access policy for all academic departments. Teachers raised concerns about administrators approving overrides into Honors and AP courses. Teachers said that they do not have enough time to differentiate instruction under open access.

Other comments offered: Class scheduling is disrupted when large numbers of students shift between AP and regular courses. What are the support systems for AP students? Having adequate resources is important. Will students "self-select" their courses better after this current "growing pains" school year? Create application deadlines for courses before the master schedule is completed.

Summary of Dec. 11 Representative Council Meeting

Highlights from the Dec. 11 BHEA Rep. Council meeting:

- Received newly installed Board of Education Pres. Nooshin Meshkaty who spoke on the topics of civility, communication, her plan to visit school sites to personally interact with BHEA members, forming a partnership with BHEA, the importance of employee morale, instilling a relaxed atmosphere at Board of Ed. meetings, and welcoming constructive criticism in a non-personal manner.
- Reported that our instructional assistant bargaining unit failed to reach agreement with BHUSD on total compensation as of their last meeting. Negotiations between the IAs and the district have been hobbled for several months and the possibility of impasse is real. The two parties differ by about 5 cents/hour. The district's contracting out of IA work is also an issue.
- Reported that BHEA's bylaws committee is working on a table of contents and a draft of language that will better define the number representative seats available to each site.
- Reported that the facilities advisory committee recommended to the Board of Ed. two architectural firms to begin scoping planned Measure E projects. Planned work includes renovation of the 3-story DO building and moving Moreno HS to the DO campus. Moreno HS students would still have to park at the HS. None of the planned projects have yet received final approvals. Concerns were brought forth about potential parking problems while construction is going on.
- Reported that the BV facilities committee met and that it appears that the draft plan for facilities improvements at BV is moving forward. Reported that none of the other school site-based facilities committees have met yet. (BHEA learned after the RC meeting that HM's facilities committee met on Dec. 11 for the first time this year.)
- Reported that the GATE advisory committee met on Dec. 2. RC members offered a variety of different opinions on GATE certification,

which is an optional program that BHUSD is making available to our members. (This certification is not required to be able to teach GATE students.) Reported that teachers helped to explain to parents at the GATE meeting that the GATE program is still happening in our district even though it is no longer a stand-alone program. Reported that the GATE program is different from the Honors program. RC members said that our district should avoid glamorizing teachers who hold the optional GATE certification at the expense of those who do not. Detailed minutes from this GATE meeting are available online at BHEA's website at: <http://bhea.org/Minutes.htm>.

- Reported that BHEA is now ready to begin implementing a new online survey mechanism to get feedback from our members.
- Reported that BHEA has begun researching salary schedules from basic aid districts.
- Reported that the Board of Ed. did not make a decision at their December meeting on which superintendent search firm to select.
- Reported that BHEA will participate in two upcoming CTA conferences (Treasurer's and Region III Leadership).
- Reported that a small group of BHEA members met informally with a small group of BHUSD parents to discuss the test release issue.
- Discussed timely topics that our members can use when writing letters to the editor of the local BH newspapers.
- Gave direction on BHEA's interests with regard to student permit guarantees for our members' children and also with regard to serving the best interests of students when it comes to involuntary intra-district student transfers among K-8 sites.
- Approved BHEA going forward with political involvement in the March 2009 BH City Council election...including issuing questionnaires to candidates, interviewing candidates, and possibly endorsing one or more candidates in the race.
- Reported that the district is paying a consultant by the name of Rita Flynn to serve as a "coach" to BHUSD principals.