

Hawthorne High School

3/16/2010 Faculty Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting notes taken by D. Barnes. Minutes written by Daniel Barnes. Possible edits by Sandra Goins.
CVSTA Representatives Present: Steve Anderson, Daniel Barnes, Pedro Martinez
Administrators Present: Elizabeth Hirata, Mark Newell, Karma Nicolis
Administrators Absent: Mark Knapp, Michael Martinez

1. BUSY BEES BUZZING: Despite, at the previous FAC meeting, Mark Knapp re-affirming the benefits of locking the west (Bally's) gate at 4:30 pm every day (to prevent vandalism & keep out speed demon parents), teachers have continued to complain, bitterly and in large numbers, about the new early closure policy. Hawthorne may be the only campus in the district that allows teachers to park in an area other than its main lot, but we've been doing it for decades, leaving as late as our workload dictates. People who have gotten used to something for that long don't give up that easily, it seems. One teacher, representing seven teachers who were locked in on at least one occasion, gave several arguments in favor of leaving the gate open late. Perhaps the main idea she championed is that this is a program improvement school (and has been for so many years that yours truly has lost count, referring to our status now, imprecisely, as "Magnum P.I."). Therefore, it should be a top priority of the administration to do whatever it takes to improve the quality of instruction, and, thereby, improve student test scores and graduation rates. Closing the gate early tends to make teachers go home early rather than spend more hours preparing higher-quality lessons. Rather than punishing the vandals (who can hop fences anyway – have you seen the inaccessible places these little ninjas have defiled with their spray paint?), closing the gate early punishes all the students who could benefit from teachers preparing more deeply and thoroughly for their (standards-based) lessons. If vandalism is occurring at certain times and places, security staff should be directed to patrol those locations at the times the vandalism is believed to be occurring. It seems like everyone except for the people who deserve it get punished when the gate is closed early. Due to a family emergency, M. Knapp was not present at this FAC meeting, so he did not have a chance to re-affirm his compelling (teachers are not fans of vandalism either) but contested reasons for closing the gate at 4:30. There's no telling how things would have gone had Mr. Knapp been at the meeting, but, as it

happened, Dr. Newell decided that closing the gate at 5:30 instead of 4:30 would be the way things should go. S. Anderson agreed out loud that 5:30 would be a good compromise.

2. HEATERS: M. Knapp wasn't present to give any heater repair updates. The issue will be re-raised at the April FAC meeting.

3. INTERRUPTIONS: Subsequent to multiple teachers complaining about phone calls during instructional time, Mr. Newell, as seen in an e-mail issued rather promptly after last Tuesday's FAC meeting (clapclapclap), has directed attendance and other agencies to use e-mail whenever possible to notify teachers of their need to submit various forms. For our part, then, we as teachers need to conscientiously monitor and respond to our e-mails, if we want to prevent intrusive phone calls. Attendance has reports they need to file by very strict government-imposed deadlines. They're under the gun.

4. CAHSEE SCHEDULE: The total number of minutes lost by each period was far from equal during CAHSEE week, and at least one teacher with a 4th period prep complained bitterly about this imbalance. Dr. Newell reminded FAC that CAHSEE week was planned out before the staff development day was moved, by district office fiat, to Friday of the same week. If SD had not happened Friday, 4th period would have met for a full 90 minutes that day and, thereby, not have been hit nearly as hard. Dr. Nicolis is aware of the injustice done, both with regard to teachers with 4th period preps and to students of 4th period classes (that would be everybody) who will now be a full block period (or more?) behind schedule. She will endeavor to see that minute loss is more equitably distributed across the periods during STAR testing in May. Perhaps, at that time, 4th period can even be given the lion's share of the minutes to make up for its disproportionately large sacrifices during CAHSEE week. At least one teacher complained that, in addition to being imbalanced with regard to instructional minute

loss, the schedule used during CAHSEE week was not the one presented during our recent schedule voting. This complaint is a little confusing, because this year's schedule was voted on last year. The recent voting is supposed to be for next year's schedule, not this year's schedule. A further confusing factor is that on CAHSEE days, the 1/2/5, 3/4/6 method was used, which is a rapid administrator response to double-blocked intervention teachers complaining about having to see the same kids for four hours in the same day. As teacher-indulging as this modification is, it violates the idea that schedules are supposed to be approved a year in advance by official, CVSTA-run elections. (No matter what one does, one always ends up stepping on *someone's* toes, doesn't one? This whole testing schedule issue is turning out to be a rather tangled pretzel.)

FAC also discussed the related issue of the CAHSEE bell schedule giving inadequate time for both administration (script reading and materials distribution/collecting) AND work time (students actually taking the tests). Given this under-allocation of time (the proper allocation being defined in the DFA), it is not surprising that so many kids didn't finish the ELA portion of the CAHSEE in the allotted time. Newell and Nicolis both acknowledged that the resulting situation in the cafeteria was overcrowded, and, resultantly, anarchic. Everyone received Dr. Newell's apology e-mail regarding the situation in the cafeteria, so I won't reprise it here, but all admin involved understand the need to have STAR testing and future CAHSEE testing run more smoothly. It was hoped by many FAC members that the extra time students made use of, particularly on the essay, was proof that they were actually trying, something that FAC in general believed to be due, at least in large part, to enthusiasm, seriousness, and preparedness inculcated into them by our English teachers.

5. ROOM CLEANING: Mr. Knapp was absent, so the usual oral transmission of concerns was not possible. However, Mr. Knapp has a great track record for reading and responding to these minutes, so he will, no doubt, hear that building 9 has never been mopped and that building 20 has general room-cleaning deficiencies.

6. (DON'T) RUSH (ME) HOUR: Two staff complained that kids are not only tardy in droves, but that tardy kids wander the halls, shouting obscenities at each other (7 & 9 buildings mentioned in particular). One teacher complained that, when his prep occurs during the first class of the day, he has seen large numbers of students streaming down Inglewood Avenue well after the tardy bell: he'd like to see a heightened security presence there to hustle the kids along. Dr. Newell indicated that he prefers security guards to actively encourage students to go to class. D. Barnes mentioned that he frequently hears guards shouting at kids to get to class, so there seems to be different degrees of action. Mr. Anderson recalled that the random, electronic tardy sweeps we had last year seemed to do the trick quite nicely, although the technique needed to be applied often to maintain the effect and required substantial manpower to enact.

7. "NOTHING HAPPENS": A growing number of teachers are complaining that when they complain to FAC (especially about but not limited to custodial deficiencies), nothing happens. Promises are made but meaningful results do not happen. There is no doubt that certain suggestions made in FAC, even ones that administrators have said they would take care of, have not come to pass. Naturally, this is frustrating to those originating the complaints and to others who watch those complaints going unresolved. On the other hand, it has also been obvious that admin have been very good about following through on many suggestions, often within a very quick time frame, and with an obvious spirit of cooperation. FAC chair has seen example after example of this happen right in front of his face, so it's clear that although not every suggestion has been agreed with and not every promise has been kept, there has been enough palpable progress to generate in this author a sense that admin has a genuinely positive attitude toward certificated employee concerns. It's quite clear that when they can help, they want to help. Anyone who lives on this planet for very long knows that no matter how nice and capable the people around you are, you're not going to get absolutely everything you ask for. However, there are certain issues that, in good conscience, must be pressed relentlessly. Just because you don't hate doesn't mean that you approve or give up. For instance, the issue of

teachers having to sweep their own classrooms and empty their own trash when someone is already paid scarce district money to do just that is an issue that should not be, pardon the pun, swept under the rug. If asking nicely doesn't get results, enforcement needs to be escalated to the next level.

8. INAUDIBLE BELLS: M. Knapp wasn't at the FAC meeting, so no update on the expected installation of bells during spring break was available. Mark is great about reading these minutes, though, so FAC chair is confident that for this and other reasons, the issue has not been forgotten and the ball has not been dropped.

9. STUDENT RESTROOMS CLOSED:

Because classrooms have only one bathroom pass clipboard each (for good reason) and because, therefore, only one student can be in the hall per classroom at any given time (there's the reason I was talking about), if a student has to walk all the way across campus because the nearer restroom is not open, sometimes, the student waiting to go until after that person returns has a containment-related raiment anointing incident. Yes, this actually happened, according to one teacher. A student did accidentally mark her own pants as part of her territory. If the west side student restrooms had been open, as they should be according to Ed Code, the person ahead of them in line with the clipboard would have come back much sooner and the pelvic plumbing failure in question would not have occurred. Mr. Newell said he'd talk to the safety officer staff (via their leader, D. Eatmon), and make sure they know to keep both bathrooms open to the greatest extent possible.

10. HAWTHORNE "HIGH": Complaints continued to come in about kids wantonly smoking marijuana on the side of the 22 building facing El Segundo Blvd. We spent plenty of money on a colorful billboard to enhance our image, yet just a few yards past it, there's another, smoldering billboard knocking that image right back down into the ashes. Dr. Newell said he'd tell chief safety officer D.

Eatmon that security needs to make more regular sweeps back there to dissipate our al fresco viper room.

11. P3?: After the very businesslike (draconian?) imposition of the grades submission due date made swiftly at the end of S1, it came as a bit of a shock when no announcement at all for a grades submission deadline for the five-week progress report ("P3") came until after the time that the deadline should have already occurred. The first most HHS people heard of it was Todd Barker's e-mail mentioning a 4 pm deadline that very day (Monday, 3/15/10), but that burden should not have fallen upon him. The District Office should have put out a memo, but failed to. E. Hirata said she'd talk to Vince Bravo at the D.O. and ask for a couple days' extension on the due date . . . although no due date had actually been given or put into action directly by the D.O., so I'm not sure how you extend a non-existent due date, now that I think of it. FAC chair has forwarded the concern to E. Carlstone for addition to the next SAC agenda, since this seems to be a district-level difficulty. UPDATE: Vince Bravo has just now sent out a memo about P3, giving 3/25/10 as the "Final Grades and Comment Verification Report" hard copy due date.

12. DISAPPEARING FURNITURE: Four blue chairs disappeared from 20-4, and to date, they have not returned.

13. DOTS: One teacher complained that Dr. Nicolis initially said dots were not necessary for present students but then, later, attendance staff demanded dots once S1 roll sheets started coming in. Dr. Nicolis said that it is the district that requires teachers to make dots for present students in their roll books; she merely forwards district orders. I don't recall any kind of explanation for why the complaining teacher got the idea at the beginning of the semester that dots were not required. (I think there was a moment of chaos in the meeting or something and I may have gotten distracted and dropped the conversational ball on pursuing that one. Score a point for ADD.)

If you have any complaints, suggestions, or praise that you would like added to the next FAC meeting's agenda, please email misterbarneshhs@social.rr.com. You may also leave a note in Dan Barnes' box. Also, please let Mr. Barnes know your observations of how well the promises made in these minutes are being enacted.