

Sequoia High School PTSA
Association Meeting
March 6, 2012

Call to Order:

PTSA President Shoko Barnes called the meeting to order at 7:50 pm in Room 50 following a question and answer session with Principal Bonnie Hansen in the MPR.

Bonnie reported that the visit from members of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) went very well and thanked everyone who attended the meetings, prepared welcome baskets, and provided snacks. She expects to get another 6-year clear recommendation (no mid-cycle review), which is the highest rating. In comparison, our last rating was 6-year with a 1-day visit at the 3-year mark. She then offered to answer any and all questions from the audience.

Q. Could you give us an update on the changes to Sequoia's start time, World Studies I, and house system?

A. The later start time has resulted in 15% fewer tardies than last year and 22% fewer 1st/2nd period cuts. These numbers don't take into account that there are 100 more students than last year, so the actual number is even higher. Site council will review the issue next year to decide whether to make it permanent.

The decision to eliminate World Studies I ICAP came from the district; they also eliminated honors Social Studies classes for 9th graders at the other three high schools. At the same time, the district mandated extra reading support in lieu of Social Studies for students reading at or below a 5th grade level. These students get two periods of reading support in place of both English and Social Studies. This will remain in effect next year. There is no data available yet to evaluate the success of this change since STAR testing has not yet occurred.

The house system was a victim of the Program Improvement plan. Bonnie is devastated to see it go and would love to find a way to reinstate it, but it required a lot of extra prep time for the staff and the WASC committee wants our emphasis to be on improving the skills of students who perform below basic and far below basic on the standardized tests—currently about 100 out of 620 9th graders.

Q. Could you explain how the schedule for collaboration Mondays has changed and what happens on collaboration Mondays?

A. Staff has been focusing on preparing for the WASC visit during collaboration Mondays all year. Coordination happens within and across departments and staff feels there is not nearly enough time to cover everything they want to. One example of intra-department collaboration is English teachers creating a common final exam. Bonnie offered to put the collaboration schedule on the SHS website under "Parent Info".

Q. Is it only newcomers to Sequoia who are at or below a 5th grade reading level?

A. It varies. Some are newcomers, some are students with learning differences, and some have simply gotten stuck at CELDT level 3. CELDT level 3 means that the student has a good oral command of the English language but needs to work on reading and writing in English.

Q. Why are classes so short during collaboration Mondays and have you considered changing the schedule so a collaboration Monday looks more like a block day?

A. We have considered every conceivable change! This year classes on collaboration Mondays are 10 minutes longer than last year (40 versus 30). She will solicit input again next year.

Q. What happens in class during collaboration Mondays?

A. It's different in every class. For example, 40 minutes is too short for a lab in a science class. Some schools have only block schedules and never have days with periods shorter than 50 minutes. However, some foreign language and math teachers argue that block schedules don't work for their subjects because students need to have their class every day.

Q. My student sometimes claims he can't do his homework because he left his textbook at school. Could students have two sets of books—one for school and one for home?

A. Sequoia can't afford this, but staff recognizes that 9th graders in particular would benefit from this. The school is open until 10 pm if you need to retrieve a book from your locker. Bonnie recommended that the student contact his teacher about this and noted that there is an open lab every Tuesday evening at 6 pm for anyone who needs assistance (in English or Spanish) emailing a teacher or using Infinite Campus.

Q. Do we know what the budget is for next year?

A. No, but we should have a pretty good idea next October! Bonnie joked that if the state does go down in flames, Sequoia Union High School district will be the last one standing because we are in better financial shape than many other schools.

Q. Will the incoming 9th grade class be large?

A. No because Sequoia doesn't have any more capacity. We'll be graduating our smallest class and the current 9th grade class is our largest. We'll be accepting many fewer transfers next year.

Q. Are the teachers feeling overwhelmed?

A. The beginning of the year was hard, but this is an awesome staff as evidenced by WASC reiterating how supported the students feel.

A parent thanked Bonnie, the staff, and the district for all the support they've given her and her 10th grader over the last two years.

Attendees:

Sue Anderson, Shoko Barnes, Michelle Discher, Lisa Duncan, Rebecca Flynn, Alice Henderson, Pat Krpan, Doug Massingill, Betsy Parkhurst, J. Mario Preza, and Elisabeth Stitt

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Approval of the minutes from the association meeting on February 7, 2012 were postponed due to a lack of a quorum.

Statement of Account

Balance on hand as of January 31, 2012: \$24,098.21

Receipts totaling \$3,527.74

Disbursements totaling: \$654.50

Balance on hand as of February 29, 2012: \$26,971.45

Executive Board Report:

The executive board met on 2/13/12 to discuss some budget issues.

Motions:

none

Summary:

- AVP Sean Priest was not able to attend. Instead we heard from Michelle Discher who is recruiting volunteers to proctor IB exams. She needs to find twice as many proctors as last year. It's ok to proctor a test your child is taking. Volunteers can sign up [here](#).
- President Shoko Barnes announced that details about the California PTA initiative for stable school funding can be found [here](#).

Treasurer's Report:

Doug Massingill distributed copies of the Treasurer's Report for February 2012. Discussion ensued about whether we have enough money to fund Spring mini-grants. Rebecca Flynn needs to know by March 1. We can't

know for sure until the audit is complete, but Doug will attempt to have a budget ready by our next executive meeting on February 13.

Candidate Slate for Next Year:

Alice Henderson reported for Suzanne Saluti that we have an open position of 1st Vice President in charge of special projects. Anyone who is interested should email [Suzanne](#).

Committee Reports:

- 2012 Safe and Sober Grad Activities: Shoko Barnes reported for Suzanne Saluti that the PTSA has agreed to donate \$500 to pay for the senior brunch. The estimated expense of the barbecue was reduced. So the new goal is to raise an additional \$3000 and there are five more fundraisers planned, including the upcoming Bingo Night. The ticket price for Grad night is and has always been \$75 this year; in previous years it was \$50. It's too early to tell if this increase will affect sales since seniors traditionally wait to buy tickets until the last minute. This is the first year tickets have been available for purchase online, although no adjustment was made to account for the PayPal fees. They will need to hire more buses this year since the class is bigger, so the true cost of the ticket could be around \$100.
- 2013 Safe and Sober Grad Activities: Lisa Duncan reported that the sale of the reusable bags resulted in a profit of \$1021. She would like to plan some restaurant fundraisers and will solicit input from the junior class officers. The deadline to register for a booth at San Carlos Hometown Days is April 14. The event conflicts with Relay for Life, but last year's PTSA booth made a profit of \$500 in one day. She will have the junior class officers brainstorm what to do about this.
- Junior Scholarships: Elisabeth Stitt reported that she has a committee in place but has not received any applications yet. (The due date is March 22.) The PTSA will provide Terri Ignaitis with a list of juniors who are PTSA members.
- Spring mini-grants: Rebecca Flynn reported that she has a committee in place and has already received some applications. She is working with the Quiz Kids to revise their application so that it will conform to our guidelines.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Betsy Parkhurst, Secretary