

Date: June 10, 2008

To: AC parents and guardians

From: Jon Marley, Parent Liaison to the AC Social Living Program

Re: 2007-2008 Report on AC Social Living Program

As the school year draws to a close, I would like to provide you with a report on one component of the Academic Choice curriculum: the AC Social Living program. 2007-08 was the second year that AC History and English teachers used this curriculum, and the first year that the program was implemented in both freshmen and sophomore classrooms.

As you may know, Academic Choice received permission from the Berkeley School Board in 2006 to add a one-semester World Geography course for freshmen, to better prepare them for their sophomore World History & Cultures course. In order to accommodate this, AC needed to design a special Social Living component to replace the previous version that was taught in a 9th grade "Identity & Ethnic Studies" class. The new, highly innovative course curriculum was principally created by Dr. Karen Kaufman, an AC parent, and Nancy Rubin, who taught Social Living at BHS for many years, while working in close coordination with AC teachers Heather Sadlon, Samantha Godbey, and Rebecca Martin.

The AC Social Living curriculum is designed to be taught primarily in the three week session after students return from Winter Break at the beginning of January and the end of finals at the end of that month. (For this reason, AC freshmen and sophomore students take their final exams in English and History before Winter Break.) The curriculum conforms to State of California standards that delineate expectations for nine areas of mandated instruction in physical and mental health and safety, such as "Disease prevention and treatment" and "Understanding differences in growth and development."

Each teacher receives a curriculum binder outlining the expectations and resources available for each expectation, training on the topics, and ongoing support throughout the school year. Core teacher pairs choose how to best implement the curriculum for their specific students. Activities include: journal writing, Socratic discussions, debates, instructional videos, guest speakers, and attendance at a BHS performance of *Secrets*, Kaiser Permanente's award-winning play about HIV/AIDS.

In addition to the intensive sessions of three weeks in each of the freshmen and sophomore years, AC 9th and 10th grade students receive Social Living instruction integrated into their studies throughout their first two years in English and History. The content and approach of this integration depends to some extent on the texts chosen by individual teachers in English Language & Composition (9th) and World Literature & Composition (10th). However, the intended focus is on issues of cultural, gender, and sexual identity that naturally come up in the books read in these English courses and the topics studied in 9th and 10th World History courses.

This school year, Social Living was taught by a total of 11 AC teachers. Feedback from both teachers and students was very positive again this year. The scope of the program will remain the same in 2008-09, but differentiation between what material is covered in 9th vs. 10th grade will be increased. Ms. Sadlon will serve as Faculty Coordinator for the AC Social Living program next school year and, among other duties, will work to create student readers for the curriculum and arrange training for new AC teachers.

If you have any questions about the Social Living curriculum, or you wish to help out with this program next school year, please contact me at marley@stanfordalumni.org.