



# Academic Choice at Berkeley High School

November 12, 2010

## Tips on How to Support and Advocate for Your Student

As parents and guardians of students moving through their high school years, we find ourselves doing a constant balancing act between, on the one hand, giving them the freedom to find their own path and learn from making mistakes and, on the other hand, guiding them in the right direction and intervening on their behalf when necessary. The following are some ideas on things you can do to help your student navigate Berkeley High and Academic Choice successfully.

**1. Check in with your student regularly on how things are going.** As you know, the teen years are often a time that students test their independence, and may not be particularly forthcoming with information about what's going on at school, feeling that this is a private part of their life now. However, far from prying into their business, you can establish a pattern of regular check-ins, based on your genuine curiosity of what material they are covering in class, what's going well and what isn't, and gentle reminders that you are there for them if they need support.

**2. Make use of online homework and progress report sites.** Berkeley High School employs an online resource to keep students and families informed of grades, homework, and attendance:

**PowerSchool** (<http://ps.berkeley.net/public/>)

You will need an activation code to access your student's grade and attendance information. This code was mailed to every student home address. If you did not receive one, you may look it up at <http://pspasswords.berkeley.net/>. There is also a help document at [http://www.bhs.berkeley.net/uploads/ps\\_parent\\_instx.pdf](http://www.bhs.berkeley.net/uploads/ps_parent_instx.pdf).

**3. Learn about the many resources available for both student and parent support.**

Berkeley High School is large! This presents a challenge in terms of students not losing their way, but it also means there are lots of resources available for families to draw upon. Whether it's arranging academic tutoring and mentoring, calling upon the student's Counselor for assistance, or getting specialized help with a specific problem, you can find many connections listed on the BHS website at <http://bhs.berkeleypta.org/pta-student.htm>. BHS offers extensive school wide tutoring services in math, English, and social studies – for more information, visit <http://www.bhsacademicchoice.com/support.htm> or contact Jeanne Schuman at [schuj@compuserve.com](mailto:schuj@compuserve.com) and/or Christina Mitchell at [cmitchell@berkeley.k12.ca.us](mailto:cmitchell@berkeley.k12.ca.us).

**4. Encourage your student to take a leading role in her/his success.** Parents can help their students become aware of the opportunities and resources available at BHS and encourage them to use these resources as a foundation to find their own paths. We can remind them that we will be there to support them, but also remind them how important it is for them to be their own leaders.



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**5. Contact your student's teacher with questions.** The BHS website has a detailed directory with teacher and staff email addresses at: <http://bhs.berkeleypta.org/bhs-staff.htm>. Send an email message with your questions – you should receive a response within 48 hours. You can also leave a voicemail message by calling the school at (510) 644-6120 and following the recorded instructions.

**6. Stay informed!** Subscribe to the BHS e-tree (send an email to [bhsrequest@idiom.com](mailto:bhsrequest@idiom.com) with the word "subscribe" in the subject line). Subscribe to the AC e-tree (send an email to [academicchoice-request@lists.berkeleypta.org](mailto:academicchoice-request@lists.berkeleypta.org) with the word "subscribe" in the subject line). You will receive up-to-date information on scheduling, tutoring and student support, events, extracurricular, athletics, and volunteer opportunities.

**7. Excuse Absences for Your Student** You may excuse absences for your student electronically by sending an email to [bhsattendance@berkeley.k12.ca.us](mailto:bhsattendance@berkeley.k12.ca.us) or phoning (510) 644-6209.

### If a problem arises

If your student is having a problem with a teacher, the first step in resolving it is for the student and teacher to meet one-on-one to discuss the issue. This is a school-wide policy, designed to encourage students to both advocate for themselves and practice direct communication. If, after the student meets with the teacher, the issue is not resolved, the next step is for you to arrange a meeting with the teacher and your student. If this meeting still does not successfully address the problem, you should request a meeting with the teacher, your student, and the Administrator responsible for the learning community or small school in which your student is registered. In rare circumstances, it may be necessary to take the issue one step further and include Principal Pasquale Scuderi in a meeting. An important resource for you and your child is your child's assigned counselor.

### BHS Counselors for Academic Choice

**Anthony Smith:** Last names beginning with A – He  
[anthony\\_smith@berkeley.k12.ca.us](mailto:anthony_smith@berkeley.k12.ca.us)  
Room D149 (main admin building), 644-6714

**Brenda Wong:** Last names beginning with Hi-R  
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**Lisa Wagner:** Last names beginning with S  
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**Xia Lee:** Last names beginning with T-Wa  
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**Dwayne Byndloss:** Last names beginning with We-Z  
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Room H215, 644-8987



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### Volunteering your time

Many parents and guardians have seen the research studies that show both higher academic performance and higher self-esteem of students when the adults who take care of them are actively involved in their school. Again, this can be tricky for teenagers, who may be mortified to have their parent show up in their classroom. There are many ways for you to be active at Berkeley High School. For ideas on how you can help out, please contact Parent Coordinator Co-Chairs Carol Isen [cisen@clearsong.com](mailto:cisen@clearsong.com) or Wendy Lukas [wlukas@sbcglobal.net](mailto:wlukas@sbcglobal.net). Volunteer opportunities are posted regularly via the AC and BHS etrees. Stay tuned, and we hope to see you around the campus in 2010/2011!