



Academic Choice at Berkeley High School

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 is moving toward a system of online grade and attendance reports, as well as providing teachers with the opportunity to post course outlines and homework assignments online. Two resources are currently available, so you need to check with your student's teachers to find out which they are using:

a) **Edline** (https://www.edline.net/pages/Berkeley_HS)

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, send an email to bhsedline@berkeley.k12.ca.us. Also, regular trainings are being offered in the evenings for parents and guardians to learn how to access Edline.

b) **The Homework Site** (<https://www.thehomeworksite.com>)

Visit the site to create a user profile with your student's class schedule.

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>. In Academic Choice, we also offer specialized support in Math, English, and Social Studies – for more information, visit <http://www.bhsacademicchoice.com/support.htm> or contact Karen Meryash at kspivey@ix.netcom.com.



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4. Encourage your student to take a leading role in her/his success.

By first helping our students become aware of the vast opportunities and resources available at BHS, they should then have a foundation of where to start 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.

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.

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. For Academic Choice students, this is Vice Principal Pasqual Scuderi (pasquale_sudari@berkeley.k12.ca.us). In rare circumstances, it may be necessary to take the issue one step further and include Principal Jim Slemph in a meeting.

BHS Counselors for Academic Choice

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Volunteering Your Time for Academic Choice

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. In Academic Choice, we want to assure you that there are many ways for you to be active at Berkeley High School and in support of Academic Choice. For ideas on how you can help out, please contact our volunteer coordinator, Kate Spohr, at kspohr@berkeley.edu.