

6254c Private contact information,
Student information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [board](#)
Subject: 9th grade English classes
Date: Sunday, January 26, 2014 5:45:37 PM

Dear PAUSD Board members,

First, I wanted to thank you for taking the time to work on the issues that face our district, I know they are many and complex!

I have read about the plan for Paly to combine their two English lanes into one for ninth graders starting next year. I have a [REDACTED] who will be starting Paly next year, and when I told [REDACTED] of this [REDACTED] honestly said, "Really? But I have been waiting since sixth grade to have an advanced English class!" Honestly I was surprised to learn that [REDACTED] has two math lanes in seventh and eighth grade, but only one English lane, and I am disappointed to hear that Paly is considering doing the same thing. While I am a proponent of offering all students a rigorous education in both math and English, I am surprised that teachers and administrators do not support the idea of offering an accelerated English class at [REDACTED] and now, at Paly. My [REDACTED] is an avid reader and has been frustrated at the slower pace of [REDACTED] English classes at [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] says that the teachers have to explain things multiple times, and one teacher played the audio version of the text for many parts of one of the books they were reading as a class. I know that some students need this reinforcement, and yet for those who are fast readers who comprehend the text easily, this can be highly frustrating. As a former middle school teacher I have always believed in having high expectations for all students. However, I support the idea of giving some students the extra time and review of concepts that they need, while allowing other students to move at a faster pace and develop concepts at a deeper level.

I urge you to reconsider this decision and allow there to be two English lanes in 9th grade for this purpose.

Best,

Heidi Mickelsen
Parent of [REDACTED]

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [board](#)
Subject: Changes to Palo Alto High school English classes
Date: Monday, January 27, 2014 9:21:05 PM

Dear School Board Members,

I would like to express my opinion that limiting the choices of English classes for high school students is detrimental to their education. I believe that multiple lanes of English should continue to be offered. While it is nice to believe that all students can achieve at the same level when “held to the highest standard”, the reality is that high school is populated by a diversity of students who are not all at the same level and, to be honest, are not all capable of performing at the same level.

For too long the school board has made unilateral changes trying to support lower performing students at the expense of the rest of the student body. This has resulted in minimal improvement for those lower performing students while constantly sending the message to other students (and their parents) that their educational needs are not important. It is time for the school board to treat all students EQUALLY – and by that I mean addressing the educational needs of higher performing students with the same fervor and willingness to create classes for them that is seen when addressing lower performing students. (How many pull out classes and special sessions are available in elementary and middle schools for lower performing students and how many for exceptionally advanced students?)

The lofty goal of differentiation has yet to be attainable in reality. Just spend some time in any class, and you will quickly see the reality that one teacher can only teach to one cohort of students, generally in the middle of the class. You can see then, that students who perform at a lower level AND those who perform at an advanced level are left out. Multiple lane classes that allow students (with input from parents and counselors) to choose the best fit allow for more appropriate and directed teaching to the student cohort.

My children will finish their Palo Alto school system education in the next few years. My overall feeling is that their educational needs have only been nominally met by a system that generally teaches to the middle, while giving lip service to “differentiation” that is not actually delivered. Outside and at-home additional educational opportunities, I hope, have aided them, but my feeling is that the educational quality in the Palo Alto school district is on a downward trend. If it continues to appear that the emphasis of the school district is on supporting poorer performing students, at the expense of other students, I fully expect to see those parents with monetary resources, or those willing to make exceptional sacrifices for their children’s education, removing their students from this public school district or not purchasing homes here in the first place.

Please take into consideration the best way to provide a good educational experience to ALL the students in High School English class before instituting these changes.

Regards,

Tina Peak

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Camille Townsend](#)
Subject: Comments from board mtg.
Date: Thursday, January 30, 2014 6:30:19 AM

Hi Camille,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposed changes in the one PAUSD high schools in regard to the 9th grade English classes. Our family and child have the highest respect for the teachers and administrators in this district. It's a safe, nurturing and challenging environment for a student to learn. I must express my overall concern with this for the following reasons:

- 1) We have personally experienced the experiment of inclusion within the middle school and sadly, we believe it is failing. The staff are not given the necessary resources to handle the many behavioral disruptions within the class period and this results in minutes of instruction time being lost on a daily basis. In addition, there are students that do not academically thrive and are being asked to move on, or the entire class is being asked to pause while a few "catch up". The teaching staff are doing their best, I cannot imagine being handed a classroom of 3-10 special needs students (behavioral and non proficient) and trying to integrate a lesson plan with one aide. This is ridiculously planned and implemented. No one wins.
- 2) The math laning has eliminated most of the above issues in the 7th grade, for those students taking the higher lane. The students understand they are going to be challenged, get it and want this experience. Our feedback is that in the other classrooms the teacher's have to redirect the lesson to handle behavioral issues and the same students who are struggling, resulting in lost instruction time for such activity. This is a daily experience and these subjects include English.
- 3) The life lessons for a student to witness and see this is real world and we explain that to our child. However, as this is now a daily classroom experience since entering middle school, it's becoming annoying for a tween/teen. Lessons are commonly group and project based now. The learning experience is almost a lottery if one is given a table with some of the included students that have no additional classroom support. I cannot imagine how these students must feel, being asked to behave or catch up by a peer and equally frustrating for the other students. No one wins.
- 4) English seems to be an Achilles heel with our district. I do not understand why. We have the resources and will make sure our child thrives in this subject. We would like the district to offer all students this choice. Some students want to be challenged and most learn by interacting not only with their teacher, but with their peers, much like in college. How can the students thrive by putting everyone in the same box and offer little to no resources?

Please consider any vote you consent to on this issue as parents are concerned. As you can read, resources are not being provided for these students, everyone is affected. How can you ensure the resources to make this work? Why is one our high schools approach so different from the other? Can we get the schools to collaborate for best practices?

Thanks for reading, appreciate all the late evenings you put in for our children, had no idea how long these last! I know the intentions are always good and please understand I am just reporting an experience, you have more insight.

Katie Shade

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Melissa Caswell](#)
Subject: Comments from last board mtg.
Date: Thursday, January 30, 2014 6:20:45 AM

Hi Melissa,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposed changes in the one PAUSD high schools in regard to the 9th grade English classes. Our family and child have the highest respect for the teachers and administrators in this district. It's a safe, nurturing and challenging environment for a student to learn. I must express my overall concern with this for the following reasons:

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Thanks for reading, appreciate all the late evenings you put in for our children. I know the intentions are always good. Hope your son is doing well.

Katie Shade

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Barb Mitchell](#)
Subject: Comments from last board mtg.
Date: Thursday, January 30, 2014 6:26:44 AM

Hi Barb,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposed changes in the one PAUSD high schools in regard to the 9th grade English classes. Our family and child have the highest respect for the teachers and administrators in this district. It's a safe, nurturing and challenging environment for a student to learn. I must express my overall concern with this for the following reasons:

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Thanks for reading, appreciate all the late evenings you put in for our children. I know the intentions are always good and understand I am just reporting an experience, you have more insight.

Katie Shade

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [board](#)
Subject: De-laning English at Paly
Date: Monday, January 27, 2014 12:23:46 PM

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please do not de-lane English at Paly. This would hurt both the advanced students, who would not be as challenged as they could, and the struggling students, who would struggle even more than they should.

If the district feels that more students are capable of the advanced level class than are choosing it, you could have the lane determined by the teacher based on performance in 8th grade, as is done for math, instead of allowing student to self-select.

Thank you,

Vered DeLeeuw
(Tamar, grade 8, JLS)

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [board](#)
Subject: De-laning English
Date: Monday, January 27, 2014 3:55:37 PM

Dear PAUSD School Board,

Re: the upcoming board vote on whether to de-lane English classes at Palo Alto High school

Please do not de-lane English in 9th and 10th grade at Paly. According to the statistics you were given, 70% of Paly's 9th graders picked Advanced English this year and 30% picked regular English. By lumping all students into Advanced English as 9th and 10th graders, Paly would be doing each group of students a disservice. There is a very broad range of ability in both reading and writing. Lumping all students together would make it very difficult for the teachers to serve all constituencies effectively in the classroom, frustrating both teachers and students. Assignments would be too difficult for some students and not difficult enough for other students. We applaud any teacher willing to take on this herculean challenge and students of all levels can certainly learn from each other. However, it's an unnecessary challenge with the current English program that strives to serve students at varying ability and interest levels. If the concern is that students are not picking 9th & 10th grade class levels that are appropriate, it would be straightforward for 8th grade English teachers to recommend a level just as 8th grade Math teachers recommend the correct placement for 9th grade.

Paly is not a one-size-fits-all in math, nor should it be in English.

Thank you for all your hard work on the Board. Respectfully,
Jennifer and Andy Mutz

From: [Kindel Launer](#)
To: [Dana Tom](#)
Cc: [Shirley Tokheim](#); [Victoria Kim](#); [Kimberly Diorio](#); [Katherine Baker](#)
Subject: Differentiation examples
Date: Monday, February 03, 2014 7:24:22 PM

Hi Dana,

As you've requested - here are two examples of materials that I would use during as a differentiated instructional practice. I cannot capture the language over email and I hope that these docs may provide some insight.

Because teaching is dynamic, a video would provide the best evidence.

1. Differentiation Example 1: a handout used in both English 9A and 9. Note that both classes are working with the same material as both classes average a 85% 4s and 5s on CST-ELA.
2. Differentiation Example 2: a handout used in both English 9A and 9. Learners tend to use different templates to approach analytical writing.

Again, it would be best if we could talk in person and even better if you could observe a class.

Best,

Kindel

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Dana Tom](#)
Subject: English 9
Date: Monday, February 03, 2014 4:22:10 PM

Dear Dana,

I am writing about the English 9 proposal that was presented to the board last Tuesday. A chart was included in the board packet showing the English 9 pathway at other Santa Clara schools. I visited the website of each of the five schools with unlaned English 9 and found that none of them offered English 9 as an honors course. Each school offered a college prep level English 9 for all students.

It might also help to look at the schools that PiE uses as benchmark schools to see what they offer. I looked at Edina, MN and Scarsdale, NY (the only two that I remember from PiE) and they both only offer English 9, as a college prep class, but not as an honors class.

It seems that what the teachers are proposing is in line with what other schools, similar to ours, offer their 9th graders. Of course, support is given to the students who need it and the proposal before the board also includes support for students who need it.

I thought the teachers made a strong argument for their proposal, especially with the research they cited. It was interesting to learn that when you have unlaned 9th grade English everyone does better - the students at the top as well as the students at the bottom.

I hope this information is helpful.

Best regards,

Mary Vincent

"We live in the shelter of each other." Irish saying

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Camille Townsend](#)
Subject: English 9
Date: Monday, February 03, 2014 4:21:32 PM

Dear Camille,

I am writing about the English 9 proposal that was presented to the board last Tuesday. A chart was included in the board packet showing the English 9 pathway at other Santa Clara schools. I visited the website of each of the five schools with unlaned English 9 and found that none of them offered English 9 as an honors course. Each school offered a college prep level English 9 for all students.

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6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Melissa Caswell](#)
Subject: English 9
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Mary Vincent

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6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Heidi Emberling](#)
Subject: English 9
Date: Monday, February 03, 2014 4:22:56 PM

Dear Ms. Emberling,

I am writing about the English 9 proposal that was presented to the board last Tuesday. A chart was included in the board packet showing the English 9 pathway at other Santa Clara schools. I visited the website of each of the five schools with unlaned English 9 and found that none of them offered English 9 as an honors course. Each school offered a college prep level English 9 for all students.

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Best regards,

Mary Vincent

"We live in the shelter of each other." Irish saying

6254c Private contact information;
Student information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [board](#)
Cc: [superintendent](#); [REDACTED]
Subject: English 9A for 2014-2015
Date: Thursday, February 06, 2014 8:32:33 AM

Dear All:

I do concur that this approach is well meaning and will benefit the students. I say this, if and only if those students that require assistance get the help they need. Everything to ensure the success and confidence of these and all children should be high priority. PAUSD and staff must also be aware that it is NOT just students with 504s and IEPs that require this assistance. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] These students MUST get the help they need during the school year.

The students should not have to hire tutors, be expected to attend summer school, or be sacrificed in their grading.

PAUSD needs to make sure kids do not fall through the cracks and that they receive the best education for each individual. PAUSD should not have their first priority be protecting and improving their statistics for advanced classes.

PAUSD stated: "The small number of students (44 students, spread throughout 18-20 sections) who need additional support will continue to receive this support through co-taught classes, case managers, tutorial, and programs such as RESTART, AVID, and FOS that will enable them to succeed ...The small number of students (44 students, spread throughout 18-20 sections) who need additional support will continue to receive this support through co-taught classes, case managers, tutorial, and programs such as RESTART, AVID, and FOS that will enable them to succeed ...At the same time, we believe in the importance of providing substantial and appropriate support for struggling students so they can access the curriculum. Because of the work the freshman team has done over the past eighteen months to align curriculum and expectations, we feel fully prepared to meet the needs of all students." I can only hope this is true and that the staff follows through.

Sincerely,
Teresa Strathearn

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [mbcaswell](#); [Heidi Emberling](#); [Barb Mitchell](#); [Dana Tom](#); [Camille Townsend](#); [Kevin Skelly](#); [Charles Young](#); [Katherine Baker](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: English 9A class
Date: Tuesday, January 28, 2014 1:16:49 PM

Dear Board Members and PAUSD Administrators --

I realize this is late and apologize. I believe a single English lane for 9th grade students is important and am glad you're moving toward the pilot program for Paly. My concern is that the single English class is an English 9A class, whereby the "A" means the class is outside the scope of the Homework Policy guidelines (AR6154). Since 9th graders will have no choice in selecting their English class, the class must fall under the protection of the homework policy to so students do not suffer unreasonable assignments and group projects.

Please reconsider the "A" designation.

Thank you.
Keri Wagner

I'm totally opposed to this proposal. In my opinion special ed students may be able to do English A, but at what cost? They will most likely get a lower grade. My son already struggles in the regular English,

This is important for:

- GPA: CSU and UC look at gpa mostly, why should special ed students not have a chance to apply there? UC also require at least a C, now some may only get a D and the course won't count, whereas the regular English with a C would count.
- self esteem: lower grades are not going to help. Special ed students already feel "stupid" compared to others.
- extra stress: more struggling to get the work done.

What is the reason that Paly wants to drop this class I feel there are plenty of students, not only special ed kids who benefit from this class. Why does Paly want to be such a prestige school? I don't get it. Why not lane like math by teacher's recommendation instead of by own choice. That would help students pick the higher lane if they are capable.

It will not affect my son anymore, but for all that are still coming I feel strongly we need to oppose as a special ed parent group

This new proposal will negatively affect our special ed students, and students whose English is second language, because of less accommodation to their needs. It will also compromise the teaching of advanced students because the pace of the classroom will HAVE TO be adjusted to meet in the middle. This will result in Paly less competitive overall in language and literature down the road, contrary to the expectation of the course designer.

I am against the proposal. My son, now a senior, struggles with writing. The rigor of the higher level English class would definitely have been too much for him. He stays up until midnight or later trying to complete his writing assignments. The extended time accommodation under his 504 Plan helps, but it becomes a vicious cycle causing him to get behind in his other work.

It would be interesting to find out specifically, how does PAUSD/the Board plan to support students who struggle with reading and writing? - What are the main causes of these difficulties? What accommodations have been effective in the past to address student's disabilities? What research-based interventions help these students satisfactorily complete English classes with a normal/appropriate amount of homework time? If the school isn't able to demonstrate awareness of the specific support that a certain group of kids will need to access the curriculum, or demonstrate effective results (i.e. kids are already struggling), this should be of concern. I think that these supports should be further investigated and determined, before it eliminates the lower lane class.

We have some concerns about this move. For students in English 9A that really should be in English 9, do they all need official 504 in place? Unless the policy is very clear, I do not think this change will serve everyone well. It is not clear what is meant by "substantial and appropriate support for struggling students". We feel it is much more important to align the curriculum and standards at 7th and 8th grade so that parents and students are better educated on which path best serves each student. We

have not seen this happen at all at JLS and we feel that the biggest factor for the 9/9A decision has been how motivated the parents were to push their kids into advanced English in later high school years.

I am against a single lane. There are multiple lanes for Bio, Math, and Chem and Physics. I don't understand why only STEM areas are deserving of multiple levels. English deserves the same attention and care, and meeting the kids wherever they may be in their learning.

Horrible idea. Too much pressure. Unfair to high performing and struggling in English.

This would have been disastrous for my student with an IEP -- she struggled as it was to keep up in English 9! There must be an option available for those who are simply not capable of being successful in an "advanced" class involving extensive reading and writing.

I don't think this is a sound idea for many reasons, but mainly, will make it really difficult for kids who struggle with writing, and also, slow down kids who are taking these classes because they have the skills currently. It will be frustrating for kids on either end of the spectrum. I think that this should not be implemented.

I think one vs. two tracks of English isn't important. The real issue is how does the school plan to differentiate students who have different needs and abilities. If students with a wider range of abilities, needs and learning styles are put into the same classroom, how is the administration planning to support both the students and teachers so that students can learn effectively & teachers will not be burdened with too much work? Has the administration articulated a plan?

When I was talking about this issue with my daughter, who is now a Junior at Paly, she said that the most important thing was to *not* have 2 levels of English taught at the same time by the same teacher in the same classroom (a situation she encountered Freshman year because of TEAM). We have found that switching levels of English both up and down has been very easy, but the higher level classes have had more writing homework.

The fundamental assumption behind forcing students into the higher lane is that they are either ignorant of the difference and so would choose incorrectly given a chance or that they lack the motivation to do the advanced class. There is no consideration that the students don't have the ability to do the more advanced class. The idea that special ed supports or focus on success (FOS) will confer these skills and abilities that they have not developed up to this point while in the middle of taking the class is wishful thinking at best.

Another problem is that this is only one class in the student's course load. If the other classes would back off on their expectations, then the extra effort on English could POSSIBLY make sense. We all know that every class in 9th grade expects a step up in effort and ability from middle school, so we are hitting the most vulnerable kids with the greatest expectations jump. Some will rise to the occasion and others will fail (sorry to be blunt, but...).

Since passing 4 years of English is mandatory for graduation and almost all colleges, we seem to be increasing the load and pressure on any kids who fail 9A class for any reason.

The basis of the proposal is that "laning up" is very hard to do successfully. But aren't we effectively "laning up" all these kids and won't there be a similar lack of success? The difference is that there is no individual teacher responsible for making the recommendation to lane up. Why not put much more focus on supporting "laning up" for the kids who can? We can do that both with active teacher identification and focused development of the pieces needed for those kids to make the jump in 10th or 11th grade. This seems like a more objective driven approach of having students succeed in advanced classes rather than simply making a blanket change attempting to move some statistic.

This brings me to several observations:

The people are looking at a high school statistic that reflects lower than desired participation in the advanced classes from certain groups of students. They then think the answer must be found in the way high school works. Somehow if we raise the bar, all the kids will magically develop all the things they need to do advanced English.

Sit in on some FOS or special ed classes and see whether these kids have a) have the prerequisite skills they need for their classes, b) believe they can succeed, and c) understand how to produce sustained effort at school work. My guess is that a very large percentage of the kids suffer from at least one of these challenges. For the ones with these challenges, it seems doubtful that the proposed changes will produce a significant increase in advanced class participation during succeeding years.

This is a problem that needs to be fixed not in high school but in elementary and middle schools. These are not things that change with simple policy or curriculum changes. They take serious effort in the home and school on an individual needs basis. Let's set the goal and focus that every student enter high school capable of taking the advanced classes. Then the problem takes care of itself.

As a special ed parent, there seems to be a school system model that the only way to get added services is to first have the student fail. How many times have we heard that because a student is now succeeding, they no longer need something that is currently being provided. The clear assumption is that it is better to take it away and see if the student fails again than to find a way to wean the service away while continuing the student's success.

What happens when we force all the kids into advanced classes? The brightest suffer because the class has to go slower to try to support the less capable. The less capable suffer because they get poor or failing grades which are a permanent part of their transcript. There would need to be a major shift in success rates of "laning up", whether entering 9th grade or after, for these negative aspects to be offset.

Is anyone willing to put up assurances that the majority of students currently taking English 9 will have comparable success in 9A? Or is this yet another case of forcing students to fail to get the appropriate courses and supports the following year?

The challenge with statistics like participation rates is that they tend to see the systemic issues. They then require a thoughtful analysis of where the issues lie. Unfortunately, there seems to be tendency to see broad policy and procedural actions as effective tools. These types of things are often not backed up with the hard evidence that the outcomes on an overall positive/negative basis will be there. We do too many experiments on our students in the name of progress.

After reading this proposal, my first inclination was to agree with it. My twins are only in 5th grade and will not be attending Paly for quite a while, but I am already thinking about high school and college. My kids have IEPs for specific learning disabilities, namely dyslexia and math difficulties, but this is not stopping them from wanting to excel. They are very bright "twice exceptional students" (the Napa Unified School District accommodates for this kind of student in its gifted or Advanced Learner program <http://nvusd-ca.schoolloop.com/2e>). Ironically enough, with the proper accommodations (audiobooks, extra time on assignments, etc...) they are already revealing that some of their strengths are in writing and analyzing literature! I would love to see them take advanced English classes at Paly and one or both get involved with journalism there too. I am constantly worried that because they have IEPs they will automatically be overlooked and pushed into courses that do not challenge them taught by teachers who refuse to recognize their talents and accommodate them for their weaknesses. Also if there is just a single course, 9A, my kids would have no choice but to take it, whereas if they had the choice of 9 or 9A I would be worried they would choose to take 9, thereby putting themselves in a lower lane, maybe not a lane that best reflects their abilities.

After reading some of the comments about the proposal from other CAC parents, I started feeling less inclined to believe that eliminating English 9 would be a good idea. The other parents made some good points, expressing concern about the fast pace of the class, the challenges faced by teachers in teaching such a wide variety of students, and the effect of the total course load from all courses, not just 9A, on students' lives. I also have concerns about my own kids, what they will be like in 3 1/2 years when they begin Paly and how prepared they will be to take an advanced class (of course some of that depends on how well they learn to advocate for themselves and manage school stress).

I feel that eliminating 9 would only work if Paly teachers and staff made sure of the following:

1. that teachers in 9A fully accommodate for IEP students by allowing extra time on assignments, modifications of assignments, etc..;
2. that the workload from ALL other courses, not just English, be reduced to a reasonable amount, thereby allowing students more time for extracurriculars such as sports or drama (let alone downtime and sleep);
3. that 9A's curriculum studies fewer books in more depth instead of racing at a breakneck speed to skim the surface of many books. Of course I am unfamiliar with the curriculum of 9A and perhaps it does that already, but based on some of the comments from Paly parents, I got the impression that wasn't the case, that it does cover many, many books at a fast pace. Many of the courses in my BA and MA literature programs covered fewer books very much in depth over a longer time and I happen to think that made for a richer experience than racing through a ton of books.

If the above cannot be accomplished, then I think keeping 9 would be in the best interests of the families and students of Paly. Perhaps, though, there could be a way for 8th grade teachers at Jordan to encourage IEP students whom they think would be good candidates for 9A to take the class when the students get to Paly? That might help solve the problem of capable students choosing 9 over 9A.

6254c Private contact information
Attachment provided separately

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Melissa Caswell](#); [Heidi Emberling](#); [Barb Mitchell](#); [Dana Tom](#); [Camille Townsend](#); [Stephen Kelly](#)
Cc: christinamschmidt@yahoo.com; stacey@zachary.com
Subject: feedback on Paly English 9A Pilot Proposal
Date: Monday, January 27, 2014 9:35:32 PM
Attachments: [feedback on English 9A.docx](#)

Dear members of the PAUSD School Board and Dr. Skelly,
cc: Christina Schmidt and Stacey Ashlund, CAC

Regarding the proposal which will be submitted to the school board tomorrow night of piloting English 9A for all students at Palo Alto High School starting this fall, I solicited feedback from special ed parents over the weekend. Pretty much everyone is opposed to this proposal, myself included.

The main reasons are:

- There are multiple lanes in math and science, why remove multiple lanes in English and force all students to do English A?
- Some students are currently struggling as it is in English; it would be better to provide more supports for these students so that they could lane up if possible, rather than solve this problem by requiring they be in English A.
- Since 4 years of English is required, what does requiring all students to take English A accomplish besides adding more stress, poorer performance, and lower self esteem for those already struggling with regular English?
- Work on solving the issues of disparity in elementary school and middle school and not try to patch it in high school by proposing students all take English A.
- Work on proper laning into English 9A as appropriate, or laning into English 10A from English 9 upon teacher recommendation (just like is done now in science).

We support **opening access** to English A for all students; we are opposed to **requiring** all students take English A.

We heard about this for the first time last Friday. I have attached all the comments I received over the weekend.

I also sent this feedback to Principal Diorio today. She is going to work on setting up a meeting with the Paly English IS and Special Ed IS and parents to discuss this, as she believes this proposal benefits special ed students, but none of us parents currently see this as a benefit.

Respectfully yours,
Cindy Goral
Paly PTSA Special Ed parent rep

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Melissa Caswell](#)
Cc: [Keri Wagner](#)
Subject: Fwd: English 9A class
Date: Tuesday, January 28, 2014 1:19:37 PM

I got your pausd email wrong. -- Keri

Begin forwarded message:

From: Keri Wagner [REDACTED]
Subject: English 9A class
Date: January 28, 2014 1:16:36 PM PST
To: mbcaswell@pausd.org, hemberling@pausd.org, bmitchell@pausd.org, Dana Tom <dtom@pausd.org>, Camille Townsend <ctownsend@pausd.org>, Kevin Skelly <kskelly@pausd.org>, Charles Young <cyoung@pausd.org>, Katherine Baker <kbaker@pausd.org>
Cc: Keri Wagner [REDACTED]

Dear Board Members and PAUSD Administrators --

I realize this is late and apologize. I believe a single English lane for 9th grade students is important and am glad you're moving toward the pilot program for Paly. My concern is that the single English class is an English 9A class, whereby the "A" means the class is outside the scope of the Homework Policy guidelines (AR6154). Since 9th graders will have no choice in selecting their English class, the class must fall under the protection of the homework policy to so students do not suffer unreasonable assignments and group projects.

Please reconsider the "A" designation.

Thank you.
Keri Wagner

6254c Private contact information;
Student information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Barb Mitchell](mailto:Barb.Mitchell)
Subject: Fwd: Vote no on advanced English for all 9 th graders at PALY
Date: Friday, January 31, 2014 10:34:18 AM

From: Kisa Young [REDACTED] >
Date: January 31, 2014 at 10:29:03 AM PST
To: "hemberling@pausd.org" <hemberling@pausd.org>
Subject: **Vote no on advanced English for all 9 th graders at PALY**

I am the parent of an [REDACTED] at PALY and ask you to hear my usually quiet voice. My [REDACTED] only a 504 (not an IEP which would provide needed support for advanced literature of any kind), and already struggles in English. Putting [REDACTED] and others like [REDACTED] in advanced level English will cause [REDACTED] homework load to increase exponentially. [REDACTED] struggles already with outside tutoring, frequent teacher and guidance counsellor meetings and 2-3 times longer to complete written work as compared to average peers. Why is this good for [REDACTED]? [REDACTED] already feels inferior in this arena. It will devastate [REDACTED] self-confidence. Please, please consider ALL students when making this decision. It will negatively affect a less vocal, but equally important group of your students.

Vote NO!!! To English 9A for all 9 th graders at PALY next fall!!!!!!!!!!

Thank you for your attention.

Kirstin young

Mother [REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

6254c Private contact information;
Student information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Dana Tom](#); [Camille Townsend](#)
Subject: Fwd: Vote no on advanced English for all 9 th graders at PALY
Date: Friday, January 31, 2014 10:34:30 AM

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Kisa Young [REDACTED]
Date: January 31, 2014 at 10:29:03 AM PST
To: "hemberling@pausd.org" <hemberling@pausd.org>
Subject: **Vote no on advanced English for all 9 th graders at PALY**

I am the parent of an [REDACTED] at PALY and ask you to hear my usually quiet voice. My [REDACTED], only a 504 (not an IEP which would provide needed support for advanced literature of any kind), and already struggles in English. Putting [REDACTED] and others like [REDACTED] in advanced level English will cause [REDACTED] homework load to increase exponentially. [REDACTED] struggles already with outside tutoring, frequent teacher and guidance counsellor meetings and 2-3 times longer to complete written work as compared to average peers. Why is this good for [REDACTED] [REDACTED] already feels inferior in this arena. It will devastate [REDACTED] self-confidence. Please, please consider ALL students when making this decision. It will negatively affect a less vocal, but equally important group of your students.

Vote NO!!! To English 9A for all 9 th graders at PALY next fall!!!!!!!!!!

Thank you for your attention.

Kirstin young

Mother [REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Melissa Caswell](#); [Heidi Emberling](#); [Barb Mitchell](#); [Dana Tom](#); [Camille Townsend](#); [Kevin Skelly](#)
Subject: January 28, 2014 Board Meeting
Date: Monday, February 03, 2014 1:57:30 PM

Dear Board of Education and Dr. Skelly,

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation for your dedication to all of our students and the amazing work that is happening at our schools.

I would like to clarify my comments made at the Board meeting on January 28th, 2014. Given the late hour, my comments may not have been as coherent as I would have hoped.

I had the privilege of hearing that morning the two high schools SPSA presentations and in the evening to hear the proposed new courses and pathway offerings. It is impossible to not feel excitement for the choices our students will have with all of these new programs. The Palo Alto community has valued choice for as long as I have been a member, as demonstrated by the various choice offerings beginning in our elementary schools. It is therefore, surprising to see Paly eliminating choices in its English department, a graduation requirement, not an elective program.

Embracing new programs/course offerings is always exciting; taking choices away is difficult and thus requires careful thought and communication. What has not been communicated is what collaboration occurred between the two high schools' English departments regarding the needs of our students and how to best address them. Since families do not self-select between the two high schools, rather are assigned by geographical location with JLS middle school split between the two, why is Paly eliminating choices in English and Gunn keeping them? Why is this not an issue at Gunn and why do they have a higher A-G completion rate than Paly? Did Paly consider the Gunn model or a variation of it? So much work has been done over the past years, to align the Gunn and Paly course offerings in Math and Science - and this was on display at the SPSA and Board meetings - that it would logically follow that they would continue this collaborative effort. We are a unified school district after all.

So, I ask, why is the English department going in a vastly different direction from Gunn? This is not just about collapsing 9th grade English into one class. This academic year we have seen the removal of the 12th grade honors class, thus leaving only AP English, a yearlong class, as an option for seniors who feel they need to continue to demonstrate academic rigor in their college applications. Not all seniors may be interested in, or feel that they can fit in, another AP class their senior year and a semester honors class offers an excellent alternative. Will we then be discussing only one English offering for 10th grade? The book mentioned at the board meeting as a guide for this trajectory implies that this would be the case, even though the question was not directly answered at the meeting.

I appreciate the hard work and time that has gone into this proposal. However, I am dismayed that all of this happened in a vacuum from the board, and the broader school community. The communication piece and the decision process leave much to be desired. Having the public discussion the night before the course catalogs are unveiled and meetings with the guidance counselors take place is just not acceptable. If the board and the superintendent are in agreement that eliminating choice in a core subject is desirable, you should then consider allowing parents to choose between the two high schools. Remember, this is a community that values choice.

I therefore ask that as you consider the proposal to collapse 9th grade English at Paly, you do so in the context of increasing or reducing choice. This is a change in a core subject matter, not an elective class, and it takes away choice. So if you do decide to move this forward, at least allow

families the choice between the two schools.

Sincerely,

Louise Valente

From: [REDACTED]
To: [board](#); [superintendent](#)
Subject: Keeping the 2 lane system for 9th grade English at Paly
Date: Tuesday, February 04, 2014 7:34:56 PM

Dear Education Board Members and Dr. Skelly,

I am the mother of a [REDACTED]. I attended this morning's workshop at Paly about the proposal to eliminate the 9th grade regular English lane and only offer the advanced lane. Prior to the meeting, I have read the well prepared proposal.

First I want to thank Paly and the English teachers for wanting to teach our children well, wanting to reduce the current performance gap between the kids who choose 9R and 9A English.

However, I do not think merging them into one lane will achieve the desired outcome. Further more, this may cause undesired effects as well.

We all know kids develop at different pace, and there are multiple types of intelligence. For kids who need a little bit more support, or for kids who have other priorities than English (for instance, art, music and sports), they may benefit from a slightly relaxed learning environment during their first year of high school. We are already talking about too much academic pressure for kids nowadays, forcing kids who they themselves and/or their parents don't feel ready for the advanced lane will give them even more pressure. We all know pressure is not good for learning. If the would-choose-regular-lane-kids get Cs and Ds in the advanced lane, or worse, get the "looks" or discouraging words from their peers, how can they build the confidence to try higher lane in upper grades?

In middle schools, except math in 7th and 8th grades , there is no lane system otherwise. I have heard from my kid as well as from other parents who have heard from their kids complains about special ed students making interruptions during the lectures. Some kids are in tears each morning not wanting to go to school because the classes are too boring, because the teachers have to constantly stop the lectures to address the disruptions.

If Paly sets up varsity teams and junior varsity teams for sports due to kids' differences in their sports abilities, why do you not accept their differences in learning aptitude?

Although it is out of good intention, based on the information I have obtained so far, I strongly urge you to **vote to keep the current 2-lane 9th grade English system**. You may consider other approaches to reduce the learning gap, for example, smaller class size, more rigorous teaching in the regular lane, etc.

Thank you,

Catherine Xu

From: [REDACTED]
To: [board](#)
Subject: Please do NOT de-lane English at Paly
Date: Monday, January 27, 2014 10:21:16 AM

Delaning English at Paly

Please do not de-lane English in 9th and 10th grade at Paly. Across the students in a given grade, there is a very broad range in ability in both reading and writing (a 5 grade level spread is not atypical). To group all of these students together would mean that any class reading assignment would likely be largely inaccessible for some students and not very challenging for others. Grades in 10th grade are important for college admissions and students that may do well in the regular lane may get a lower grade in the unlaned class that has more higher level students.

From the report, it seems like the issue is that the district feels that more students are capable of the advanced level class than are choosing it. An easy solution for this is to have the English class determined by performance in 8th grade (as is the case for math) rather than allowing student to self-select. My [REDACTED] would really like to be with kids who want to learn more and delve deeper. Allowing students to self-select would mean that she would get to be in a classroom full of students who want that also.

Thank you for your time,

Stephanie Youngquist

6254c Private contact information;
Student information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [board](#); [superintendent](#)
Subject: Please keep the 2 lane system for 9th grade English at Paly
Date: Tuesday, February 04, 2014 10:02:53 PM

Dear Board of Education Members and Dr. Skelly,

I have a [REDACTED]. I have learned about Paly's proposal to have only a single English lane for 9th grade. While well intentioned I believe it does a disservice to both the regular and advanced lane students.

For the more advanced students who want to move at a faster pace, cover more challenging class material to stay engaged and focus on academic achievement, introducing disruptive and less academically advanced students will hurt their learning, concentration, motivation and achievement.

For regular lane, this is a choice they have made to participate in that lane, many of whom have no intention of going to a four year college or have other interests. Being part of the regular lane is a choice they have made and provides a more comfortable and lower stress environment to learn. Also, the teachers can take the time to focus on these students and pace the class at the appropriate speed for them. These students do not have to receive poor grades because they are at the bottom of a more advanced class or feel academic inferior to their peers. Teachers can provide more challenging material and class discussion to these students if they feel they would benefit from that without having to merge the classes.

The proposed solution was well meaning but benefits neither lane of students. I strongly oppose this proposal but do encourage you to think of out of the box student-centric solutions that benefit the entire student body, such as additional tutoring ability to change lanes during the year or offering more advanced material to some students in the regular lane for extra credit.

Hamilton Hitchings

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [board](#)
Subject: Proposed un-laning of English at Paly
Date: Tuesday, January 28, 2014 3:59:48 PM

Dear PAUSD Board:

I am writing to urge you not to consolidate English 9 and 9A and 10 and 10H at Palo Alto High School. Divergent student needs and capabilities are best served with two levels of English.

Having studied the Board's proposal, I'd like to advocate for more direct intervention methods to address segregation concerns. Consolidating 9/9A does not seem to address the root of the problem. And even if the two English levels are consolidated, there would be a de facto segregation having to do with elective choice: students will choose similar electives as their friends, and then find themselves in classes with particular blocks of students.

What tends to happen is that students with many honors classes tend to be in the same classes.

Perhaps there are ways to limit the scheduling problem - trying to find a way to fairly distribute all students across the english classes - though I doubt it.

A more direct solution to the problem of encouraging strong students to step up to 9A would be to encourage strong students to step up to 9A.

English is a hard academic subject. It is the one core subject for all college bound majors for all years of high school. It is not a straightforward subject in which to excel, because the skills involved are sophisticated - "good writing" cannot be boiled down to speed, understanding of set rules, or memorizing a body of knowledge. Because of this, it makes sense to me for high school students to know that there is an option for them to be challenged, if they choose, and an option for them to fulfill their requirements. These two needs are different, and should have different classes.

Sincerely,
Marjorie Sayer

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Dana Tom](#)
Subject: Questions re. proposed pilot for ninth grade English 9A
Date: Wednesday, February 05, 2014 11:05:39 PM

Dear Dana,

There have been a lot of discussions among parents re. the proposed changes to Paly's freshmen English. I have read the entire 5-page proposal (http://pausd.org/community/board/downloads/brd_packet/item_018.pdf) and I would like to raise some of my concerns.

One main reason for the proposed change seems to be that there is a belief the students at 8th grade are not making the choice for their 9th grade English class. The proposal said " The self-selection process has produced classes divided along non-academic criteria. We have become additionally concerned about data showing students make a decision before beginning high school that will affect their entire high school pathway in English." So, the solution proposed is to remove the choices all together. In my opinion, this is not the right way to solve a problem. Instead of removing the choices, we should instead try to find out the root cause as to why students are making the wrong choices. We should also work on educating 8th graders and their parents to make the right choices for their 9th grade English courses. We could make it clear that a student with a score of 4 or 5 in CST should take English 9A. We could also have 8th grade English teachers to help parents make the right selection.

The proposal also stated that "We believe any struggling students, with appropriate supports, will also benefit from this rigorous coursework." There was no data in the proposal to prove this claim. If my kid is an average kid, or has a lot of other activities or interests, she might not be able to handle the rigorous work load and it would be hard for her to get an A, and that would hurt her self esteem. On the other hand, if a kid is already 2 years ahead in reading/writing, how would he benefit from this mixed classroom.

The proposal cited some neighboring schools who have no lanes. But have you researched schools that do have lanes, even starting 7th grade? What are their achievement results?

I'm not convinced that the proposed change is better than the current 2 lane program for any students, whether they are struggling or advanced. I'd appreciate if you could show some more research to justify the proposed change. I would also strongly urge you to consider carefully before casting your vote.

Thanks for your time,

Regards,
Lydia

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Barb Mitchell](#)
Subject: Questions re. proposed pilot for ninth grade English 9A
Date: Wednesday, February 05, 2014 11:04:53 PM

Dear Barb,

There have been a lot of discussions among parents re. the proposed changes to Paly's freshmen English. I have read the entire 5-page proposal (http://pausd.org/community/board/downloads/brd_packet/item_018.pdf) and I would like to raise some of my concerns.

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I'm not convinced that the proposed change is better than the current 2 lane program for any students, whether they are struggling or advanced. I'd appreciate if you could show some more research to justify the proposed change. I would also strongly urge you to consider carefully before casting your vote.

Thanks for your time,

Regards,
Lydia

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: Heidi.Emberling
Subject: Questions re. proposed pilot for ninth grade English 9A
Date: Wednesday, February 05, 2014 11:04:14 PM

Dear Heidi,

There have been a lot of discussions among parents re. the proposed changes to Paly's freshmen English. I have read the entire 5-page proposal (http://pausd.org/community/board/downloads/brd_packet/item_018.pdf) and I would like to raise some of my concerns.

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I'm not convinced that the proposed change is better than the current 2 lane program for any students, whether they are struggling or advanced. I'd appreciate if you could show some more research to justify the proposed change. I would also strongly urge you to consider carefully before casting your vote.

Thanks for your time,

Regards,
Lydia

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Melissa Caswell](mailto:Melissa.Caswell)
Subject: Questions re. proposed pilot for ninth grade English 9A
Date: Wednesday, February 05, 2014 11:02:35 PM

Dear Melissa,

There have been a lot of discussions among parents re. the proposed changes to Paly's freshmen English. I have read the entire 5-page proposal (http://pausd.org/community/board/downloads/brd_packet/item_018.pdf) and I would like to raise some of my concerns.

One main reason for the proposed change seems to be that there is a belief the students at 8th grade are not making the choice for their 9th grade English class. The proposal said " The self-selection process has produced classes divided along non-academic criteria. We have become additionally concerned about data showing students make a decision before beginning high school that will affect their entire high school pathway in English." So, the solution proposed is to remove the choices all together. In my opinion, this is not the right way to solve a problem. Instead of removing the choices, we should instead try to find out the root cause as to why students are making the wrong choices. We should also work on educating 8th graders and their parents to make the right choices for their 9th grade English courses. We could make it clear that a student with a score of 4 or 5 in CST should take English 9A. We could also have 8th grade English teachers to help parents make the right selection.

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I'm not convinced that the proposed change is better than the current 2 lane program for any students, whether they are struggling or advanced. I'd appreciate if you could show some more research to justify the proposed change. I would also strongly urge you to consider carefully before casting your vote.

Thanks for your time,

Regards,
Lydia

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Camille Townsend](#)
Subject: Questions re. proposed pilot for ninth grade English 9A
Date: Wednesday, February 05, 2014 11:06:47 PM

Dear Camille,

There have been a lot of discussions among parents re. the proposed changes to Paly's freshmen English. I have read the entire 5-page proposal (http://pausd.org/community/board/downloads/brd_packet/item_018.pdf) and I would like to raise some of my concerns.

One main reason for the proposed change seems to be that there is a belief the students at 8th grade are not making the choice for their 9th grade English class. The proposal said " The self-selection process has produced classes divided along non-academic criteria. We have become additionally concerned about data showing students make a decision before beginning high school that will affect their entire high school pathway in English." So, the solution proposed is to remove the choices all together. In my opinion, this is not the right way to solve a problem. Instead of removing the choices, we should instead try to find out the root cause as to why students are making the wrong choices. We should also work on educating 8th graders and their parents to make the right choices for their 9th grade English courses. We could make it clear that a student with a score of 4 or 5 in CST should take English 9A. We could also have 8th grade English teachers to help parents make the right selection.

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I'm not convinced that the proposed change is better than the current 2 lane program for any students, whether they are struggling or advanced. I'd appreciate if you could show some more research to justify the proposed change. I would also strongly urge you to consider carefully before casting your vote.

Thanks for your time,

Regards,
Lydia

6254c Private contact information;
Student information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [board](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: 9th Grade English
Date: Monday, January 27, 2014 4:06:46 PM

Dear School Board Members --

It has been brought to my attention that my email below may be misconstrued, so I would like to clarify specifically what I am saying. I find it of no comfort that the intended curriculum for all 9th grade students will be the advanced curriculum. That seems like the worst of all worlds. Instead of giving valuable differentiated learning for all students, you will be forcing all students to engage in a curriculum that may or may not be well suited to their circumstances or level. My concern is 100% about grouping students of all abilities together in the same classroom. I believe that you are guaranteeing that your teachers will not have the time, nor the capacity, to address the learning needs of all the students across a spectrum of preparedness and proficiency. Worse yet, my experience in the Palo Alto school has been that when teachers are tasked with simultaneously teaching students of various levels of proficiency, the vast majority of their time is spent working with students who are at the lowest level of proficiency. I believe that this is the appropriate use of resources in those circumstances, but it inevitably underserves the students at a higher level of proficiency. On the other hand, when students are divided based upon proficiency level, the teachers can focus their energy on level-appropriate instruction. The result is a better academic experience for everyone. I can not imagine taking a step backwards to undifferentiated learning. You will be sacrificing the education of the students and to what benefit? I sincerely hope that you will retain the system currently in place. It is the system that best serves our students.

Best,

David Hornik

On Jan 27, 2014, at 12:51 AM, David Hornik wrote:

> Dear School Board Members --

>

> I am writing to express my support for retaining an Advanced English option at Paly in the 9th and 10th grades. My [REDACTED] is a recent graduate of Paly ([REDACTED] is now a Freshman at Yale) and was the beneficiary of the Advanced English program. [REDACTED] was pleased to have the opportunity to work on an accelerated level, and that accelerated English has clearly benefitted [REDACTED] in college. In those rare instances in which [REDACTED] did not receive differentiated learning at Paly, [REDACTED] found the experience to be meaningfully less valuable. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] classmates were not given the opportunity to participate fully, nor were the teachers able to give the appropriate amount of attention to either the accelerated learners or the non-accelerated learners in the class. Rather than creating a better educational experience for the entire class, these non-laned classes did a disservice to all members of the class, accelerated or otherwise.

>

> My [REDACTED] will be entering Paly in the Fall. I am deeply concerned that all English learners will be lumped together in the same class. The end result will be a less beneficial learning experience for [REDACTED], as well as all of [REDACTED] fellow classmates. My [REDACTED] have each attended a mix of private and public schools. They have benefitted in varying degrees from the public school system. But no matter what their learning environment, they have benefitted meaningfully from the ability to work in a classroom with like-level learners. I believe that any efforts by the Palo Alto schools to flatten the curriculum and remove Advanced classes would do all students a disservice.

>

> Thank you for your time.

>

> David and Pamela Hornik

[REDACTED]



6254c Private contact information;
Student information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Melissa Caswell](mailto:Melissa.Caswell)
Subject: Re: 9th grade English classes
Date: Monday, January 27, 2014 10:23:13 AM

Hi Melissa,

Thanks for your response. Yes, I am aware that the combined class would have the intent of teaching advanced curriculum to all ninth grade students. My sense is that what would happen is that the pace and content would have to be reduced to accommodate the students who aren't as strong readers or writers. For example, in eighth grade if Algebra 1 were taught to heterogeneous classes of students, and a third of the class had a hard time grasping new concepts, the teacher would necessarily need to slow down the pace to accommodate these students. I believe that the same basic curriculum could be presented to two different levels of ninth grade English, with the difference of the pace and depth. This way the students who aren't as strong with language and reading could receive the extra support but still study the same texts and concepts, while the more advanced students would be able to move at a faster pace and accomplish assignments that required more complex analyses of texts.

Thanks,

Heidi

On Mon, Jan 27, 2014 at 7:17 AM, Melissa Caswell <mcaswell@pausd.org> wrote:

Hi Heidi,

Thank you for your letter concerning the Paly 9th Grade English proposal . Are you aware that the proposal includes English 9A (advanced English) curriculum and pacing for all 9th grade students in this combined class?

Does this impact your view of the proposal? Does it change your concerns?

Regards,

Melissa

From: Heidi Mickelsen [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, January 26, 2014 5:45 PM
To: board
Subject: 9th grade English classes

Dear PAUSD Board members,

First, I wanted to thank you for taking the time to work on the issues that face our district, I know they are many and complex!

I have read about the plan for Paly to combine their two English lanes into one for ninth graders starting next year. I have [REDACTED] who will be starting Paly next year, and when I told [REDACTED] of this [REDACTED] honestly said, "Really? But I have been waiting since sixth grade to have an advanced English class!" Honestly I was surprised to learn that [REDACTED] has two math lanes in seventh and eighth grade, but only one English lane, and I am disappointed to hear that Paly is considering doing the same thing. While I am a proponent of offering all students a rigorous education in both math and English, I am surprised that teachers and administrators do not support the idea of offering an accelerated English class at [REDACTED] and now, at Paly. My [REDACTED] is an avid reader and has been frustrated at the slower pace of her English classes at Jordan. [REDACTED] says that the teachers have to explain things multiple times, and one teacher played the audio version of the text for many parts of one of the books they were reading as a class. I know that some students need this reinforcement, and yet for those who are fast readers who comprehend the text easily, this can be highly frustrating. As a former middle school teacher I have always believed in having high expectations for all students. However, I support the idea of giving some students the extra time and review of concepts that they need, while allowing other students to move at a faster pace and develop concepts at a deeper level.

I urge you to reconsider this decision and allow there to be two English lanes in 9th grade for this purpose.

Best,

Heidi Mickelsen

Parent [REDACTED]

6254c Private contact information;
Student information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Melissa Caswell](mailto:Melissa.Caswell)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: 9th Grade English
Date: Monday, January 27, 2014 12:05:08 PM

That was my understanding. As I said below, that strikes me as an extraordinarily bad idea and detrimental to all kids, not just the high performers.

Happy to discuss it in person.

David

Sent from my iPhone

> On Jan 27, 2014, at 8:50 AM, "Melissa Caswell" <mcaswell@pausd.org> wrote:

>

> The proposal is to have all students regardless of level, in the same class. The curriculum that is being proposed is the 9A curriculum.

>

> Student ability would be across the spectrum in all classes and there would be no other 9th grade English options.

>

> Melissa

>

> From: David Hornik <[REDACTED]>

> Sent: Monday, January 27, 2014 7:31 AM

> To: Melissa Caswell

> Cc: Pamela Hornik

> Subject: Re: 9th Grade English

>

> My understanding was that the proposal was to flatten the curriculum and have all kids (regardless of level) in the same class. That's not the case?

>

> Sent from my iPhone

>

>> On Jan 27, 2014, at 8:17 AM, "Melissa Caswell" <mcaswell@pausd.org> wrote:

>>

>> Hi David and Pamela,

>>

>> Thank you for your letter concerning the Paly 9th Grade English proposal . Are you aware that the proposal includes English 9A (advanced English) curriculum and pacing for all students?

>>

>> Does this impact your view of the proposal? Does it change your concerns?

>>

>> Regards,

>>

>> Melissa

>>

>> From: David Hornik <[REDACTED]>

>> Sent: Monday, January 27, 2014 12:51 AM

>> To: board

>> Cc: Pamela Hornik

>> Subject: 9th Grade English

>>

>> Dear School Board Members --

>>

>> I am writing to express my support for retaining an Advanced English option at Paly in the 9th and

10th grades. My [REDACTED] is a recent graduate of Paly [REDACTED] is now a Freshman at Yale) and was the beneficiary of the Advanced English program. [REDACTED] was pleased to have the opportunity to work on an accelerated level, and that accelerated English has clearly benefitted [REDACTED] in college. In those rare instances in which [REDACTED] did not receive differentiated learning at Paly, [REDACTED] found the experience to be meaningfully less valuable. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] classmates were not given the opportunity to participate fully, nor were the teachers able to give the appropriate amount of attention to either the accelerated learners or the non-accelerated learners in the class. Rather than creating a better educational experience for the entire class, these non-laned classes did a disservice to all members of the class, accelerated or otherwise.

>>

>> My [REDACTED], will be entering Paly in the Fall. I am deeply concerned that all English learners will be lumped together in the same class. The end result will be a less beneficial learning experience for [REDACTED], as well as all of [REDACTED] fellow classmates. My [REDACTED] have each attended a mix of private and public schools. They have benefitted in varying degrees from the public school system. But no matter what their learning environment, they have benefitted meaningfully from the ability to work in a classroom with like-level learners. I believe that any efforts by the Palo Alto schools to flatten the curriculum and remove Advanced classes would do all students a disservice.

>>

>> Thank you for your time.

>>

>> David and Pamela Hornik

[REDACTED]

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Barb Mitchell](#)
Subject: Re: Changes to Palo Alto High school English classes
Date: Tuesday, January 28, 2014 4:45:43 PM

Dear Barb,

Sorry if I sounded heavy handed in my letter. It came from many years of frustration with kids who have been bored at the slow pace of many classes. I know that you work very hard to try to balance the demands of many varied constituencies and I appreciate that you took the time to read my letter.

Regards,
Tina Peak

On Tuesday, January 28, 2014 4:02 PM, Barb Mitchell <bmittchell@pausd.org> wrote:
Thank you for your candid note, Tina. I have similar questions, and am looking forward to learning more about how the proposed pilot has incorporated parent and student perspectives and interests regarding choice, and how it would address the range of student needs during tonight's discussion.

Barb Mitchell
President, Board of Education
Palo Alto Unified School District
650-245-7575
 @trusteebarb

On Jan 27, 2014, at 9:20 PM, Tina Peak [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear School Board Members,

I would like to express my opinion that limiting the choices of English classes for high school students is detrimental to their education. I believe that multiple lanes of English should continue to be offered. While it is nice to believe that all students can achieve at the same level when "held to the highest standard", the reality is that high school is populated by a diversity of students who are not all at the same level and, to be honest, are not all capable of performing at the same level.

For too long the school board has made unilateral changes trying to support lower performing students at the expense of the rest of the student body. This has resulted in minimal improvement for those lower performing students while constantly sending the message to other students (and their parents) that their educational needs are not important. It is time for the school board to treat all students EQUALLY –

and by that I mean addressing the educational needs of higher performing students with the same fervor and willingness to create classes for them that is seen when addressing lower performing students. (How many pull out classes and special sessions are available in elementary and middle schools for lower performing students and how many for exceptionally advanced students?)

The lofty goal of differentiation has yet to be attainable in reality. Just spend some time in any class, and you will quickly see the reality that one teacher can only teach to one cohort of students, generally in the middle of the class. You can see then, that students who perform at a lower level AND those who perform at an advanced level are left out. Multiple lane classes that allow students (with input from parents and counselors) to choose the best fit allow for more appropriate and directed teaching to the student cohort.

My children will finish their Palo Alto school system education in the next few years. My overall feeling is that their educational needs have only been nominally met by a system that generally teaches to the middle, while giving lip service to “differentiation” that is not actually delivered. Outside and at-home additional educational opportunities, I hope, have aided them, but my feeling is that the educational quality in the Palo Alto school district is on a downward trend. If it continues to appear that the emphasis of the school district is on supporting poorer performing students, at the expense of other students, I fully expect to see those parents with monetary resources, or those willing to make exceptional sacrifices for their children’s education, removing their students from this public school district or not purchasing homes here in the first place.

Please take into consideration the best way to provide a good educational experience to ALL the students in High School English class before instituting these changes.

Regards,

Tina Peak

6254c Student information

From: [Kindel Launer](#)
To: [Dana Tom](#); [Kimberly Diorio](#); [Shirley Tokheim](#); [David Cohen](#)
Cc: [Katherine Baker](#); [Charles Young](#); [Kevin Skelly](#)
Subject: RE: Concerns from a parent of a 504 student about English 9/9A
Date: Monday, February 03, 2014 12:58:47 PM

Great - watch for those docs later this afternoon.

k

From: Dana Tom
Sent: Monday, February 3, 2014 12:57 PM
To: Kindel Launer; Kimberly Diorio; Shirley Tokheim; David Cohen
Cc: Katherine Baker; Charles Young; Kevin Skelly
Subject: RE: Concerns from a parent of a 504 student about English 9/9A

Hi Kindel,

I would be happy to look at samples of the differentiation with explanations. It will be helpful for me to better understand how you support students with greater challenges than most. I am not able to analytically assess the efficacy but I am after an understanding appropriate for a board member. For an issue like this, my goal is to be confident that you can meet your objective of supporting the full range of students.

Unfortunately, I am busy all day tomorrow and won't be able to speak with you then.

Dana Tom
Trustee, Palo Alto Unified School Board

From: Kindel Launer
Sent: Monday, February 3, 2014 11:43 AM
To: Dana Tom; Kimberly Diorio; Shirley Tokheim; David Cohen
Cc: Katherine Baker; Charles Young; Kevin Skelly
Subject: RE: Concerns from a parent of a 504 student about English 9/9A

Hi Dana,

I am booked with parent meetings this afternoon - interestingly, working with two families on writing differentiation for their respective sophomores who use a 504 plan. I could send you samples of the differentiation with explanations (?)

Given our C-Day schedule, I won't finish teaching until 2 pm, but I have a prep tomorrow at 2 pm. We could talk then about the docs I send later (?)

k

From: Dana Tom
Sent: Monday, February 3, 2014 11:21 AM
To: Kindel Launer; Kimberly Diorio; Shirley Tokheim; David Cohen
Cc: Katherine Baker; Charles Young; Kevin Skelly
Subject: RE: Concerns from a parent of a 504 student about English 9/9A

Hi Kindel,

Thank you for the response. I will urge the parent to attend one of the meetings tomorrow and refer her to you, Shirley, or David.

I would like to understand how you can serve students like the one in my email who are struggling mightily with their English classes in middle school. I do not want to address the specific needs of an individual student. Are you confident that you can better serve the full range of challenged students, from IEP to 504 to those who are not quite classified as either with the change? Thank you.

- Dana
Dana Tom
Trustee, Palo Alto Unified School Board

From: Kindel Launer
Sent: Monday, February 3, 2014 10:35 AM
To: Dana Tom; Kimberly Diorio; Shirley Tokheim; David Cohen
Cc: Katherine Baker; Charles Young; Kevin Skelly
Subject: RE: Concerns from a parent of a 504 student about English 9/9A

Hi Dana,

Thank you for forwarding your constituent's concerns. In order to speak to these, a couple of options come to mind - there are two parent meetings tomorrow. One at 8:30 am and the other at 6 pm, both in the ERC at Paly.

I'm sure you can imagine the difficulty of speaking broadly to the needs of an individual student who receives services as the result of a 504 Accommodation Plan. Would you be comfortable directing the parent to the Freshman Team? Any one of us can speak more accurately to the specific differentiation that would best serve the student - it may be easier for the parent, too, as we would be able to protect the student's privacy rather than discuss it in a public email document.

Respectfully,

Kindel

From: Dana Tom

Sent: Monday, February 3, 2014 10:05 AM

To: Kimberly Diorio; Shirley Tokheim; David Cohen; Kindel Launer

Cc: Katherine Baker; Charles Young; Kevin Skelly

Subject: Concerns from a parent of a 504 student about English 9/9A

Hi all,

Here is an email from a parent:

I am the parent of an [REDACTED] at PALY and ask you to hear my usually quiet voice. My [REDACTED], only a 504 (not an IEP which would provide needed support for advanced literature of any kind), and already struggles in English. Putting [REDACTED] and others like [REDACTED] in advanced level English will cause [REDACTED] homework load to increase exponentially. [REDACTED] struggles already with outside tutoring, frequent teacher and guidance counselor meetings and 2-3 times longer to complete written work as compared to average peers. Why is this good for [REDACTED] [REDACTED] already feels inferior in this arena. It will devastate [REDACTED] self- confidence. Please, please consider ALL students when making this decision. It will negatively affect a less vocal, but equally important group of your students.

How will you serve students like [REDACTED] Is there more elaboration you can provide beyond these excerpts from the board report?

The staff has found through teaching English 9 and 9A concurrently that students enrolled in English 9 *can* handle more rigorous coursework with appropriate supports, a service currently provided to students who enroll in an accelerated class despite some initial skill deficits.

We believe all high-achieving students who enter Paly (4 of 5 students) should receive rigorous instruction and benefit from the high expectations of an accelerated English course. We believe any struggling students, with appropriate supports, will also benefit from this rigorous coursework.

The small number of students (44 students, spread throughout 18-20 sections) who need additional support will continue to receive this support through co-taught classes, case managers, tutorial, and programs such as RESTART, AVID, and FOS that will enable them to succeed

The parent's concern sounds very real to me. I am not fully versed on the details of the varying support between IEP and 504. I hope you can address these concerns both for me and for parents like her.

I appreciate your efforts to best serve all of our students and recognize the challenge of balancing so many interests.

- Dana

Dana Tom
Trustee, Palo Alto Unified School Board

6254c Private contact information;
Student information

From: [Camille Townsend](#)
To: [board](#) [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Support for PALY English proposal
Date: Tuesday, February 04, 2014 9:43:25 AM

Hi Jane,

Thanks for writing. We will look at the strength of the program. There is

From: Jane Smith [REDACTED] >
Sent: Monday, February 3, 2014 7:51 PM
To: board
Subject: Support for PALY English proposal

Dear PAUSD Board,

As a parent of an [REDACTED] to PALY, I am emailing to support the PALY English proposal of having one lane on English for 9th grade.

I believe the English teachers have prepared a thoughtful proposal that will help all students succeed in English. There was a lot of what I call "FUD" (Fear Uncertainty Doubt) circulated about this topic: the curriculum being dumbed down; that this would permanently lane students into English tracks after 9th grade without movement; that the proposal was to de-lane all years of high school English.

By holding the informational meetings at PALY, and presenting the actual proposal, our community can make their own informed opinions. Offering 9A to all students, I agree with this statement from the proposal: "By maintaining high standards for all students and providing appropriate supports as needed, the school produced improvement on every indicator of both academic success and equitable access using in school and external statistical measures."

There is a lot of parent backing in the community for this proposal-- and perhaps they have not felt compelled to write the school board. My hope is that a vocal minority does not overly sway you.

Warm regards.
Jane Smith

6254c Private contact information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [board](#)
Subject: School Board Mtg Comments
Date: Thursday, January 30, 2014 10:16:26 AM

Dear School Board Members,

It was brought to my attention that it would be best I communicate to all of you, rather than to the few I had sent individual letters to. As I only know a few of you; Barb, Melissa and Camille, I did not feel sharing my concerns to the other two board members would be prudent, however, I understand this is the best way to share information.

First, a huge thank you for all the work you do for our children and district. It had been years since I attended a school board meeting and it was a reminder how fortunate to have a group of dedicated parents take this role.

I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposed changes in the one PAUSD high school in regard to the 9th grade English classes. Our family and child have the highest respect for the teachers and administrators in this district. It's a safe, nurturing and challenging environment for a student to learn. I must express my overall concern with this for the following reasons:

1) We have personally experienced the experiment of inclusion within the middle school and sadly, we believe it is not working well. The staff are not given the necessary resources to handle the many behavioral disruptions within the class period and this results in minutes of instruction time being lost on a daily basis. In addition, there are students that do not academically thrive and are being asked to move on, or the entire class is being asked to pause while a few "catch up". The teaching staff are doing their best, I cannot imagine being handed a classroom of 3-10 special needs students (behavioral and non proficient) and trying to integrate a lesson plan with one aide. This is ridiculously planned and implemented. No one wins.

2) The math laning has eliminated most of the above issues in 7th grade math, for those students taking the higher lane. The students understand they are going to be challenged, get it and want this experience. Our feedback is that in the other subjects, the teacher's have to redirect the lesson to handle behavioral issues and to the students who are struggling, resulting in lost instruction time for such activity. This is a daily experience and these subjects include English.

3) The life lessons for a student to witness and see this is real world, and we explain that to our child. However, as this is now a daily classroom experience since entering middle school, it's becoming annoying for a tween/teen. Lessons are commonly group and project based now. The learning experience is almost a lottery if one is given a table with some of the included students that have no additional classroom support. I cannot imagine how these students must feel, being asked to behave or catch up by a peer and equally frustrating for the other students. No one wins.

4) English seems to be an Achilles heel with our district. I do not understand why. We have the resources and will make sure our child thrives in this subject. We would like the district to offer all students this choice. Some students want to be challenged and most learn by interacting not only with their teacher, but with their peers, much like in college. How can the students thrive by putting everyone in the same box and offer little to no resources?

Please consider any vote you consent to on this issue as parents are concerned. As you can read above, if adequate resources are not being provided for these students, everyone is affected. How can you ensure the resources to make this work? Is the staff ratio expected to change in every classroom being affected? Why is one our high schools approach so different from the other? Can we get the schools to collaborate for best practices?

Thanks for reading, appreciate all the late evenings you put in for our children. I know the intentions are always good and understand I am just reporting an experience, you have more insight.

Katie Shade

6254c Private contact information;
Student information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [board](#)
Subject: Support for PALY English proposal
Date: Monday, February 03, 2014 7:51:39 PM

Dear PAUSD Board,

As a parent of an [REDACTED] PALY, I am emailing to support the PALY English proposal of having one lane on English for 9th grade.

I believe the English teachers have prepared a thoughtful proposal that will help all students succeed in English. There was a lot of what I call "FUD" (Fear Uncertainty Doubt) circulated about this topic: the curriculum being dumbed down; that this would permanently lane students into English tracks after 9th grade without movement; that the proposal was to de-lane all years of high school English.

By holding the informational meetings at PALY, and presenting the actual proposal, our community can make their own informed opinions. Offering 9A to all students, I agree with this statement from the proposal: "By maintaining high standards for all students and providing appropriate supports as needed, the school produced improvement on every indicator of both academic success and equitable access using in school and external statistical measures."

There is a lot of parent backing in the community for this proposal-- and perhaps they have not felt compelled to write the school board. My hope is that a vocal minority does not overly sway you.

Warm regards.
Jane Smith

6254c Private contact information;
Student information

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Heidi Emberling](#)
Subject: Vote no on advanced English for all 9 th graders at PALY
Date: Friday, January 31, 2014 10:29:09 AM

I am the parent of an [REDACTED] at PALY and ask you to hear my usually quiet voice. My [REDACTED], only a 504 (not an IEP which would provide needed support for advanced literature of any kind), and already struggles in English. Putting [REDACTED] and others like [REDACTED] in advanced level English will cause [REDACTED] homework load to increase exponentially. [REDACTED] struggles already with outside tutoring, frequent teacher and guidance counsellor meetings and 2-3 times longer to complete written work as compared to average peers. Why is this good for [REDACTED] [REDACTED] already feels inferior in this arena. It will devastate [REDACTED] self- confidence. Please, please consider ALL students when making this decision. It will negatively affect a less vocal, but equally important group of your students.

Vote NO!!! To English 9A for all 9 th graders at PALY next fall!!!!!!!!!!

Thank you for your attention.

Kirstin young

Mother [REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone