

Minutes from Academic Programs / SLCs Committee Meeting January 13, 2004

At the outset of the meeting, the committee members present reviewed the three versions of the last Academic Belief Statement that was drafted during the first committee meeting held in early December. The group agreed on some modified language and created two statements out of the three original versions proposed by the committee. In addition, some minor changes were made to the first belief statement.

Once the changes were made to the belief statements, the committee members reviewed their thoughts and impressions on the presentations that were given during the December 18th meeting on the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program, the Service Seminar Program, and Smaller Learning Communities. Mr. Fannin indicated that after polling the SAHS Staff, several teachers from different academic disciplines expressed interest in the IB program, but only one had indicated that he was interested in working with a Seminar-type program. Mr. Fannin reported that the proposed 2004-05 budget cuts to Schools-of-Choice and Paideia would most likely make it more difficult to secure training funds for any program that would be implemented. It was recommended that any program that used the Socratic Seminar methodology as its primary instructional focus be limited initially to one grade level. In addition, it should have strong support and commitment from the teachers who desire to implement it.

A review of an IB Program in a Washington state school indicated that the program really benefited the high level students in the school, but took resources away from the struggling students. In addition, the implementation of the IB Program ended up causing AP classes to be pulled from the school's master schedule. This was a real concern to the committee, as well as the reported costs associated with the initial training of teachers and the annual fee that each school has to pay to be a part of the program. The committee indicated that the SAHS community should review West High School's early experiences with the program prior to deciding to try to develop its own program.

A general discussion ensued relative to "Smaller Learning Communities" and what the committee believed should be implemented at SAHS. Since most of the SAHS teachers selected to date do not know each other and since the final 30% of the staff will not be selected until May or later this summer, it was recommended that any major thrust relative to the composition of the academic houses be delayed until all the teachers had an opportunity to get to know each other. This would allow them to discover their views, thoughts, and experiences relative to SLCs and houses. From that point the flavor or themes of the houses could be developed/proposed for the following year and the students would be able to prioritize their preferences for the proposed houses. Ninth and tenth grade Language Arts and Social Studies students would be teamed in the 2004-05 school year and their lockers would be in or near the house that held their two teamed classes.

At the end of the meeting, it was suggested that the major topic of the next meeting be the type of schedule that should be used at SAHS next year. In addition, a brief discussion on closed campus issues took place. No advisory direction was given after this discussion.

The next meeting is January 29th from 3:30-5:00 in the Old Dimond High School Library.