

Connecting to Berkeley High

Lisa Sibony, Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator

This year is Berkeley High's 131st as an accredited high school. We have roughly 3,200 students and over 280 teachers, counselors, and support staff. As a school it *is* big and *can be* confusing—especially for first year families. As parents, grandparents, and guardians we can make a significant difference to our children's education by helping guide and advise them through high school. But, in order to do so, we must first decipher the school ourselves. We hope the suggestions below are a helpful start.

Berkeley High has technology in an effort to enhance school-to-home communication. **PowerSchool** has become a powerful tool allowing parents and guardians to track their student's attendance and grades on a daily basis, the **etree** with over 3,300 subscribers posts important information every school day, **all teachers** are accessible via email.

While many important items are mailed home (to a student's BHS-registered address only), a great deal of communication assumes access to the Internet. Families without Internet access should take advantage of the **Parent Resource Center** operated by Irma Parker and Leticia Amezcua. Located in the Administration Building on the second floor between the Library and the College and Career Center, the Parent Resource Center—open during the school day—has a bank of computers for parent use. If you need help setting up PowerSchool or communicating with a teacher, Irma and Leticia are there to help you.

USEFUL INFORMATION

1. **About the etree:** The PTSA funds the Berkeley High School etree. This invaluable communication tool posts the Daily Bulletin, the College Advisor's weekly bulletin, news, volunteer opportunities, messages from the Principal and the Berkeley Unified School District. The etree—moderated by parent volunteers Marguerite Fa-Kaji and Catherine Ference—works closely with the Berkeley High administrative team to ensure accuracy. We urge you to subscribe to the etree.

2. **How to subscribe to the etree: Send a blank email (no ads or signature lines) to bhs-request@lmi.net with one word only in the subject: subscribe.**

If you have any difficulty subscribing, please email bhs-owner@lmi.net for assistance.

3. **Managing the etree:** The etree sends out an average of five messages a day. Experienced readers learn they do not have to open all postings as the contents for each message are clearly stated in the subject line. If the posting does not apply to your child, feel free to delete. Other readers manage the volume by having postings sent directly to a folder and then checking the folder once a day. Finally, when you subscribe you may opt to receive a "digest version" of the etree twice a day—at noon and 10 p.m.

4. **etree Archives:** At the bottom of each etree message there are several links. The last connects to the etree archives: <http://lists.lmi.net/pipermail/bhs/>. The archives contain every etree posting since April 2004—including the one last week with the vital information you already forgot...

5. **PowerSchool:** Enables parents and students to track grades and attendance online. Information on using this essential tool may be found at <http://bhs.berkeleyschools.net/resources/powerschool-access/>.

If you have trouble setting up your account the Parent Resource Center is prepared to help. Please call 644-4814. Finally, the BHS Technology Department will be available for support at Back to School Night, Thursday, September 18 for troubleshooting.

6. **Subscribe to the Jacket.** The students of Berkeley High produce an award-winning student paper packed with information and insight. It is distributed free to students on a biweekly schedule and mailed home to subscribers. If you would like to subscribe to the Jacket, fill out the form included in this mailing and return it to the school during registration.

7. **Volunteer.** There is nothing like being on-site—if only for an occasional hour or two. There are any number of opportunities to volunteer: at registration, during the first weeks of school, mailings, the Athletic Fund, the Development Fund, test monitoring, chaperoning dances or field trips, helping in the library. Volunteer opportunities are posted on the etree (see above). If you see a chance to help, take it! You will receive more than you give.

8. **Attend the PTSA meetings.** The meetings are packed with information and a great place to network. The date of the first meeting (traditionally held the first few weeks of September) had not been set by the time we went to press. The date will be posted on the etree as soon as available. This first meeting is particularly important—not only to hear from the Principal—but to vote for representatives to the important BSEP and School Site Council (see below).

9. **Serve on a committee.** There are two important school-wide committees at Berkeley High: the **Berkeley Schools Enrichment Project (BSEP) Site Committee and the School Site Council (SSC).**

BSEP spends close to \$750,000 annually—our site share of the city parcel task, which also pays for 20 percent of our teachers, maintenance, music and more. Our college counselors, the Parent Resource Center, the Afro Haitian dance drummer, Outreach and Volunteer Coordinators, Student Court, and after school tutors are just a few items paid for by the Site Committee.

The **School Site Council** spends some money but more importantly makes policy decisions for the school.

Both committees are composed of teachers, students, administrators and elected parent/guardians or community members. Elections for parent/guardians are held during the first PTSA meeting of the year (see PTSA above). Please plan on attending—if not to run, then to vote.

11. **Support your child's learning community.** Each of the six learning communities has a governing board with parent involvement. If you have not received information on how to be involved in your learning community, please call the office 644-6121 to get the contact information for the program's lead teacher, or check one of the websites listed below.

12. **Use the Internet.**

Please note that most of the learning communities operate a list-serv, similar to the BHS school-wide etree, which sends out supplementary news and notices of particular interest to their

community. Directions to subscribe to most of the individual etrees may be found on their community website. Below are many useful and important websites.

Academic Choice; <http://bhsacademicchoice.com/>

AHA: aha.bhs.berkeleypta.org

BHS: <http://www.berkeleyschools.net/>

BHS PTSA: berkeleyhighptsa.blogspot.com/

Berkeley High Athletic Fund: <http://www.berkeleyhighathletics.org/>

Berkeley High Development Group: <http://bhsdg.org/>

Berkeley High Jazz: <http://bhsdg.org/>

Berkeley High Jacket: <http://www.bhsjacket.com/>

Berkeley High Library: <https://sites.google.com/a/berkeley.net/bhslibrary/>

Berkeley International High School <http://bihs.berkeleyschools.net/>

CAS: www.cas.bhs.berkeleypta.org

Parents of Teens: parents.berkeley.edu/subscribers.html

Power School: <http://ps.berkeley.net/public/>

13. Contacting a teacher, counselor or staff member: There are three ways to contact a teacher, counselor, or administrator -- email, phone, or note.

a. Notes may be left in the Teachers' Boxes located just across from the Front Desk.

b. To leave a phone message, call the front office (510) 644-6120 and ask for information on connecting to Voice Mail. Please note however, many teachers do not have voice mail. In those cases, the Front Desk Volunteer will take down a message and leave a note in the teacher's box.

c. Teacher and staff email addresses can be found on the BHS website (see above). Here's a shortcut to most staff addresses: firstname.lastname@berkeley.net

14. Financial Support: Giving money (and time) is always important. There are three main school-wide organizations that need your financial support: the **Berkeley High School Development Group** (BHSDBG), the **Berkeley High Athletic Fund** and the **Parent Teacher Student Association** (PTSA). The Development Fund supports a wide variety of activities from the Health Center to teacher grants to the Student Organizer. The money the BHSDBG raises makes an enormous difference at the school. The Berkeley Athletic Fund purchases equipment and uniforms for the more than 1,000 students participating on teams as well as helps with transportation, fees, etc. The PTSA focuses on communications (the etree, for instance) and hospitality.

15. Back to School Night! Thursday, September 18 at 7 p.m. This is a special evening for parents to meet their students' teachers. Count on attending.

16. Double Addresses: Many students have parents living at separate addresses. Unfortunately it is not possible to send report cards and other student specific letters to two addresses. However, for non-specific letters, Lisa Sibony, lisasibony@berkeley.net the Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator keeps an informal list of students with double addresses. If you wish to be on this list please contact her directly. Include both of the student's addresses (please indicate which one is NOT in the BHS data base) and the student's year of graduation. **Please note, while you may not receive a report card at two addresses, you may access the same information via PowerSchool.**

17. Leaving school for an appointment If your student has a medical appointment during the day, it is not necessary or even desirable, for a parent to come to the front desk to collect their student. Give your child a note asking the teacher to release him or her at the appropriate time. Your child may leave school on his or her own and meet you outside. Before your child returns, please call the appropriate attendance number or send a note for the student to give to the attendance office to clear the missed time. Attendance details are in a separate letter included in this packet.

18. Forgotten items: As a policy the school does not interrupt classrooms to deliver messages or forgotten items. However, you may leave messages and items for your student at the front desk and have them picked up between classes. It is however, your child's responsibility to collect the items.

19. Call the Front Office at 644-6121. If you have questions that are unanswered and you do not know where to go, a member of our front office staff will help direct you. They are experienced and know the school. They will help you!