

NEWSLETTER

Community Partnerships Academy
Berkeley High School



March 2007

website: <http://www.bhscpa.org>

A Profile of Flora Russ

We don't need to introduce Flora Russ because everyone in CP Academy knows her and she knows everyone. In fact, during the almost 40 years she's taught in Berkeley Schools and the 24 years she's been at Berkeley High School, one of her greatest joys has been getting to know parents and students over the course of four years of high school and



continuing to follow their progress as they go on to colleges and careers. Recently, a former student wrote to tell her that he had been in her computer science class at King

Middle School in 1973 and now teaches math and computer science at Brown University. Many of Flora's students went on to become computer professionals. That's because, after graduating from Ohio State University with a degree in Math and Science Education, Flora came to Berkeley in 1968 and began teaching at Martin Luther King. She was asked to teach a computer course for the GATE (Gifted and Talented) program, took computer courses at night, and quickly came to the conclusion that all students needed access to computer education. Flora continued learning and teaching about computers, obtaining her credential to teach at community college and teaching at Diablo Valley Community College and UC Berkeley Extension at

night while teaching at King during the day and helping set up computer programs at Berkeley elementary and middle schools. She also found time to get her M.A. from Cal State Hayward in Science and Math Education.

We tend to think of Flora as our CP Academy co-coordinator, very much grounded in what is going on here with us, but Flora's career is much bigger than our small school. She has worked and been recognized on a state, national, and international level. Her work with the EQUALS program at Lawrence Hall of Science led her to become one of the founding members of Expanding Your Horizons, a program that encourages girls' participation in math and science that is now celebrating its 30th year operating at over 80 sites around the world. Flora was also one of a six-member team in 1986 that brought donated Apple computers to People's Education Press in China. For her hard work, Flora has been recognized locally (when she was named Teacher of the Year in 1997 by the Berkeley Public Education Foundation and when she was one of two Honored Instructors at UC Berkeley Extension in 1990), statewide (in 1991 when she was named one of five honored instructors by the Computer Using Educators in Northern California), and internationally (when she represented California for the International Society for Technology in Education in an international competition and won).

In 1990, a Berkeley principal asked Flora if she would start a state partnership academy at Berkeley High and the rest is history. Flora believes that CP Academy is successful because of the way parents, students, and an excellent team of teachers work together to bring students out into the world and bring caring adults into the school. She loves being able to watch students mature and begin to realize what they need to do to get into college. She is proud of the fact that CP Academy helps students through

the college process: selecting a college, applying, and finding the resources to pay for it.

Here's what Flora had to say about CP Academy, "The teachers are great, the students are great, and the parents are great."

AP Offerings in CP Academy

At the next Parent Council meeting, the AP English and AP Calculus teachers will introduce us to these two CP Academy AP classes. In the next two months, your children will be signing up for next year's classes, so it's a good time to find out about these courses. There are many reasons to sign up for an AP class. Right away students get an extra point for GPA calculations, which is important for UC and CSU. For prestigious private schools, students show that they have taken the most rigorous classes available. Not to mention the fact that AP English gives students a college-level writing course while still in high school. AP Calculus provides insight into how we analyze our modern mechanical universe including the people who live in it. Both courses are very important and you should come find out if they would fit into your child's course of study. By the way, this will be the first time AP Calculus is taught in CP Academy.

Become a Writing Coach

We have started plans to launch a new program next year called the WriterCoach Connection. This program organizes volunteers to come into the classroom and give students one-on-one help with their class writing assignments. Each writing coach will coach four students, meeting individually with each student ten times over the course of the year during morning English classes.

We need 25 or 30 volunteer coaches next year. Volunteers don't have to be CP Academy parents but it's better if they are. Having parents in the classroom strengthens our community and when parents are trained as writing coaches, they are better able to help their own children. Would you consider becoming a coach? You don't have to be a writer. What's most important is a willingness to commit to supporting students on a regular, ongoing basis. Current writing coaches working in Berkeley middle schools say that coaching is not only very rewarding, but also fun.

Becoming a writing coach involves three steps. First you take a training course—two three-hour meetings plus classroom observation and mentoring by experienced coaches. Next you register with Berkeley School Volunteers for a one and a half hour orientation. Finally, you commit to two hours of coaching per week for the school year. We'll keep you posted about upcoming training sessions. If you have questions, contact Lynn Mueller at 510-524-2319 or writercoachconnect@yahoo.com. Or go to www.writercoachconnection.org for more information.

Real Time Grade Reporting

One little known application of the PTSA Internet homework posting through the Homework Site is the ability to have real time grade reporting. With Internet grade posting, teachers record grades online at the same time they enter them in their grade book using a standard format such as EXCEL or Word. As a parent or student, you could use a login name and password to find out if an assignment has been turned in and the grade for that assignment. Using the Parent Council's programming expertise, Nat Lewis has generously agreed to be the test case with his IMP2 classes. Right now work is going on to ensure the confidentiality of the grades in electronic form. Expect some results in about two months.

Student Presenters Impress Incoming Freshmen

At the Information Night for Incoming Freshmen on Tuesday, February 27th, five CP Academy students along with Annie Johnston, Wyn Skeels, and Marty Downey, gave presentations about CP Academy to four groups of interested eighth graders and their parents. Everyone was impressed when, after giving their presentations perfectly the first time, the students' presentations got better each time they gave them. Thanks for your good work to Kimberly Scott, Noel Russell, Cydnee Clomon, Kimberly Moreno, and Ben Hamilton. Also thanks to Chelsa Green, and Kimberly Scott for their presentations at the middle school assemblies. CP Academy could not be represented any better. We are proud of you.

Parent Council Meeting: Thursday, March 15th, 7 pm to 9 pm, in the College and Career Center.
