

**Oak Park and River Forest High School  
201 N. Scoville  
Oak Park, IL 60302**

**An Instruction Committee of the Whole Board  
September 18, 2008**

An Instruction Committee meeting of the Whole Board was held on Thursday, September 18, 2008 in the Board Room. Dr. Millard opened the meeting at 9:45 a.m. Committee members present were John C. Allen, IV (arrived at 10:00 a.m.), Jacques A. Conway, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Sharon Patchak Layman, and John P. Rigas. Also present were: Dr. Attila J. Weninger, Superintendent; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Amy Hill, Director of Research and Assessment; Nate Rouse, Principal; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistance/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors included Kay Foran, OPRFHS Community Relations and Communications Coordinator and James Hunter, Faculty Senate Executive Committee Chair.

**Acceptance of Instruction Committee Minutes of August 19, 2008**

It was the consensus of the Instruction Committee members to accept the minutes of the August Instruction Committee meeting, as presented.

**Student Travel Experiences**

Ms. Milojevic provided the following chart of OPRFHS Summer 2008 Tours.

<b>SUMMER 2008 TOURS</b>						
<b>Trip</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<b># Students</b>	<b>Administrative Contact</b>	<b>Academic Approval</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Peru	June 9 – 18	Marci DiVerdi Heather White	27	Cheryl Witham	Yes	\$3,500 (9 days) Agency: ACIS.
Costa Rica	June 11-25	Kara Bohne	21	Jack Lanenga	Yes	\$2,900 (15 days) Agency: The Monteverde Institute in Costa Rica (a biological research institute) to help coordinate the itinerary.
Japan	June 22 – July 18	Yuko Schulties	25	Attila Weninger	Yes	\$2,600 (4 weeks) Agency: IACE Travel
Florida	Aug 3 - 13	Michelle Bayer <i>Marine Biology</i>	15	Cindy Milojevic	Yes	\$1,600 (11 days) Summer school registration is not included. Agency: none, teacher planned.
Smoky Mountains	August 4 – 8 FB1	Leigh Remack Leigh Remack	11 12	Cindy Milojevic Cindy Milojevic	Yes	\$500 (5 days) Summer school

	August 10 – 15 FB2					registration is not included. Agency: none, teacher planned.
<b>Total Number of Student Participants</b>			111			

Scholarships provided by the Linda Levine Travel Award, the Alumni Association’s Enrichment Award and the Crystal Charitable Fund have helped to expand the travel experiences of students.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if most of the students going on trips go on only one trip per their high school career. While there is no prohibition as to how many trips a student may take, Ms. Milojevic stated that there is a tendency for them to go on only one trip with the greatest demand coming from juniors and seniors.

Ms. Patchak-Layman felt that foreign travel was a beneficial experience for students and she wanted more students to have this experience. She asked if there were enough staff to increase student opportunities for student travel. It was reported it was not just a matter of staff, but of finances also. The trips that also act as courses are offered through the Science Division and the teachers are paid as though they were teaching a summer school course. Students who participate in those trips begin meeting in January and are deeply committed to the experience. The teachers who escort students during spring break do so on their own time without any compensation. Ms. Milojevic noted that there would be many trips this spring. Ms. Patchak-Layman wanted student travel to be a goal of the school and suggested that the trips need not be so far away. Middle schools take nature trips to the Indiana Dunes, to Springfield, etc.; these could be considered for high school students, as they are great experiences. Dr. Millard agreed, but reiterated that it was a huge commitment on the part of the teacher and a loss of his/her vacation time.

Ms. Milojevic reported that the Gospel Choir went to Disneyland. By thinking creatively, every student who wanted to and was qualified to go was able to do so. She also hoped to coordinate an Illinois college tour, etc. Ms. Patchak-Layman was impressed with the way the Concert Tour Association facilitated student travel to different events. A portion of all funds collected for their concerts is put into a fund for this purpose. If the high school were to make the experience of some sort of travel part of a student’s four-year plan, the school must find ways to support that experience. OPRFHS charges for some student performances and a portion of whatever is charged could be earmarked for the support of this travel. Dr. Millard added that the students who need these experiences the most are the families with the fewest resources. Even if the funds were divided equally among the students, it would be a struggle to determine equitably whether the student whose family had resources might have equal access to this funding, as opposed to the student whose family did not have the resources. Ms. Patchak-Layman felt it was a starting point. Dr. Millard suggested that the discussion of awards/scholarships be continued in an appropriate venue.

Ms. Milojevic noted that the procedure has been put into place that spells out what happens to the unspent funds at the end of the trip. If any funds remain, parents will be asked if they want their portion reimbursed or if they would like to contribute it to a scholarship fund. She acknowledged the fact that more at-risk students were interested in participating in the trips, but the school must have the funding for them.

Next month, some of the students who participated in the summer trips will report to the Committee on their experiences.

### **Standardized Test Report**

Ms. Hill presented the annual summary report on the standardized test reports, reflecting the scores of students who will graduate in 2008, i.e. SAT scores, PSAE. The report indicates that the ACT composite fell .3 percent. At the same time, there were small, not statistically significant, gains made in the junior class. The good news is that the drop is not statistically significant, but the school would have preferred a gain.

A review of the last six years shows the following:

1. Over the past six years, OPRFHS has not made AYP in the area of math.
2. Special Education students have made AYP in reading all six years.
3. African-American students have made AYP in reading in all but the last two years.
4. Low-income students have struggled as a subgroup in the areas of math and reading, but there is no clear pattern. However, there was an increase by low-income students in math this year.
5. The multi-ethnic subgroup, added this year, made AYP in both math and reading.

Research suggests that the more subgroups that a school has, the less likely it will be that the school will make AYP in those areas. Mr. Prale acknowledged that challenges remain. Too many students are not accelerating after they arrive at the high school. OPRFHS is still not successful in those things in which Illinois wants it to be successful. One way the administration is addressing the issues is to ask every Division Head to set a goal based on the teaching of reading in all of the classrooms. OPRFHS will continue with positive interventions that include 1) the ACT Prep Class, 2) the expansion of the reading areas of Special Education, i.e., the number of reading program licenses for computers has doubled, and 3) the training that has been provided to both regular and special education teachers. Ms. Hill, comparing the ACT scores of last year's juniors in math, reading and science, to the scores they earned as sophomores shows 1) 82 percent had growth at or above the expected range of growth from practice to real test, and 2) 54 percent had growth that exceeded the expected range. Thus, more than half of the students are growing at rate faster than anticipated. She will disaggregate the data for reading and science as well.

Dr. Lee asked if there were anything that went into the composition of the national SAT I average that made it somehow different from OPRFHS. He found it odd that the average

African-American student scores in all three areas of reading, math, and writing was way above the national average. That says something about the national average. Only those students who intended on attending a select school, usually on either the East or West Coast, would take the SAT. A self-selected group of students takes this test. The number of African-American students taking this test was 14. Mr. Rigas stated that the trend is going away from requiring the SAT test, especially on the West Coast. Mr. Prale suggested that it would be prudent to ask the students who attended college about their experiences at the high school, e.g., what courses had they taken, etc. The school needs to open up rigorous curriculum to the talented students and recruit more students for those courses. That is where the gains are made. Until the high school does that on a consistent basis, it will not see an overall increase. All African-American students are accounted for in the ACT scores. The only students not included in the ACT were those who tested with accommodations, as that information was not provided. ACT scores reflect the total scores.

Ms. Patchak-Layman felt a .3 downturn was alarming. She sensed that the District was just moving along a little at a time when 80 percent of the students were not having the experience the school desires them to have. While Mr. Prale observed that as much as OPRFHS wants to be different in its approach, it was striking to him, when looking at the data, how similar it is to the other schools in the state and in the nation. Students will meet state academic expectations on the ISAT in the eighth grade and then decline. OPRFHS's averages may be better at both levels, but because it is not able to close the achievement gap in three years means it is more similar to other schools in the State than not. To make that kind of intense change means a change in thinking, a different way to allocate resources. Everyone must think differently.

There was consensus that the Board has been focusing on the minutia and not on the hard aspects. Mr. Rigas suggested talking with OPRFHS graduate Michael Feinberg about his model, the KIPP School. This is a year-round school and each day ends at 5:00 p.m. While a change such of this would be costly, the Board of Education should discuss this.

Mr. Prale noted that some students can meet the ISAT requirements but cannot meet the college readiness standards in EXPLORE. He suggested working with parents before they arrive at the high school about the placement of students in the right classes. A strong Board of Education policy and determined conversation with the parents is necessary as to why the school wants the student enrolled in a particular class. Problems arise when parents sign overrides, allowing their students to take higher-level classes, which they are not prepared to do.

Mr. Rigas asked how many students attend the high school who should not be out of the eighth grade. Mr. Prale replied that they numbered 12 to 20, explaining that these students come to the high school for mandated summer school, to acquaint them with the building and to develop their skills. Mr. Rigas stated that if this is a community issue, then District 97 should be engaged in the issue. The school has to think more broadly; OPRFHS just maps the State of Illinois and the national average of the ACT scores.

Ms. Patchak-Layman felt it was the whole package, it is not just the students, and it is not just the parents. Dr. Lee disagreed. As a practical matter, one cannot do everything at once. One must decide what kinds of things have the greatest priority and then start working on those. As other problems arise, they are addressed. Dr. Lee felt that the school should first determine the students' reading proficiencies. Then the school should inform the parents of those students about their children's deficiencies and how the school will remedy the reading deficiencies. The school must then put the students in the appropriate programs. The parents must be informed that the school understands their opposition to this idea, but the Board of Education stands behind this decision. Dr. Lee was willing to take criticism for that decision. Mr. Prale said that the school was putting about seventy (70) of these students in Learning Support Reading classes instead of study halls and they were receiving support from their teachers.

Dr. Lee wanted to create the resources to find out what the needs of these students were. Ms. Patchak-Layman said it would entail redirecting the job description. Mr. Rigas suggested it would be probably mean having smaller groups and, thus the need for more resources.

Dr. Lee was unclear as to how much the school could do when it was unclear as to what the reading needs of students were. Mr. Prale offered to bring that information next month as the freshman students had just taken a reading test, which they would retake at the end of their sophomore year. Dr. Lee asked if the school knew if the students' problems have to do with vocabulary, comprehension, etc. He felt a more in-depth analysis was necessary. While a company such as Woodcock Johnson or another detailed-analysis company could do such an analysis, Mr. Prale stated that it would be a greater investment in dollars and time. Mr. Rigas felt that if the high school spent more on resources upfront, less might be spent on the backend. Mr. Rigas was willing to try other options. Research shows that behavior in the building changes when you have uniforms. Mr. Prale stated that with the implementation of PBIS, there has been improvement in behavior in the ED Program that serve 120 students, but no academic improvement. Mr. Prale responded to a question from Mr. Rigas that there had been no academic increases directly tied to the SOLO Program.

Dr. Lee asked if the school had the ability to obtain data now that Dr. Spight was employed full-time elsewhere. Mr. Prale stated that Dr. Spight was still being responsive to the District's requests but he was no longer located in the building. Dr. Lee wanted data to see if the changes in the discipline system had an effect on the students' academics. Mr. Prale stated that Dr. Spight was busiest at the end of the semester and at the end of the year, as those were the times when reports were due. Periodic reports are being produced internally to get a pulse of how things are progressing. Dr. Weninger reminded the Board of its No. 2 Goal. The District will review the job description of the institutional researcher position and determine the high school's needs, as this is an important position to the District.

Dr. Weninger acknowledged that this set of data on African-American students was inexcusable, but that it is inexcusable from a variety of viewpoints. Dr. Ronald Ferguson,

a researcher at Harvard and participant in MSAN, said that the achievement of African-American students who come from homes with college-educated parents was less than those Caucasian students whose parents were high school dropouts. Dr. Ferguson felt this was inexcusable and put onus on the parents. Dr. Weninger stated that the school is doing some things and it can do more. By School Code, District 200 could enter into an agreement that would say that all students not achieving at a certain level would be required to go to summer school at the high school. The high school would pay for it. OPRFHS has six targeted programs, as well as several others directly focused on these students, but the results of those programs/interventions will not be seen until this freshman class is in its junior year. Dr. Weninger remembered Dr. Lee saying that he did not believe the achievement gap would be solved for another ten (10) to fifteen (15) years and Dr. Ferguson said it would be twenty (20) to thirty (30) years before it would be accomplished. There is a sense of urgency to address the gap and the high school is doing so. Even if District 97 moved to fix the problem, it would not help the 15 percent of those students who transfer from Chicago Public Schools (CPS).

Dr. Lee asked if the high school were in a position to tell what the difference is between a student who transferred in from CPS, River Forest, or Oak Park. Ms. Hill noted that they can be identified but the high school does not have the data as to when students entered either District 90 or District 97. Mr. Rigas stated that the Achievement Gap report showed that the gap was much wider with students transferring from CPS.

Dr. Millard stated that the piece she does not know how to address is that of the parents being able to trump the system. Parents have a culture that they do not want their students in a remedial program. How does the school assist the parents and the students understand that the school has a long-term interest in helping them? This is a cultural issue. Mr. Rigas disagreed, as parents who want their children to succeed would object more to remedial classes than those parents who are just not involved. A bigger problem for the achieving African-American students is that their peers are telling them they are acting “white.”

Dr. Lee suggested the District track those students whose parents override the school’s recommendations and then compare the records at the end of a two-year period against those students who parents supported the school’s recommendation. If there were no difference, then the present policy would be right. When talking about policy issues, a period of two years is a reasonable time request to gather information.

Mr. Prale stated that the administration could work with Division Heads, per the Board of Education’s direction, regarding reading. He also referenced the suggestion of Dr. Weninger and Mr. Rigas regarding implementing a mandatory summer school. This could start with a larger conversation within the community and discussed at a joint board meeting with the three boards of education. Mr. Prale also felt, however, that there might be a racial component to that conversation. Dr. Lee felt that a joint board meeting would bring about positive changes. Mr. Allen stated that the terms must be defined. Mr. Rigas felt that Dr. Ferguson’s data showing that the students of African-American, college-educated parents achieving below the level of students of Caucasians parents who

had dropped out of high school would not be consistent in these communities. Mr. Rouse stated that there were other parts to that conversation, but that Dr. Ferguson had presented that because he wanted the focus to be on the parents and their roles. Mr. Prale added that in 1996, Ed Gordon, a professor of psychology and whose philosophical beliefs underpinned MSAN, wrote reports for the College Board in the mid-1990's on one indicator of success—the mother's education. In some ways, the success of white mothers with high school diplomas was the same as African-American mothers who held a college degree.

Dr. Lee felt that this conversation gives the District a new handle on engaging the community and parents. Parents of fifth graders can start to think about how they will get their children into high school with the same degree of intensity that parents of high school students think about how they will get their children into college; they will have to prepare their students to be admitted to OPRFHS. OPRFHS must have a program that can be defensible. Mr. Prale stated that one math teacher wants students to have pre-algebra in the fifth grade.

Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that if one wants everyone perfect coming into the high school, then one is saying that you have standards and if one does not fit the standard, even if it were a homogenous group, they would not fit. The high school cannot continue to say that if Districts 90 and 97 did this and this, then those students would be perfect for the high school. This does not work on a continuum. Dr. Lee agreed and stated that OPRFHS needs a defensible program before it starts legislating admonition standards. Ms. Hill stated that some of this conversation is not the District's standards, but the standards being projected for college readiness. Ms. Patchak-Layman said the high school must say that from wherever a student comes, the high school will get to be college ready. Dr. Millard stated that making up this deficiency was an ambitious goal depending on the level the student begins with when he/she enters the high school. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that the high school has to look at its standards. Will the standard allow the student to do the problem solving skills and pick up content along the way? It is a balancing act. The high school must start talking differently and not differentiate. Dr. Lee asked if the high school could say one had to be able to read at the seventh grade reading level to come to the high school. Mr. Prale suggested that if students could not read at a specified grade level, they would be enrolled in a reading class. Ms. Patchak-Layman felt that if students could not do what was prescribed when they came to the high school, they should be provided support.

Mr. Hunter liked the idea of saying that if a student does not graduate from eighth grade; he/she will not go to high school. In the world of being held accountable, one has to say here is the action plan to deal with things and the help of parents is needed in order for the students to achieve. If parents choose not to do something, why does the school have to be held accountable? The Chicago Public Schools do not move students to high school until they are ready and over 8,000 students went to summer school this year. The problem, however, will be that OPRFHS will look like it has racial programs because the majority of students who will qualify for them will be African-American. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that there were ways of educating students without saying you, you, and

you. Mr. Hunter stated that pulling out students and giving them directed instruction was the only beneficial way to educate them.

Mr. Rigas observed that the meeting was again over, that this had been great conversation, but the Board of Education had not moved forward. Mr. Rouse stated that he and Mr. Prale were meeting with the feeder schools to highlight what the high school is trying to do. Hopefully, this will be a dialogue and they will find out what the feeder schools do as well. Mr. Rigas reiterated his frustration that the Board of Education had not moved forward. It was not a matter of pointing a finger. Mr. Hunter was confident that the school was trying to move forward but that the Board of Education continues to do the same thing. Dr. Lee asked if the level of talk had been the same as this during the last seven years. Mr. Rigas stated that it had been in the last three years, because of the phase-in money.

Mr. Prale stated that he would update the list of initiatives for the Board of Education. Mr. Allen was frustrated with not feeling that things were being accomplished. He wanted to hear new ideas. If the Board of Education has only 15 percent of the budget to do things with, he wanted to hear ideas. Dr. Lee suggested looking at what programs were and were not working. Ms. Patchak-Layman added that this had been one of last year's goals.

Mr. Allen wanted to talk more about the Baldrige Method that Ms. Patchak-Layman had brought up previously. He wanted to bring something in to determine how this school functions and how it puts in its processes. He wanted to hire a person, even temporarily, to help bring the school a method that would help it to function. It will require a financial commitment to make this happen. Dr. Millard suggested having a conversation about the Baldrige Method, what it would cost, etc. Mr. Rigas suggested contacting Mrs. Zinni, resident of River Forest, an employee of the Palatine School District, as she went through the Baldrige process and was very impressed. He suggested she come before the Board of Education to talk about it. Mr. Prale was also familiar with a number of districts who used it. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that having a framework takes a long time and allows one to go on to the next conversation. At this time, there are no overall questions that lead to the next set of actions or conversations. Dr. Millard stated that the high school had no direction at this point. There was consensus to have a conversation regarding the Baldrige Method at next month's Instruction Committee meeting. Mr. Allen wanted to focus on a high level and this may be a Board of Education's initiative.

### **Miscellaneous**

Ms. Patchak-Layman felt the Board of Education must discuss the indicators and the measures of success of the goals. Mr. Prale informed Dr. Millard that Dr. Weninger would be sending something to the Board of Education members on this issue. Ms. Patchak-Layman, noting that there was a second part to this issue, stated that the Board of Education was to have a conversation.

Dr. Millard summarized that next month's agenda would include:



- 1) Reading Scores;
- 2) Diagnostic activities; and
- 3) The Baldrige method.

If any other Board of Education member had any additional requests, he/she should provide them to her or to Mr. Prale.

**Adjournment**

The Instruction Committee adjourned at 11:05 a.m.