

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

**An Instruction Committee of the Whole Board  
March 19, 2009**

An Instruction Committee meeting of the Whole Board was held on Thursday, February 19, 2009 in the Board Room. Dr. Millard opened the meeting at 7:40 a.m. Committee members present were, Jacques A. Conway, Valerie J. Fisher, Dr. Ralph H. Lee (, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, and Sharon Patchak Layman (arrived at 7:59 a.m.). Also present were: Dr. Attila J. Weninger, Superintendent; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Amy Hill, Director of Research and Assessment; Nathaniel L. Rouse, Principal, Cheryl Witham, Chief Financial Officer; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors included Kay Foran, OPRFHS Community Relations and Communications Coordinator; James Hunter, Faculty Senate Executive Committee Chair; Janel Bishop, Assistant Principal for Student Health and Safety; Tia Marr and Jim Goodfellow, OPRFHS Deans, Mark Wilson, Assistant Principal for Student Services; Judie Wilson of the League of Women Voters; Marsha Frank, parent; and Amy Leafe McCormack, parent.

**Visitor Comments**

Ms. Frank read the following statement:

“Consider the following scenarios:

- Student A:* Rehearses his music regularly, comes to class prepared, is attentive and respectful during class, participates in all performances. Grade: A
- Student B:* Occasionally rehearses his pieces, sometimes forgets his instrument or music, often talks in class, has skipped performances. Grade: D

“What is the difference between these students? None! When it comes to calculating their grade point average, neither the A nor the D counted. How can this be in a school the caliber of OPRF? A school that touts its fine arts options does not count these grades in the Grade Point Average!

“The student who excels at math has all math courses included in the calculation of her GPA. The student who loves to read and write will be rewarded for his efforts in his GPA. How about the fine arts student? Well, if she takes beginning guitar – it is included in the GPA calculation; however not if she plays a band instrument!

“When I was on the District 97 Board, there was significant effort in creating an educational fabric – a thread of continuity from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. I cannot speak for District 90 schools, but the music programs in District 97 are beyond

exceptional. Band students are required to turn in outside concert evaluations, regular rehearsal logs, and music theory homework. Participation in band performances is included in their grade. Even more important, this grade counts in their overall GPA. From experience, our family knows that Mr. Svejda runs a marvelous band program with many additional options ranging from marching band to jazz ensembles. I am sure the vocal and orchestral options are just as strong. Most of these students who participate in the music classes give up a study hall or other elective options to take the class. The administration and Board of OPRF is failing to recognize these hard-working students.

“A recent front page Chicago Tribune article noted that applications for music programs at the collegiate level are actually increasing. For the communities of Oak Park and River Forest, this may not be a surprise, given the significant support for the various arts and artists in our communities. Now, how does a graduate from OPRF High School explain to the college admissions office that most of his music courses are not calculated in the GPA? Indeed, how can the OPRF Curriculum Department explain to the parents of Oak Park and River Forest this fact? It is important that the Curriculum Department and the School Board be very clear and specific as to why certain courses are offered in the curriculum and are given a grade, but are not counted in the overall grade point average. This explanation should not only be given to the current families of OPRF, but the future families as well. It is hoped that if you value a class enough to offer it to your students, then you should value it enough to make it count!”

Ms. Patchak-Layman commented that the Concert Tour Association (CTA) also raised the question about receiving GPA credit for Orchestra. She did not know if there was a resolution. Ms. Hill responded that no music performance courses count in a student’s GPA. A formula is provided in the *Academic Catalog* as to how the GPA is calculated and which courses are not included in that calculation. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that parents consider musical performance groups to be after school programs.

Dr. Lee agreed that this was a serious issue and asked that it be discussed at future Instruction Committee meetings. Ms. Fisher asked the administration for a recap of the District’s last examination of this issue. Mr. Prale stated that in May 2003, eighteen recommendations were received as part of the research report and one of those eighteen was to reconvene the Philosophy of Grading Committee. Six recommendations were made in 2005 after the Committee had extensive discussion within the Committee and throughout school community. The question of including Drivers’ Ed, Music, and PE in the GPA was explored. At that time, the Board of Education, administration, school, and community affirmed to make no changes. While students receive credit for these courses, it does not count in their GPAs. He suggested revisiting the notes and discussions and then discussing the merits of those ideas at the next Instruction Committee meeting. The Committee was cautioned of implications that extend beyond music, e.g., the freshmen study hall requirement. Should a student take music performance instead of the study hall, and the grade from that class be counted in the student’s GPA that student might have a slight advantage in class rank due to the increased in the GPA. In addition, lifting the current restrictions on freshman

enrollments would have financial ramifications. Mr. Conway noted that he had asked Student Council to make a recommendation on this issue, as well.

### **Acceptance of Minutes**

It was the consensus of the Instruction Committee members to accept the minutes of the January 15, 2009 Instruction Committee, as presented.

### **PSAE Plans**

Ms. Hill informed the Committee members that the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) would be administered to juniors and proctored by teachers April 22-23, 2009. At the same time, Work Keys would be administered to sophomores. She noted that a system is now in place that works well.

Ms. Hill reviewed the two-day schedule of testing that had been provided to the Committee members, noting that no activities were planned for the afternoons, as staff development was scheduled. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the public library had been informed of the early dismissal of students and whether it had offered any feedback about supervision, etc. Ms. Foran stated that both villages were aware of the school's calendar.

### **MSAN**

Mr. Prale and Ms. Hill presented the Committee members with information regarding 1) the Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN) Research Practitioner Council (RPC) meetings in Chicago this year, and 2) a two-day mini-conference focusing on carrying forward conversations about race and achievement held at the OPRFHS. Mr. Prale also noted that the annual MSAN Conference was scheduled for June in Dearborn Michigan: the District plans to send a full team, including a Board of Education member.

Ms. Hill coordinated the mini conference at OPRFHS with the assistance of faculty member Devon Alexander. Forty people from six districts participated in the intensive day and a half program. The Instruction Committee reviewed the conference agenda. Mr. Prale said the conference provoked thinking about the work teachers do and how this school works with students of color. He thanked Ms. Patchak-Layman for her support and for her attendance for a portion of the conference. He also thanked the faculty who participated, as they did this voluntarily on a holiday.

Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that a number of the districts spoke about having an equity coordinator or administrator on their staff. Because OPRFHS does not have a parallel position, she asked if there had been any discussion about creating such a position. Mr. Prale responded that OPRFHS had not had any discussion and Mr. Rouse added that, typically, an equity coordinator position is implemented in year two or three of a district-wide rollout of courageous conversations related to race and the faculty.

Dr. Millard questioned whether equity referred to only race. Mr. Rouse stated that the discussion is first about race and it then broadens into other inequities.

### **Student Discipline Report**

Mr. Rouse introduced Janel Bishop, Assistant Principal for Student Health and Safety, who created, with the help of Mark Wilson, the Student Discipline Report for first semester. Ms. Bishop noted that the new format was in response to Board of Education feedback. While this was the beginning of the discussion, it would continue at the regular March Board of Education meeting.

Ms. Bishop noted that the table of contents included the following reports:

1. Student Discipline Summary by Gender and Race
2. Student Discipline Summary by Special Education and Race
3. Student Discipline Summary by Consequence, Grade Level, and Race
4. In School Suspensions by Gender and Race
5. Out of School Suspensions by Gender and Race
5. All Suspensions By Class of Infraction, Year of Graduation, and Race
6. Recidivism
7. GPA Tables
8. Alternative Actions & Interventions
9. Year-to-Year Comparisons

Each section was separated by a title page, analysis of the data, and the data table itself. Because this was Ms. Bishop's first time completing this report, issues were discovered with regard to how information was reported in Skyward and they would be corrected the next time.

She highlighted the following information:

- African-American males committed 38 percent of all infractions as compared to 16 percent committed by White males.
- Non-Special Education students committed 32 percent of all infractions as compared to 15 percent committed by Special Education students.
- Consequences were evenly distributed across all grade levels.
- The Board of Education expelled held in abeyance four students; these four students were involved in two incidents. This compares with three students expelled in the first semester of the 2007-2008 school year.
- The number of detentions issued (2270) includes ASDs that were given as consequences divided into three 1-hour detentions, or a 1-hour and a 2-hour detention. This is due to data entry limitations in Skyward. Had that limitation not existed, the number of ASDs would be higher and the number of detentions would be lower.
- There were 66 attendance related infractions, primarily due to the new tardy procedure. Deans are working hard to address the truancy issue and teachers are trying their best to record and to write referrals.
- The 18 students involved in Mob Actions were involved in four incidents and there were no recidivists for Class IV infractions. There were also no recidivists for

- Fighting; however, seven African-American females were suspended for fighting and of the 18 involved in Mob Action, 12 of them were African-American females.
- Freshman students received the highest number of ISS and tied with Seniors for the highest number of OSS.
  - Juniors received the lowest number of ISS and OSS of all four grade levels.
  - Approximately 26% (791 students) of the total population of students attending school here at OPRFHS have had at least one discipline referral. While 791 students are more than preferred, it should be noted that of the 791 students, 510 have had three or fewer referrals.
  - 64% of all students did not continually repeat the behaviors that caused them to receive consequences from the discipline center.
  - The highest number of students who received an ISS had a GPA that ranged from 1.0 and 1.99.
  - The highest number of students who received an OSS also had a GPA that ranged from 1.0 and 1.99.

Discussion ensued. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the previous information relative to class, gender, etc. was available. She was informed that on page 14 was a breakdown of consequences by class, race, and gender. She asked that another column be added to the chart that would provide information as to which infraction was violated. She said this information was about knowing how to use this data to influence the services for students.

Ms. Patchak-Layman felt that the students who needed a change of venue and were offered to go to an alternative placement were not included in this report. It was explained that the PSS Team makes a recommendation for another placement even though no infractions have occurred and it would not show up on this report. Three students were offered alternative placements this year by the superintendent.

Instruction Committee members were invited to submit additional questions regarding the report to Ms. Bishop so that they could be answered at the March meeting.

Mr. Conway was surprised at the low number of infractions with regard to illegal usage, as the Township has indicated that it was on the rise. Ms. Bishop felt the number of students under the influence was high. While the school does a good job of providing support for students, this is a community-wide issue. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the time of day were recorded as to when the incident occurred, as that information could be used to provide programs that would most appropriately address this problem. Mr. Rouse stated that the consequences would be the same from the school's perspective; however, the timing of these events might be difficult to provide. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that this request was part of her wanting this report to have usefulness in terms of beginning new programs, etc.

Dr. Lee felt good about this report because of its nature. He saw this as a major institution that has learned how to convert data into actionable information. When this report was compiled, a myriad of problems were found and he felt this was part of the growth. This was an ambitious report and it is the type needed in order to convert

numbers into meaningful information. He, however, was concerned about whether this represents institutional growth or personal and professional growth on the part of one person. If the path of following the line of least resistance is followed, the District will find itself in 2025 an institution that did not gain from someone's expertise. He hoped the District could find ways to insure that three or four people could gain this experience, as opposed to just one or two, understanding that when it is a one-person job, it is difficult to have three or four people doing it. He spoke with Dr. Weninger about the District developing depth as well as specific expertise in doing data analysis as exemplified in this report. Dr. Lee asked if this report were possible because of the present data system or in spite of it. Ms. Bishop responded that it was a bit of both. She hoped that there were opportunities for a larger number of people so as to include professional and personal growth.

At Ms. Patchak-Layman's request, Mr. Rouse suggested doing a joint discipline report with PBIS information included. Ms. Patchak-Layman added that PBIS was a now a pilot program and if it were implemented throughout the school, the only way to judge how well it worked would be to follow the data path.

Dr. Weninger stated that DLT has been looking at an overhaul of the technology area, including Skyward. Last summer after the Board of Education reviewed the discipline report, the Board of Education was asked what kinds of reports it wanted. When Mr. Rouse and Ms. Bishop were hired, they looked at the old reports and the tables. This past fall, several conversations occurred about what information should be provided to the Board of Education on a regular semester basis. The District is attempting to establish a process for reports, in order to have a record of what was done with the information and whether discipline had improved over time. Dr. Weninger suggested that the Discipline Committee compare this report to the data at the end of the year, so that it becomes part of the institution's knowledge and memory.

Dr. Lee stated that when the speaker, Ms. Frank, talked about the students with an interest in music, it was obvious that a similar conversation had occurred in 2004. A mechanism has not been built by which the turnover in Board of Education members does not create the same deficit and forces the same conversations repeat. As it is necessary to build institutional memory into the administration, it is necessary to build institutional memory into the Board of Education so that conversations do not have to be repeated every two years or so. He asked also if there were ways to get into data that would enable the District to answer the question as to whether it would be worth investigating whether there were specific student characteristics that would indicate those students most likely to generate the biggest data points in the system, not just whether they were black or white. However, he doubted that they were distributed randomly across all African-American students. Are there pieces of information that can be helpful in building programs? Mr. Rouse stated that as the District evolves with SIP and conversations occur about students having needs related to achievement, a direct correlation would occur as to what is occurring in the dean's office. There is a correlation between those students highlighted in SIP and in the Student Discipline

Report. The District is trying to provide a safety net for students and utilize the resources available.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if there were any trends in terms of the recidivism of students and moving into a different classification. The answer was no. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if some students were having Class III or Class IV infractions, would that mean something different in terms of whether they were just truant or attending class, etc. Ms. Bishop noted that the students involved in Class IV infractions more than two times would be assigned OSS and a recommendation for expulsion.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if tardiness were the start of a student's problem and which lead to other infractions, e.g., fighting, illegal substances, etc. Ms. Bishop had not seen that trend.

Mr. Goodfellow stated that the District is now having positive behavior meetings with families to talk about the child's positives, rather his/her negatives.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked how one would judge or evaluate whether the interventions listed on page 3 provided the desired results? With GPA information available, what is the interface with the academic activities of the students, e.g., conversations with teachers, talks about interventions, etc? Ms. Bishop stated that some things are shared with teachers if beneficial for them. Some things are not allowed to be shared.

Ms. Patchak-Layman, referring to the chart where 20 students have a GPA under 1.0, asked if there were academic plans of actions for students assigned an ISS. Mr. Rouse stated that discussions were occurring about providing tutoring in ISS and Mr. Rouse added a personal anecdote. He was fortunate to be part of the mediation that took place with the students who were in fights. While the mediation was difficult, the result was positive. The work of the PSS Teams and the Concordia counseling show small examples of how this is working.

Mr. Goodfellow stated that it was difficult and cumbersome to have discussions on certain issues prior to PSS Teams. Being housed with the counselors has dramatically increased communication.

Dr. Lee believed there were ways to come up with not just anecdotal evidence about the direction the school was headed in revising the discipline system, but concrete data to support the proposition that the District is that moving in the right direction. It is necessary to come up with supporting data and it is a matter of working hard to define that. He stated that he would like to see the data structured the same way that it was previously for comparison purposes.

Ms. Fisher noted that being able to get at the root cause of a student being chronically late was a huge factor. For all of the years that she has been on the Board of Education, tardiness was a perennial problem and the remedies were mechanical. To identify the root cause of an issue and resolve it would be much more helpful.

Dr. Millard concluded that the real key is the interventions the school can do to help the students.

### **School Improvement Plan (SIP)**

Mr. Rouse noted that he had provided the Instruction Committee members with an executive summary of the School Improvement Plan (SIP). This will also be shared with the school community. The Board of Education will be asked to approve this at its regular March Board of Education meeting. Mr. Rouse stated that Nikki Paplaczyk was the external/internal response intervention coach and work closely with West 40 Region to develop the RtI strategies school-wide. Mr. Rouse continued that SIP speaks to deficiencies of the students.

Ms. Patchak-Layman questioned why non-achieving (based on AYP scores) students were always grouped together. She wondered if the different groups of students, e.g., African-American and economically disadvantaged, had the same problems in reading. Mr. Prale stated that they were not the same. In the area of reading, there were three strategies and activities, including the software option. This was largely a Special Education initiative that was expanded into the regular education program. Strategy 1 was for both special education and regular education students. Strategy 2 was regular education and focused on African-American students. Strategy 3 focused on the economically disadvantaged. While strategies and activities do not identify the students, they do in the organization of targeting different students.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked where the specialty that comes with the cohorts was. She could not tell what was being transferred across the activities for the action plans. She was happy about the expansion into the regular population but her understanding of the reason to pull out cohorts and present that to the state is to make the District more aware. When someone reads this information on the web, he/she should be able to see a specific plan and activity for this cohort of students. She continued that some of these activities have been around for several years. Absent seeing the information or being part of the discussion, she was concerned that many of the same things were there but just rolled over, i.e. parent activities. If rolled over, she assumed the programs were successful, but the outcomes are not stated. Mr. Prale responded that SIP is a state of Illinois directive to improve school wide data. OPRFHS does not pull students out for intervention; it targets the program, unless students are identified as special education. The District also reports regularly on its programs, e.g., the behavior interventionist position, the reading program, etc., and both of these programs have show positive results. The AYD program noted in SIP began as an experiment a couple of years ago and the school committed to Agile Mind for one more year. The current junior class is the first class to have had that program and the District will look to see how they do on the PSAE.

SIP Committee is composed of parents and some sit on Board of Education-sanctioned parent groups. Once the plan is approved, they will discuss it with their respective groups. Mr. Rouse continued that the school does not control the template that the state provides.



Ms. Patchak-Layman asked that the reports be included in the SIP. Dr. Millard remarked that the Board of Education receives reports regularly. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that the SIP says this is what OPRFHS is doing to achieve AYP and what the community reads. Dr. Millard stated that no one from the public has called her regarding the SIP and she asked Ms. Patchak-Layman how many had called her. Ms. Patchak-Layman responded that this is an annual report and one should be able to determine if a restructuring is needed; there is value in putting together a report that is consistent and has accountability.

Dr. Lee felt there was no dividing line between Special Education and non special education students and yet the high school is forced legally and financially to make a delineation because of governmental funding and state law. He was tempted to say that the high school knows it has problems with special education students and then just look at the non special education student problems, although that would be a false way of dealing with it. Mr. Prale stated that often special education students have different needs or challenges. OPRFHS has a continuum of differing needs for students. Many students have not been identified as special education students yet may have test anxiety, etc., and the teacher will give an accommodation that will lead to higher achievement. As RtI is implemented, the result will be that RtI is about good teaching, intervention, caring for students, providing individualized instructional activities and then within that continuum, people meet, plans are put to paper and the State counts up those students. Some students are tagged; the obligation is not to focus on some students but to provide for all students. The State now requires that intervention strategies used be documented before the school identifies a student as being eligible for special education.

Dr. Lee asked when he would receive the GPA data disaggregated by race. Mr. Prale stated that this is not a regular report and GPAs are posted twice per year. The District can give a cumulative report. Mr. Rouse will talk with Mr. Prale, Dr. Weninger, and Dr. Lee, as well as other Board of Education members to get their input on this.

It was consensus of the Instruction Committee members to recommend to the Board of Education that it approve the SIP Report at its regular March Board of Education meeting.

### **Textbook Approval**

It was the consensus of the Instruction Committee to recommend to the Board of Education that it approve textbook *Algebra 2: Concepts and Skills* for the Mathematics Division at its regular March Board of Education meeting.

### **Additional Information**

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked for an update on the Childcare Practicum. She was informed that a report would be made after a meeting scheduled with Dick Chappell of the River Forest Community Center had taken place.

### **Adjournment**

The Instruction Committee adjourned at 10:19 a.m.