

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

**An Instruction Committee of the Whole Board  
October 17, 2007**

An Instruction Committee meeting of the Whole Board was held on Wednesday, October 17, 2007, in the Board Room. The meeting opened at 7:35 a.m. Committee members present were Jacques A. Conway, John C. Allen, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Sharon Patchak Layman (arrived at 7:40 a.m.), and John P. Rigas. Also present were: Dr. Attila J. Weninger, Superintendent; Phil Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Amy Hill, Director of Instruction; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistance/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors included: Kay Foran, O.P.R.F.H.S. Director of Community Relations and Communications; James Paul Hunter, Faculty Senate Chair; Cindy Milojevic, Assistant Principal for Student Activities; Dr. Carl Spight, O.P.R.F.H.S. Institutional Researcher; and Bridget Kennedy of the *Oak Leaves*.

**Approval of Instruction Committee Minutes**

The Instruction Committee minutes of September 18, 2007, were accepted as presented.

**Research on the Relationship between Reading Benchmarks and Course Success**

Mr. Prale presented the following report to the Instruction Committee meeting:

**“Overview**

At the September meeting of the Instruction Committee of the Board of Education, we presented for discussion information regarding the matriculation of students from D97 through the freshman math program. To uphold the district’s commitment to continuous review of programs and our collective interest in improving our school, we directed attention this month to the matriculation of students through the ninth and tenth grade core academic programs and their success within those programs. Similar to last month’s report, we examined information related to students scheduled to graduate in 2009, this school year’s eleventh graders or juniors. Test scores incorporated in this report include ISAT tests given by District 97, ninth grade English placements, instructional ACT (IACT) tests given in April 2007, and grades earned by these students in sophomore English, history, and science classes. As in the previous report, the goal is to discover the most productive areas for continued program improvement.

“The reliance on the ISAT scores as the starting point for tracking the effectiveness of the school program on behalf of these students came after Dr. Spight reviewed the correlations of ISAT, EXPLORE, and Gates-McGinitie scores for ninth grade students. Enough correlations among these scores were found that any of the measures would suffice as a starting point for exploring the experiences of these students as they matriculate through the high school program. The advantage of using the ISAT as a starting point is that the test provides four categories for grouping students. While variations within the categories exist, the Exceeds, Meets, Below, and Academic

Warning groupings serve as a starting point for examining what students experience and how they succeed at various levels within the high school program.

**“Analysis**

Setting as a standard the college readiness benchmark of 21 on the Reading subscore on the IACT, the chart on the top of the next page shows by ISAT, the distribution of white (shown as ethnic code 1), African American (shown as ethnic code 2), and multiracial (shown as ethnic code 6) students across the three main ninth grade English courses, Elements of Reading and Essentials of English (112/117), English 1-2 (113), and English 1-2A (115).

**ISAT Reading Performance \* College Ready Y/N \* RACE \* Freshman English Placement Crosstabulation**

Count				College Ready Y/N		Total
Freshman English Placement	RACE		N	Y		
112/117	1	ISAT Reading Performance	B	8		8
			M	6		6
		Total		14		14
	2	ISAT Reading Performance	B	21		21
			M	13		13
			W	1		1
		Total		35		35
	6	ISAT Reading Performance	B	3		3
			M	1		1
Total				4		4
113	1	ISAT Reading Performance	B	9		9
			E		8	8
			M	52	33	85
		Total		61	41	102
	2	ISAT Reading Performance	B	8		8
			E		2	2
			M	50	8	58
		Total		58	10	68
	6	ISAT Reading Performance	E	1		1
			M	3	5	8
			Total		4	5
	115	1	ISAT Reading Performance	E	4	77
M				12	53	65
Total					16	130
2		ISAT Reading Performance	E	1	8	9
			M	5	5	10
			Total		6	13
6		ISAT Reading Performance	E		8	8
			M	1	5	6
			Total		1	13

“This chart holds several points of initial and important information for this review. First, the basic or transition level courses, Elements of Reading and Essential of English (112/117), do not prepare students for achieving the college readiness benchmark in reading as described by the ACT. Of the 53 students who took Eng 112/117 none

achieved the benchmark of 21 on the Reading subscore. Although not shown on the chart above, the distribution of Reading subscores of the IACT for these students shows that five students reached a score of 18 on the exam which, based on ACT projections, could place them into an acceptable range for achieving the benchmark. This suggests that five of these 53 (9%) students for whom we have matched scores are projected to reach this college readiness benchmark as measured by the ACT.

“A second point to examine in the first table is the distribution of students in the regular level ninth grade English course, English 1-2 (113). The English 1-2 regular level course represents the standard English course for approximately half of the students who enter the high school. For the current junior class set to graduate in 2009, we were able to match ISAT and IACT scores for 179 students enrolled in English 1-2 as ninth graders. Among the 179 students reviewed 56 achieved the college readiness benchmark by the end of sophomore year as measured by the ACT subscore in reading. It should be noted that these students represent only the students identified as white, African American and multiracial and for whom we had matched scores. When the information is disaggregated by race, statistically significant gaps appear with 41 of 102 white students reaching the ACT standard (40%) and ten of 68 African American students reaching the ACT standard (15%) by the end of their sophomore year. Sophomore students who achieved a reading subscore of 18 and could be projected as within reach of the benchmark include an additional 23 white students, for a subtotal of 64 (63%), and an additional ten African American students, for a subtotal of 20 (29%). With all these students taken into consideration, 92 of the 179 (51%) students in this sample would reach the college readiness benchmark.

“Looking further into the experiences of the students who took English 1-2 as ninth graders, we explored the success of those students as sophomores in three content areas – English, history, and science. For this review, we used the construct of a success fraction, which states as a ratio the number of A or B grades earned to the number of courses taken by a group of students. A success fraction of 1.00 indicates that all students in the sample earned A or B grades in the courses taken in a specified content area. A success fraction of 0.00 indicates that no A or B grades were earned. The N values vary from group to group because not all students took courses in all three content areas in their sophomore year. The table below shows success fractions for the students we have just considered, disaggregated by race, and in courses taken in English, history, and science courses in their sophomore year.

**Analysis of Sophomore Content Area Course Success of Students who took English 1-2 in Ninth Grade**

Ethnic Code	Success Fraction English	Success Fraction History	Success Fraction Science
1	.75 N = 102	.66 N = 71	.56 N = 76
2	.42 N = 68	.29 N = 38	.28 N = 53
6	.44 N = 9	.40 N = 5	.25 N = 8

“The table above shows gaps in success fractions in all three content areas. The gaps may be caused by a number of factors, but the school must intervene decisively to address specific gaps in learning that perpetuate for students who take courses in the regular level academic program. All school staff must address these statistically significant differences.

### **“Recommendations**

Based on the review of this information, we make the following recommendations at this time:

- Address the gap in the teaching of reading and literacy with a curriculum review of the reading and adolescent literacy program across the entire ninth grade curriculum. The challenge is to address curriculum and instruction needs in the basic and regular levels of classes for all ninth grade students.
- Consider varying the reading program with the application of a stronger skill basis for students across the ninth grade regular level of courses.
- Assess the effectiveness of the Reading Lab, started this school year. If this effort shows promise by the end of first semester, consider expanding the availability of the hardware and software.

*“Assistance for this report was provided by Dr. Carl Spight.”*

Discussion ensued. Dr. Lee requested the results of the Gates-McGinitie Tests taken in the fall of the ninth grade and then in the spring of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades.

Dr. Weninger stated that AYP is based on ACT score, which is never reported as a grade level. Grade level information is obtained through the administration of the Gates-McGinitie test. The ACT corporation predicts that a ninth grade student who achieves a subscore of 14 on the EXPLORE Reading Test would naturally increase his/her score when taking the ACT as a junior without any interventions, because of the natural development of the student over time. On average, O.P.R.F.H.S. freshman students have a 9.4 grade level in reading. White students have a grade-level reading range of 9.9 to 10.2. African-American students have a reading average of 8.4 grade level. Most instruction in the regular classes occurs at the 9.6 or 9.7 grade level. Discussion is occurring with the Division Heads about this issue. Dr. Lee felt that while the average reading level for African American students was 8.4, it represented a wide distribution of reading levels among that group. He wanted more analysis of that information. Dr. Spight was willing to share the scores of the tests, but stated that they were all over the map and that the correlations for the Gates test were disappointingly low. Thus, the predictive power from knowing a student’s performance on that test was poor. Noting that there were clusters in performance, i.e., 6/7, 8/9, 11/12, etc., the variation was very wide.

Dr. Weninger stated that a couple of weeks ago the *Tribune* and other newspapers talked about predictive tests. He asked Dr. Spight if he could identify the students who appeared to meet AYP on the eighth grade ISAT, and yet were scoring below grade level on the Gates-McGinitie Test and equally low on the EXPLORE Test. Dr. Spight stated

that while there is a pattern, the pattern had modest but weak predictive powers. To get a high score on most of these tests is difficult, but to get a low score is easy for a variety of reasons. The low scores tend to be strongly associated with low grades in that time frame and in subsequent classes. These students have deficits. High score performances are high score performances and may influence how a class is taught. A class that envisions a high level of instruction has to be careful because the low scores that appear among some of the students in that class could be lower than anticipated. In regular level classes, there is some power of prediction but the caveat is that those African American students who have a mean 9<sup>th</sup> grade reading level and meet ISAT reading scores are coming in at a ninth-grade reading average. The white students who meet ISAT reading are at 10.4 on the Gates-McGinitie Test. They meet ISAT and Gates-McGinitie. While both groups of students meet AYP, when a more discreet reading test is administered, there is a difference.

Mr. Rigas noted that it was reported in the paper that Illinois had the 49<sup>th</sup> easiest ISAT test in this country. That may give a false confidence/security level. Mr. Rigas wanted a disaggregation by feeder school for articulation purposes. Mr. Prale agreed to bring that information forward in November. Mr. Prale added that the Gates-McGinitie and ISAT tests were informative, but correlations between the scores fluctuated because they were not written by the same company. He felt that the EXPLORE and ACT tests better tracked the progress of programs.

Mr. Rigas asked what was the best evaluator of a student's grade level in reading. If a student cannot read, he/she will struggle. Instruction is given at the 9.4 grade level in the regular program, but large numbers of students with reading levels below 9.4 are in the regular program and the school needs to do more to engage them. The classes do not teach pre-reading and pre-thinking.

Mr. Hunter noted that the scatter grams show some College Prep students reading at the third-grade level. Thus, teachers could have students reading at the eleventh-grade level and at the fourth grade level. Students use a variety of learning styles and strengths to compensate for deficits.

Dr. Lee felt there would be a strong correlation between the reading level at the entry point of the ninth grade and the total GPA at the end of tenth grade. Dr. Weninger concurred. The 2003 Study showed that when a student has a low reading level entering high school, the GPA will be low going forward. Dr. Lee continued that when there is discussion about the achievement gap, it is a comparison of GPAs. Dr. Weninger noted that GPA might be the worst indicator of the achievement gap, because the GPA was based on teaching and weighted and unweighted grades rather than standardized testing. Mr. Prale stated that the correlation between the eighth grade reading score and the GPA was stronger for African-American students than it was for white students.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked when the Gates-McGinitie tests were administered. The response was two times in the freshman year and in the spring of the sophomore year. When asked if students made progress from the first test to the last, Mr. Prale responded yes, on average, but not for everyone and the gains was neither race- nor gender-based. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the District knew which classes did not have student progress. Mr. Prale responded that while the District knew which course, it did not know

the individual class. Mr. Prale was unsure if other interventions had been used with this group.

Dr. Weninger stated that the District could choose any reading test to come to a grade-level equivalency. Does the data show a gap when these students enter the high school? The response was yes. However, the achievement of white students accelerates at a higher rate than the achievement of African American students. The gap would exist even though every student achieved. The gap widens because white students achieve at a faster rate than African-American students. Dr. Spight noted that acceleration must be faster for African-American students. Mr. Prale stated that the District knows it can accelerate the learning because it does so for other students, for example more and more students are taking and succeeding in AP courses. The District has not said to the teachers, "Take what you know works and bring it to your regular classrooms." The District is looking for that acceleration at a higher level across the board. The problem is with students not in the regular courses. Dr. Weninger believes the biggest problem for the District is the African American students who come in reading below grade level. Much effort is invested in transition level classes. Dr. Spight said to remember that the lower end shows little gain. He devised a formula algorithm as to how much gain comes from certain levels of performance. He did a regression between the Gates-McGinitie level reading score and the gain seen over a period of two years. The bad news is that the low end does not gain at all, as there is a deficit.

Dr. Millard noted two main factors. 1) How can a teacher who has a range of five to six grade levels in one classroom be successful? 2) What can the District do to bring these students to a higher-grade level in reading? The answer must require articulation; it must go as far back as the pre-schools. Mr. Prale added that a single score can be used as a flag to use a diagnostic tool. Also, to assume that the burden on the reading literacy deficit is the responsibility of a single class is both unreasonable and non-effective. .

It was noted that there were three ability groupings at the high school: "College Prep Program" or the "Regular" Program, "Basic" Program or the "Traditional Program," and the Honors Program/AP Program.

Ms. Patchak-Layman, noting that there was diagnostic work done in reading within Special Education to see what skills needed support, asked if it were available for the regular education population. Mr. Prale responded that diagnostics were performed on the students who attend the Bridge Program during the summer. Diagnostics are not administered during the school year. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the students who were now known could go through extensive diagnostic testing. Mr. Prale referred to RTI's stance that any time diagnostic assessments are given, teaching does not happen. Ms. Patchak-Layman continued that diagnostic testing would give an idea of whether there is a mixing of auditory or visual perceptions so that if one finds an auditory problem, the teacher would know how to base his/her training. Mr. Prale stated that the RTI model moves away from testing and says it is more important to keep teaching.

Dr. Spight stated that even absent tools used by Special Education, there is more information from the EXPLORE Test and its subcomponents than typically used. Students are described by scale scores/performance levels. Whole sets of information typically are not configured and the use of that information is nil. The District says it knows them by grade level via ISAT, EXPLORE, but it knows more about them in

principle. The District must set and position itself that it is about intervention, instead of tagging, placing and moving on. More information is needed based on the recognition of the students' skill sets. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked when all of the pieces would be lined up to see where the pieces fit so that a program could be developed for the students. Mr. Prale suggested that, perhaps within the next month, teachers could start to be informed of the disaggregation by race, the scatter plots, and the scores for the EXPLORE and Gates-McGinitie Tests for ninth graders. Dr. Weninger said that giving teachers information they did not already have would help them modify their instruction. Mr. Prale noted that professional development training was essential. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked how professional development and the new information would fit together. How would professional development in the range of the College Prep Program help to address the range of skill ability? Mr. Prale stated that developing professional development would take longer to develop. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted while the bigger picture is the improvement of instruction at the high school, identified students need immediate support.

Dr. Lee noted that the District has lots of new information, but it has not configured its resources to make use of that information. The current classroom setups may not be the best configuration of resources to make use of that information. He suggested the District spent time on how to best configure resources rather than assuming it will impose things on a configuration that does not fit.

Dr. Lee was disappointed to learn that there were only 2.0 FTE reading specialists on staff. Mr. Hunter noted that specialized reading programs are available, but parents decide which courses their students take; that is a problem. The Board of Education must decide to provide a dedicated reading program to work with these students to increase their reading skill level, a trade-off of instructional time. Dr. Lee could not think of anything that was more important than a person being able to read.

Dr. Weninger asked to continue this discussion next week when he talked about the Plan for Raising Student Achievement.

### **Course Proposals**

Ms. Hill provided a booklet containing the course proposals for the 2008 – 2009 school year. These proposals will be submitted first to the Instruction Committee to give the members an opportunity to provide input at the start of the process that the school uses for considering, recommending, and approving course proposals. Of the 32 proposals, eight would create new courses, seven call for the deletion of a course, and 17 propose course revisions.

### **BUSINESS EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

Add Public Service Practicum, a 1-semester course working in conjunction with Business Community Relations in which students will participate in 40 hours of public service.

Add Business Community Relations, a 1-semester course working in conjunction with Public Service Practicum, to teach business ethics, business writing, community activism, and expectations in today's corporate communities.

Add Web Site Development, a 1-semester course to teach website development using various software packages.

Revise 636/2 Multimedia Presentations and Development by changing the course name to Video Game Development and Multimedia.

### ENGLISH DIVISION

Revise 129 American Literature 1-2A (AP) by changing the course name to American Literature Honors/AP Language and Composition.

### FINE & APPLIED ARTS DIVISION

Visual Arts. Revise the course description of 685/2 Advanced Photography to describe more accurately course content.

Revise 654/2 Digital Imaging II by changing the course name to Advanced Digital Imaging.

Speech Arts. Add Spring Musical Seminar, a 1-semester course for students who will participate in the spring musical. Course includes a study of the development of the American musical.

Delete 092/2 From Harlem to Hollywood because of lack of enrollment.

Revise 091/2 Drama Foundations by changing the course name to Introduction to Theatre.

Revise the course description of 093/2 Acting Workshop to describe more accurately course content.

Revise 095 Advanced Theatre Study: Auditions and Portfolio to reflect a 1-semester course, thus changing the course code to 095/2.

Music. Add Chamber Singers 1-2, a course for advanced vocal performing in small ensembles.

*Family and Consumer Sciences. Revise 705 and 706 Clothing Construction and Design by changing the name of 706 to Advanced Clothing Construction and Design and listing the courses separately. 705 Clothing Construction and Design then becomes the prerequisite for 706 Advanced Clothing Construction and Design.*

Technology. Revise the course description of 794/2 Electricity/Electronics to describe more accurately course content.

Revise 7952 Digital Circuits/computer Repair by changing the course name to Advanced Electricity/Electronics & Digital Circuits to describe more accurately course content.

### MATHEMATICS DIVISION

Delete 271 Applied Mathematics 1-2 because of lack of enrollment.

Revise 203 Foundations of Algebra 1-2 by changing the course name to Concepts in Algebra 1-2.

Revise 209 Integrated Geometry/Algebra Program 3-4 (IGAP 3-4) by changing the course name to Concepts in Algebra 3-4.

Revise 207 Integrated Geometry/Algebra Program 1-2 (IGAP 1-2) by changing the course name to Concepts in Geometry 1-2.

Ms. Hill added that in two of the four academic areas proposing math and science, the proposals, at least one in each case, the course content in the basic level courses is being revamped, not only the curriculum but the sequence of the courses. In this sequence of Foundations of Algebra and then the IGAP 1 and 2 courses (Geometry) and IGAP 3 and 4 (Algebra). This will give two-years of Algebra and then a year of Geometry in preparation for PSAE.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Rigas and Ms. Patchak-Layman wanted to see an educational component added to the Website Development Class. It was suggested that it might include historical content, bringing in the History Department as well as the math department, and perhaps offering it as a double class. While Ms. Hill supported these suggestions, she pointed out that when two courses are tied, it narrows the number of students able to take them. There is already a small pool of students interested in these courses and the department is trying to garner more interest. Mr. Rigas stated that it offers other classes of value, i.e., Business Law and Accounting and Investment Principals. The counselors should urge students to take these courses. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the school administered student surveys to find their interest levels. Ms. Hill responded affirmatively. Dr. Weninger felt that the other criteria needing consideration was not only the students' interest level, but what they needed for college, the work force, etc. Mr. Rigas remembered the school offering a Ground School for pilots years ago and the class being full. He also suggested deleting the computer class and having a mandatory public service practicum. He was informed that this would be a change in the graduation requirements and would require a policy change.

Dr. Lee stressed the need for a reading course for students. He objected to a biology class where students did not have to know how to read. Mr. Prale noted that most classes had a reading component.

Dr. Millard asked about the ACT Prep class. Who took the class, and where and how was it taught. Ms. Hill responded that two sections were being piloted as regular classes. It would be taught by Christine Daggett, who has expertise in language arts, and two other teachers whose expertise were in math and science. They would travel between the two groups of 20 to 25 students. Ms. Hill stated that there is a profile that predicts the likelihood of a student missing the mark on the PSAE. The school is offering this class to those students in place of a study hall. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted a concern. She looked at this test as a way of seeing how well the District meets the needs of the students in a global way. Interjecting something to say the District is going to fill the gaps before

taking the test may be a false evaluation of what it is doing. Had this class been in place before, the District may not have looked at College Prep Program. Dr. Weninger noted that this course was intended for students who do not test well. It is not an attempt to cram in content knowledge. Previously, this was an after-school activity. The school hired temporary staff who taught this same course. Many of the students who will meet and exceed are already taking test prep classes. Some parents spent a significant amount of dollars at private tutoring companies. Some students are self-selecting for those programs. The skill gap is less about content in this group than it is about testing skills, familiarity with tests, etc. This group of students is scoring within reach of meeting or exceeding, but need help. The school offers a range of test prep programs after school. Special Education students may access the after-school classes.

While there was discussion as to the significance of this test score to the college admission process, Ms. Hill stated that the counselors felt that for those students whose GPA is low, a higher ACT might not make a big difference in that process. However, in state schools, the higher the ACT score, the lower the GPA can be.

These proposals will next be vetted through Instructional Council, then Student Council, and the parent groups. The Instruction Committee will review them again in December and the Board of Education will be asked to approve them at its regular December business meeting.

Dr. Weninger noted that in the future he and DLT would play a stronger role in determining what courses came forward relative to the overall plan.

Ms. Hill explained to Ms. Patchak-Layman that the structure for the foundation classes is two years. While Integrated Science is very interesting and challenging, it is inquiry-based and requires much independence on the student's part. She did not know if the foundations class would prepare them for the Integrated Science class.

Ms. Patchak-Layman was informed that the Emotional Development Program was adding Global Studies as another way for students to earn credits for graduation in that program. That program likes to parallel what is going on in the regular program.

It was noted that the sequence of courses in science is determined by the alphabet, i.e., Biology, Chemistry and Physics. The easiest science course to take, however, is physics, as it is practical.

Mr. Allen asked if the name change to Video Game course was due to the sole focus would be video games. Ms. Hill noted that the existing course description was appended by the new course description. The name was changed to reflect the course.

### **Miscellaneous**

Mr. Prale noted that the Instruction Committee members would be polled on their availability to meet November 28 with the History Division.

### **Adjournment**

The Instruction Committee adjourned at 9:25 a.m.