

**Oak Park and River Forest High School
201 North Scoville Avenue
Oak Park, IL 60302**

**POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
July 17, 2008**

An Adjourned Policy Committee meeting was held on Thursday, July 17, 2008, in the Board Room of the Oak Park and River Forest High School. Dr. Lee called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m. Committee members present were John C. Allen, IV; 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; Nathaniel L. Rouse, Principal; Jason Edgecombe, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Jack Lanenga, Assistant Superintendent for Operations; Cheryl Witham, Chief Financial Officer; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors included James Paul Hunter, F.S.E.C. Chair; Cindy Milojevic, Assistant Principal for Student Activities (arrived at 8:06 a.m.); and John Stelzer, Athletic Director (arrived at 8:08 a.m.).

Consideration of Policy 5132, Activity Programs

Dr. Lee informed the Committee members that the intent of the meeting was to move Policy 5132, Activity Programs, forward for first reading. If approved, this Policy will then be brought to this Committee in August for second reading with the intent that the Committee will recommend that the Board of Education amend this policy at its regular August Board of Education meeting.

It was brought to Dr. Lee's attention that approving this policy at this time would not allow the opportunity for wide-spread input from parents and community members due to summer schedules. This is a subject that community members may wish to give input. He wanted the Committee to carefully weigh whether or not it should attempt to recommend this policy for first reading at this meeting and subsequently final approval at the August Board of Education meeting or bring this back to the August Policy Committee meeting for first reading.

Dr. Millard reminded the Committee that the push to revise this policy originated from a parent's suggestion that students involved in co-curricular activities have the same rules and guidelines as athletes. If it were approved in the fall, would it be in effect for the 2008-09 school year? She, personally, strongly supported the revisions.

Both Ms. Milojevic and Mr. Stelzer felt it would be too awkward to bring these changes forward in the middle of the year and preferred instituting the policy at the beginning of the year.

Mr. Rigas favored moving the policy forward. The previous administration had informed the Board of Education that this type of policy existed; students who participated in activities and misbehaved were under the same guidelines as athletes. However, that was not the case.

Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that it was one thing to want to have the policy and another to go over the details of the policy. She stated that it was important that the administration know the details of the policy and that both parents and students had the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes. This policy has a direct effect on the student body and introducing this in the summer before the student body and parents present would be an injustice to them.

Dr. Millard stated that the proposed policy offers an element of protection; it can protect students from self selected behaviors. She suggested “fast tracking.” Dr. Weninger explained that this policy would be included in the Student and Athletic Activity Handbooks, which are printed in house. Dr. Lee suggested printing the proposed policy in the handbooks with a statement that the policy was under consideration by the Board of Education. He agreed Ms. Patchak-Layman’s point that this was a significant issue within the community. Mr. Rouse added that some activities will begin prior to school. The concern is the potential of not having the policy in effect for those who violate the policy at the beginning of the year; parents would feel it was unfair. Dr. Lee and Mr. Rigas agreed that there might be an unhappy parent or two. Mr. Allen noted his support of approving the policy for first reading at the Special Board of Education meeting to follow. It was the consensus of the majority of the Committee members was that it would be awkward and confusing to do that.

It was also explained that IHSA rules are firm about having good grades, they are not as clear on behavior; it would affect only the day of the activity. It is up to the school to have a code of conduct. OPRFHS has additional rules in addition to the ones provided by IHSA.

While community input is valid in this instance, Mr. Rigas discounted student input; the Board of Education should decide how students are disciplined. Dr. Lee felt more parental input would be generated on this policy versus other policies considered, with the exception of the Philosophy of Grading Policy.

Mr. Rigas asked for clarification regarding lacrosse and girls’ water polo. It was explained that these were not IHSA-sanctioned athletics.

Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that the Board of Education had a discussion about privilege and the overall educational experience. To her that meant being all encompassing and wide open for students; the school was not to put up barriers in students’ paths so that they may partake of an overall educational experience. Privilege is the first step in talking about barriers in participation; the Board of Education has to remove all of barriers in order for maximum participation. In terms of grades, the District must provide support to students for them to keep up their grades. However, there is nothing in the Code of Conduct that helps students. There is the question of privilege versus overall educational experience and how they come together in the administration of the policy. Dr. Lee suggested providing resources to help students with their conduct and grades.

Discussion ensued as to whether participation should be described as a privilege. Ms. Patchak-Layman responded yes. Dr. Lee felt the word “privilege” was necessary because a transaction was taking place. Students who do not participate are not obligated to follow school rules outside the school; he saw that as a transaction. Students are given the privilege and the right to misbehave outside of school. If a student were not involved in sport or an activity, Dr. Millard asked what would be the disciplinary action. Mr. Rigas stated that the District only has portal-to-portal authority and that the word “privilege” should remain.

Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that there was more standing in academics. The academic part of this made more sense. When one is outside of the school day, one relies on other people to feed it information. During school hours, the District can see if the student is following its *Code of Conduct*. Once outside the school, the school must rely on the information supplied by volunteers. She felt the policy should relate to what could be documented in the activity in which a student was involved. Mr. Rigas stated that the only time a person should be sanctioned is in relation to which school personnel are involved, e.g., sporting events, etc. He used the example of a student going to a game and a staff member recognizing the student had been drinking; it was an obvious violation. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the student is away from school, on vacation, etc., and has a drink and someone sends a picture of that, is the student

not in violation. Mr. Rigas supported the policy as written. Ms. Patchak-Layman would also not include issues that the police had reported. Dr. Millard asked how she would handle a parent's referral, as people were asking for help. Dr. Lee asked if there were any support for Ms. Patchak-Layman's concern. The response was no.

Mr. Stelzer explained that there were two levels of IHSA sanctioning: 1) fully sanctioned (all with the exception of drill team, lacrosse and field hockey), and 2) emerging sports (those on verge of becoming fully sanctioned). Emerging sports must register as an emerging sport each year; the school district then agrees to abide by the rules, but not as many schools are involved, no championship events, etc.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if there were a distinction between administrative decisions for students with IEPs as different procedures are to be followed regarding suspension of students IEPs due to state law. Dr. Weninger will provide clarification on that issue. Dr. Millard did not know how the District could impose something that would be in violation of state law.

In response to Ms. Sharon Patchak-Layman's remark that part of the policy indicates that the school will give extra support to the athletes to keep their grades up via study tables, Ms. Milojevic reported that C Pass to Play applied to IHSA activities only, e.g., chess, debate, speech, etc. Other activities do not have an athletic season, may not do anything for the rest of the year. Dr. Millard stated that all academic support should be given to every student in the building. Mr. Rigas felt a forced study table would be a deterrent for students in activities.

Ms. Patchak-Layman felt the school should be the one to determine whether behavior expectations had been violated. She continued that the policy states that conduct is more important than the grade. Dr. Millard and Mr. Rigas concurred. She felt this was a deterrent.

Dr. Lee was concerned that the District did not have the same academic requirements for activities as it does for athletes; however, he felt that the fact that instituting such academic requirements would be perceived as being more challenging for these students outweighed this issue. Dr. Weninger stated that this discussion would be an appropriate subject for DLB and BLT. Dr. Millard suggested reviewing this policy this midyear.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if it were the general feeling of the Board of Education that the policy will go out and that community input will not affect it. Dr. Lee noted that second reading was an opportunity for comment. It was noted that the Board of Education has the right to make adjustments.

It was the consensus of the Policy Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education approve Policy 5132, Activity Programs, for first reading at its Special Board of Education meeting to immediately follow this meeting.

Adjournment

At 8:46 a.m., the Policy Committee adjourned.