

Tuesday, May 27, 2014

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Tuesday, May 27, 2014 in the Board Room of the high school.

Call to Order

President Phelan called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m. on Tuesday, May 27, 2014. A roll call indicated the following members were present: Thomas F. Cofsky, Dr. Steve Gevinson, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Dr. Jackie Moore, Sharon Patchak Layman, John Phelan and Jeff Weissglass. Also in attendance was Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent; Amy Hill, Director of Assessment and Research; David Ruhland, Director of Human Resources; Michael Carioscio, Chief Information Officer; Tod Altenburg, Chief Financial Officer; Karin Sullivan, Director of Communications and Community Relations; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors

Jeffrey Cohn of Brave Dialogue; Joseph Biel, Thea Schiet, Sarah Lugar, Sharon and Amy Stolz, Dawn Deaton, and Susan MaCauly, community members.

Public Comments

Thea Schiet, resident of 236 S. Cuyler, Oak Park and sophomore at OPRFHS, spoke to the Board of Education regarding the Chinese program. She noted that other classmates had wanted to attend this meeting but were unable to because they were studying for finals. She heard that the vibrant Chinese program was to be eliminated. She noted that the program in place was diverse, exposed students to a wide spectrum of cultures (both Chinese and Taiwanese), and that current students wanted this opportunity for future students. The students want to be actively involved with the Board of Education to address the concerns of the program.

Joseph Beal, resident of 119 Wisconsin Avenue, Oak Park, had also heard that that the Chinese program was going to be cut and he wanted the Board of Education to reconsider that action. He noted four reasons to study Chinese: 1) Chinese is the most common first language in the world; 2) If it is not the number one economy in the world, it soon will be; 3) China is one of the United States' largest trading partners; 4) China is a growing world power and learning the language will promote an understanding of China.

Sara Lugar, resident of 141 S. East Avenue, Oak Park and student, stated that one of the things in terms of those "Those Things That Are Best" at OPRFHS is its World Language Department and the Chinese program is part of that. When she visited China, she discovered how important learning the native language was to connecting with the people.

Sharon Stolz, resident of 1149 Wisconsin, Oak Park, spoke about her daughter's success in the Chinese Program because of its excellent teachers. The goal of her freshman daughter is to teach special education in China. Ms. Stolz wanted this program to be available for any student in the future and complimented OPRFHS for even offering a Mandarin Chinese program. Top high schools are ranked on many factors, including offering forward sets of educational options. She believed that if the program were maintained, it would grow and develop.

Susan MaCauly, resident of 310 Park Avenue, River Forest, is the parent of two students who will graduate in 2017 and 2019. Ms. MaCauly spoke of the fact that one in five people speak Mandarin Chinese as their native language and China is the second largest economy. She has used her knowledge of this language in her law practice with both Americans with Chinese and Chinese with Americans. She read the mission and vision statements of the high school, noting that OPRFHS was dedicated to meeting the needs of students living most of their lives in 21st century. She continued that the numbers of students enrolling in this program might be a factor in determining whether to continue this program. She was aware of multiple situations where OPRFHS counselors have not recommended students take this course. There are over 100 families with adopted Chinese children with the average age of 13. If this program is not continued, these children will miss an opportunity to learn this language. She strongly encouraged the Board to reconsider this situation and to make this program available.

Mr. Phelan reported that the Board of Education had not discussed this situation and that the administration had no plans to discontinue the program, unless enrollment was light; however, that was not the situation at this point. His own daughter is enrolled in the program and some misinformation had occurred. He thanked the speakers for their comments.

Board Annual Self-Reflection

Mr. Phelan recounted that the Board of Education met a year ago on establishing trust with the Board of Education members, the administration, and the stakeholders. Mr. Cohn facilitated the Board of Education's forward movement with governance in the District at that time.

Dr. Isoye reported that Mr. Cohn had spoken to Mr. Phelan and himself about workflow, committee structure, efficiencies of the new process, and the Superintendent and Board of Education Agreements to determine goals for next year.

A workbook was distributed that included the annual schedule set by the Board of Education last year. This year's discussion will build board and administrative capacity. He distributed a capacity schedule used by another school district that allowed its board and administration to have a dashboard view of significant things on a monthly basis.

The Board of Education members then listed individually what they felt should be addressed over the next 12 to 18 months, their desired outcomes.

- 1) Realistic evaluation on the commitments made a year ago and a course of action on how to fine tune them going forward.
- 2) Collective assessment of what adjustments need to be made.
- 3) Discussion of the committee structure.
- 4) Receive administrative input on the committee structure.
- 5) Get as focused as possible to lead the Strategic Plan
- 6) Have a conversation about the Board of Education's urgency items and focus the Strategic Plan, while not rewriting or redirecting it.

- 7) Board dynamics. How does the Board of Education conduct its business together, with its CEO and how does it flow from the CEO to the rest of the administration.
- 8) An assessment of how well the issue of trust has been managed. What are the administration's plans? Previously the Board of Education wanted to get out of micromanaging and by doing so that would trickle down throughout the building.

Mr. Cohn led the Board of Education through a presentation on being a Q2 High Performing District Leadership Team using Franklin Covey's 5 Choices as to how humans should make important decisions in the 21st century. They were:

- 1) Act on the important—do not react to the urgent.
- 2) Go for the Extraordinary
- 3) Schedule the BIG ROCKS – not the pebbles
- 4) Rule your Technology – do not let it rule you.
- 5) Fuel Your Fire

He noted that it was important for boards to focus on the “heavy rocks,” not the pebbles, which receive more focus because of social media, expansion of thought, and knowledge. Boards should focus on things that are not urgent and heavy rocks. Boards should focus on Q2, Extraordinary Productive, of Franklin Covey's The Time Matrix, which is:

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| • Proactive work | • Prevention |
| • High-impact goals | • Relationship building |
| • Creative thinking | • Learning and renewal |
| • Planning | |

Mr. Cohn asked the Board of Education to describe some of the pebbles, i.e., last minute deadlines, needless interruptions, unnecessary reports, other people's minor issues, etc., with which they deal. One comment was the reaction to misinformation distribution or lack of communication, i.e., a teacher stating something that was untrue to the students. Another said, parents fear of reprisal and having their students mistreated if they have to go through the channels.

In terms of the educational system, how can OPRFHS become Q2 focused and be an empowered organization? How does administration set up a cogent way to say to the Board of Education that something is not a Q2 focus? Comments were as follows.

- 1) Many of the things in Q1, Q3, and Q4 were efforts on the part of various individuals, groups of individuals who would like to see an outcome that they view as good. They feel the shortest distance between two lines is to aim at the Board of Education, as opposed to going to other people first.
- 2) The Board of Education has done a good job of moving toward Q2 this, in particular by limiting Q4 work, but not with Q1. Many things arise, perhaps because of the nature of schools, and while the Board of Education has done efficient work, there are long closed session discussions and it was unclear how they could have been planned. Mostly recently the discussions have been connected to the new state law and that could not have changed.

Mr. Cohen stated that external factors are included in Q1, but Covey's reflection is that the annual SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) are designed to address annual, internal/external factors. When the Board of Education looks at threats next year, i.e., pensions, the board will determine what the threat is and how to respond. It is a time-taking process. One member noted that students are at the high school for four years and new students come every year. If this were an adult-only organization, one might want to look to see how an organization should work. However, because new families, new staff, and new students arrival every year, it might be important to do a backwards analysis in September when a new group arrives and it is a new environment. It may be 3 or 4 months before activities begin to happen with the students and staff. Another layer should be evoked that affects the change in the dynamic schooling situation. This does not give recognition to time and change that happens. Mr. Cohn stated that it was the concept of Q2 and it is what the Board of Education articulates to the CEO to make sure those coming in understand the culture. It is not a reaction; it is an embracement of this cycle.

The Center for Public Education named the 8 characteristics of effective school boards from districts with 80% of their students who meet or exceeded state standards, 80% qualified for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program, and 80% were disadvantaged. Mr. Cohen asked the members of the OPRFHS Board of Education to rate themselves on the eight characteristics.

Characteristics	Exceeded the target	Made the Target	Missed Target but Close	Missed the target	Comments
Commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision.	13%	38%	50%	0%	
Share strong beliefs and values about what is possible for students and their ability to learn, and of the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels.	13%	38%	38%	13%	Scores can improve with time, as people get know each other's beliefs.
Are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement?	0%	38%	25%	38%	High governance teams delegate things to the superintendent; it is a measurement of trust. These are the day-to-day issues. Policies, taxes and facilities are not operational items and must go the Board of Education. More time needs to be spent focusing on improving student achievement.
Have a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and establish a strong communications structure to inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals.	0%	38%	38%	25%	
Are data savvy; they embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement.	0%	38%	38%	25%	The entire Board of Education wanted a retreat on student discipline.
Align and sustain resources, such as professional development, to meet district goals.	0%	50%	38%	13%	
Lead as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust.	0%	50%	25%	25%	
Take part in team development and training to build shared knowledge, values and commitments for their improvement efforts.	0%	63%	38%	0%	

Mr. Cohen provided the Board of Education with its Next Steps from the meeting of July 2013. They were:

1. Provide the Board with Board Annual Calendar
2. Define strategic language
3. District goals, Superintendent goals, objectives, strategies, etc.
4. Board establish template or format for Executive Summary

Discussion ensued about this year's next steps. Comments included:

1. Annual calendar
2. Had the Board of Education defined strategic language? Defined district goals versus Board of Education goals. The Board of Education's goals define the Superintendent's goals, which are the District's goals. This past year the District goals were not defined because the Strategic Plan was not yet approved. The Board of Education goals are termed District goals and they remained status quo after approval of the Strategic Plan.
3. With regard to a template for administration to provide compressed reports to the board, i.e., executive summary, it was noted that different committees use the same summary form. That has been helpful, as it includes what the committee voted to recommend or note, the vote, and specifically what the Board should do. It has moved many things to a consent agenda.
4. The goals have to be determined in light of now having an approved Strategic Plan.

Board communicating to the Superintendent and then he communicates throughout the organization. The Board of Education participated in a survey about their agreements.

The results of the survey were:

- All reported that they had a copy of the Board of Education agreements and that they had participated in the creation of the Board of Education agreements.
- With regard to honoring and respecting the Board of Education agreements, 75% responded yes and 25% responded somewhat. One member noted that they were more important than last year and while more teamwork and unity could be done, these allowed a route in terms of procedures.
- With regard to wanting the Board of Education to use the agreements consistently, 7 responded yes and 1 "most of the time."
- As to whether the administration/staff were aware of the agreements, 7 responded yes and 1 responded most of the time.
- As to whether the administration/staff respected and honored the Board of Education agreements, 6 responded yes and 2 responded that the staff did most of the time. Mr. Phelan attested to the administration following the agreements.
- As to whether respecting and honoring the Board of Education agreements could impact trust, positively and negatively, 5 responded yes, 1 responded somewhat, and 1 responded not at all. One member commented that most of what the Board of Education does affects trust, positively or negatively. The Board of Education had reached agreements and the members expected them to be followed. Following them would be positive and ignoring them would be negative. This Board is not unanimous about many things. Another member said it might be that different members had different philosophies and that had nothing to do with trust.

People can be at odds with each other and yet still trust each other. One member asked if the Board of Education were listening with a desire to reach a conclusion, which is reasonable and intelligent, but at the most basic level, is it going to keep the agreements with each other? How?

- With regard to whether Board of Education behaviors were consistent with Board Agreements, 7 responded yes, and 1 responded no. Had the agreements affected the administration? The response was yes, as they served as a reminder of the commitment to how information is sought or lend support working together and being aware of the commitment to make the process smoother. Each week DLT reviews what kinds of information should be provided to the Board of Education in its weekly report. If something happens during the week that Board of Education should know, team members remind the Superintendent to inform the Board in order to prepare them to speak with the community, if necessary. Discussion ensued about the timing of posing questions to the administration about information contained in the Board of Education packet and how that information should be disseminated, i.e., to the committee members or to the whole Board? This discussion will occur later in the meeting.
- With regard to whether Board of Education behaviors were consistent with Board agreements, 7 responded yes and 1 responded sometimes.
- Discussion ensued about how something is added to an agenda. If it is the will of the Board of Education to see information with the decision made at a Board of Education meeting, then the administration will work on a request for information. If not, no resources will be expended upon it. Mr. Phelan asked how the Board of Education could address the fact that the meeting agendas are so full with things brought forward by the committees, that the Board of Education has little time to discuss items of interest. Mr. Cohn responded that it would through the capacity to schedule and the definition of work. Language could be added to the Thursday meeting agenda that would reflect on the committee meetings.

A suggestion was made to put together a Board of Education manual for incoming OPRFHS Board of Education members.

The Board of Education recessed at 6:55 and resumed at 7:15 p.m.

Discussion ensued about connecting the annual planning cycle to the current strategic plan. Dr. Isoye stated that the District had planned an Institute Day around the Strategic Plan last January, but because of the extreme winter, the opportunity for the faculty to talk about the school's mission and vision and deconstruct the words to get meaning did not occur. There is more awareness of the plan this semester as Dr. Isoye has held lunchtime meetings to talk about the plan. Mr. Phelan reads the vision and mission statements at each Board of Education meeting. It is about making sure people are a part of it in order to determine the appropriate activities to do the deep dive at the beginning of the year.

One member was concerned that the Strategic Plan, even though the Board of Education took time to digest the plan, was in limbo. Another member stated that there were factions in the building that were happy with the Strategic Plan and others did not understand it. Including dates and times will be important to incent people, rather than being open-ended. If a deadline were missed, an explanation as to why will be expected. This member hoped that the District could determine what it does day-to-day so that the Board of Education is aware of those steps

rather than just saying this is the schedule of events. Another member liked the idea of deadlines, but an ideal way to focus on implementation would be to use PD time, although that was not included as part of the Plan. Six implementation teams would meet after school or at other times.

Mr. Cohn provided an example of an annual capacity calendar for which the Board of Education and the Superintendent and the administration might use to help the Board of Education do its business at a high level and for the Superintendent to reflect on the Board of Education’s discussion and then write a plan for the coming year. This could be used for the Strategic Plan as well. The Board president and superintendent will work to construct this calendar and present it to the Board as the calendar it will use for the year. That builds capacity for the administration and the Board of Education.

In trying to clarify some of the work of the Strategic Plan, Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that not everything for implementation was new. Different way of looking at them or expanding them exist. All of the things in the goals are things the Board of Education expects/assumes to be happening in every day. Within the goals, the Board of Education will have areas in which it wants to move. The Strategic Plan has sub points under each of the goals, and the Board of Education may have to determine things such as finances, etc., but the classroom activities are the goals. Boards of education use different approaches to delineate goals, i.e., committee structures, etc., and where there are no committees, they can use the SWOT process and attach it to something already in the strategic plan.

Mr. Phelan noted that much of the actions provided were not similar to the items in form and his understanding was that the execution teams were going to develop the steps that would be implemented in order to meet the aspirations. If the teams have not been pulled together yet, this does not lend itself to decided on the format provided. Mr. Cohn stated that the capacity worksheet is the calendar to be used annually for the Strategic Plan. Dr. Isoye suggested adding a placeholder on the regular agendas on Strategic Plan status report and deadlines. Implementations teams will begin after the August Institute Day in looking at several resources i.e., task force work, chart short-term and long-term plans, low hanging fruit, etc. Energy will be put into short-term ideas and will probably be transactional in the sense that they will be able to help students in certain area, but it will be the long-term vision of what will happen over time that will take deeper thought. A long-term plan may not be available until the end of the first year.

Mr. Cohn asked the Board of Education members what needed immediate attention using a SWOT conversation. The ones with the highest interest will be the ones used to build the Board’s goals.

Supportive Learning Environment/Student Engagement	Mr. Weissglass
Discipline (philosophy and implementation within the discipline framework at the school)	Ms. Patchak-Layman, Dr. Gevinson, and Dr. Moore
Strategic Focus	Mr. Cofsky
How will the reading improvement program be evaluated?	Dr. Lee
Student/teacher relationship building, connections over student’s four years at the high school	Ms. Patchak-Layman
Open communications within the building	Mr. Phelan and Dr. Gevinson
Dashboard/Scorecard on key measures/programs	Mr. Cofsky

Definition of scorecard and dashboard and specific ways of evaluating programs	Dr. Lee and Dr. Gevinson
Ownership of expense control throughout the building	Mr. Cofsky
Supporting faculty	Mr. Weissglass
Legislative relationship	Mr. Weissglass
Swimming pool	Mr. Weissglass and Dr. Lee
Improve teacher/parent interactions/partnerships	Mr. Phelan
AP & Honors – Minority and Girls Increase Clustering	Dr. Moore
Increase heterogeneous classroom situations within regular school day. Mix of students, abilities, and opportunity to be together during the formal day. Receiving no criteria set ahead of time.	Ms. Patchak-Layman
Addressing student use of illegal substances	Mr. Phelan
Consistent information given to families and students with respect to high expectations/rigors	Dr. Moore and Mr. Weissglass
Conversation about race move to the student level	Ms. Patchak-Layman
How expensive is too expensive? Do students deserve the very best whether or not the present residents can afford the very best? Talk about the systems, this is not just D200.	Dr. Lee. He noted that the values in place would determine how the superintendent would send the money. Mr. Cohn stated that it was a belief conversation.

This then is the beginning of the coming year’s Board of Education/District goals. Most of concerns needing immediate attention, i.e., discipline and strategic focus, have a place under the Strategic Plan. Every year the Board of Education should have a SWOT conversation as to what is most important to it and use this list to identify what in the Strategic Plan equates to them in June. This process will allow the Superintendent to hear the focus of the Board of Education and determine under which goal their concerns can connect, the objectives, and the action items. He can then present a plan to the Board of Education in July. The Board of Education president and superintendent will create the capacity schedule and how that relates to the Board of Education’s work on a monthly basis.

Discussion ensued. Many of the Board of Education 2013-14 goals were a carryover from prior years because the Board of Education was not ready do anything else. Many of those goals have a history or thread through several years. Is the Board of Education saying that it will replace these goals with the goals in the Strategic Plan? Will the goals be for next year only, five years, or is it the actions that will be the focus or something else? The above were the actions and more actions could be added depending upon the work that occurred in the prior year. One action item could incorporate three of these concerns. The action would then become the goal with the subparts to be considered. Mr. Cohn stated that every year when the Board of Education has its SWOT, some goals may be added and some deleted. This is also not telling superintendent that something has to be completed in one year.

Discussion ensued about how the Board of Education’s goals would direct or intersect with input from the Strategic Plan Implementation Teams. One response was that the Implementation Teams would appreciate the Board of Education’s direction. The goals of the Board of Education would be what should be accomplished and the Implementation Teams will determine how to accomplish them.

Ms. Patchak-Layman said the Board of Education's work activity is discipline/philosophy, as that sets the direction for policy and the district, and that is not part of the Implementation Team process. Mr. Phelan noted that more discussions would occur about the interaction with the Implementation Teams, procedures for asking of resources, measurements, etc., and they might be steps within the capacity calendar.

Mr. Cohn suggested listing the action and working backwards on the capacity worksheet. The heavy rocks are part of Strategic Plan, except for those things were have an emergency nature. The Board of Education can provide Dr. Isoye the items from the Strategic Plan that it wants to focus on and then schedule status report from Implementation Teams. Therefore, the Board of Education decides on which problem to send the implementation team and then schedule status reports into the annual capacity calendar.

How can the Board of Education do its work? Typically, Board of Education members spend 5 hours at regular board meetings, 2 hours at special meetings, and 4.5 hours at committee meetings each month which adds up to about 130 hours per year. The Board of Education was asked how it would utilize that time going forward after this meeting as the Board of Education and the staff have capacity levels. The reason for developing 3-member committees was the issue of trust and saving four other members from spending that time. Committees have worked well in reducing the time commitment. A time analysis comparison might show that from this year to last year a 30% reduction less time was spent in meetings.

Presently, committee chairs determine the work of the committees. A discussion had occur about the superintendent and president assigning agenda items to a committee. A couple of agenda topics have been discussed in two different meetings. Is the Board of Education comfortable with duplicative time? Things come to the consent agenda but are frequently pulled off that agenda and that takes away hours from other Board of Education members. What other ways would be make the Board of Education more efficient. One member made the following observations:

- 1) The Finance Committee had received agenda items that its members felt they needed consideration substantively by the Instruction Committee, so it is a matter of sequencing.
- 2) The work of the Technology Committee could be distributed to the Instruction and Finance Committees. However, Mr. Carioscio stated that the Technology Committee strategically does not meet every month and if the work were blended into the other committee meetings, the technology conversation could be lost.
- 3) Consider separating facilities from the Finance Committee.
- 4) While the committees are working well, a concern was expressed about how the Open Meetings Act allows no more than two members of a 3-person committee to speak to each other about committee issues. Informal collaboration could be helpful in sorting things out and, perhaps, allow more time for discussion in the meetings. Mr. Phelan responded that had been the main reason for having the Superintendent and the President assign the work so informal collaboration could happen until it was before the committee.

- 5) A suggestion was made to appoint 5-member committees. One member noted that boards generally stayed away from committees of four members or higher (unless it was a committee of the whole) because action could be taken if it were posted. The lowest number for a committee would be a committee of one.
- 6) Another member noted that if an item were assigned to the committee with the most interest, other Board of Education members could deliberate on it at the full Board of Education meeting by pulling it off the consent agenda.
- 7) The Finance Committee has stated that standard financial information should be brought forward with the recommendations, i.e., the cost, from which account, etc. With that information, the agenda item could go directly to the Instruction Committee without first going to Finance.

One member asked for committee rules to be included on next steps. It was the consensus of the Board of Education members to continue to have all committee meetings on one night. Because of the amount of work involved in getting the packets together for the Tuesday meetings, it would be difficult for the administration to provide them any earlier than Friday.

Brief Reflections

The Board of Education covered much information in a short amount of time. It was a productive meeting.

Closed Session

At 8:36 p.m., Mr. Phelan moved to enter closed session for the purpose of discussing the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the District or legal counsel for the District, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee or against legal counsel for the District to determine its validity and collective negotiating matters between the District and its employees or their representatives or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees; seconded by Dr. Moore. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

At 10:00 p.m., the Board of Education resumed its open session

Personnel Recommendations

Mr. Phelan moved to approve the personnel recommendations including new hires and change of title; seconded by Dr. Moore. A roll call vote resulted in six ayes and one nay. Dr. Lee voted nay. Motion carried.

Youth Interventionist Contract

Mr. Phelan moved to approve the Youth Interventionist Contract, as presented; seconded by Mr. Cofsky. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Adjournment

At 10:08 p.m., Mr. Phelan moved to adjourn the Special Board Meeting; seconded by Dr. Moore. A voice vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

John Phelan
President

Dr. Jackie Moore
Secretary