

**OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST HIGH SCHOOL**  
**201 North Scoville Avenue**  
**Oak Park, IL 60302**

**INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**  
**Tuesday, August 13, 2013**

An Instruction Committee of the Whole Board of Education meeting was held on Tuesday, August 13, 2013. The meeting was called to order at 7:20 p.m. in the Board Room. Committee members present were Thomas F. Cofsky, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Dr. Jackie Moore, Sharon Patchak-Layman, John Phelan and Jeff Weissglass. Also present were Dr. Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent; Michael Carioscio, Chief Information Officer; Dr. Tina Halliman, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services; Amy Hill, Director of Assessment and Research; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Nathaniel L. Rouse, Principal; Karin Sullivan, Director of Community Relations and Communications; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors: Cindy Milojevic, OPRFHS Director of Student Activities; Kyle Farley, Jay Lind, Paul Wright and Lauren Blanco, OPRFHS Faculty Members, Ambria Jones, Alison Carraher, Kiley Nelson and Laurand Royal, students; Melanie McQueen, Nancy Leavy, League of Women Voters.

**Summer Travel Experiences**

Annually the students who participate in travel experiences sponsored by the school, either excursions or field courses, present to the Board of Education. Students often report these experiences as being “life changing.” Students who participated in the Marine Biology, Costa Rica Field Ecology and Ireland to study at the James Joyce Institute received course credit for those experiences. The sponsors were as follows:

Marine Biology - Michelle Bayer and Jennifer Roth  
Costa Rica Field Ecology - Kyle Farley and Christina Smith  
Ireland James Joyce Institute - Jay Lind and Kristin Holtschlag

Mr. Lind introduced Kiley Nelson and Alison Carraher who, along with 14 other OPRFHS students, studied at University College in Dublin at the James Joyce Institute with other graduate students, noting that this trip was one of the OPRFHS proudest times because of the way the students handled themselves.

Ms. Nelson and Ms. Carraher shared pictures of their trip where they watched a hurling match at Croke Park, had dinner and watched a show at Merry Poughboy where they had dinner and show, attended lectures in the mornings and seminars after lunch, watched a play at the Abbey Theatre, toured the Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin Cemetery, ate dinner at the Swiss Embassy and the Newman House, walked along St. Stephen’s Green with the Joyce Bust. They traveled from Dublin to Ballintoy and saw the Titanic Museum (built in Belfast), the Giant’s Causeway, the ruins of Dunluce Castle, Murlough Bay, crossed a Rope Bridge, saw Clare Island, and visited Croagh Patrick, a pilgrimage site.

Students are writing papers on James Joyce. If they do well and with the help of Boston College, they will receive 3 credits at Boston College. Students who have taken this trip previously have all received that credit.

Marine Biology

Ms. Royal spoke about the Marine Biology trip in Florida. Thirteen students took an additional science class last year in preparation for this trip in learning about fish.

At Sea World in Orlando, they were to seek out specific fish exhibits, discover their scientific names, their habitats, and their habits. They also visited Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute Foundation in Fort Pierce Florida, a section of the Florida Atlantic University, where they also learned about fish. They held nets and walked through sea grass and capturing small fish, crabs and then put them in a tank for observation. The students traveled to Key Largo where they were lectured on fish based on color, location, fin shape and their family and size. They then went snorkeling in three natural habitats. In addition they went to the Mangroves where smaller fish hide before they go off to the Florida Keys. She had a new appreciation for the environment and what is being done to preserve the environment.

### Costa Rica

Ambria Jones, senior participated in the trip to Costa Rica. The students traveled to the San Luis de Monteverdi coffee plantation and learned how coffee is processed, to the Don Juan Eco Farm and learned about sustainable farming, and to a pineapple plantation to see how that is harvested and processed. She saw insects, snakes, bullet ants, iguanas, moths and a glass butterfly.

The students visited with native Costa Ricans in their homes and an orphanage. This is a rich community because it is a rich country. She wants to return to Costa Rico to give back and discover species of her own. A saying in Costa Rica is “pura vida” which means “everything is perfect, nothing is wrong”. She enjoyed the experience, the team, and the country.

### **Math Program Update**

Ms. Frey and Mr. Prale prepared a written report on the work of the math division, specifically on the work of Algebra and Plane Geometry Final Exam Analysis. The last report, given in August 2012, summarized student outcomes in Plane Geometry 1-2, as of the end of the fall semester of the recent school year. This report provides an update as of the end of the 2013-2014 school year and incorporates outcomes for students in our Algebra 1-2. Mr. Wright and Ms. Blanco were available to answer questions.

The failures for students in Algebra with Support second semester was 17%. The goal is to decrease this number to 10% as a benchmark level. A major concern continues to be a need to develop student fundamental knowledge in numeracy and core math skills. While the District has accelerated the learning in math for about 45 students, it is not confident that these students attained the competence needed to be successful in future classes. The next steps will be as follows:

- Continue with a detailed analysis of final exams for all students in the extended algebra class. Average final exam score for the 80 students with extended support was 59.4%.
- Create an essential list of skills and concepts students needed to master in algebra classes.
- Create a set of teacher-led, student-centered interventions and lessons that address these skills and concepts.
- Conduct action research, continuing analysis of student performance.

Regarding the analysis of Plane Geometry End of Course Data, the Plane Geometry pass rate for semester grades earned remained steady for the last 2 school years, at approximately 96%. The same final exam in was used both years for this course and the result showed final exam pass rates also remained steady. Semester final exam grades earned were also steady but showed some disparity with first semester at approximately 70% and second semester at approximately 52%. Not shown in the appendix, but evident in our internal data, is that the Plane Geometry second semester final exam average was 62% for all 345 students enrolled in the course this past year. The Plane Geometry pass rate for semester grades earned remained steady for the last 2 school years, at approximately 96%. The District used the same final exam in both years for this course and the result showed final exam pass rates also remained steady.

For both Algebra and Plane Geometry, the District will

- Review item analysis for questions missed by more than 25% of our students.
- Review curriculum and lessons that speak to these questions.
- Review individual teacher's classes for any "stand-outs" and collaborate.
- Set benchmark student outcome goals and initiate action research to reach those benchmarks.

An appendix of student outcome information was also provided.

Mr. Wright stated that Algebra no longer has the two-year concepts track; half of the students this year received a C or better this year in one year. The District hopes to reach 10% more students who will take a two-semester Algebra class, with support, instead of taking four semesters, which is approximately 10 to 20 students. Teachers will determine how to drive that number. Ms. Blanco added that there is a stronger focus on Common Core this year and teachers are working on other aspects of the student mind in dealing with critical thinking skills in preparation of PARCC tests scheduled for 2015. Teachers are no longer teaching rote math; students are being taught to think and process a problem and apply that knowledge. Dr. Lee encouraged understanding the context of 4 and 5 years ago, what the program was, and the future focus, as it seems much progress has been made. From the report, however, that is not obvious. Mr. Wright stated that the new program allows students to go from Point A to Point B faster and that, in turn, that allows them to take more high school math courses. Would that inhibit one's ability to enter college because of the drop in grades, or is a Catch 22, or do colleges understand that?

Ms. Hardin felt the assumption she heard was that the students' grades who took that program were C or better, but she did not know if the school had that data. Ms. Blanco had spoken about the emphasis this group has put on advanced problem solving skills and looking ahead, not just to the Common Core, but to future testing. The District is asking deeper questions and that is difficult to capture in a report. Algebra is catch-phrase that can mean different things in different years. The data shows that the District is seeing with consistent learning targets strong work of TCT and a commitment to common assessments, a higher pass rate, and the ability of students to take four full years of math in order to be prepared for junior-level testing. Previously, some of those students receiving support were only getting two years of math before they took the state testing. The District could make a historical timeline of the course descriptions but it would not speak of the work that has been done over the past few years. Ms. Blanco and Mr. Prale ran data a couple of years ago when making the switch from the transitional level and College Prep and introduced the Algebra Block Program. They realized that students who took Advanced Algebra as juniors were twice as more likely to meet or exceed state standards. The goal then was to develop a program that could get more students into Advanced Algebra. Dissolving the lowest level track not only holds students to higher standards but it provides the support with the critical thinking skills needed to meet those standards in order to be successful in Advanced Algebra and, thus, more successful in college. Next year the District will have two years of data on Algebra.

What is missing is disaggregation by race, gender, etc., as that data was more difficult to access and it needs to be incorporated into the summative data. Discussion ensued about whether there was a lack of resources to obtain this information and that it was important to gather that data this year in order to have benchmarks for next year. Mr. Wright shared that the majority of students in the concept level classes are predominately African-American and they are now in regular classes with support. The data shows the District is being successful as 46% of the students in that class are earning a C or better. Students would not have had that opportunity in the prior model. Mr. Phelan noted that success and improvement takes hard work and it was important to separate them. This year the District is using Renaissance Math software and it will help separate the data from this year and next year. All students taking Algebra and Geometry will be tested three times per year and the lower levels will be measured five times per year. The District wants to see if it is being equitable based on growth from the beginning of the year. Is the

District helping lower-level students, all races, all educational needs? Are they growing similarly or does the District need to do something different?

Mr. Wright stated that it was empowering for students to be in a regular level class. Dr. Moore stated information such as that should be part of the qualitative story and needs to be part of the narrative.

Ms. Blanco and Mr. Wright invited Board of Education members to visit their classrooms.

Ms. Patchak-Layman was happy that the District had looked at junior year and backtracked because for a long time, it needed to know where it needed to be. She thought the District would have information to look at freshman growth from the upcoming PLAN test. The trend has been predictable historically. The other piece of information is when the District began to have the whole school take the ACT. The administration said the District had held firm on its numbers. This is somewhat similar. Now that all the students take Algebra, they are all progressing with similar numbers but with more difficult materials. This shows that this is a harder test and they have not lost any ground.

Discussion ensued about whether these were co-taught classes. Mr. Prale will speak with Dr. Halliman and Ms. Hill about bringing forth a report at a future date as there are many variables in those settings.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if there were to identifying whether co-taught classes made a difference and suggested it be part of the TCT conversation and how that all works together. She asked if the information learned from these classes and the problem solving ability was transferred to the other teachers who teach these students about their successes. Was the information written down somewhere so it could go forward the next year? Mr. Rouse stated that the both the TCT and Learning Strands talk about data decision making and Executive Functioning and Strategies are the tool boxes of faculty who have been successful. While the District does not have IEPs for the mainstream population, the network of support includes teacher discussion, counselors in the PSSST model, and other support services.

Dr. Isoye stated that this was an example to the Board of Education of the deliberate, calculated risk that the District felt it should try. He credited the math department for moving forward with this and reporting the facts as soon as possible. It studied the data and realized that students had to move to a certain point. There is frustration with data reporting. Currently, the District is researching programs to help create reports and that will be coming to the Board of Education. Administration experiences the frustration as well. He was proud of the work the math department had done. It was a good example of what the administration is asking the faculty to do.

### **HARBOR/Ombudsman Schools Report**

Each year the Board of Education provides an update on the credits earned by students attending Ombudsman and HARBOR Academy. Staff has reviewed all of the records for accuracy. Over the course of the year, of the 26 students who were referred to either HARBOR or Ombudsman, 22 attended. Ten students attained graduation, 8 from the Ombudsman Program and 2 from HARBOR. Three students opted not to attend their recommended off-campus place. One student was determined not to be a resident of the District.

Collaboration with the staff at both of these schools prompted the District to extend summer school opportunities at both schools to a small group of motivated student for some additional program might provide additional credits.

Dr. Moore was alarmed that so many African American students were placed at these schools and questioned whether other students being disciplined had other options or is there a predominance of black students ending up in this alternative situation. Ms. Hoffmann and the PSS Teams will be made aware

that this trend continues and to consider that as they make referrals. Students do have the option to go or stay at HARBOR and those who stay are successful.

**Adjournment**

Mr. Phelan adjourned the meeting at 8:23 p.m.

Dr. Jackie Moore  
Secretary