

September 19, 2011

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Monday, September 19, 2011, in the Board Room of the high school.

Call to Order

President Millard called the meeting to order at 5:09 p.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: Valerie J. Fisher, Terry Finnegan (attended electronically), Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Amy Leafe McCormack, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, John Phelan (arrived at), and Sharon Patchak-Layman. Also present were Dr. Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent; Amy Hill, Director of Research and Assessment; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board of Education and FOIA Officer.

Visitors

Dr. Allan Alson, Educational Consultant and Terry Dean of the *Wednesday Journal*.

Dr. Alson complimented the Board of Education on its work with regard to designing its goals for the 2011-12 school year. He hoped the new meeting format of holding two regular meetings in the evening versus morning meetings was working well. The Board of Education reviewed and accepted the norms agreed upon at previous meetings and the meeting's agenda.

This retreat is the first one of four to be scheduled this year to explore data and talk about the achievement gaps. The Board of Education will learn how to gather data, analyze evidence, begin to understand why the evidence exists, and learn how it is addressed. The goal of this first meeting was to have the Board of Education

- 1) look at how the two largest racial groups, white and black students, are doing when they enter the high school from the two feeder districts and elsewhere.
- 2) look at how these same students as they leave OPRFHS, in absolute terms. How well did they do? How was that information determined?

Questions for the Board of Education to answer in order to help the administration determine the future might include:

- 1) What is happening at the school level?
- 2) What do administrators know and what are they doing?
- 3) What do teachers know and what are they doing?
- 4) What should the Board of Education's role be in altering this landscape?
- 5) What policies are affected? What policies already exist? What policies should exist?

The Board of Education's first goal for this school year is about equity and achievement. Dr. Alson expected this work to lead to a five-year view during

which time the Board of Education would 1) examine the current policies, 2) determine how they could be reshaped, if necessary, direct the administration; 3) learn what is working, 4) learn what programs are geared toward reducing achievement gaps, 5) learn how they can be brought forward systematically to analyze and make determination about their status, and 6) learn about the programs/interventions in order to determine if they are making a difference or if they need alteration. The Board of Education will also be looking for opportunities to affect the students who are in the building now. Because equity and race is a Board of Education active goal, it is reasonable that certain reports be requested, data sets analyzed, and changes made where indicated.

In the first of his four years of consulting with the Glenbards, Dr. Alson reported that it formed a 55-member committee that developed a plan with a six-prong approach. The plan included hiring for diversity and offering more professional development opportunities. In its third year, there were significant gains in AP enrollment by its Latino and African-American student population. In addition, they developed a process to work with the six feeder districts to identify specifically why students were not achieving in math in grades four through eight.

Dr. Alson presented the Board of Education with a type of hypothetical scenario about first semester freshman failure rate by subject and race and asked the Board of Education to review it and consider four questions.

- What have you learned?
- What more do you want to learn?
- What additional information, if any, will you request from the administration? Why?
- What are the policy implications of this achievement report?

Board of Education members' comments on this hypothetical scenario included:

- 1) Reading is critical to any subject. If one cannot comprehend the material, it creates a problem. The English gap was the largest gap between white and black students.
- 2) What other measures of academic achievement should be considered?
- 3) The failure rate for all students is too high.
- 4) The number of white and black students is the same.
- 5) Life chances have been determined by these grades, as college counselors made decisions based on the students' first years as it affects credit accumulation.
- 6) What constitutes a failure rate? A school may allow a student to repeat a class if he/she gets a C. How was the failure rate determined? The reason for failure is unknown.
- 7) Why are 15% of the students failing everything? How will that be addressed?

Dr. Alson suggested that the Board of Education receive OPRFHS's data on D and F grades by subject and race or grade distribution rate on a regular basis. The Chicago Public Schools has a scorecard that provides this information to principals and teachers so that they can see the data and take immediate action. The Board of Education listed items that they might want to see because of this scenario.

- 1) Students by number of failures? 5, 4, 3, 2, 1
 - a. Grade distribution by race
- 2) Other kinds of achievement data
 - a. Test scores
 - i. Reading which is embedded in entry EXPLORE scores)
- 3) Comparison standards by local, state and national levels and components of the grade
- 4) Failure rates by teacher
- 5) Absenteeism
- 6) Standards of Grading
- 7) Where are the most English failures?
- 8) What weight do finals have in grading? If a student is doing C+ work during the semester but blows off the final test, it would be very detrimental to his/her final grade.
- 9) What number of students/courses does each of the percentages represent?
- 10) Placement (ability grouping)

Additional comments included:

- College prep courses may have more homework than higher-level classes, yet those students are least able to do it.
- How does one interpret a student success in a particular class when doing poorly in other classes?

Implications for students:

- 1) Create policies that affect academic achievement in a specific way, i.e., a student who scores below 17 on reading will be required to take a reading course or no OPRFHS student will graduate without reading at a certain level, or policies that would ensure that there is a more level playing field, etc. The Board of Education does have a variety of policies that do affect achievement, i.e., graduation policy, etc.
- 2) Placement
 - a. Parents' rights—overrides
- 3) Limit the amount of time a student is out of class for disciplinary actions depending on the type of infraction
- 4) Family/Community policies
- 5) Interventions

A suggestion was made to create a list of implications for teachers as that may be less difficult. Students do not choose the sequence of classes or when they go to school, e.g., the morning or the afternoon. Do those kinds of impositions affect their grades? Are all teachers applying the same standards? How can they be supported in this? Core standards are based on critical, comparison, or inference and often times students are able to do that broadly in a subject in which they are interested. Each student brings a set of skills learned from many places. The Board of Education needs broad data before it can make decisions.

The Board of Education recessed at 6:40 p.m. and resumed at 7:10 p.m.

Ms. Hill led the Board of Education members through the following data sets and they asked clarifying questions of it.

Entry Data:

Table 1—Average 8th Grade EXPLORE scores 2011-2015

Table 2 – Average 8th Grade EXPLORE English Scores by Race 2011-2015

Table 3—Average 8th Grade EXPLORE Math Scores by Race 2011-2015

Table 4—Average 8th Grade EXPLORE Reading Scores by Race 2011-2015.

Table 5—Average 8th Grade EXPLORE Science Scores by Race 2011-2015.

Table 6—Percent of Students Achieving All Four EXPLORE College Readiness Benchmarks by Race 2011-2015.

MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) for the class of 2015.

Freshman Math Enrollments, Class of 2015, by Race

The EXPLORE College Readiness Benchmarks for eighth graders are:

English 13	Reading 15
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Math 17	Science 20
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Ms. Hill explained that the EXPLORE and ACT tests are a continuum of college readiness standards. ACT tracks backwards using matched scores of students who have matriculated and completed first semester of college. The patterns in the EXPLORE data is similar to that of ACT. Science is the highest scoring area and tends to go to the lower scoring area on ACT. Note: Sometimes there is a multiracial subgroup category and sometimes there is not.

What percentage of students by race earn meet the above college readiness benchmarks? The “N” value was unknown in this presentation.

Discussion ensued about MAP testing, a standardized test normed up to grade 9, which can start as early as third grade. District 97 did MAP testing for the first time last year and District 90 has used it for a couple of years. Current freshmen are the first class of students for which the District has this data. The current eighth grade class has not yet taken this test. MAP testing is mainly

used a formative assessment because it gives teachers immediate feedback; it is administered 3 or 4 times. Dr. Alson asked the Board of Education to remember that the MAP test is not aligned to the state test, standard, or the EXPLORE test. OPRFHS is considering a baseline testing in the spring of its ninth graders. MAP testing is computer based and it increases with difficulty with grade level. If a student answers wrong, a similar question is asked. If the student then answers correctly, he/she will move to a different question. If the student again answers incorrectly, it will move to another question and then come back to the original concept. Its database contains a set of questions. Its purpose is to diagnose a student's problems and to help teachers to know what they need to do to help students instructionally. It is a four-hour test and is used for diagnostic purposes, not for comparison to other high schools.

Board of Education members reviewed the Freshman Math enrollments – sequence basic to high (most support to least support)

Concepts in Algebra	Advanced Alg F1A
Algebra Block 1	Geometry 1A
Algebra 1	Pre Calc 1A
Inter. Alg F1A	AP Calc BC 1

The mode is Algebra 1, followed by Inter. Alg F1A, with approximately 60% of the students enter into these courses. There was uncertainty if this pattern was similar to past years. Overtime, there has been a decrease in concepts and an increase in the Geo 1 A level. What effect did overrides have?

Entry Data Conclusions

1. Wide racial disparity on EXPLORE test (same on all sub tests)
2. The pattern of success established
 - a. Starts early
3. Language-based test
4. Fewer black students meet college readiness standards

Dr. Lee attended an event at Hephzibah where it was reported that the children who heard the largest number of words by the time they were three years old were destined to be the most successful in life. The amount of money it took to overcome any deficits was also discussed. The high school needs to have as many interventions as possible for entering ninth grade students, knowing that these students will not be as successful as they would have been if the interventions had occurred in the third or sixth grade.

Answering only two or three more questions correctly on the EXPLORE test would increase a student's score and have a significant impact on a student's trajectory. Students may know the subject, but they may not know the language. ACT uses as its norming group in English, reading and math, of college freshmen. The norming group in science is composed of students who

are science majors. Discussion ensued about assigning teachers who excel in teaching those students with lower skill levels to those students. Currently, teachers are prepped to teach all three levels (basic, college prep, and honors) and are assigned as such. Teachers feel just as valued teach lower-level students as the higher-level students.

The Board of Education reviewed the following Exit Data.

- Average OPRFHS ACT Composite, 2006-2011 Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity
- Percent of OPRFHS Graduates Achieving ACT College Readiness Benchmarks in All Four Subjects, 2006-2011
- Percent of 2011 Grads Taking Honors/AP During High School
- Cumulative Unweighted GPA, Graduating Class Averages 2007-2011
- Cumulate Weighted GPA, Graduating Class Averages 2007-2011
- Percent of Students Applying to College by Race/Ethnicity Class of 2011
- Graduation Rates, 2006-2010

Upon review of this data, the Board of Education created a list of questions to be answered.

- How do teacher assignments, skills/knowledge, impact achievement?
- What do teachers need?
- What are the expectations of teachers?
- How would the graph look without science?
- How do relationships affect achievement?
- How are placements made? Are they aligned with scores?
- What is the parent's level of education?
- Is this the first student to go to college in their family?
- Should there be policy on a language-based test?

Note that out of the 734 2011 graduates, 701 applied for college and 91 percent of them reported planning to have a 4-year college, a 2-year college, or military post high school experience. This information was derived Naviance, a system the high school uses to facilitate the college application process which sends the information directly to the schools.

In regards to a language-based test, a suggestion was made to have an exist interview? Did the students understand the questions? Did they understand the instructions? Did they have enough time to complete the test? This information could help to find out how to help those students who struggle with the test. A good test taking strategy might be to preview the questions with the students before completing them.

What is the nexus of discipline? Were disciplinary issues or attendance issues reasons for a student to not graduate within four years? Note: the State of Illinois changed its rules with regard to graduating special education students. If students accrue the number of graduation credits in four years, the high school needs to award them their diplomas and then they can make separate decisions about whether to stay until they are 21. It is a controversial issue, as these students will question why they should remain in high school after having received their diplomas. Dr. Alson noted that the Chicago Public School graduation rate is a five-year rate, not a four-year rate.

How many students have to take remedial courses when they enter college? OPRFHS has that information only for students who go on to Triton.

The Board of Education asked additional questions about the exit data.

- What is the attendance rate in 2-year vs. 4 year colleges?
- What is the overall college attendance rate?
- What is the growth over the student's years at high school?
- What should they know when they leave the school? (rates of academic growth in math, science, World language, Core Standards)
- What are the postgraduate plans of students who do not plan to go to college?
- What is the graduation rate after four years of college?
- Where do students go to college?
- What are the basic literacy skills that students need in order to graduate? Should a policy be in place that says when a student cannot read at a certain grade level by the end of 9th grade, he/she must take specific required courses in the tenth grade.

Discussion ensued about how the dropout rate is calculated by the state. If a student exits before school begins and does not start by the following semester, the state considers that student a drop out. If the family has asked for a transcript to be sent somewhere else, then that student is part of the district's mobility rate. The registrar must interview each student in order to gather this information.

The Board of Education determined that it wanted the following for its next retreat.

Dr. Alson noted that National College Access Network (NCAN) whose mission is to build, strengthen, and empower communities committed to college access and success so that all students, especially those underrepresented in postsecondary education, can achieve their educational dreams might be a resource for the school.

Next time:

- 1) Interventions for struggling students
- 2) Reading and language skills
- 3) Strategies to identify causes of gaps
- 4) Learning correlations
- 5) Student engagement
- 6) Teacher engagement/differentiation of instruction to individual students
- 7) What does the District do about grading consistency? How is it evaluated?
How is instruction improved? What are best practices? Review subsets.
- 8) Are there other activities in which students are involved?
- 9) Track by gender and breakdown by discipline code infractions; how does that affect grades.
- 10) Review the Blueprint study to see how its observations/recommendations relate to these items.
- 11) Is this the first student to go to college in their family?
- 12) Other data

Dr. Alson added that a study in which he was a part of implementing found that if a student were not involved in extra-curricular activities by end of seventh grade, there was little likelihood that they would be involved in high school.

The Board of Education was assigned the following homework:

- 1) Determine policy implications
- 2) How can the Board of Education ready itself for a strategic plan?
- 3) How does the goal of equity work with this?

Discussion ensued about the Board of Education agreeing to a list of information that would be produced annually—a scorecard/dashboard.

Adjournment

At 9:13 p.m. on Monday, September 19, 2011, Mr. Finnegan moved to adjourn the Special Board Meeting; seconded by McCormack. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Amy McCormack
Secretary

Gail Kalmerton
Clerk of the Board