

August 26, 2013

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Monday, August 26, 2013 in the Board Room of the high school.

Call to Order

President Phelan called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: Thomas F. Cofsky, Dr. Steven Gevinson, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Dr. Jackie Moore, Sharon Patchak-Layman, John Phelan and Jeff Weissglass. Also in attendance was Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent; Tod Altenburg, Chief Financial Officer; Michael Carioscio, Chief Information Officer; Amy Hill, Director of Assessment and Research; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Nathaniel L. Rouse, Principal; Karin Sullivan, Community Relations and Communications; Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors

Dr. Allan Alson and Pat Maunsell, educational consultants, Anna Schaidler, Dr. Carl Spight, Carolina Song, and John Messina, community members; Rebecca Bibbs of the Oak Leaves; and Terry Dean of the Wednesday Journal

Visitor Comments

None.

Theme of Excellence and Equity Framing Questions

The agenda for this meeting was crafted in response to questions that the Board of Education posed on excellence in equity and its role in forming both the work of the District itself and the school and how should it be informed by it. Equity was embedded throughout the draft of the Strategic Plan, not as just one of the five work plan areas, but in the plan itself. How is equity and excellence reconciled? The plan will speak to all students, close achievement gaps, and raise the level of achievement for all students. The frame questions to be addressed later in the meeting were:

- 1) What is Excellence? How does excellence currently look at OPRF?
- 2) Are Excellence and Equity:
 - A. Separate Constructs
 - B. Loosely Coupled
 - C. Inextricably Linked
 - D. Other
- 3) How should the answers to questions 1 and 2 inform the Strategic Plan?

Facilitated Discussion of Readings

The Board of Education had been asked to read the following prior to the meeting.

- 1) Last Chapter in *Leading for Equity* by S. Childress
- 2) Last Chapter in *Creating the Opportunity to Learn* by Boykin and Noguera
- 3) *Social Equity Theory and Racial-Ethnic Achievement Gaps*, by C. McKown

Discussion ensued about what the Board of Education members took away from the readings what were the implications for the current state of OPRFHS and for the Strategic Plan.

One member observed that OPRFHS has been stuck in this place of not being where the state says it should be. The concept of a North Star as described in the Montgomery County reading resonated with this member because it created a beacon in which unification could occur if there were the direction and a conviction to make changes that were critical to executing a plan. Otherwise it would be action versus

continuity. Is this District looking at those? Are they the right ones for the District? This member believed that because ORPFHS was not a unit school district that it would be very challenging. Dr. Alson noted that Montgomery County's process was over 10 years; it was a systematic built one year at a time. While OPRFHS is not a candidate to be a turnaround school is there urgency and, if so, what would it look like?

Dr. Gevinson noted the only change that applied to OPRFHS was about being flexible and having students take more AP classes. Before he retired, he taught 3 sections of College English (now AP) for 75 students. The honors track was a funnel that started broadly and funneled down. He spoke about the number of AP classes that were taught in the 1990's as compared to today in English. There are 5 to 10 times more now and with fewer students. OPRFHS has done much to move students up, to transition students. He believed that OPRFHS had worked on this issue and worked on it well. More than half of the freshmen are placed in Honors track English now and that was not true before. Esquire Magazine published an article noting the 50 Americans who changed the world. Two attended OPRFHS: Ray Kroc and Ernest Hemingway. What worried him was that class size had increased and yet there were lines drawn about hiring. Hiring good teachers is the best thing that can be done for any class and that must be considered.

Dr. Lee believed OPRFHS to be an excellent school for some. The school to which students come well prepared for academic work and the students who show signs in the 9th grade that they will be admitted to Harvard, that is the school that people brag about and what is sold. OPRFHS has a reputation for doing that better than most schools in the US. Also, OPRFHS markets to an audience of special education parents. If a Special Education child attends OPRFHS that child will probably get a better education than anywhere else in US and Dr. Lee believed that statement. Students with excellent academic backgrounds are more likely to have their needs met here. He did not believe that the school had dealt with those students who are not in that position and it needed to do so. He asked that the discussion of the Board of Education be about excellent for whom. Can it be defined by dollars spent per child, time and effort, talking about the problems, or defined in terms of specific programs designed to meeting specific needs and for whom?

Mr. Weissglass found it interesting that the Montgomery County story was about the way in which it analyzed and identified, and then milestones were used to see if it were making progress towards meeting its goals. OPRFHS needs to identify data in order to move students.

Mr. Weissglass acknowledged that the Strategic Plan contained a tremendous amount of information, but that it was hard to discern a strategy, theory of change, or theory of action. He identified 8 specific elements that could be considered part of a theory of action, which were embedded in the plan, which could be shaped and then used for milestone planning.

- 1) Rigorous academic experience for all
- 2) High expectations for all
- 3) Engagement of all
- 4) Redirected resources from higher performing to lower performing resources? Are there redirect resources? Are less experience teachers being assigned to lower performing student classes? Is that a political question?

- 5) Teacher Support
- 6) Student Support
- 7) More discussion is needed on breaking down barriers – institutional racism, challenging normalization of failure.
- 8) Continuum of learning. Evidence is clear that if the community is not making benchmarks from birth until high school, it is falling behind the 8 ball.

Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that there have been many conversations about plans to change something for the next group of students but there is no immediacy for current students. OPRFHS needs to do what it can for the ninth graders and not just use them as a data point. A key point is that of working on individual children rather than groups of children. Change is not difficult if one considers the individual child. She was unsure as to whether OPRFHS could provide an excellent education for a group of its students. Colleges are trying to ensure that they have lots of student perspectives within their abilities; they know that by having more than the same is better for all students. She was unsure if all students were being put together with the same criteria and requirement that OPRFHS could provide the kinds of excellence it should be providing. OPRFHS is not looking at how good students are at problem solving and critical thinking and the other skills. An assumption is being made that if a student does well on ACT, then he/she is doing well in other areas. Colleges are questioning AP credits. She did not believe the right questions were being asked as to the direction the school should go.

Dr. Moore felt the readings raised more questions. In personalizing this to this community, she struggled with the whole question of what does it mean. By equity? By income? By race? If it is race, the school should be clear and then delve into it and determine future planning. She was troubled by concentrating on one group, i.e., African Americans, Hispanic students, etc. She felt it did not provide for a school that believes in excellence. It has to be across the board. She is in a unique position as she has twin daughters who have different teachers and already there is a difference in rigor. In terms of milestones or benchmarks, the Board of Education has a goal to reduce the number of whatever group, a lofty and challenging goal, but what steps need to be taken to get there. She wanted to have the hard conversations about why Honors and AP classes look the way they do. Is it just about performance and achievement or is it a component of race. There has been anecdotal information about African American students taking the wrong class. Interventions have those taking higher level classes in their junior and senior years and then going on to a higher education. The language about allowing students to take an upper level class is passive. There should be a way to embed in this institution that every student can achieve to their highest level. She fought with her teenagers and other parents about taking a certain level of class. Saying that the school will allow students to take the most rigorous class should be a stronger conversation. Many community members feel that OPRFHS is two or three schools, not one: College Prep, Transitional classes, and Honors/AP. Even though a student may get a grade of A, is he/she learning anything? While rigor and challenge must be there, an honest discussion should occur about what assumptions are made about certain students when they enter the high school.

Mr. Phelan appreciated the conversation and noted that some themes had been repeated in this conversation. A common perception in the community is that OPRFHS is not one school. So, what is excellence? Not only is it about describing what is excellence,

students and AP classes, it is also about 1) directing the faculty, 2) management's responsibility to hire the best people and set their expectations, and 3) everyone, the Board of Education members, the administration, and the faculty, needs to be held accountable. From the school that is described as excellent, much is to be saved, and then there is the other element of equity. Is it equity of opportunity or results? The Board of Education wants to make it equity of results without burning the platform, and doing what is excellence.

Mr. Phelan felt that while the Strategic Plan included many ideas, it did not focus on the "Holy Grail" of actions that the District should take. Action steps and milestones have to be developed if the District is to achieve the "Holy Grail" and do so without losing what it already has.

Dr. Lee felt the Montgomery County approach started by defining specific problems. He felt that was different from what ORPFHS has done and what it intends to do. There is this feeling it has problems but they do not constitute the whole school. He is mindful of what is working well. He wanted ORPFHS to deal with those things considered to be its highest priority problems. He felt the District would be operating under a handicap by saying its long-range plan was for everything. He would be satisfied with those things that were working better. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked what priority problems there were that could be addressed with the caveat that this be an action that can happen within five years. The priorities that the Strategic Plan set were based on conversations at the table and the information that the Steering Committee members had. The Board of Education is a different group and has different priorities.

Dr. Alson thanked the Board of Education members for their sensitive, passionate, and thoughtful comments as they connect to the beliefs and the school. He was very impressed with their depth of caring about the institution and about how difficult these challenges are. Where is the right place to get traction to deal with them? The reasonable question to put forward would be how the Board of Education would address the issues in order to insure the protection of the level of excellence that the school affords for all. He suggested adding a half day retreat for this conversation.

Dr. Alson reflected on the Board of Education members' comments.

- 1) Is there a sense of urgency? Are there problems? If so, who are the students? Who are the adults? Where do the problems lie? What needs to be fixed? Should there be urgency to what needs to be fixed. What would that urgency look like? Milestones? Would it be the administration directing staff? That is the balance of accountability for all the adults, whether administrators, parents, etc. What support is needed for the 98% of the adults who show competency in order to hold them accountable?
- 2) Excellence for whom? What resources, time, and effort does the district possess? Where do the results fit it? Is this about opportunity? What would the results look like? What would milestones be?
- 3) With regard to Theory of Actions, are they currently in the Strategic Plan draft? Should they be raised up?
- 4) Expectations? Where do they fit? Being a superintendent, he used to think that building programs for target audiences was the way to go. Now he believes they should be imbedded in institutional practices. What would that look like? Would it know every student individually by name, strength and need? What would make

that practical? How can data be used to drill down to each student? How can that reasonably happen? Common Core results will be available a year from now. Kentucky and New York have seen dramatic drops when problem solving and critical thinking have been tested in comprehensive knowledge of data.

- 5) What does the high school control when it inherits a situation? What does the high school do when a student gets here?

Dr. Alson allowed the Board of Education to agree to disagree in order to build consensus.

Dr. Moore reflected on the use of the word “protect” in protecting the school’s excellence while helping other students. From that perspective it seemed like one would lose something if other students were helped. Dr. Moore felt this was dangerous as it might pit one group against another as opposed to the whole. The word “protect” means belonging to a certain group. That language suggests systemic things in terms of how students are viewed, how the high school wants to help them, and the whole picture.

Mr. Weissglass noted that the Montgomery county case study talked much about raising the bar and closing the gap. I know during the campaign and watching the Board of Education that it was common. It would be good to dig into that and at the same time acknowledge the question of what is an excellent education in a modern era where so many things are changing. What it means to raise the bar is an open question.

Dr. Gevinson stated that even though it may look like there is disagreement amongst the seven members, he believed they could reach consensus. While he believed there was huge agreement and shared mindsets, he was unaware of the process for talking through the positions.

Presentation of Data

The administration provided a sample student information set that included the highest GPA for 50 African American Students and 50 white students in the graduating class of 2013, covering the 2012-13 school year. The question posed was, “What are the similarities and differences in the student outcomes for the top 50 African American and to 50 white students when the students are sorted according to weighted grade point averages?” The data compared included basic demographic information (gender, zip code, Special Education status, GPA), activity and discipline involvement, standardized composite test scores, and course taking patterns for these students.

The analysis acknowledged challenges. The 50 African American students account for roughly 21% of our African American graduates; the 50 white students account for roughly 11% of the white students. However, even if comparable percentages of the student racial groups were examined, there would be widely varying student outcomes for the two subgroups. When the internal student groups are compared, it raises the problem of reinforcing an “us” versus “them” notion. The Board of Education and the community will be challenged as to what the measurements/benchmarks will be as equity and excellence are defined. Will external benchmarks be used by which every group’s performance can be assessed?

The visual display of the GPA provided a distinct picture of the disparities in terms of the grades that students earn and similar disparities when one looks at the ACT scores. Participation in extracurricular was less significant, but pronounced with discipline statistics of mostly in the “failure to serve” detentions.

It is evident that the number of white students taking higher level courses in AP and honors in each area of academic was larger. With regard to the spread of experiences that is evident in the best scores, both EXPLORE and ACT, more African Americans are reflected at all levels of the scoring level and the range for the white students was a narrower band toward the top.

Dr. Alson asked the Board of Education members what they noticed, what had surprised them, and what the implications for the Strategic Plan were.

In EXPLORE to ACT, there is an additional gap .7 in the spring of the sophomore year. A lot of spread is built in by the spring of the sophomore year.

The River Forest population is 18 to 20% of the total population.

The reason for comparing the top 50 African Americans and white students and not the bottom 50 or the middle 50 was that of equity. Given that the District will have different assessments, can it continue to raise achievement for all students and eliminate predictability. This data points to the gaps. Equity and excellence is the question.

An observation was made that the EXPLORE test is taken in December of the eighth grade. All others are given in late April.

The readings noted that ACT did not talk about critical thinking, while AP did. The question was asked as to whether the District wanted to understand how much of the gaps are based on race, as it seemed like students should be matched on non-school-related basis, e.g., economic, family income/wealth, 2-parent home, parents’ education, etc. and then find the racial disparity in achievement. The present data show no racial disparity as it compares the 50 students who differ on that basis. One cannot see how much the data reflects on the institution in how it treats students on the basis of race. It seems like it might be showing that on the basis of design.

Dr. Alson spoke about another book “Crossing the Finish Line.” It was about following three sets of African-American and white students who went to Ivy League, flagship universities, and small private schools with particular attention schools in Virginia and Maryland. Distinct differences by rank and class were discovered after shifting out educational backgrounds, wealth, etc. Race was a factor, not only in getting into college, but in finishing college. The numbers were shocking. A study component revealed that the GPA and AP scores were better predictors of success in college than was the ACT. When multi-regression factors were reviewed, race and social economics were the two major detriments that existed by themselves, along with others, in finishing college. This issue goes beyond graduating from OPRFHS and continues to be a problem. The embedded question is what can a community and a high school do to change that trajectory?

One member felt that race was a bigger piece of the puzzle than social economic status, also an important piece, but other comments could dilute the urgency to address the racial issue. Another member felt that while race and social economic status were separate, the Board of Education will not find the racial component just by talking about it.

Data that could inform the Board of Education's thinking would be discipline and classroom rigor. How many students have access to college? What about those students who do not go to college because of poor counseling, financial issues, and their own reluctance to apply to schools to which they do not think they will get accepted. What would the data look like if the students who lived River Forest were removed? When NCLB first started, schools had to start reporting subgroups. Perhaps subgroups of white students and African-American students should be noted in this data. Special Education students with the highest GPA may take courses that would things in a different direction.

Based on EXPLORE and GPA scores, what classes were assigned to these students in the ninth grade? Did the District make the right placement for these students in terms of EXPLORE and PLAN scores and then their ACT scores? Were they making the test score benchmarks? Between the EXPLORE and the PLAN tests, the District seemed to be off as much as it was on in its projections. It was interesting to see more African-American students fell off on the I-ACT and then picked up with the ACT. Within both groups, there was a drop in EXPLORE to PLAN. Does the school have the right determinants to place students? Eighteen African American students would fit into the list of ACT scores with white students. Is that the determination the same in their classes? If one parses out the information, one could figure out if these students were placed in classes that would have given them AP in the senior year. This data is rich in information. Did the administration find that the student, who scores 18 and is probably without family involvement to get into a different class, will end up in College Prep classes, and yet they scored 31. It suggests that they have more information than is seen within the testing scores. ACT says that AP and the GPA gives a much better indication as to which students will graduate college. How does the district fit what it wants with what colleges want so that students will complete college? Dr. Alson noted that there is under-matching in which students select or are guided to schools that are less challenging than where they would be successful. Poor and African-American students are much less likely to graduate from an Illinois state university than the University of Illinois or a Washington University. The institutional issues for the Board of Education are 1) is the District appropriately challenging students when they arrive as well as supporting their trajectory and 2) is it giving the right guidance and support in taking the next step.

A member acknowledged the startling disciplinary statistics 82 to 3, but felt it was a correlation and not casual, as 80% of the 78 Level 2 infractions for African Americas were failure to serve detentions. Either they showed up or they did not. Why? What can the administration learn from this? A goal for this year was to break down systematic inhibitors and build support systems for the students, parents, teachers, community organizations, in an effort to help them progress.

One member reflected that counselors and teachers provide information and encouragement when students sign up for next year's classes. The Strategic Plan

included implementing an advisory system to make it easier to know and advise students. While that is an expensive system, it would have better results where students may have been mismatched. OPRFHS does not have home room or an A-period.

One thing missing from the conversation about offering students more challenging courses is that of support services, tutoring, etc., and how that is matched in terms of income and race. Are the students doing well? What support services are available? Is that matched with African American students? The community offers resources as well. Could they be used more strategically and better? A math academy in this community offered tutoring in physics and calculus yet no high school students attended. An informal system of referring students by the high school existed, but should it have been made more formal. It is not a matter of putting a student in a challenge class and then letting the family figure out the support.

Discussion ensued about other desirable data sets, i.e., proportional numbers, cut by quintals, zip code disaggregation, etc. Much data had been presented. Was the Board of Education fully owning or embracing it? There was worry that too much time and energy could be spent in analysis. A suggestion was made to use the data to shape what is meant by excellence. Was the Board of Education qualified to decide educational outcomes? The administration has access to the data and get what it needs to affect the outcome. In framing a forward vision of excellence, what would that need to look like? The correlation of high GPA and high AP scores and succeeding in college could be criteria of excellence. And, it would not be just one measure by itself. Another would be not to put any barriers in place. While it may not be the Board of Education's job to figure out the problems and set the milestones, boards are encouraged to look at the data to see if there are questions.

Dr. Alson suggested looking at the Vision, Mission, and Values in the Strategic Plan. How would the Board of Education like this report to look? One member asked how the District gets children to be above average. What would that data look like in the next five years as stated in the Strategic Plan? Where should resources be put to accomplish that? Were students placed in the wrong class? The District may be able to cross data and when something seems askew, it can go back to the point in the data when it made a difference. For EXPLORE, it is figured into the freshman year and course placement.

**OPRFHS Strategies
Currently Employed**

The District has had an evolutionary process about race and equity. In the 1990's programmatic changes occurred, which included step-up classes, cross divisional programs, an Academy Program for students who would benefit, discussion based programs (TESTA), and EDO program, a human relations effort that was community based. Dr. Donald Offermann was a founding member of MSAN in 1998, an organization that prompted researched-base initiatives. It maintained array of initiatives into 2000's. In 2007-08, a plan, called "The October Plan," was brought forward. There have been community-based conversations about race and achievement. In critical race study, Mr. Rouse had direct experiences with Pacific Education Group (PEG) and its Courageous Conversations About Race (CCAR), which internal staff visited.

Dr. Isoye noted that Dr. Weninger had brought CCAR to the district. The District decided to train people using internal trainers. Thus, forty people were invited to be trainers. When Dr. Isoye started more discussion occurred about whether a train to trainer model was the best course of action for OPRFHS, and it was found that it was not. The District decided to partner with PEG in order to bring in a different level of expertise to have conversations that would have a deeper impact. This continues in the Learning Strands. Twenty percent of the staff will go through this training this year. While this takes away from the programmatic things, which still continue, it does bring a larger mindset discussion as to how each individual fits into the puzzle. It goes to the fact that everyone has a stake in this and they have a responsibility. It is a matter of shifting mindsets and making a systematic change.

The District continues its involvement with MSAN. It looks at instructional practices to see what works best in terms of what is happening in the classrooms. MSAN members share ideas and how they are moving the topic of race and equity in their own districts.

District Equity Leadership Team (DELT) is the place where the administration filters the equity work to see how it fits together. What impact will it have on the school? How will the District take the PEG information and move it into the classroom, in addition to the elimination of systemic inhibitors.

Mr. Rouse stated that the discussion of race starts at the district level

Phase I - DELT, the administration

Phase II School Insight

Phase III Collaborative Action for Research and Equity (CARE WORK).
Division Heads are both administrators and teachers. They have the opportunity to review lesson plans that deal with students who are under served. They have all participated in Beyond Diversity I and II. Their task is to develop lessons based on state and district standards to engage students for college.

The Board of Education members reflected on where this would fit in terms of the Strategic Plan.

In preparing for Board of Education goals in the prior year, discussion ensued about continuing the conversations about race from 2006. How has progress been measured in terms of results? Understanding that it would be hard to make direction correlations, but to the extent that there are no results to show, at what point does one say that about the programs since 2008. Do other districts have results and can OPRFHS emulate those results? It seemed no one has determined how to fix this issue. Logical efforts are not a result of what is being sought. What are the results in closing the achievement gap? Is the end result to get equity to come up and meet excellence? Was there a correlation between the two?

The administration responded that there were several trains. Dr. Isoye's impression was that when PEG started, a learning curve existed. CCAR makes a person look deep inside one's self as to race which can be very uncomfortable. When CCAR started, there was a notion that others would take over, but there was always the question of when that would occur. At the same time, programmatic changes have occurred, i.e.,

Read 180 and literacy coaching programs that grew from 9th grade to 10th grade to 11th grade. Assessment changes have occurred, but it is unknown if they will affect ACT scores. Areas of support for students include the Math program, Credit Recovery, etc. The big change however, is how people begin to internalize or ask processes. It is no longer the saying that a program has to be put in place. Changes must be made carefully and the District must understand what change looks like for many people. It is no longer how one protects but how to provide experiences. The District is moving away from what it was afraid or uncertain. The next piece is getting it into the classroom and how that translates and works. The work may be more measurable. In working with the mindset (attitudes and beliefs), it is harder to measure.

Can benchmarks be set between the work that is being done with race and the achievement gap? Can school climate can be measured? Can teachers connect with students? The District should be able to point to a shift in the mindset to show that it is working. Assessments should be in place that indicates how teachers are responding—student and teacher outcomes. A trying piece is that educators want to fix things that are technical. In education, normally there is a program to meet a goal. On this topic, no technical solution exists. The Professional Development committee ask questions and looks at things through a different lens now and want to do something about the experiences of many students, all colors. The District has hiring procedures that call for the faculty and staff to mirror the student population. Seventy faculty members have gone through the Beyond Diversity training. Again the District has Learning Stands. The belief is that this needs to be done collectively as a school and establish relationships with students. Providing multiple perspectives provides individuals with the importance of being a professional and taking risk. This will “move the needle.” All of the phases of PEG have a common language.

A question was raised as to whether this was about having the conversations or the conversations about the achievement of students. Was there no brochure that stated that student achievement was affected in these schools? The personal journeys about oneself and the end results are that some are able to reach students differently now. The PD committee members ask questions about how it can provide this experience to all staff. There is the belief that people are at a comfort level in having discussions about what they can do themselves. More AP tests were taken this year than any other. Of the 1021 students who took the test, 84 were identified as African American. This is a 9.5% increase. This is a result. How can students be encouraged to take the test? That is a place where the District can state where changes have been made.

One member was struck by the passion with which the administration had in the sense of a deep ownership of this piece of the work and belief. Mr. Weissglass had been working directly on race relation issues for 20 years in various ways, including his own personal work. The Critical Race Theory (CRT) has started to take hold of these conversations in a new way recently. Because he learned about this differently in the beginning and in part because of what he witnessed at the Strategic Plan Steering Committee, he thought the way this was presented in public and what was embedded was difficult and could be off-putting in terms of the way that white privilege is imbedded in white. He felt a deeper conversation was necessary about this. He questioned how teachers and others in the school were experiencing it. Anecdotally, the 3 or 4 people he had spoken to, all white were troubled by the way it is being spread through the school. A catch 22 is that in talking about CRT, he as a white man on the

Board of Education was accused of privilege and power, and he tried hard to look at that. A response to people saying that they do not like the way it is unfolding is built into the theory that one would find it uncomfortable and that it would be worked through. It makes it impossible to ask people's opinions about it as the response is that it is working.

Mr. Rouse stated that CRT was a tool that allows the deconstruction of a dominate narrative. It allows the opportunity to talk differently about race. While CRT is both good and bad, it gives the District a tool to look at a dominate narrative. Dr. Isoye stated that his view of the process was that it was painful and people do get angry as it is about self-reflection and hearing the stories of others. It is an evolution. He used an example that was not about race but about constructiveness theory or teaching or the deconstruction and reconstruction of beliefs. While it was talked about in 1990's, it is now the conversation. These are difficult conversations.

Dr. Alson reflected that there was a perception that in order to be successful in the long term, the District must build an awareness, understanding and orientation of culture and identify to help in working successfully with students and forge a foundation for the institution moving forward. The tension is the urgency as there are current students who need this help. What things can be done?

The next steps had been described as building a foundation that would get into the Strategic Plan by looking deeply at mission, vision, values, action goals, the framing and the construct of that shaping.

At this point, it was the consensus of the Board of Education to extend its meeting until 9:30 p.m.

Dr. Gevinson liked the PEG discussion idea of dividing into two train-mindsets and programs. He had participated in mindset discussions first by the World of Difference Program which was school wide, an African-American Achievement Group under Dr. Offermann, and joint institute days with Evanston and the elementary schools. The District must continue to address conscious raising or cultural sensitivity. A peer to peer model, TESTA, was also a good model and could be used with teachers going into each other's classrooms and looking for behavior that could be implemented immediately. Yet, it was observed that students of color were not participating even though from the teachers' perspective it went well. Putting up best practices and having teachers critique each other would be more useful and doable than top down efforts.

Mr. Phelan stated that if the goal was to address minority achievement, he thought of it in one way. If the goal were to improve school climate, he thought of it in another way. He did not believe that there would be no growth without pain, and that the ends do justify the means, as long as the ends come. The Board of Education needs to understand the ends if it is to address minority student achievement, because of the resources being devoted to it. If it is not, then resources should be devoted to something else. Mr. Cofsky concurred as it is important to get into solutions. He needed a "North Star," and just using the word achievement gap was not enough as it mean different things to different Board of Education members. One of the premises is that when students are involved and participate in the education activity, their outcomes

will be better. Part of that engagement is the relationship they have with the staff in the room and other staff surrounding them. How can the District assess if more tools are provided to support engagement of students with adults in the building work. What are the basic definitions of engaged and not engaged?

Ms. Patchak-Layman felt that part of information the information started with knowing one's self, the group of people one is with, etc. That is how she views CCAR. One cannot pull one part and critique it by itself. What she liked about CCAR is that there is a parameter, a rule about being able to talk and have the conversation, and learn the vocabulary. When she first came to the Board of Education, she wanted the whole system in place the first year. While it has taken longer, more people now have a deeper understanding and can have conversations.

When the question was raised as to results after a six to eight year process and whether this should continue, a response was that math said it was doing things differently and there are better results for students in the classroom. A personal story was that of evolvment. A PE teacher shared that she came from Iowa and struggled when she began to teach swimming because she assumed everyone liked swimming. She did not understand hair weave and the difficulty of getting out of pool and going to class in an unpresentable state. She sought help in understanding and learned through difficult conversations and multiple perspectives. In the last three years, only two students failed versus the 7 or 8 students in previous years. Her learning transferred.

Discussion ensued about next steps. It was the consensus of the majority of the Board of Education members to discuss how the Board of Education would decide whether or not any progress had been made in closing the achievement gap by attempting to agree on a definition of achievement and what the Board of Education wants to achieve. Common language about problems and issues are valuable and could lead to agreements about what the Board of Education will do next. One member noted that there are many definitions, i.e., one-to-one analysis or the definition of achievement gap as broad as everyone's individual understanding of it. One member acknowledged that the District has been talking about achievement gap for years and the general understanding was that it was the gap between ACT test scores and the academic outcomes of students primarily in this school, race, and economic status. One member felt that academic outcome was reflected in the test scores.

Dates and times will be suggested for the next meeting. Most preferred a weekday meeting from 6 to 9:30.

Adjournment

At 9:30 p.m., on Monday, August 26, 2013, Dr. Lee moved to adjourn the Special Board Meeting; seconded by Dr. Moore. A voice vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Dr. Jackie Moore
Secretary