

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Monday, November 25, 2013 in the Board Room of the high school.

Call to Order

President Phelan called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: Thomas F. Cofsky, Dr. Steven Gevinson, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Sharon Patchak Layman, John Phelan, and Jeff Weissglass. Also in attendance was Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent; Nathaniel L. Rouse, Principal; Tod Altenburg, Chief Financial Officer; Michael Carioscio, Chief Information Officer; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction; Dr. Tina Halliman, Assistant Superintendent for Special Services, Amy Hill, Director of Assessment and Research; Karin Sullivan, Communications and Community Relations Coordinator; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors

Dr. Allan Alson and Pat Maunsell, educational consultants; John Messina of APPLAUSE!, and Rebecca Bibbs of the Oak Leaves.

Visitor Comments

John Messina invited the Board of Education to attend the Winter Music Festival event on December 5, 2013, sponsored by APPLAUSE!

**Review of Agenda
And Goals**

Dr. Alson thanked Ms. Sullivan, Mr. Prale, and Dr. Isoye for helping with the rewrite of the documents. He hoped that they reflected the commitment of the Strategic Plan's Steering Committee and the thoughts, ideas, and concerns of the Board of Education.

The meeting objectives were:

- 1) Finalize the mission, vision, values and goals and be ready for the next step.
- 2) Present this document for public discussion at the December 10, 2013 meeting and approval at the December 19, 2013 if closure is reached at this meeting.
- 3) Continue the discussion January if closure is not reached at this meeting and then present it for public discussion on January 14, 2014 with approval on January 23, 2014.

This document does not need a first and second reading. When the plan is approved, Dr. Isoye will create implementation committees for the various goal areas and will charge them to reflect the priorities and scaffold the work for the next five years. The Board of Education would receive for approval a report about the work of the committees. The Board of Education's obligation is to review the work to make insure it is implemented with fidelity. Adjustments can be made to the timeline, if necessary.

Mission & Vision

Board members provided feedback as to which of the options presented they preferred. Comments included:

- 1) The majority of the Board of Education members preferred Option 2 of the Vision. Their comments included:
 - a. It flowed with Option 1 of Mission 1, as it captured the essence of going forward and adding full potential.
 - b. What is being cultivating? Is success the result or is cultivating knowledge, skills, and character?

- c. Option 2 of Vision will become an ever-improving model that will enable all students to achieve their full potential. Mission 1, use the word “ensure,” as it was good to incorporate all.
- d. Excellence and equity does not stimulate thought. The issue of continually improving becomes more important than excellence and equity. One must think about how it and it will have a greater effect on what is accomplished.
- e. “Ever-improving” reflects a learning organization. The mission is aspirational, so it is not a contradiction.
- f. While the briefness is welcome, “full potential” is key, as it says that it is unique for each individual; excellence and equity is for everybody.

It was the consensus of the Board of Education members that the Vision Statement would read as follows:

“OPRFHS will become an ever-improving model of excellence and equity that will enable all students to achieve their full human potential.”

It was the consensus of the Board of Education members that the Mission Statement would read as follows

“Provide a dynamic supportive learning environment that cultivates knowledge, skills, and character and strives for excellence and equity for all students.”

Significant discussion occurred as to the meaning of equity. Is it an idea? Is it about outcomes or is it about opportunities? Were opportunities enough? Does that mean more resources need to be devoted to students who struggle more? One member felt it was about equity in outcomes. One member thought it meant awareness that people have different needs and not everyone comes to a learning environment prepared to take an AP class, as an example. It might mean providing an experience where everyone could take the class. This will be included in the action steps and allocation of resources will reflect that fact. One member felt the strategic plan was to address the achievement gap, not to give up anything for those who were achieving. One member thought definition of equity was difficult to describe and the Board of Education may have to accept that it is a living dynamic in the everyday work. To another member equity meant devoting, insofar as is practical, equivalent resources toward meeting each of the students’ needs in the District. Considering the need for students to become better readers was just as important as the need for students to master calculus. Because the District cannot meet the need of every student every day, and the Board of Education must make judgments about resources. In this member’s opinion, the Board of Education is presently doing a more equitable job now than 20 years ago because it has elevated the importance of students learning how to read and it had not diminished the need for meeting the needs of the best academic students. One member asked how the Committee had defined equity. Dr. Alson added that the Steering Committee thought it was about striving for outcomes, about closing achievement gaps, i.e., race, class disabilities, and not being predictors of success. That might require differentiated support, interventions, etc., different from the current bifurcation of achievement. The Steering Committee referenced inputs that would be necessary that would achieve both outputs and equity. One member did not believe one could say the District could say “ensuring equity of outcome.” Another member felt there were two issues 1) equity of individual and 2) equality of large groups. By look at each student’s

gender, race, economic status, the District says that each student is important. The Committee wanted to include special education and gender equity as well. Race is where the committee wanted to focus first. One member did not believe anyone would dig deeper into the meaning of the words and what affect it will have on the future. One member had hoped it would guide the Board of Education's future actions. One member was comfortable with ensuring equity as it is both customized to the person and pushing the outcome, but understood that the District cannot analyze data granularly. When asked how the Board of Education would conclude from the school report that it was equitable, the response was that happened every time something was discussed or voted upon by the Board of Education. When the example of one student coming to the school who was regularly fed and one who was not and thus did not perform well, the question was asked if it was the mission of the school to strive to make sure that they have equal outcomes, assuming that they are inherently capable of an equal outcome. A response was that it was not the school's role to provide food but it could mean that the school was collaborating and in concert with other organizations or agencies to get necessary resources to the family. Food is a resource that the community has been considering.

The question was asked if the high school were not striving for equitable outcomes, why the Board of Education funded the Collaboration for Early Childhood Care and Education. Those children are not at the high school and the controversy inside the building was that they are not the high school's students. One member saw the high school's mission as striving for equity of the outcomes that come to it and not based on inherent abilities ORPFHS strives for outcomes for which the institution is known and for what it can control, i.e., equity in the allocation of resources (money, time, care, and decision-making. Do the values carry the definition of what is in the mission and vision? If so, equity could be removed from the mission statement as all of the specifics involved equity, finances, outcomes, all of that is covered in the value statements. Whether it was educational or academic, excellence could be placed in the value statements. There is nothing about the future, nothing about hopefully going to college, gain additional training. That is implied with "full potential."

Values

The Board of Education reviewed the values and reflected on whether they were the ones it wanted in the plan and if they worked.

1. Consensus as is.
2. Consensus as is.
3. Consensus with adding the word "character." Consideration was given to including "grit" or "perseverance" or "academic and social success." The definition of grit included delayed gratification, understanding how networks, collaborations and individuals work, attention to detail, soft skills, emotional intelligence, taking a stand, etc. The word "character" was chosen because it had broader implications.
4. Consensus to add "equitable" after the word "in".
5. Consensus to replace "achievement" with "equity". Adults refer to all, i.e., parents, faculty, and staff working with students. The Board of Education will look to the administration as to how to fund the achievement outcome. Discussion included also whether to insert the word "nurturing" before adult leadership because it could mean that the high school would look at other adults other than staff in a more partnership way. Nurturing is different from "learning and leadership." It was noted that No. 2 referenced partnerships.

6. Consensus as is, although consideration was given to 1) inserting the word “needed” before “academic, 2) nurturing is about encouraging and demanding as only some students will take advantage of study sessions; 3) replace “encouraging” with “providing.” 4) Replace “all students” with “each student”; 5) add word “needed” or “appropriate” before the word “academic”.
7. Consensus was to start with the following: “We embrace our diversity and believe race, income, gender, and learning differences” and add “educational outcomes” before the word “should. Discussion included whether achievement, outcomes, or educational outcomes were being discussed. This means achievement gaps. The issue of diversity is not on the list as a value. Does the community value the diversity of race, income, gender, etc.? While diversity can be a construct in the community, it need not be at the high school because it has to accept all students.

A question about whether the values were the basis for all things going forward arose. While the Board of Education had agreed that there were originally too many values, the writing team was confident that all concepts were incorporated, i.e., creating a dynamic learning situation, supporting students, academic support, etc. One comment was that “engaging challenging education” had been a modifier that the school prepares students for all options after high school, not just “full potential.” A later discussion will occur on this topic. In addition, a couple of members felt that was a goal.

Goals

Goal I. The consensus was the modify as follows: OPRFHS will collaborate with other educational institutions and social service organizations to create a continuum of learning for all students with attention paid to strategies that best support students of color, students with special needs, underperforming students, and students at risk of failure. Discussion reflected that the prior version did not capture business relationships, for a continuum of learning, etc. Had the integration of concepts of equity throughout the action steps created more problems? The original goal worked well but taking incorporating this into the action steps was not the original intent of the goal; Action steps are to be specific. Data identified certain students and the Steering Committee wanted attention paid to these students.

Dr. Alson suggested continuing the discussion on goals at the January 6 meeting and spending one half hour on the remaining goals. Any suggestions or thoughts could be shared with the administration prior to winter break. It was suggested that a word documents of the agreed upon draft of mission, vision, values and changes for goal 1 be sent to the Board of Education members in order for them to make changes.

Mr. Phelan appreciated the tone and the discussion of this meeting. Dr. Alson thanked the administration and Ms. Maunsell for their writing effort that facilitated a productive discussion. Effort has been made to keep the Steering Committee abreast of the Board discussions by the Board of Education relative to the Strategic Plan.

Adjournment

At 9:00 p.m., on Monday, November 25, 2013, Mr. Lee moved to adjourn the Special Board Meeting; seconded by Dr. Lee. A voice vote resulted in all eyes. Motion carried.

John Phelan
President

Dr. Jackie Moore
Secretary