

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Thursday, September 29, 2016, in the Board Room of the high school.

Call to Order President Weissglass called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: Fred Arkin (departed at 10:30 a.m.), Jennifer Cassell, Thomas F. Cofsky (departed at 10:38 a.m.), Dr. Steve Gevinson, Dr. Jackie Moore, Sara Dixon Spivy, and Jeff Weissglass. Also in attendance was Dr. Joylynn Pruitt, Superintendent; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors

DLT members, and Sherry Johnson, George Bailey, and John Duffy, community members

Public Comments

Dr. Duffy spoke on behalf of many people regarding leadership, elected leaders and he complimented them on the hard work and their commitment to do the hard work. Dr. King had spoken the week before he died at the National Cathedral. He had said: “A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a molder of consensus.” Ask the questions: Is it safe? Expedient? Political? Popular? Is it right? He noted that the proposal by SEA, APPLE and Suburban Unity Alliance provided to the Board of Education earlier in the day was consistent with the recommendations in the Learning Community Performance Gap, the Blueprint Report, and the compelling data presentations made by Ms. Hill. The recommendations from the document to the Board of Education included the following recommendations:

1. Establish an Assistant Superintendent of Equity
2. Adopt a Racial Impact Statement
3. Create an inquiry process with community, teacher and parent participation into the design, supportive research, development and feasibility of creating an all-freshman course offering comprised of and combining college preparatory and honor students. This inquiry would include the following:
 - a. Providing for ongoing input in both the design and potential implementation of this program to include teachers, parents, and community stakeholders
 - b. Formally reviewing local and national research and data that examines the impact a tracked curriculum has had on all students’ learning outcomes--including OPRFHS research on the role of racial identity development in student learning, common beliefs about student ability, how traditional views affect student potential, and concerns teachers, parents and students may have about academically integrated curriculum. *See* Rose (1997, 2005), Manley (2003), and Duffy (2011).
 - c. Identifying the professional learning and student supports that a unitary academic curriculum program would require, ensuring allocation of appropriate resources college preparatory students and other students may need to succeed in a de-tracked program, and

- ensuring that the program provide vigorous, rigorous learning for all students while including pathways for earning honors credit; and
- d. Developing a strong, comprehensive independent evaluation model to determine the impact of any program initiative on both the college preparatory and honor students--evaluation protocols to include both quantitative and qualitative learning outcomes.
4. Create an Academic Equity Advocate position which would work closely with guidance counselors and the PPS team to assist students, and parents of students impacted by the student achievement gap in advocating for an education consistent with the declared Mission, Values and Goals of this Board in the Strategic Plan. This position would report to the Assistant Superintendent of Equity
 5. Continue to aggressively identify the students disconnected from the school environment and continue to maintain qualitative and quantitative reporting on the success and challenges of intervention/support programs, developing new, research-based interventions as indicated by evaluations.
 6. Embrace cultural elements of African American, Latino(a), and other racial and ethnic minority experiences on a daily basis in the curriculum, art, and culinary expression as a normative value, and not just as a special recognition.

Mr. Weissglass noted that when Dr. Gevinson, Dr. Moore, and Mr. Cofsky were elected, they tried to reshape the Strategic Plan, and as it was adopted, he thought of it as an aspirational and inspirational document. Much of the work was around innovations and pilots to kick things off and trying to get more substance. He was excited about Dr. Pruitt's commitment to this work and he look forward to learning what she had learned in her time at the District.

Dr. Moore added that the Strategic Plan Operations Committee started looking at the indicators with the intention of being specific about student instruction and school life through the lens of how the District would gauge success and look at the challenges. She shared the frustrations with issues about the achievement gap and equity. Racial inequity has been an issue for years, and the high school has implemented programs to combat it. Mr. Prale added that it always has been at the forefront: It is a problem for the entire learning community. The BOE members have commented that it is their desire to look at the achievement gap. Pilot projects such as Leadership and Launch, SEL, and the reconfiguring of classrooms have started. The work of the BOE is to continue to address equity from a visionary and policy level and look at the ways it addresses the pillars. Looking at race and the experiences at this school are critical.

Dr. Pruitt noted that this journey would take longer than the time allotted for this meeting and include more than just the people in the room. This discussion is about all of the students in Oak Park and River Forest, not just OPRFHS students. The

Board of Education will not leave this meeting with a plan. It is a beginning of a conversation. There was a call to action at the September 27 Culture, Climate, and Behavior Committee. The BOE members need to project into the future and reflect on why they care about the future of OPRFHS. Dr. Pruitt's goal in life is to educate children. Originally, she had thought she was going to be a teaching nun, then a PE teacher. Her friends always said she would be a teacher, and her mother told her everything was about education. Her passion is education to help each and every student reach their potential.

Dr. Pruitt reviewed the meeting agenda:

Why Strategic Planning?

SOAR

SMART goals

OPRFHS Strategic Plan (look at commonalities)

Value/Vision/Mission Statements

Overarching Goals

SOAR Activity

The work at this meeting is about thinking and collaborating. While the BOE gives the direction, it will be everyone else who helps to get the work completed. The Blueprint and APPLE reports also need to be reviewed.

Strategic plans evolved out of the business world. Students are at the core of a school's Strategic Plan, which is about determining and establishing goals. The Strategic Plan Framework is the Mission Statement (Values, Vision, Mission), and then the goals, strategies, and action steps. The questions to ask are: 1) What does the District want students to be as they graduate? 2) How can the resources be mobilized? If the District fails to accomplish its goals, it will lose its funding, high-quality staff, and students. Part of the plan is to make sure those components are in place, have a clear focus, and accomplish all of this by a specific point in time. It is a living breathing document that should be evaluated with periodic updates. When Dr. Pruitt interviewed for the position of interim superintendent, she told the Board of Education she felt the Strategic Plan had a lack of focus. Its language was vague. Where would it strengthen the organization? While common goals existed, specific outcomes were questionable. A process for assessment did not exist. She did not know who was to be held accountable for the educational excellence. In talking with DLT, teachers, and the community, she found another plan, and it had some of the answers to the questions. It had benchmarks, actions, and value statements, mission, and vision statements. Its focus included Social emotional or holistic, Transformational Teaching and Learning, Leadership, Finance, and Innovated instruction, but not the when.

The keys to success are:

- 1) Everyone has to be on the same page
- 2) Everyone has to be engaged (the entire community)

3) Everyone has to be collaborative with frequent engagement

Dr. Pruitt stated that absent from the Strategic Plan were SMART Goals: 1) Specific, 2) Measurable, 3) Appropriate, Achievable, Attainable, 4) Realistic, Results focused, and 5) Time-bound. If presently 25% of African-American students are participating in athletic and extracurricular activities, how should that be improved by the end of the school year? Mid-year? What is the measurement to be used? A goal has to be appropriate and achievable.

A happy medium of action steps needs to be developed, and the District has to be bound by time, i.e., increase the number of African-American students participating in activities and sports by 50% in five years. That would show incremental gains.

SMART goals will help improve teacher effectiveness and positive student outcomes. While the community may say the District lost sight of academic performance, that is not true. Rather it is not being communicated to the community. The District is doing much to move students forward, and that needs alignment with the outcomes and articulated. Otherwise, the community does not know what is being accomplished.

In looking at both Strategic Plans and the Board's goals, she found the following common language:

- Educational excellence
- Equity
- Race, income, gender, and learning differences are not predictors of student success
- Professional development for staff, faculty and administration
- Collaboration, communication, and transparency are critical
- Rigorous, challenging, and engaging educational programs.

This is not the message being sent to the community. If the District were talking about educational excellence for all, it would not be wrestling with race, income, gender, and learning. It is important for the administration to be at the forefront of this process.

Dr. Pruitt noted that because the Board felt the 2013-18 Strategic Plan had too many actions in it, it adopted the 2014-19 Plan, which became a document that sits on a desktop, on a shelf, or in a drawer. It is not being implemented; it is not working. When she met individually with DLT members on their goals, they were working on Board of Education goals, not the Strategic Plan goals.

Dr. Pruitt found common themes in the two plans:

OPRFHS will become

- A model for excellence in education
- A place where all students will achieve and reach their full potential

- A model of integrity, compassion, and equity

Dr. Pruitt proposed a Mission Statement composed from both of the Strategic Plans.

“OPRFHS embraces and provides a supporting learning environment that ensures equity for all student and that cultivates knowledge, character, and success.”

She has heard that OPRFHS is a school-within-a-school, but that it is not a great school for all students. The District must do what it says it will do, and that means hard work.

The overarching goals are great:

- Holistic Community Education
- Equity (What barriers will be removed? What does equity mean? Racial? Gender? Gender Preference Equity? Disability equity?)
- Transformational Teaching Learning (and Leadership) as every person has leadership potential to change the lives of the students served.
- Facilities and Finance (How will finances be allocated to keep the facilities safe?)

The framework exists. Dr. Pruitt asked the Board of Education to participate in SOAR goal activities. The first one would help them focus on the strengths of the District and how to move forward. What can the District build upon? What are the stakeholders asking for? What does the community care deeply about? How will the District know when it is succeeding?

The difference between SOAR Goals and SMART Goals is action-oriented activity and works under the 5 I Approach: Initiate, Inquire, Imagine, Innovate, and Inspire to Implement.

Dr. Pruitt posed the following questions. What are “we” most proud of in this organization? How is that reflected and communicated to the community? What makes OPRFHS unique? The CREST says “Those Things that are Best.” What can the District be best at? What has the District accomplished? How does providing technology 1:1, fit into the mission, vision, and value statements.

The responses from the Board of Education members to these questions included:

1. Students
2. Recognized successes
3. Commitment to equity
4. Diversity of Course Offerings (resources)
5. Highly engaged community
6. Faculty and Staff

7. Resources (financial and community energy and resources and desire to address issues)
8. When students leave OPRFHS, they will be ready for diverse world
9. Progressive in PD and try to be in cutting edge in education
10. innovative in teaching
11. Willing to improve and change
12. Well-educated community

Administrative responses are below:

1. Teachers
2. Engaged community
3. Strong financial position
4. Transparency
5. Strong academic programs, particularly in honors and AP
6. Strong existing academic and social-emotional supports for students
7. SPED world class and able to be here.
8. Curriculum prepares students, especially those who are college bound.
9. Faculty and staff
10. Students uniqueness
11. Reading program
12. Resources
13. Community of Resources

Responses from the public are below:

1. Strong Art Program
2. Higher and stronger AA leadership, aspiration surrounding the statement

The purpose of this exercise tells the administration what it can build upon in its aspirations and help to frame future work.

Next, the participants responded to the question: How does the District make sense of the opportunities, both internally and externally, as it relates to institutional trends. What are the top three opportunities on which to focus its efforts?

1. School climate makes it welcoming and accessible for all students, families, and community
2. Successful regarding resources: humane and tangible physical resources
3. Climate - career readiness for all students
4. Deepening commitment to every student so students know they are loved and can aspire.
5. Culture shift to embrace leadership at all levels
6. Commitment to implement systematic change (equity) and focus on the issues and have the necessary support
7. Improve articulation with feeder districts
8. Enhancing school capacity in athletics and arts
9. Cultural competency and inclusion by identifying and removing barriers
10. Discipline

11. Improving communication

Others commented as follows:

1. Interrogate the structure and superstructure of how things are done, look deeply at the structure and be clear and willing to talk about it (linked to systemic change)
2. Begin to think out of the box about research paradigms and begin to ask questions that have not been asked before vis a vie equity. Are we locked into a research universe?
3. For the Board of Education and the superintendent to reexamine the relationships of those two cultures. The last two superintendent relationships looked differently in public. How will those relationships be communicated?
4. Equity as related to race, gender, identity, ability, socio-economic as predictors of student outcomes.
5. Culture competency for all staff.
6. Strong academic programs for all levels to include rigor - college and career readiness
7. Better outcomes for students of color
8. Integration of technology into instruction
9. Curricular consistency without loss of autonomy or the diversity of course offerings.
10. Increasing rigor of college prep level
11. Make a welcoming environment to all students

The next question was to give the most compelling aspiration and what current Strategic Program would support that aspiration?

1. Doing as much as possible to move students to their highest level of potential which means increasing the size of AP and honors class, research track, experimenting with the tracking program and-and doing it with EOS and look at Evanston results.
2. Having productive and happy students. The SEL program.
3. Moving as many students as possible to their highest potential, academically, socially, and emotionally. More students would take AP classes and AP tests, interrogating the tracking system, and accommodating students work in the best way possible. In SEL range, EOS Program and a field trip to Evanston is in the planning stage, and pilots are in place for SEL, expand them.
4. Student achievement so that all students can do what they want to do when they leave, i.e. Leadership & Launch.
5. Support strengths of students, i.e., Leadership & Launch, SEL coach. Individuals in the building are already attempting to use restorative practices and diminishing a punitive environment. Increase culture competence with teachers and staff through the work of Jessica Stovall to enhance teacher collaboration about cultural competence.
6. Equity - CCB
7. Equity and inclusion for wellness and post-secondary readiness and the racial equity work with PEG, PD and learning strands and National Summit attendance.
8. Aspirational curriculum. Have a vision of how to excite students with real world possibilities, drawing on the integrated processes between technology,

humanism, and literature. How does one turn this building into a site of learning? Drive on technology, 21st-century concepts. An example would be: students in the building have the capacity to power the building with the alternative process as part of their curriculum. Coal is obsolete. Curriculums around turning this building into a power source that is self-generating and linking every student who comes into the building.

Others' comments included:

1. Continue building curriculum and equity by improving teacher craft, the curriculum structure and opportunities it offers and the beliefs about ability and learning, the current initiatives, the structures around SEL and help teachers create caring and welcoming classrooms.

One piece that Dr. Pruitt had not heard included things in which the District has seen success yet unknown because no benchmark of success was set. What measurement of the one aspiration or program mentioned would show success? The same process will be given to another group of people. What measure should be used to determine if the program or initiative is being successful or not?

Responses included:

1. GPA, qualitative reviews, student response surveys, the relationship about what we learn about social-emotional reaction stories and quantitative scores, GPA.
2. SEL, break down the larger data of the whole school and look at the students who are tardy. Hopefully, interventions are occurring with those students in particular, measuring their outcomes.
3. Leadership & Launch, look at the mentees, i.e., GPAs, discipline rates, freshman-on-track scores (report). For mentors, look at qualitative survey asking about leadership roles the following year, and senior year, and a post-secondary experience
4. Feedback from the leader of those programs
5. A sense of buy-in from multi levels and some outcome data on leadership and launch. Assessments for improving programs was desired in order to build on data collection work that identifies good results.
6. Individualized goal setting and dashboards versus aggregate programs, and a community dashboard progression.
7. Data on teacher assignments and whether teachers are equitably assigned across the system and whether the most experienced teacher are teaching at the AP and Honors Level.
8. SEL helps to improve the climate of the school with fewer discipline issues. But, the majority of students never get into disciplinary situations. About IEP, the tension between things that are quantifiable or using the qualitative instrument and professional judgment happens all of the time. The Board of Education has to look and understand what the professionals are doing/saying. Are instruments being created for that?

Others' comments include:

1. EOS to increase students of color in AP curriculum by 250. Survey was responded to by 80% of staff to get the patterns and themes to shift mindsets

to be growth mindsets. The principal will lead a team, and PD will be provided for teachers. Not all students will achieve a score of 4 or 5 on the tests. A score of 3 would still be a good score. This is a new environment. AP teachers teach towards a 5, and now they will have to shift that to get other students involved.

2. Wellness, emotional social, self-reported. Measures and surveys that look at how welcome the people feel in the building, etc. Survey data disaggregated by race could be provided through teachers going to Equity Strand
3. CCB supports that. No longer have disparities that are predictable by race, culture and climate, demographics of course levels, etc.

Dr. Pruitt noted this was a testament that the high school had a good plan. Some gaps exist regarding the measures and knowing when something has been attained, so an accountability piece is necessary. This conversation is the framework for further conversations as to what the pieces are already in place, how can they be built on, and what is complete.

The conversation about equity needs to continue. While there are more documents to read, the District has to develop an equity lens. Portland Public Schools' Racial Equity Lens' objective is:

By utilizing a racial equity lens, Portland Public Schools aims to (a) provide a common vocabulary and protocol for evaluating policies, programs, practices and decisions for racial equity and (b) produce policies, programs, practices and decisions which result in more equitable outcomes. Their procedure is: For any policy, program, practice or decision, consider the following five questions:

1. Who are the racial/ethnic groups affected by this policy, program, practice or decision? And what are the potential impacts on these groups?
2. Does this policy, program, practice or decision ignore or worsen existing disparities or produce other unintended consequences?
3. How have you intentionally involved stakeholders who are also members of the communities affected by this policy, program, practice or decision? Can you validate your assessments in (1) and (2)?
4. What are the barriers to more equitable outcomes? (e.g. mandated, political, emotional, financial, programmatic or managerial)
5. How will you (a) mitigate the negative impacts and (b) address the barriers identified above?

Dr. Pruitt asked what policies and procedures would the District put in place to insure students of EOS are placed and supported into AP and Honors courses. Bright Bytes is a system that will tie both academics and behavior together and signal whether the District is disciplining equitably and identify students and teachers. The District can then decide how to mitigate that information. Both she and Ms. Sullivan will embark

on listening tours in the community to hear the stories as to what people/organizations are or are not doing regarding equity.

First, the administration needs to be held accountable for its goals. Dr. Pruitt displayed an example of how goals would be tracked and reported to the Board of Education. It will be a cascade of goals: 1) Strategic Plan, 2) Board of Education goals, 3) DLT members and 4) DLT Teams. A tool was developed for having a high-level, monthly conversation with each DLT member. Under the goals is a list of tasks with timelines; quarterly, a summary (data points) of that will be produced for the Board of Education. She shared a sample of what that summary would look like. Individual DLT members meet with Dr. Pruitt monthly at which time they will provide the major projects and initiatives and what has and has not been accomplished. If barriers exist, she and the DLT member will address and mitigate them immediately.

Dr. Pruitt will contact the original committee who developed the Strategic Plan and bring an amended plan to the Board of Education, hopefully, in December, for the Board of Education approval.

Discussion ensued. Mr. Cofsky was a fan of SWAT goals, etc. and he believed it was important to have a reflective process on the goals. It is time to take action, a common focus is needed, and priorities need to be set. When past discussions occurred about SMART goals, it was result focused versus activity focused. The exercises in which they just participated in sharpened the focus. Both quantitative and qualitative data is needed as well as a commitment to making changes. The Board of Education is accountable to the public and the students. He thanked Dr. Pruitt for this process. The template will allow evaluation of a program, and if it is working, it should end. Ms. Dixon Spivy concurred that this process could bring clarity. Dr. Moore too felt this was a great start. The next steps will be for the BOE to determine how it will keep the conversation going and that the time the members spend in meetings reflective of this process. Dr. Moore felt that as the District was talking about equity, it is really talking about race because both students, faculty, and parents have said that it is. People have been made to feel marginalized because their experiences have been dismissed or disqualified. That is the hard work that keeps those things in mind as discussions occur about EOS and extending the number of students in AP classes. Her children are still talking about the same experiences of feeling unwelcome or afraid to fully engage in AP classes. The starting place could be talking with current students about their AP experiences and to those students who recommended not to take AP classes. Much can be learned from them. Racial competency must be increased. Current events are causing students to be disenfranchised. The fact that this is happening in the building and community that touts diversity is troubling. A racial equity lens is needed, and the District has to be courageous about what it is doing without feeling guilty. Dr. Pruitt added it was about being strategic, having specific actions and outcomes, and tying that work to

what the District is doing which then becomes a part of the culture of the building. Because so many things are being done, one cannot see the alignment. Dr. Moore stated that there is hesitancy in the community that change needs to occur and have viewed equity as a zero sum game argument that takes away from one to another and deterred what needs to be done for students and families.

Ms. Sheree Johnson was thrilled to see this process, as it was long in coming. Her background is software engineering, and she was happy about the tracing of the work via the tracking document. She noted that AP classes have lots of isolation. Her children had lots of support outside of the high school, and that gave them the fortitude to stay in the classes and excel in college. She stated that there were not enough specific programs for minority students. More purposeful programs need to target them. African-American and the Hispanic population

Mr. Duffy complemented the Board of Education and continued that the data of the focus groups cannot be lost. He called for a biennial of review of accountability of the Strategic Plan. He suggested reaching out to the community people to help facilitate the courageous conversations in the school. In Hinsdale, the roadblock was the C, so they adopted a weighted C. It helped those students who needed confidence. He encouraged the Board of Education to keep the process going and the data. He was happy that the EEEEC's racial impact statement was being considered. He felt this was a move in the right direction and EEEEC was there to support, facilitate and build it.

Dr. Pruitt thanked the Board of Education for being open to hearing, participating, and embracing change. She also thanked the community and DLT. Mr. Weissglass also thanked the DLT, Dr. Pruitt for her leadership and noted that this was a great start and he looked forward to passionately and aggressively continuing this conversation.

Adjournment

Mr. Weissglass moved to adjourn the Special Board Meeting at 10:40 a.m.; seconded by Ms. Cassell. A voice vote resulted in motion carried.

Jeff Weissglass
President

Sara Dixon Spivy
Secretary