Oak Park and River Forest High School
201 N. Scoville Avenue
Oak Park, IL 60302

Technology Committee
Monday, September 16, 2013
Board Room

A Technology Committee meeting was held on Monday, September 16, 2013 in the Board Room.   Dr. Lee opened the meeting at 7:45 p.m.   A roll call included the following members: Dr. Steven Gevinson, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, and Jeff Weissglass.   Also present were Dr. Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent; Michael Carioscio, Chief Information Officer; Amy Hill, Director of Assessment and Research; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors: Sheila Hardin, Faculty Senate Executive Committee Chair.

Student Reporting System Discussion
The administration began its evaluation of data warehousing products in December 2012 and issued an RFP in late February 2013. Nine vendors were vetted and five were selected to include in the RFP. Of the five only three responded. Of the three who responded, only one had the functionality desired. April 2013 was designated as the time to decide on a vendor.   However, the administration determined that it had not adequately surveyed the market. In addition, it wanted to make sure the newly elected members of the Board of Education were in agreement on making a significant investment in this type of technology as it would cost approximately $180,000-$200,000 for the implementation, training, year one of initial support and $40,000 maintenance thereafter. This purchase had been budgeted in the Education Fund General Instruction Expenditures. Thus, the administration continued its research and decided to discuss this with the Board in the fall.

Data warehouses allow for the integration and straightforward manipulation of data from multiple data sources for the purpose of making data-based decisions.   Data mart is another term for this type of system.   Connecting of the data sets is a critical factor.   Acquiring data warehouse tools would allow the District to provide effective academic/instructional information to the various stakeholder groups who require it for day-to-day operations and long-term decision making. Current data systems are isolated silos of data which can only be combined through labor-intensive processes which are unique for every data request. More time is being spent on the mechanics of creating the reports than in analyzing the data in order to provide decision-making information. Given the ever-increasing desire for actionable information in all parts of the organization, the administration feels an urgent need to improve capabilities by acquiring the tools to more easily convert data into information.   The administration would also like to expand the user base, specifically, teachers.   They, then, would have the ability to provide an analysis of their students.   At this point, Ms. Hardin, a TCT leader noted that she was unable to get data for her own team. She must go through the Division Head and then the data system.   The District is looking at the tool 5Forecast as it has the ability to provide a visual presentation, and to select and answer questions.   One member cautioned that it needed significant changes to make it user friendly.

Data warehouse technology is not new and several schools do use it.   In business it is called "big data" or "business intelligence."   It is visualization of data with pictures.   The District may find that it does not have the data or that it is not organized properly and time may be spent on that endeavor.   Once the data sets are mapped according to the kinds of analysis desired, the administration can produce more easily an analysis that would have gender, race, grade level, Special Education, etc. and draw a line of

pathways in the building by subject, test scores, etc.   This technology will allow a report to be written that will answer questions, such as if there are any warning signs of failure in academics or discipline, attendance, Gradebook, etc. Teachers are now responsible for keeping their own data.   When asked if this technology would allow the District to look at the 21 students who were not in the college-readiness number and yet still met ACT as was discussed at the Instruction Committee meeting, Ms. Hill responded that the District could get that information now, but the amount of time it would take to get a complete understanding of that would be prohibitive.

One tool that is being considered is being used by 5 or 6 districts in the area, one of which is Lyons Township which went through a lengthy process to select a tool that would serve its interests.   While Lyons continues to provide professional development to teachers to increase their use, at the school level it is being used widely.   Other districts, such as Memphis or Nashville schools, have built their own significant systems.   Most schools are doing sophisticated dashboards.   Evanston Township High School built a dashboard but it was uncertain if it had been updated since 2011.

Dr. Lee supported OPRFHS's investment in a system.   He believed the District would learn much about things outside of the classroom such as discipline, attendance, student involvement, etc., to which there is evidence that it matters in terms of a student's academic achievement. A labor intensive report that Dr. Carl Spight had done years ago was the correlation between the GPA and discipline.

When asked if this would allow pulling all of the data together, the response was a better sense of what was being asked was needed.   Ms. Hill did not believe that this technology would allow a student-by-student profile.

Mr. Weissglass understood the work involved as he has done some financial data analysis and building that with systems that were not integrated.   Big data is where the world is going so the District must determine how best to move forward.   He was interested in Dr. Lee's big picture of seeing trends and how they would affect policy decisions.   The ability for teachers and counselors to have customized data as to what is working will help OPRFHS educate its students over the long run.   He suggested working with vendors who are sensitive to that and the trajectory of people interfacing with students.

Discussion ensued about hiring a consultant versus buying an "off-the-shelf" product and waiting for a few years to see what else will be available. The question is what is the opportunity cost of waiting? The administration felt justified in bringing this consideration to the Board of Education but understands that it is a large expenditure.

All of the Technology Committee members supported moving this to the full Board of Education on September 26 for discussion.

Adjournment
Mr. Weissglass moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 p.m.; seconded by Dr. Gevinson. A voice vote resulted in motion carried.