

OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST HIGH SCHOOL
201 North Scoville Avenue
Oak Park, IL 60302

Culture, Climate and Behavior Committee
February 20, 2018

A Culture, Climate and Behavior Committee (CCB) meeting was held on February 20, 2018. Chair Cassell called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m. in the Board Room. Committee members present were: Jennifer Cassell, Greg Johnson, Dr. Jackie Moore, Aliyah Young, Sara Dixon Spivy, Andrea Riles, Wendy Daniels, Ralph Martire, Melanie McQueen, Nathaniel Rouse, Laura Hardwicke, Andrea Riles, Gina Harris, Naomi Leach, Ryan Moore, Jonathan Weintraub, Lee Williams, Dave Walksler and Lee Wade. Also present was Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board (attended telephonically).

Visitors: Lincoln Chandler, consultant.

Public Comments

None

Members of Students Advocating for Equity (SAFE) and members of this committee, Naomi Leach, Aliyah Young, and Ryan Moore, presented an argument for changing the current dress code. The questions they have asked of various voices in the building are:

- 1) Are you familiar with OPRF's current dress code?
- 2) How do you feel about the dress code?
- 3) How does it impact you on a daily basis?
- 4) Do you feel the dress code is enforced consistently and appropriately?
- 5) What suggestions do you have for alterations to the current dress code?
- 6) How do we conduct meaningful conversations about this and which groups of people should be involved?

A Dress Code Plan of Action was created where students introduced the Oregon NOW philosophy and examples from that dress code, a walk through the OPRF proposed dress code, and asked stakeholders their thoughts on the proposal, what could be added, what could be removed.

- 1/8/18 SAFE Students Speak to Staff
- 1/12/18 Mr. Rouse shares draft w/SAFE Leadership
- 1/19/18 Presentation to SAFE
 - *selection of groups to visit and discuss (Student Council, BLU, SPJ, Tau Gamma, Huskie Athletic Council, Motivational Mentorship,)
- 1/26/18 Students Select 4 Presenters and draft communication to each student group.
- 1/31/18 Mr. Rouse presents to Faculty Senate Exec Committee (FSEC)
- 2/1-2/18 Student Presentations and Feedback to Student Groups mentioned above.

The Oregon NOW Philosophy is about having a safe, comfortable learning environment and shifting the responsibility primarily to students and parents/guardians on choice of attire. The 4 basic principles are: certain body parts must be covered for ALL students, students must wear shirt, shoes, bottoms, students may wear hats, pajamas, ripped jeans), and they cannot wear clothes that depicted violence, drugs, and/or hate. OPRFHS goals would include equity and eliminating marginalization/oppression. Students would need to be informed and conversations would need to occur when questions arise. Examples of what is allowed and what is not allowed should be spelled out. Enforcement would include no body shaming, private conversations, and the use of proper language.

A draft of the proposed student dress code included the below philosophy:

“Similar to many districts that are rethinking dress codes based upon race and gender equity, the OPRF student dress code supports equitable educational access and is written in a manner that does not reinforce stereotypes. To ensure effective and equitable enforcement of this dress code, school staff shall enforce the dress code consistently and in a manner that does not reinforce or increase marginalization or oppression of any group based on race, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, cultural observance, household income or body type/size.”

The values are:

- All students should be able to dress comfortably for school and engage in the educational environment without fear of or actual unnecessary discipline or body shaming.
- All students and staff should understand that they are responsible for managing their own personal "distractions" without regulating individual students' clothing/self-expression.
- Student dress code enforcement should not result in unnecessary barriers to school attendance.
- School staff should be trained and able to use student/body-positive language to explain the code and to address code violations.
- Teachers should focus on teaching without the additional and often uncomfortable burden of dress code enforcement.
- Reasons for conflict and inconsistent and/or inequitable discipline should be minimized whenever possible.

This proposed student dress code is designed to accomplish several goals:

- Maintain a safe learning environment in classes where protective or supportive clothing is needed, such as chemistry/biology (eye or body protection), dance (bare feet, tights/ leotards), or PE (athletic attire/shoes).
- Allow students to wear clothing of their choice that is comfortable.
- Allow students to wear clothing that expresses their self-identified gender.
- Allow students to wear religious attire without fear of discipline or discrimination.
- Prevent students from wearing clothing or accessories with offensive images or language, including profanity, hate speech, and pornography.
- Prevent students from wearing clothing or accessories that denote, suggest, display or reference alcohol, drugs or related paraphernalia or other illegal conduct or activities.
- Prevent students from wearing clothing or accessories that will interfere with the operation of the school, disrupt the educational process, invade the rights of others, or create a reasonably foreseeable risk of such interference or invasion of rights.
- Prevent students from wearing clothing or accessories that reasonably can be construed as being or including content that is racist, lewd, vulgar or obscene, or that reasonably can be construed as containing fighting words, speech that incites others to imminent lawless action, defamatory speech, or threats to others.
- Ensure that all students are treated equitably regardless of race, sex, gender identity, Gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, cultural observance, household income or body type/size.

Students worked with the dress code policies of Evanston Township High School and Oregon Public Schools in developing the proposed dress code as follows. A copy of the Oregon NOW Model Student Dress Code/February 2016 was included in the packet.

Oak Park and River Forest High School expects that all students will dress in a way that is appropriate for the school day or for any school-sponsored event. Student dress choices should respect the District's intent to sustain a community that is inclusive of a diverse range of identities. The primary responsibility for a student's attire resides with the student and their parent(s) or guardian(s). The school district is responsible for seeing that student attire does not interfere with the health or safety of any student, that student attire does not contribute to a hostile or intimidating atmosphere for any student, and that dress code enforcement does not reinforce or increase marginalization or oppression of any group based on race, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, cultural observance, household income, or body type/size. Any restrictions to the way a student dresses must be necessary to support the overall educational goals of the school and must be explained within this dress code.

1. **Basic Principle:** Certain body parts must be covered for all students at all times. Clothes must be worn in a way such that genitals, buttocks, breasts, and nipples are fully covered with opaque fabric. However, cleavage should not have coverage requirements. All items listed in the "must wear" and "may wear" categories below must meet this basic principle.
2. **Students Must Wear***, while following the basic principle of Section 1 above:
 - A Shirt (with fabric in the front, back, and on the sides under the arms), AND
 - Pants/jeans or the equivalent (for example, a skirt, sweatpants, leggings, a dress or shorts), AND
 - Shoes.

**Courses that include attire as part of the curriculum (for example, professionalism, public speaking, and job readiness) may include assignment-specific dress, but should not focus on covering bodies in a particular way or promoting culturally-specific attire. Activity-specific shoes requirements are permitted (for example, athletic shoes for PE)*
3. **Students May Wear**, as long as these items do not violate Section 1 above:
 - Hats facing straight forward or straight backward. Hats must allow the face to be visible to staff, and not interfere with the line of sight of any student or staff.
 - Religious headwear
 - Hoodie sweatshirts (wearing the hood overhead is allowed, but the face and ears must be visible to school staff).
 - Fitted pants, including opaque leggings, yoga pants and "skinny jeans"
 - Pajamas
 - Ripped jeans, as long as underwear and buttocks are not exposed.
 - Tank tops, including spaghetti straps; halter tops
 - Athletic attire
 - Visible waistbands on undergarments or visible straps on undergarments worn under other clothing (as long as this is done in a way that does not violate Section 1 above).
4. **Students Cannot Wear:**
 - Violent language or images.
 - Images or language depicting drugs or alcohol (or any illegal item or activity).
 - Hate speech, profanity, pornography.
 - Images or language that creates a hostile or intimidating environment based on any protected class or consistently marginalized groups.
 - Any clothing that reveals visible undergarments (visible waistbands and visible straps are allowed)
 - Swimsuits (except as required in class or athletic practice).
 - Accessories that could be considered dangerous or could be used as a weapon.
 - Any item that obscures the face or ears (except as a religious observance).

Students were vocal about the consistency of the enforcement of the Dress Code and thus the following was proposed.

5. Dress Code Enforcement

To ensure effective and equitable enforcement of this dress code, school staff shall enforce the dress code consistently using the requirements below. School administration and staff shall not have discretion to vary the requirements in ways that lead to discriminatory enforcement.

- Students will only be removed from spaces, hallways, or classrooms as a result of a dress Code violation as outlined in Sections 1 and 4 above. Students in violation of Section 1 and/or 4 will be provided three (3) options to be dressed more to code during the school day:
 - Students will be asked to put on their own alternative clothing, if already available at school, to be dressed more to code for the remainder of the day.
 - Students will be provided with temporary school clothing to be dressed more to code for the remainder of the day.
 - If necessary, students' parents may be called during the school day to bring
 - Alternative clothing for the student to wear for the remainder of the day.
- No student should be affected by dress code enforcement because of racial identity, sex assigned at birth, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, cultural or religious identity, household income, body size/type, or body maturity.
- School staff shall not enforce the school's dress code more strictly against transgender and gender nonconforming students than other students.
- Students should not be shamed or required to display their body in front of others (students, parents, or staff) in school. "Shaming" includes, but is not limited to:
 - Kneeling or bending over to check attire fit;
 - Measuring straps or skirt length;
 - Asking students to account for their attire in the classroom or in hallways in front of others;
 - Calling out students in spaces, in hallways, or in classrooms about perceived dress code violations in front of others; in particular, directing students to correct sagged pants that do not expose the entire undergarment, or confronting students about visible bra straps, since visible waistbands and straps on undergarments are permitted; and,
 - Accusing students of "distracting" other students with their clothing.

These dress code guidelines shall apply to regular school days and summer school days, as well as any school-related events and activities.

Students who feel they have been subject to discriminatory enforcement of the dress code should contact the Student Advocate or Student Intervention Directors.

Discussion ensued. Students and the administration understood that the policy would evolve. Specific language will be crafted and training given to staff on how to appropriately address students about their dress. Students followed the timeline above to get feedback from other student groups. This recommendation will be considered for the Student Handbook. Some of the Committee members acknowledged that staff would need training on how to deliver specific language and deliver consequences equitably. Discrepancies in the dress code policy have been removed.

Mr. Rouse stated that Faculty Senate received this pilot about how to approach students positively. One member stated that a process for sharing this information should be in place for both students and staff.

Mr. Johnson thanked the students for their thinking and research.

Update on Culture, Climate and Behavior Recommendations from Last Year

The recommendations and the follow-up on those recommendations are noted below.

1. Beginning in early Fall 2017, conduct an annual review of the culture and climate at the high school (e.g. a survey to all students, faculty, staff, and families followed by targeted focus groups) to gather quantitative and qualitative data by which to assess progress in improving the school's culture and climate to create an environment in which all students feel welcome.

Some of the actions the District is presently doing include having a parent outreach coordinator, involvement with The Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN), Pacific Educational Group (PEG), etc. Participants at the NAAPID dinner, after hearing all of the efforts implemented at the school, were asked if they had heard anything new. Two-thirds of them had heard something new and that indicates that better communication is necessary.

2. Conduct inventory/audit of all initiatives created to improve equity through culture and climate implemented from 2000 to present.

A list of support programs was provided which included the targeted students, the number of students impacted and the type of program. The reason for the delay in getting this information to CCB was that the Strategic Plan Equity Goal began in November 2017. Part of this list is being gathered from institutional memory, as none of the administrators were working at OPRFHS from 2000.

Strategic initiatives evolve either organically or reactionary or because resources shifted. Committee members felt that more assessment of the programs was necessary, the work of Pacific Education Group was one specifically noted. An example of change by the administration is the Discipline Report which in the future will focus on the work of the PSS Teams that, hopefully, will be more useful for the administration and the Board of Education. While the Committee wanted to integrate initiatives that would be to the benefit of the students, all things must come through the Strategic Plan.

3. A professional audit of restorative justice practices within the school, and recommendation for improvement in quality and/or quantity of restorative justice practices. OPRFHS has engaged with OPRFHS has contracted with Hanover Research who has done a literature review and the administration is looking at this information to determine what the District is not doing and then add it if possible. More time is needed to review this document and get the students' voice. The review will be completed by May. The administration will look at other school's involvement with restorative justice as well, i.e. Evanston.

Ms. Harris will share with the Committee a document titled "School-Wide Restorative Practices: Step-by-Step" used by the Denver Schools. It will be posted to the CCB's webpage.

One member reflected on the efficacy of programs because of design. Previously 9 students were enrolled in a class titled "Learning Support" that was staffed with tutors from content areas. The tutors kept in close contact with the families of these students. None of the students who participated received a grade of "D" or "F". It was very successful. The next year, 20 students were enrolled and in reality, the class became a voluntary drop-in class or study hall having the same name. It was ineffectual. Why did it change?

Another member wanted teacher feedback on the 8 to 9 program because the thought was that 400 students could benefit from it.

The administration noted that a framework for the evaluation of programs was necessary to determine if the programs should continue and whether they were or were not being effective.

Subgroup Work

The subgroups then broke out into their various rooms.

Parking Lot

Ms. Cassell reminded the committee that the next meeting was March 1, 2018, and to send the small group minutes to Ms. Kalmerton.

Ms. Daniels announced that CCEE was hosting an equity café where many organizations in Oak Park and River Forest will talk about what they are accomplishing on March 21, 2018, at OPRFHS in the Staff Café at 6:30 p.m.

Review of Parking Lot

Committee members were asked to provide their notes to Ms. Kalmerton for inclusion in the minutes.

Adjournment

At 7:57 p.m., Ms. Hildner moved to adjourn; seconded by Ms. Dixon Spivy. A voice vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Submitted by
Gail Kalmerton