

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

Committee of the Whole Meeting
March 10, 2020

A Committee of the Whole Committee meeting was held on March 10, 2020. President Moore called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m. in the Board Room. Committee members present were Matt Baron, Tom Cofsky, Gina Harris, Craig Iseli, Ralph Martire Dr. Jackie Moore, and Sara Dixon Spivy. Also present were Dr. Pruitt-Adams, Superintendent; Greg Johnson, Associate Superintendent; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board of Education and FOIA Officer.

Also present were: Michael Carioscio, Chief Operations Officer; Karin Sullivan, Executive Director of Communications; Christopher Thieme, Senior Director of Technology; Dr. LeVar Ammons, Executive Director of Racial Equity and Student Success; Dr. Gwendolyn Walker Qualls, Senior Director of Pupil Support Services; and Cyndi Sidor, Chief Finance Officer.

Visitors

OPRFHS faculty and staff Dr. Kennedy Dixon; Lee Williams, John Lesniak, Marilyn Thivel, Fred Preuss and Amit Martin; Fred Arkin, community member.

Public Comments

Approval of Minutes of February 18, 2020

Dr. Moore moved to approve the minutes of the February 18, 2020 meeting, as presented; seconded by Ms. Harris. A voice vote resulted in motion carried.

Presentation of IDEA Grant and DRS Grant Programs

Dr. Walker-Qualls noted that the Special Education Department of Oak Park & River Forest High School receives funding from the IDEA and DRS grants to enhance educational programming. The individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) flow-through grants are supplemental funds to assist Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in providing IEP services to students ages 3-21. The funds can be used for staffing costs, professional development, supplies/materials/equipment, transportation, proportionate share services, related service cost, and administrative costs. All districts must verify that they meet IDEA excess cost and IDEA MOE requirements, i.e., the IDEA funds are not supplanting any state/local funds. Illinois LEAs meet IDEA excess cost and MOE requirements to be eligible. Amounts are based on a formula. Each LEA's allocation per the formula is posted at www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/IDEA-flow-allocations-16.pdf. The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) STEP and Transition Specialist grants prepare students with disabilities for transition to employment and community participation. The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) is a vocational rehabilitation agency that falls under the umbrella of the Illinois Department of Human Services. The purpose of DRS is to help individuals with disabilities obtain and maintain competitive employment. The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) works with people with a wide range of disabilities. Some examples include learning disability, mental illness, intellectual disability, autism, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, brain injury, epilepsy, hearing loss, vision loss, kidney disease, paraplegia, quadriplegia, and substance abuse, among many others. Most students who receive special education services qualify for DRS services.

The Special Education Department's mission is to educate, lead, support, and encourage all students to reach their full social and emotional potential through a rigorous academic and social emotional curriculum that prepares them for a productive future. The vision for the department to enhance and support academic, social, emotional, and transitional needs of all students while cultivating equitable- and excellence-based teaching and learning.

The Individual Education Program (IEP) Team, which includes the student and parent/guardian, uses data to help determine the level and types of supports and services a student might need. It considers the strengths, opportunities for growth, and post-secondary goals when determining the appropriate service needs of each student. Special Education is a service, not a placement. Students receive structure/support who have learning or emotional challenges, which interfere with their academic progress, successful integration into the general education academic environment, focus on improving their life and study/organizational skills, and encourage the use of strengths to overcome challenges.

The following programs were presented:

Learning Development Program services students with specific learning disabilities and other health impairments. The classes are selected based on the students' present levels in their academics from assessment/evaluation data, teacher recommendations, and the IEP. Co-taught and instructional classes exist across all content areas. The academic strategies classes focus on executive functioning support and career guidance. Individualized accommodations provide support or access content based on the students' needs.

The Emotional Development Program has the following supports: 1) Success Through Alternative Resources (STAR) Program. This program is designed to support students that struggle with school refusal. 2) Social Emotional Development Program (SED)- A program designed to promote social emotional functioning in the school setting; 3) Re-inventing Students' Education (RISE) Program- The program is designed to provide support and structure for adolescents who have social or emotional challenges, which interfere with their academic progress.

Transition Education with Access to Mainstream

- ▶ High school aged students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in a self-contained special education setting with access to the general education program based on individual student needs.
- ▶ TEAM students may have multiple, severe, moderate, or mild intellectual or developmental disabilities, such as Down Syndrome, Autism, and Cerebral Palsy, that require intensive academic and functional supports.
- ▶ TEAM classes focus on functional academics, life skills, pre-vocational skills, and daily living activities.

The Community Integrated Transition Education (CITE) is a transition program offered through the Special Education Department at Oak Park and River Forest High School. The Community-based Transition Option (CBTO) that provides Community Based Instruction (CBI) for special education students from age 18 to 21. CITE is housed at the RFCC and OPRF, OFF CAMPUS Programming. It is the most restrictive placement for students on the continuum.

Some students require a private day or residential school, which is the least restrictive environment. If the IEP team makes the determination that the student's needs would be best met at a school outside of OPRF, an appropriate placement for the student will be found. All schools used are approved by the Illinois State Board of Education. All disability categories can be served in a day school or residential school placement. Instructional coaches do a piece of SEL in the general education classes and a committee is working on SEL.

The list of special education full-time faculty for the 2019-20 school year included 2 Administrators, 1 Records Manager, 37 Special Education Teachers, 3 Secretaries, 4 Program Chairs, 48 Paraprofessionals, 3 School Psychologists, 4 School Social Workers, 2 Speech Pathologists. The part-time contractual staff included 1 Behavior Interventionist, 1 Clinical Psychologist, 1 Assistive Technology Specialist, 1 School Social Worker, 1 DRS Transition Specialist, 1 Occupational Therapist, 1 DRS Employment Specialist, 1 Physical Therapist, 2 Administrative Assistants, 1 Music Therapist (1 for testing accommodations) and 1 Speech Therapist 1 Nurse. The related services available included Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Music Therapy, Social Work Counseling, Behavior Therapy, Psychological Services, Paraprofessional Support, Transition Services, Assistive Technology, Health Care Services, Transportation, and Vision and Hearing Itinerant Services. Music therapy was started in the TEAM program and then added to both CITE and SED programming. Both social work counseling and behavior therapy were resumed with funding from the IDEA grant.

DRS

Mr. Williams was in his first year as the transition specialist. Students are eligible to receive DRS services if they have documented physical, cognitive, and/or mental impairments that makes it difficult to obtain and maintain a job and have an open DRS file (STEP Services). They are eligible for vocational guidance and career counseling/exploration, vocational assessments, interviewing skills, resume development, job development and placement, information and referrals to other resources, consultation with student's IEP team or 504 case manager in the transition planning process, and technical assistance to employers.

This same support is offered to those students with open DRS files in high school after they graduate. They receive post-secondary training assistance determined on an individual basis based on set criteria. Students in any special education program or have a 504 plan can apply for services. For students who do not have files open while in high school, a referral can be made during their last semester of high school to the local Westchester office for post-secondary services.

Mr. Williams helped students find employment in the community. DRS requires 19 outcomes per year and the IRS provides funds to OPRFHS based on the outcomes that are reached. The outcomes require that 19 students or more were employed for 60 days and 240 hours.

As of March, he has 14 outcomes. Employment and independent living is a big concern for students and parents. He helps students prepare for adult services. For students in the 9-12 grades, he sends a file to DRS and options as to what services the state offers based on their disability. One example of OPRFHS reaching out to students is the job fair.

Dr. Dixon helped to write this grant. Several years ago, an audit was conducted and areas on which to focus were identified within the department. The majority of the grant relates to transition and enhancing the SED items. The allocations have been increasing and they go directly to support SPED students.

DRS Step Grant - uniforms for CITE students, etc. DRS monitors and helps with what high schools are doing and it considers OPRFHS to the highest performing district in the western suburbs.

A chart showed that on campus enrollment has increased each year. Fourteen years ago, special education enrollment was less than 500 with 80 students registered for DRS services. That number will rise to over 150 next year. More students are being diagnosed with SED versus specific learning disabilities.

In response to a special education review, the staff redefined programs and services offered by OPRFHS to ensure that there is an extensive continuum of services that support students with diverse needs, enhanced and expanded the program design and components for students with emotional/behavioral needs, and ensured that the continuum of services reflected a comprehensive, non-bias and effective approach to meeting student needs. It advanced a more comprehensive transition process that includes intensified efforts in customized employment opportunities, assessment measures of work performance and stronger alignment and self-advocacy for students that reflect expanded efforts and evaluation of process that promotes greater success in achieving post-secondary outcomes. The major findings from the audit were: 1) The current special education programs are compliant with federal and state mandates to meet the IDEA and DRS grant justification for funding; 2) Development of a curriculum that fosters the integration of assessments tools administered by the Transition Specialist and Employment Specialist throughout the school day in lieu of isolated testing stations that operate in silos away from the delivery of classroom instruction. 3) Development of Career Callers an initiative that focuses on opportunities to bring in professionals in the trade industry to offer information for students desiring to pursue a vocational career. 4) Development of employability workshops to help students understand the critical skills needed to secure and sustain employment by providing students with informative feedback. Researched and adopted Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Curriculum to address the mental health needs of students. 5) Incorporated Music Therapy into curriculum 6)

Development of an innovative approach to provide social work services for students placed outside of the Social Emotional Program but still in need of ongoing social work support services.

The recommendations included:

- 1) Improve our utilization of District, ISBE, and DRS aggregated data
- 2) Expand professional development with an outcome-based measure to generalize staff skills and focus on greater alignment between data and interventions.
- 3) Improve existing relationships with DRS staff
- 4) Develop and maintain relationships with local businesses
- 5) Continue to increase DRS outcomes.

The goal of this evaluation was to understand the intricacies of state and federal funding and remain in compliance. In addition, OPRFHS wanted to provide guidance for further improvement of the services given to the students. The following evaluation questions to achieve these goals were identified:

1. What changes were made from 2016 to 2019?
2. What is the status of the IDEA grant/DRS grants at OPRF?
3. What are areas for growth that can be identified?

To find answers to these questions, the following data was gathered.

1. Overall student enrollment data compared to previous years
2. Overall grant appropriations
3. Changes made to the Special Education program
4. Student enrollment disaggregated by race and specific program recommendations

Regarding DRS enrollment, a question was asked as to why students from neighboring public and private schools were transferring to OPRFHS. The response was that students now have needs that are more emotional. Many of the public/private schools do not have emotional supports in place and private schools have the choice of saying they cannot meet the SEL needs.

The administration noted that the inclusion specialist was doing a great job and had made gains in providing individualized support in Special Education classes, per the Strategic Plan. This person models various components of a teacher's class and gives the teachers paperwork, contacts parents, works with paraprofessionals on strategies on how to work with the students to understand the components of the IEP. This person reaches out directly to the teachers, as they are the case managers.

Dr. Walker-Qualls noted that she could obtain the origin of the trending data so that the Board may understand the financial aspect, as these costs are significant. One member acknowledged an increase in social emotional needs of students with IEP and 504 plans, but noted that they were not the entire spectrum of students with needs. Dr. Walker-Qualls had tried to hire an SEL person a couple of years ago. At present, there are not enough staff members to address all of those needs. As a result, students are placed into special education. Restorative Justice is a plus and the District is determining more multi-tiered supports. The Special Education staff is seeing significant SEL concerns, especially in the junior year. Dr. Pruitt-Adams hoped that the NOVA grant would build a system for systemic support. Often there is no diagnosis until the junior year. There is a growing population with severe mental health issues. One member asked for trends in similar districts as well as those in Districts 90 and 97 and how those trends are moving into OPRFHS. Dr. Walker Qualls noted that a collaborative wellness group meets monthly with the feeder districts, the Village of Oak Park Mental Health and it is asking OPRFHS for its help. Latonia Jackson, Kris Johnson, and Ginger Colamussi presented a parent university night program on mental health. A suggestion was made to have a parent meeting once a quarter. Does the District have what it needs to meet the challenges?

Mr. Baron reflected that about three years ago, one of the Tradition of Excellence recipients was a former school refusal student. He suggested that more nominees are drawn from the pool in the room so

that more students could relate. He also noted that the District receives reimbursement for some of these expenses from the federal and state governments, and he asked for the net cost to the District. He noted that several employers in the community would like to honor these students. It was noted that Special Education does so in May and puts stickers in store windows.

Presentation of FTE Staffing Request/Status for the 2020-21 School Year

Each year in March, the Administration provides the Board of Education with staffing recommendations for the next school year, expressed as full-time equivalency, or FTE. As a reminder, 1.0 FTE represents one full-time position; for a classroom position this is a teacher teaching five sections. This memorandum represents the recommendations of the Executive Cabinet based upon analysis of the student enrollment projections and course selections as well a thorough review of the proposals for new positions submitted by the Executive Cabinet. The staffing recommendations are grouped into three categories based on the role the positions in each category play in providing services to our students: 1) Instructional (classroom) positions 2) Instructional support (non-classroom) positions and 3) Non-instructional support positions.

In making this determination, a discussion revolved around a natural cycle for electives. Those electives that were unable to run next year, then they will run the following year. Additional FTE were provided in a few priority areas in the Strategic Plan and student supports in the Special Education Department. The number of certified FTE remains the same as the Board of Education approved last year at 221.1 FTE. At this point the administration believed that enrollment projections will continue relatively flat for the next two years.

One member asked how this person would work with the data person on the analysis of data. The administration responded that the organizational reporting structure is here. This position with support the work of the dashboard, work with Kristen McKee, and collaborate with the ET department. The administration reallocated the 1.0 FTE from the non-affiliated position of the facility engineer that was eliminated in January 2020 to the position of associate data analyst.

Presentation of Educational Technology Vendor for Firewall Licensing

It was the consensus of the Committee of the Whole members to recommend to the Board of Education that it approve the Educational Technology Vendor for Firewall Licensing contract at its regular March meeting. Mr. Thieme will follow up on warranties available on both hardware and software, per Mr. Martire's inquiry. The Board of Education must approve this contract, as it is an ERate component.

Presentation of Educational Technology Vendor for Network Hardware and Licensing Purchases

It was the consensus of the Committee of the Whole members to recommend to the Board of Education that it approve the Educational Technology Vendor for Network Hardware and Licensing Purchase contract at its regular March meeting.

Presentation of Educational Technology Vendor for Network Hardware Installation

It was the consensus of the Committee of the Whole members to recommend to the board of Education that it approve the Educational Technology Vendor for Network Hardware Installation contract at its regular March meeting.

Presentation of Stipend Review Committee Recommendations

It was the consensus of the majority of the Committee of the Whole members to approve the recommendations to approve three new clubs (an increase of \$5,086) and to provide a stipend level change for a current group of sponsors (an increase of \$2,293). The net increase to this budget would be \$4,086 for the 2020-21 school year as the administration was also recommending the removal of three current stipends at a deduction of \$3,293.

Ms. Johnson reported on the reasons for the recommended stipend level changes. Criteria for the level of stipends is student participation data, how often a club meets, how much time is spent with the students or at events, showcases or programs.

A request was made to obtain data as to how many of these needs are being met by faculty, others in the building or external personnel. Does the District have the resources to fill these needs? Next year the report will contain each club's demographic information including race and gender as well as who is being attracted to new clubs.

Ms. Johnson evaluates the sponsors of clubs yearly. If they are doing a good job, they do not have to reapply for the position for the following year. Student feedback is considered. Mr. Stelzer, the Athletic Director, evaluates the coaches every year as well.

Policies for First Reading

Policy 2105, Ethics and Gift Ban

It was the consensus of the Committee of the Whole members to recommend to the Board of Education to approve Policy 2105, Ethics and Gift Ban, for first reading at its regular March meeting.

Future Agenda Items

- 1) Embedding SED into general education to enhance and reduce or identify cases.
- 2) Also, connect the request that was part of the presentation that talked about the need for more for data analysis as that is the connection that PSS Teams.
- 3) A request was made to obtain data as to how many of these needs are being met by faculty, others in the building or are external

Adjournment

At 8:14 p.m., Dr. Moore moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Mr. Martire. A voice vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Submitted by:
Gail Kalmerton, Clerk of the Board