

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

Culture, Climate and Behavior Committee (CCB)
August 9, 2016

A Culture, Climate, and Behavior Committee meeting was held on August 9, 2016. Chair Dixon Spivy called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. in the Board Room. Committee members present were: Jennifer Cassell, Lincoln Chandler, Anthony Clark, Wendy Daniels, Sheila Hardin, Dr. Joylynn Pruitt, Steven Jackson, Nathaniel L. Rouse, Cormac Warden, Kayla York, Christine Saxman, and Sara Dixon Spivy. Absent were Mary Blankemeier, Anthony Brooks, Anthony Clark, Latonia Jackson, Melanie McQueen, Ralph Martire, Lindsay Moore-Fields, Jonathan Weintraub, Val Yarrington, and Lee Williams.

Visitors: Phil Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Brenda Horton, Director of Human Resources, Amy Dickerson of Franczek Radelet, and Dr. Carl Spight, community member

Welcome

Dr. Pruitt, as the new superintendent, Christine Saxman, as a facilitator, and Brenda Horton, OPRFHS's new Director of Human Resources, were welcomed.

Introductions

All of the members present re-introduced themselves and reported on their relationships with the high school.

Framing Our Work

Dr. Chandler reflected on an overview and recap of the work of the CCB. Its purpose was to review and make recommendations on the District's equity policies and practices, particularly the Code of Conduct. The early meetings built a base understanding of OPRFHS's current practices (Code of Conduct, discipline process, and supporting data). The scope of focus was the prevention, intervention, and response to violations, with a special consideration for managing tardies and communicating the changes to the Code of Conduct due to Senate Bill 100.

The CCB had agreed upon the following norms: It will:

1. Work together as a community that values building consensus.
2. Be fully "present" at our meeting by being prepared and being attentive.
3. Share examples which do not include references to specific individuals or specific situations.
4. Invite and welcome the contributions of every member and listen to each other.
5. Operate in a collegial and open atmosphere.
6. Be guided by the Oak Park and River Forest High School mission statement which enhances success for all students.
7. Assume positive intentions from every member and every presenter
8. Listen to understand, not only reply

The Committee reviewed member comments from the last meeting as follows:

What did you learn?

- Senate Bill 100 (goes into effect September 2016)
- Removal of zero tolerance offenses

What surprised you?

- Vagueness of the Bill
- Possibility of suspension appeals

What do you want to know more about?

- Concrete and documented intervention approaches to employ
- Strategies for communicating the impact of SB100

The passage of Senate Bill 100 resulted in a revision of the Code of Conduct for the new 2016-17 academic year. As Mr. Rouse and the Student Interventionists Directors (SIDs) review Senate Bill 100, they were surprised to see that the key element was that schools cannot give the impression of zero tolerance and thus asked Ms. Dickerson for help. Given these changes, the Committee will maintain the goal of identifying opportunities to promote positive and equitable policies and practices at OPRFHS. The matrix had been removed as it could be interpreted as zero tolerance which goes against the spirit of the law. While Senate Bill 100 is somewhat vague and unclear about its implementation, before a student can be suspended, schools must provide concrete proof of interventions/tactics that had taken place that might have helped the student.

Ms. Dickerson noted that the revised Code of Conduct was generally the same as before just without the matrix and more wording. The point of the law is to make systems equitable, level the playing field, and keep students in school. Schools can still assign an ISS or OSS, once a review of the practices the school has put in place has been conducted and followed. Determinations need to be different for the discipline issues.

The first page is similar to the former Code of Conduct and gives guidance to students and parents as to how the Board views certain behavior and what to expect if certain behavior is exhibited. Level I could be a verbal offense. If a suspension is being recommended for a higher level offense, all factors needed to be considered, i.e., what was the cause of the infraction, what interventions had been attempted, etc., before recommending suspension. Previously the matrix was used as a guide and decisions were made about individual circumstances and all of those decisions will continue, but the Code of Conduct now reflects the requirements of Senate Bill 100.

Dr. Gevinson was confused by the language in the beginning of the Code of Conduct, i.e., gross disobedience or misconduct in school discipline, as an infraction is also named gross disobedience. Ms. Dickerson explained that whether it is the first offense or the third offense of harassment, the consequence may still be a 1-day Out-of-School Suspension (OSS). If the conduct continues, the SID would look through the factors and determine the same outcome after going through the process of expressing the factors in writing, i.e., what interventions had been attempted, etc. This exercise and not having a matrix may allow the SID to minimize the days of an ISS or OSS. Perhaps, some interventions had not tried.

Committee members requested a copy of Board Policy 7:190, Student Behavior, as it was referenced in the Code of Conduct. SIDs always had the directive to give a lower consequence if they felt the student's individual situation was deserving. Students with IEPs have many individual supports. A question was asked about how the teams would maintain consistency, as this Code of Conduct was more subjective rather than objective. This system seemed more subjective with different consequences being given depending upon whether the student was liked or not liked. Mr. Rouse responded that SIDs work from the feedback of students and teachers. Whether or not a SID likes a student, the SID still needs to be consistent and have an obligation of due process, i.e., calling the home, talking with the teachers and staff as to the consequences. The other system was not equitable; this process is still unclear. The school is complying with the law and, as written, it is a balance that it is more subjective, but the charge is to understand how to be objective, and more transparent about the process. This is a subject that is being looked nationally. The United States Department of Education has looked at discipline and school districts.

The law requires school officials to provide appropriate support services if a 5- or 10-day OSS is assigned. OPRFHS sends students to MENTA, an alternative school system in Oak Park for District 200 students only, and its curriculum mirrors that of OPRFHS. When a student receives a suspension, services are provided. Previously tutoring was provided at the library, but student attendance was not assured. As a result of students attending MENTA, fewer of the students are experiencing recidivism. In addition, internally, students with social emotional problems have been recommended by the PSS Teams and SIDs to see if the students are more successful. Representatives of MENTA may present to the CCB this fall. OPRFHS has already gone beyond the expectations of the law.

Discussion ensued about the District's Emotional Adjustment Classroom (EAC) Program and how it was measured. At the transitional staffing between the eighth and ninth grades, students with IEPs are placed in programs at the high school that mirror the program in which they are currently enrolled. If a student comes from a self-contained environment, then districts are required to provide a self-contained environment. District 200 professionals and the parents determine how to mirror the program so that the students' behaviors can change. The programs are to support students as the District tries to wean them off them. Mr. Jackson challenged the success of the program as he knew of two people who were killed and five who were in prison and had graduated from that program. He asked what program was being mirrored that limited the LRE.

Discussion ensued about the current purpose of the CCB, as the purpose of the previous PTAC, now CCB, was asked to revise the Code of Conduct. Dr. Gevinson thought the work of this committee was to review the Code of Conduct and explore restorative justice. Ms. Spivy concurred that SB 100 almost negated the need for the CCB, as the statute proscribed a Code of Conduct. Mr. Rouse noted that this committee can continue to monitor and make adjustments to the Code of Conduct and then go deeper into climate and behavior. Senate Bill 100 was an unknown in May; this committee can be its checks and balances. Many schools do not have programs such as MENTA to send their students.

Ms. Hardin suggested obtaining codes of conduct from other school districts during the first semester. She reported that she had attended a conference last week and none of those schools

were aware of SB 100. Mr. Rouse reported that 14 schools in the West Suburban Conference will be sharing their codes of conduct with each other.

Ms. Hildner was concerned about addressing plagiarism and a dress code. Mr. Rouse stated that if the committee wanted to address a dress code, it could in its recommendations to the Board of Education in March. The Student Handbook contains in its glossary a definition of terms, but it did not speak to how they were managed or the expectations. Ms. Spivy stated that at the next meeting, the Committee will generate ideas in the direction of Code of Conduct and then shared with faculty and staff. Dr. Pruitt stated that communication must move quickly as the District does not have the opportunity to get input from everyone who is impacted. Suggestions for communicating to parents, teachers, and students quickly included 1) the parent meeting at the Cheney meeting on August 24, 2) student pickup day, 3) teachers communicating with students about Senate Bill 100 based on bulleted comments provided to them, 4) Open House in the Little Theatre, 5) training student council members, 6) including it in the skits being done for freshmen, 7) press releases, 8) snail mail, and 9) Staff Development Day on September 9.

Scheduling

Ms. Kalmerton will send out a Doodle asking members to check their calendars for various meeting dates this fall. Dr. Gevinson noted he cannot attend Tuesday meetings. People with day jobs are not able to meet after school. Dr. Chandler stated that the committee will need to convene from the intervention standpoint regarding what things can be added to enhance the ability of the Code of Conduct.

Ms. Hildner noted that when the tardy policy was eliminated years ago, and teachers were left to determine the consequences and the consequences differed. This Code may leave the District open to variations from classroom to classroom as well. While it may not be a subject of fear, at least it will be a subject for confusion. Ms. Spivy welcomed that feedback from teachers and if it is an issue, the Committee can look at how to move forward.

Reflections

As in past meetings, the committee was asked to write down what they had learned, what had surprised them, and what else did they want to know more about?

Next Steps

At the August 23 meeting, the agenda will include the EAC, the creation of safe spaces, what things, ideas, policies and practices does the District have, i.e., bolstering, improving, monitoring and being more explicit about process, The District no longer has a matrix and it must be more specific about asking what it is doing to be more equitable.

Ms. Hardin's initial reaction to the matrix elimination was surprise, dismay, and worry. Having an initial reaction of surprise is OK. Teachers have been taught to make referrals and they may feel anxiety about not having the matrix. Her responsibility as a member of this committee is that this is a positive outcome, as the District is working toward equity, not a flat consequence, and that there are still consequences. She planned to start from a place of yes, not allowing people to focus on what is missing. What is missing is looking at more codes of conduct to get a perspective. Mr. Worden felt this looked more and fair and had a larger range of consequences. Dr. Gevinson felt once it was understood, it would be fine. Ms. Hardin stated that the harder

conversations were about the interventions and what teachers would be doing before the referral stage. Ms. Saxman stated that discussion would occur at the next meeting.

Public Comments

Dr. Carl Spight was the chair of a 1993-94 member of the discipline study team, a statistics team. He hoped there is something to do for this assembled committee and school resources. He was fearful that its energies are not usurped by what is mandated law. Students do not think about the Code of Conduct or navigating equity, support, opportunities to learn, or coaching mentoring opportunities. The committee has opportunities that extend beyond the Code of Conduct. In the April minutes, a reference was made to a document in *American Educator* magazine. He asked if it were mentioned in passing or was the committee looking at practices, digesting the document? He felt it would be a rich opportunity. This committee should ask what it has as an opportunity to change and prioritizing those changes. He challenge Dr. Chandler, in the spirit of action research, to look for 1) what was missing in order to make improvement, best practices and 3) what data things had not been attempted. Having looked at the question of differential outcomes for 25 years, he had not seen any change. It did not matter whether a law existed to drive change in the Code of Conduct. The issue is social justice and equity. He added that it might be a good thing to pull away from zero tolerance and he celebrated that it was a law. He asked Dr. Chandler to help the committee to think about this sea change.

Adjournment

At 8:37 p.m., Ms. Hardin moved to adjourn; seconded by Ms. Hildner. A voice vote resulted in motion carried.

Submitted by Gail Kalmerton
Clerk of the Board