

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

Culture, Climate and Behavior Committee
September 6, 2017

A Culture, Climate and Behavior Committee (CCB) meeting was held on September 6, 2017. Chair Cassell called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. in the Board Room. Committee members present were: Jennifer Cassell, Greg Johnson, Dr. Jackie Moore, Sheila Hardin, Naomi Hildner, Aliyah Young, Ryan Moore, Melanie McQueen, Dr. Joylynn Pruitt-Adams, Nathaniel Rouse, Sara Dixon Spivy, Laura Hardwicke, Andrea Riles, Jonathan Weintraub, Wendy Daniels, Lee Williams, Gina Harris, Devon Alexander. Also present was Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors: Lincoln Chandler, consultant; Craig Iseli, Board of Education Member and Burcy Hines, Community Member

Introductions and welcome.

Each person introduced themselves.

Norms

The CCB Norms were reviewed. They are:

- Work together as a community that values building consensus.
- Be fully “present” at our meeting by being prepared and being attentive.
- Be guided by CCB’s mission statement and OPRF’s mission statement and strategic plan.
- Share examples that do not include references to specific individuals or situations.
- Invite and welcome the contributions of every member and listen to each other.
- Assume positive intentions from every member and every presenter.

OMA Training

Because the Culture, Climate and Behavior Committee must comply with the Open Meetings Act, each person, if they have not already done so, must complete the Open Meetings Act training. Certificates of Completion are to be sent to Ms. Kalmerton.

CCB Mission Statement (adopted March 2, 2017) is as follows:

The Culture, Climate, and Behavior Committee provides the Board of Education with recommendations to create a welcoming environment where all students experience a sense of belonging and the expectation of excellence, and where student discipline rates are not predictable by race, socioeconomic factors, or special education status.

CCB Background

In spring 2017, a mission statement and initial set of draft recommendations were compiled for Board review. Going forward, this committee seeks to build on that work, with a focus on assessment and accountability. This year CCB will build on the efforts accomplished last year in conjunction with the vision of the Strategic Plan. The Committee will be broken down into four groups to address the following issues:

- 1) Student Tardiness, as it is the largest subset of student discipline
- 2) Engaging student/family Voice and Belonging
- 3) Engaging Faculty and Staff Voice and Innovation practices; and
- 4) Engaging Community Voice and Building Connections

All of this work needs to be done in a public setting. On the days that the small groups are scheduled to meet, the full meeting will start in the Board Room with a roll call, public comments, and then the small groups will go to their respective areas. A note taker has to be designated in the small groups in order to comply with OMA. Those notes will be sent to Ms. Kalmerton who will include them in the minutes and make them public. The public is welcome to observe the small group sessions, but because of the shortness of time, only the committee members will speak. Committee members will be assigned tasks to the next small group meeting. The dates these groups will meet are September 21, October 19, November 14, and December 19.

Timeline of meetings

September 6 - Introductions and OPRF Racial Equity Programming

September 21 - Small Group Work

October 5 - S.A.F.E. Presentation; 5Essentials Survey results

October 19 - Small Group Work

November 2 - OPRF Early Warning System; Restorative Practices at OPRF

November 14 - Small Group Work

December 19 - Small Group Work

January 18 - Small Group Presentations

February 1 - Discussion of Small Group Presentations

February 20 - Implementation Update 2016-17 recommendations; Strategic Plan and begin to draft the 2017-18 recommendations

March 1 - Draft recommendations

March 15 - Draft recommendations; rough draft recommendations to be posted by March 19 for community feedback

April 5 - Review of feedback from students, staff, faculty, community, and Board

April 19 - Refine draft recommendations

May 3 - CCB Approval of Final Recommendations to BOE

People will be asked to rank their interest in one of the groups so that there is equal representation of the members. Items of interest can be shared by sending it to Ms. Kalmerton for posting on the CCB website.

Regarding the 2016-17 draft recommendations, the administration is working on assessment, Mr. Chandler is preparing a report on discipline which will provide helpful information for the tardy group, and an accountability team is being established.

To Mr. Alexander question as to the Board's distinction between equity and racial equity in the Board goals, Dr. Moore responded that for this work it is looking at racial equity, as that has driven much of the work of PTAC and the data shows that is needed. Dr. Pruitt-Adams stated that in some of the meetings about mission statements, the group's decision was that the focus of this group is racial equity. Mr. Rouse stated that in the spring of 2008 when he applied for the position of principal, Mr. Alexander had called him and had talked to

him about the need for systemic work relative to racial equity at OPRFHS. Mr. Rouse had experience with the work of Glenn Singletary and his program, Beyond Diversity. Mr. Alexander spoke about bringing forward Courageous Conversations About Race. Continuous work about racial disproportionately in the classes and this community has challenged the school with regard to racial equity. A book talk was started and faculty was invited to participate. Mr. Alexander had done master's work in this area and he was positioned. That work then grew. Subsequently, teams went to the Pacific Education Group's National Summit and the District began Beyond Diversity work here and it has helped the institution grow. The challenge, however, is that it has been adult-center. The District has not transformed the work systematically and does not believe the students are reaping the benefits of the work. A lack of a framework to address equity still exists. However, a Strategic Plan and a racial equity plan now exist.

Mr. Alexander joined OPRFHS in 2005 and he was dismayed at the lack of racial consciousness and the lack of professional development (PD). He knew of more effective ways to delve into racial equity. He presented a plan to dialogue within the community in the 2007-08 school year that he had developed. In the spring of 2008, he heard that the racial equity program had gone forward. That was the beginning of the conversations about having a racial cohort in order to improve discourse and engagement and building capacity for teacher leaders on race and education. In 2012-13 a shift in PD occurred, a decision was made to go to 5 learning strands. Thus, racial equity became 1 of 5 learning strands during the 2012-2017 school years. A new framework has been developed and includes collaborative action equity research in the classroom. He shared a copy of the Racial Equity Programming overview dated 2007-2023.

Ms. Hardin reported that the professional development work from 1995 to 2008 was technical, i.e., professional development was "one and done" events, i.e. a speaker in an audience of 200 people. It was scattered and no clear vision existed as to its purpose or goal. Nothing focused on the internal mechanism in talking about race that would allow a classroom teacher to investigate the practice. Ms. Hardin came to the eye-opening realization that her students would only experience her as a white female teacher. When the racial equity strand commenced, the purpose was to allow teachers and staff to all experience an opportunity to work and learn the protocols in order to have healthy conversations about race. It drilled deeper into racial consciousness and racial biography. The school realized that technical PD had not changed education. Phase 2 of this training is focusing on what is building capacity to apply the tools across the entire district so that each person can engage in that intensive conversation about how race affects learning in the district. Learning Strands were an additional 5 years of PD across the divisions, i.e., Teacher Collaboration Teams (TCT). Small course-like groups met to have a deeper consciousness and start talking about teams. This PD was mandatory for administration, faculty, and as many of the staff as possible.

Because this is not technical work, the results are not always tangible. Teachers hear the stories of children in classes and as they walk through the building, they hope to see that the courses are no longer predictable by race. It is about becoming systematic. When the staff was surveyed as to what it wanted more of during the TCT time, the response was racial equity. The comfort level and expectations for each other has increased. The expectation is that participation is not just mandatory, but that faculty and staff are fully engaged. While test scores may not yet reflect this work, places exist where improvement can be seen. The work that is being done at OPRFHS is ahead of the curve when compared to other institutions, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and for this work, a framework is needed. The goal over the next six years ensures that a racial equity director/coordinator is hired to lay the groundwork for that work.

One of the student members noted that students too need to talk about racial equity because some of the language used by the students in the hallways is disrespectful, and a six-week gender class was suggested. Dr. Pruitt-Adams noted that SAFE had hosted forums to talk about being a student of color at OPRFHS. She concurred that there would be both qualitative and quantitative data and lots of assessments tied to students feeling welcome. Qualitative data is most significant now, i.e., she makes sure that every conversation in which she is involved is brought back to racial equity and the Strategic Plan. DLT norms are tied the principle/compass of the racial equity work in the District. While the climate of the building change, it may have not necessarily affected the grades. Mr. Rouse noted that the District Equity Leadership Team (DELT) has been responsible for the work in name but not in action; it struggles with holding itself accountable.

In Ms. McQueen's capacity of working with parents and students from kindergarten to 12-grade, she has become aware that the current sixth-grade parents are very vocal about their likes and dislikes and the children of these parents will be coming to the high school. As a result of what is happening on social media, other parents of color are being more courageous in what they say, i.e., "There are no African-American students in a video taken on the first day of school--what a travesty".

When asked if new teachers were provided PD on racial equity. Mr. Rouse stated when he interviews teacher candidates, he does talk about racial equity. At this point, every new staff member goes through Beyond Diversity Training. In addition, the learning strand on equity continues, a CCAR cohort group meets bimonthly over the year, and smaller subsets on racial equity across divisions meet. Hopefully, this framework will have a more structured approach to student engagement and racial equity.

The feedback from teachers on this PD was "shock" the first year with the two days of intensive training. The word "equity" can be an umbrella for many things. The District cares about all levels, but it is isolating race. The District continued with this PD and allowed people to say they were shocked. As time moved on, it has been more well-received. When asked if teachers with training have impacted the way they teach and respond to the students, it was noted that the District appreciates the student voice, but there is no acknowledgment of the students. A survey was administered and the data has been maintained. About 50 percent of the staff have gone through the learning strands and how it manifests in their classrooms is probably 35% of the teachers are open to it, 25% might have to be forced to do the work, and 25% are probably not doing it. PD for students is something that came up in CCB last year. One member noted that a more intentional way of introducing student leadership with adult leadership in the building is needed and that the student voice is not only being heard but being used to create change. Systemically, students are not just the product; they are part of the process and the District needs to be intentional about using the students it has. One such group is Safe Students Advocating for Equity (SAFE).

The percentage of black students is 25% and the percentage of black teachers is 9%. Dr. Pruitt-Adams' charge is to recruit staff that will be representative of the student demographic so that the District is intentionally putting in the equity questions into the interview process. The District is looking to hire staff that reflects the demographics with quality.

Mr. Alexander reported that CCB intersects with racial equity in that this is a table of individuals. When it comes to race, all are citizens in America. The danger in putting a committee together to address equity is who

operates with the lens and is reproducing the system. The original charge of CCB to focus discipline is sufficient. It is a realm that a committee can wrap its hands around and come together with the use of professionals in the system to offer them insight and engagement that can be fruitful for the entire community. Where racial equity intersects in the community, this group can come together to address the inequities and great work can be done. However, when those lines are blurred, problems occur.

Review of the Parking Lot

Ms. Cassell noted that when discussions occur that are not on topic, the committee members can police themselves and write the topic down and consider it again when it comes up on a future agenda, or ask the administration to review, or address something from public comment, etc.

Ms. Hildner reflected she was a member of PTAC for 3 years which took on the discipline code. The CCB has taken on a new level that includes conversations about race and looking for some end product that will impact what will happen in this building. This committee has shifted its emphasis from just discipline to encompassing what is happening with discipline in terms of race, and that is different from its original focus.

Ms. Harris said that the committee has done its work on its own biases, positions, etc. Individually this group of people has wide and varied backgrounds. Dr. Pruitt-Adams stated that the work of DELT has worked to raise its own consciousness or dis-consciousness, but not as a collective group. Dr. Moore suggested that next month, people bring their own racial biography. Ms. Hardin suggested showing examples of that first.

Parking Lot

- Dress Code
- Why are minority history classes classified as electives? Why are Eurocentric classes required?
Security guards and staff
 - Tones and microaggression towards students of color

Adjournment

At 8:03 p.m., Ms. Daniels moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Ms. McQueen. A voice vote resulted in motion carried.

Submitted by
Gail Kalmerton
Clerk of the Board