

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

Culture, Climate and Behavior Committee
April 5, 2018

A Culture, Climate and Behavior Committee (CCB) meeting was held on April 5, 2018. Chair Cassell called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m. in the Board Room. Committee members present were: Jennifer Cassell, Greg Johnson, Dr. Jackie Moore, Gina Harris, Naomi Hildner, Naomi Leach, Sara Dixon Spivy, Laura Hardwicke, Andrea Riles, Wendy Daniels, Lee Williams, and Lee Wade. Also present was Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors: Lincoln Chandler, educational consultant; Karin Grimes, community member, and Holly Scott, student.

Visit comments: None

Minutes

Ms. Daniels moved to approve the minutes of March 15, 2018, Culture, Climate and Behavior Committee meeting minutes; seconded by Dr. Moore. A voice vote resulted in motion carried.

Peace Circles

Gina Harris led the committee in a peace circle experience and provided some general norms: staying focused and being present; speaking one's truth as it is about one's own experience or feeling; using "I" statements (I think, I feel, etc.); allowing everyone to speak; maintaining confidentiality; understanding that things may feel uncomfortable; using all of their senses to listen. Adds from community members were: listen exquisitely; listen to support a difference of opinion; listen lovingly; be respectful; watch people's body language; stay centered; and assume a positive result. The Committee agreed to these norms.

What felt different to the members in the peace circle setting were:

1. Feels more about the person rather than the position
2. Feels like a team
3. Feels more personal
4. Feels like the potential to develop a relationship
5. Feels more open
6. Feels like fewer barriers
7. Feels more close-knit
8. Feels warm and welcoming
9. Feels less hierarchy
10. Feels everyone is at the same level
11. Feels everyone's energy
12. Feels united presence
13. Feels like community
14. Feels less weighty and more connectedness

15. Feels more equal
16. Feels like more eye contact

The question was asked how much more effective this work would be if peace circles were a consistent practice or would it not affect it. The responses were:

1. The discourse at the last meeting would not have happened.
2. This instrument allows meeting people where they are.
3. It helps us to humanize the work.
5. It is all about relationship and cooperation.
6. It allows the opportunity to see something more personal.
7. It is an opportunity to hear everyone and contribute something.
8. Students, community, and teachers feel more comfortable talking.
9. It is less political.
10. It makes people feel more equal.
11. It may get the committee to work collaboratively to develop policy and change honestly.
12. It eliminates the silos that create the walls.
13. It makes me more thoughtful and effective to what I bring to the group.
14. It encourages everyone to say something, even if one does not want to do so.
15. It has the potential to see that the members are all together rather than individual perspectives, missions, and visions.
16. This conversation would better help the committee link its work and themselves to the commitments to integrity.
17. One appreciates that magic that happens.

Everyone was encouraged to commit to keeping the circle safe and agreeing to the commitments. If someone can't keep the commitments, they can say they are not sure. Committee members expressed the desire to have this type of engagement in the future.

Dress Code

Mr. Rouse asked for the thoughts from the Committee members on a draft dress code. He stated that the proposed dress code was influenced by the Oregon NOW Model Student Dress Code and Evanston High School.

Dress Code Philosophy

Similar to many districts that are rethinking dress codes based on 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.

Our 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.

Our 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.

Dress Code

Oak Park and River Forest High School expect that all students will dress in a way that is appropriate for the school day or 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).

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 gendernonconforming 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

1. All students should be able to dress comfortably for school without fear of or actual unnecessary discipline or body shaming.
2. All students and staff should understand that they are responsible for managing their own personal "distractions" without regulating individual students' clothing/ self-expression.
3. Teachers can focus on teaching without the additional and often uncomfortable burden of dress code enforcement.
4. Students should not face unnecessary barriers to school attendance.
5. Reasons for conflict and inconsistent discipline should be minimized whenever possible.

Mr. Rouse noted that a student panel spoke about inconsistencies of enforcing the current dress code at the January Institute Day. The reactions of the faculty and staff varied. He also noted that several schools, including Hinsdale South and Hinsdale Central, Proviso East, and Evanston were changing their dress code policies.

Teachers inconsistently enforce the dress code throughout the day. To whom do the teachers send the students when inappropriately dressed? It was suggested that they could be sent to the SIDS or Counselors and handed out black t-shirts.

A suggestion was to use “non-binary” or “genderfluid” instead of gender non-conforming.

Discussion ensued about micro-training of students and staff. There may be a requirement of unlearning. PD should be added about what can be said and what should not be said to students. One member suggested adding language that conversations should occur with students individually and confidentially. The word “inappropriate” should not be used. Should that and other taboo words be included in the language? One teacher noted that she has a classroom rule and included in the teacher course profile that underwear should not show. The administration said that would imply that it was OK to do something different from this proposal. The response is no, one has to be explicit.

This dress code will be sent out to the committee member. Members should send their responses to Ms. Kalmerton. The goal is to present the CCB’s recommendation at May meeting.

Draft CCB Recommendations

Dr. Pruitt-Adams and Ms. Cassell met with Faculty Senate to review the CCB’s recommendations at a high level. Dr. Pruitt-Adams and Mr. Johnson will weigh in as to how these recommendations interact with the Strategic Plan, as the administration needs to approve the recommendations. Discussion ensued about the number of recommendations. Where there too many? Can they be pared down? Can things be collapsed? Will these be mapped out like the Strategic Plan actions? Who will be the owner of the recommendation? What will the timing be? What resources will be available for the recommendations?

One member noted that the Committee should focus on what goes on in the building climate and culture, not necessarily the community and family. How can Restorative Justice be made a top priority? It will require professional development, and that is not included in the recommendation: It would mean make it an action.

Another member noted that when District 90 implemented its Equity Committee, it prioritized an implementation plan and a reporting procedure to the Board and the Equity Committee. The Culture, Climate, and Behavior Committee could choose top five priorities, and the OPRFHS Board of Education would decide on the action plans and reporting procedures, which would include reporting to the CCB so that it then could evaluate its next steps. The recommendations need action plans and owners. A comment was made that committee fatigue occurs when the work is not put into action. Mr. Martire was honored to serve on this committee and had learned much. He reiterated how crucial the accountability piece was. He assumed that every recommendation would not work and that the CCB would have to develop a better recommendation to change the system.

Mr. Chandler suggested deleting Action Step 4, under 4, Family Outreach Coordinator, because its meaning was not clear.

Other feedback included:

1. PD would be necessary for both staff and students at the beginning of the year on the dress code.
2. The security staff felt left out of the discussions on the dress code. Is further outreach possible?
3. It used to feel like a family at OPRFHS. How can that feeling be promoted? Staff talent show?
4. Why do women of color leave OPRFHS?
5. The administration should have more attendance at various events at large.
6. Attendance Policy - excused absences, etc.
7. Parents need to understand that students need to be in their seats. It affects instruction time; Communications must occur that attendance is an expectation. Action Step 3, Student Group.

Review of Parking Lot

The next meeting is scheduled for April 19. Ms. Cassell asked each member to send their comments on the draft recommendations, with ranking, by April 12 to Ms. Kalmerton so that they could be collated for the next meeting.

Ms. Daniels reported that 24 organizations participated in a community equity event that was held recently. Surprisingly, there was a little overlap in what the organizations do. SAY took the lead on this and Linda Francis facilitated it. An Equity Group Directory was just completed. A central website has been developed so that different groups can post what they are doing and people can see where to go for what and if there is an overlap of organizations.

One teacher noted that the issue of tardy was complex. White parents have no problem with notifying the school that their students will be absent. However, African-American parents do not notify the school that their children is absent and it then becomes an unexcused absence. Everyone must feel welcome in the building, and if all did, then the parents of color might be more willing to communicate with the school. Another member noted that when her boys attended OPRFHS, they were always being marked late, yet her daughter was never late. The school should move from the sense of less generalizing to being more specific. The administration stated that the data shows there are different patterns from those who are tardy to school and those who are already in school and late to class.

Adjournment

At 8:08 p.m., Mr. Martire moved to adjourn; seconded by Ms. Daniels. A voice vote resulted in motion carried.