

**Oak Park and River Forest High School
201 N. Scoville
Oak Park, IL 60302**

**An Instruction Committee of the Whole Board
January 31, 2007**

An Instruction Committee meeting of the Whole Board was held on Wednesday, January 13, 2007, beginning at 6:00 in the PE department and concluding in the Board Room. Committee members present were Jacques A. Conway, Barbara P. Fernandez, Valerie J. Fisher, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Yasmin A. Ranney, and John P. Rigas (arrived at 7:00 p.m.). Also present were: Dr. Susan J. Bridge, Superintendent/Principal; Jack Lanenga, Assistant Superintendent for Operations; Cheryl L. Witham, Chief Financial Officer; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Amy Hill, Director of Instruction; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistance/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors included Kay Foran, Director of Community Relations and Communications; Marcia Hurt, Physical Education Division Head; José Sosa, Dale Craft, James Geovanes, Donald Hopkins, Chris Ledbetter, Barbara Liles, Lucy Riner, Todd Black, Dan Kleinfeldt, Linda Carlson, Shirley Redmond, and other members of the Physical Education Department as well as Dan Kleinfeldt, Doug Brown, Larry Montagno, James Nudera, Jennifer Roth from the Drivers' Education Department.

Climbing Wall Experience

Members of the Instruction Committee and B.A.T. were given the opportunity to participate in climbing wall experience, similar to one in which the students engage.

Board of Education Discussion with the Physical Education and Drivers' Education Divisions

Ms. Hurt hoped that all enjoyed the climbing activity. She thanked two groups of people, first P.T.O., Boosters, Mr. Lanenga, Ms. Witham, and Dr. Bridge for their support and assistance, and, second, the dedicated teachers who learned a whole new course on the climbing wall in order to be able to teach it to students. This is a part of the school's Adventure Education Program.

Ms. Hurt stated that PE teachers have also participated in workshops in pool settings where they learned new kayaking techniques and time spent in staff development to learn many new initiatives and team-building games. Teachers are very excited and passionate about this course, just as are the students. Jose Sosa had been the leader of the Adventure Ed Program. She asked him to give the Committee members additional information regarding the program.

Mr. Sosa welcomed the Board of Education and guests. He too thanked the P.T.O. and Boosters for this support. He was both honored and terrified to address this group. He

told the Committee members about the great things students learn in Adventure Education. It brings students together for a multicultural experience—they get to know each other and it brings community to the classes. Adventure Ed involves students both physically and mentally. The skills they learn can transfer across many activities. Trust, risk-taking, problem solving, physical agility, mental agility and leadership skills are all a part of it. Safety procedures must be taught first to ensure student safety. Freshmen completed a survey in which they were asked what class they wanted to experience. The number one response was Adventure Education. Students achieve personal goals such as, learning about oneself, overcoming fears of height and water. They learn to navigate in water, how to do outdoor cooking, kayaking, camping, etc. It can be a personal expression of freedom. Committee members each received a package of carabineers that are used with the wall climbing activities.

Ms. Hurt stated that in addition to Adventure Education, Physical Education continues to offer a very strong dance program. Last year, the school celebrated teacher Lucy Riner’s awards—State Dance Teacher of the Year, Midwest Dance Teacher of the Year, and Runner up to the National Dance Teacher of the Year. She has been recognized as being one of the best in the country at what she does.

Ms. Riner then gave an overview of the evolution of the dances. Ms. Riner teaches five dance sections and sometimes yoga and Pilates. A wide variety of dance styles are taught, and everyone is “boy friendly.” Increasingly, young men are enrolling in the classes, especially the jazz and hip hop classes. It used to be that only freshmen signed up for the classes, but now the enrollment includes upper classmen. Other dances taught are African dances, ballet, tap dance, and popular dances. The most fun is the “dance of the decades” section where the line up differs from decade to decade. Dance classes are lots of fun and there is a low failure rate. Ms. Riner creates a safe environment; students must learn to trust and respect one another. Ms. Riner stated that she loves to teach all students.

Ms. Hurt stated that PE continues to teach a curriculum that includes CPR and AED training within its swimming program. The belief is that both are great life skills for all of students to have.

PE continues to offer a variety of team and individual sports. A new activity includes table tennis and another section of Adaptive PE (taught by Todd Black and Shirley Redmond) have been added for the T.E.A.M. students.

The self-defense classes for girls have also been strengthened. At the Board of Education’s request a couple of years ago, self defense is now taught both second and third quarters to try and get as many girls exposed to this very important class about life lessons, relationships, making good choices, internet and cyber protection, how to stay safe around strangers, as well as in dating relationships.

Linda Carlson shared more information about the self-defense class. She spoke about Officer Stinson dressing up in a red, well-padded suit as an attacker for the girls to act out

as they would an attacker. For three weeks the girls put on helmets, kneepads, elbow pads, etc. and are allowed to follow through on their anxiety. These sessions are videotaped. It is empowering for the girls to see themselves on video the next day. Next year there is a plan to add a presentation about the story of a rape survivor who is moving on with her life. Students are also allowed to tell of their own experiences if they would like to do so. At this point Ms. Carlson read a reflection from a student who was in the class three years ago about her own experience and how this class had helped her.

Ms. Hurt then framed the PE teachers' day for the Committee members. Seventy-seven sections of PE are provided every day, meaning there are approximately 2,500 students in motion and exercising daily. PE teachers continue to investigate their craft. Through staff development opportunity this year and, with Mr. Prale's guidance, they were able to research their discipline in a slightly different way. This year the Physical Education Learning Teams are spending their time researching and reviewing literature on Brain Research and the impact activity on it has on the academic learning process. A second learning team is reviewing literature and research on teenage obesity and what PE teachers can do to assist in better nutritional education. A third PE Learning Team is spending time reading and studying current articles on ADD/ADHD to determine how PE can help the ADD/ADHD child be more focused, consistent and comfortable in the school environment. The fourth Learning Team, composed of Drivers' Education teachers, is spending time on how to better understand how to teach and work with the LD student. They are doing this under the leadership of Colleen Biggins and Dan Kleinfeldt and will continue to research new methodologies and delivery of instruction for these special students.

Since the Driver Education Department joined the Physical Education Division two and one half years ago, Ms. Hurt had developed a completely new appreciation for the job these teachers do in teaching young people how to drive. She spoke of her own experience in sitting in the back seat of a car and observing inexperienced drivers behind the wheel. She said it was not easy. The Drivers' Education teachers do provide a very special and safe environment for students and their parents in their pursuit to learn how to drive. Mr. Kleinfeldt has done an excellent job in his first year, as the new Drivers' Education Department Head, and he has already made several wonderful changes to the program. She introduced Mr. Kleinfeldt.

Mr. Kleinfeldt spoke about working with Ms. Hurt and about her extraordinary passion for the health of all students. He then introduced the Drivers' Education teachers: Larry Montagno, Mark Valintis, James Nudera, Doug Brown, Jennifer Roth, and Dave Splan, who was not in attendance. They teach Drivers' Education to 360 students per semester and over 900 students per year, including those who attend the summer school session. He remarked on recent news where teenage drivers have been killed; it was lucky that has not affected this community. He felt that it was in part because this course helped to make students good drivers. Proposed changes to the law will make teenage driving somewhat more restrictive. For the first six months after getting their license, they are only allowed one passenger in the car. Soon teenagers may be required to have 50 hours

of practice time and 10 of those hours must be at night. These proposals will probably be made effective this summer.

One newspaper did a study asking parents their number one concern for their teenagers, i.e., poor grades, drug abuse, etc. The parents' number one fear was that their teenagers would be in a car accident. This department has 1) spearheaded better communication with parents by incorporating parent/teen night at the beginning of each semester; 2) worked closely with counselors and other staff in the building; and 3) created a parent/teen guide, which was shared with the Committee members. The rules and regulations contained in the guide are discussed on parent/teen night. Parents have the responsibility to coach their children through the process in order for them to be better drivers.

The Drivers' Education Program is a 3-phase program: 1) classroom (theory), 2) laboratory (simulator), and 3) behind the wheel. The fourth phase is working with the parents at home and practicing. With the help of the administration, this department has been able to continue to build on its program by getting better equipment, allowing more options to work with the students, i.e., new Drivers' Ed cars. With everyone's help, this department can provide the best opportunity for O.P.R.F.H.S. students to learn to drive and provide them with the tools necessary for a lifetime of accident-free driving.

Ms. Hurt concluded by saying that it had been their pleasure to be with the Committee members that night, climbing with them, and getting to know them better. She hoped that they, too, enjoyed the evening.

On behalf of the Physical Education and Driver Education departments, she thanked each board member for their past and continued support of O.P.R.F.H.S.'s programs. She asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Rigas inquired about new legislation introduced that would not allow simulators to count as part of the behind-the-wheel training. Mr. Kleinfeldt stated that they were analyzing that concept, but at this point, it was still a proposal. There was the sense that, if there were no money attached to it, it would not be supported. Additional legislation as of July 1 states that if someone in the school feels a student is truant, the Secretary of State may be contacted and the student's driving permit would be revoked until he/she were of 18 years of age. If a student were to get a speeding ticket, it would take five years before it would be removed from his/her record. That would cause insurance rates to be much higher.

Other questions concerned the dance classes and adventure education. Then the Committee members asked if there were issues that this division wanted the Board of Education to address. One member responded that no school had better facilities from the lighting to the cleanliness of it. Ms. Hurt thanked for the Committee for meeting with this division. The division was told to contact the Board of Education if they had any concerns in the future.

Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 8:11 p.m.