

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

An Instruction Committee of the Whole Board
November 7, 2006

An Instruction Committee meeting of the Whole Board was held on Tuesday, November 7, 2006, in the Board Room. Ms. Fernandez opened the meeting at 7:35 a.m. Committee members present were Jacques A. Conway, Barbara P. Fernandez, Valerie J. Fisher, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, and Yasmin A. Ranney. Also present were: Dr. Susan J. Bridge, Superintendent/Principal; Cheryl L. Witham, Chief Financial Officer (arrived at 8:32 a.m.); Jack Lanenga, Assistant Superintendent for Operations; 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 and Kathi Kyrias, Director of Guidance (arrived at 8:18 a.m.).

Acceptance of October Instruction Committee Minutes

Hearing no amendments to the October 19, 2006 minutes, the Committee members accepted them as presented.

Standardized Test Report

Ms. Hill prepared an analysis and result of the ACT and SAT testing as follows:

“This report reflects a number of changes compared to past years in the analysis of ACT performance. The first change is regarding the data file on which the report is based. For some time we have used the School Profile Report provided by ACT as the source of our data. We have questioned the value of that report, given its heavy dependence on student self-reported data that we do not attempt to verify (e.g. course-taking patterns, GPA, family income level) and the large number of students who do not report their ethnicity, casting considerable doubt on the accuracy of the disaggregated analysis. We also learned recently that the ACT School Profile Report does not include (and has never included) the scores of special education students who test with accommodations. Excluding such students’ scores provides an incomplete picture of our students’ achievements and therefore an incomplete basis for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of our programs.

“To address these shortcomings, I have merged student performance data from the School Profile Report and from the 2005 PSAE Day 1 file to create a complete record of ACT performance for the class of 2006. This record also makes use of Skyward student demographic data for race/ethnicity and special education status, which allow us to disaggregate the numbers more accurately in the table and chart on page four of this

report. Given the fact that scores for students testing with accommodations are included for the first time this year, it is difficult to make performance comparisons between this year and previous years in which those scores were not included. While our mean subject-area and composite scores remain high above state and national averages (our mean composite score this year was 23.2, including special education students), the disaggregated data reveal serious gaps between white and African American students, as well as between Special Education and Regular Education students. We must continue and enhance our support for these students where evidence indicates those efforts have been effective—via expanded summer school step-up opportunities, improvements in our curriculum and course offerings, tutoring, and test preparation, as well as careful and effective guidance in the development of four-year plans.

“A second change regarding ACT data analysis is reflected on page five of the report, where our students’ performance in comparison to the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks is detailed. According to ACT, benchmarks are the minimum ACT test scores required for students to have a high probability of success in credit-bearing college courses... Students who meet a Benchmark have approximately a 50% chance of earning a B or better and approximately a 75% chance of earning a C or better in the corresponding college course or courses. While 91% of the class of 2006 matriculated to two- and four-year colleges and universities, the percent of students meeting or exceeding the College Readiness Benchmarks varied widely from one subject-area test to the next and from one group to the next, with rates as high as 94% and as low as 6%. Overall, almost four-fifths of the class of 2006 met the standard for success in English Composition; half as many met the standard for introductory college-level Biology. Thirty-six percent of our students met the benchmarks in all four subject areas. Upon disaggregating the data, it is evident that a much smaller proportion of our African American students achieved scores at or above the benchmarks compared to their white peers (in reading, for example: 36% v. 78%). As a result, they may be more likely to require remediation upon matriculating to college. We do not track our graduates’ course-taking patterns or their grades in first-year college courses, so this analysis is admittedly speculative. Comments above regarding continued and enhanced academic support are equally relevant here if we hope to provide a solid foundation for all of our college-bound students to succeed in post-secondary education.”

SAT Results

“The 267 students in the class of 2006 who took the SAT are among the first cohort nationwide to have been assessed on the new SAT Writing test. Our students’ scores this year continue recent trends of 600+ means in each subject area, and their combined mean for Critical Reading (formerly the Verbal section), Math, and Writing was 1820. Locally as well as across Illinois and the nation, female test-takers fared better than males on the new Writing test. Among our students, mean scores were highest for students who opted not to identify themselves by race/ethnicity (1943 combined) and lowest for African American students (1588 combined).”

Ms. Ranney reported that colleges are seeing the reading gap in their students, as some students have had to take two or three semesters of developmental reading classes. If a student cannot read, he or she will not be successful in anything. Ms. Fernandez asked about the instructional materials being used in Special Education classes with African-American students. Ms. Hill stated that the high school's committee on literacy was working on a proposal for transition level students, including tracking their results. Mr. Rigas noted that this was part of the initiative program.

Dr. Greenwald asked if the high school could mandate a transitions program for those students who had not attained a certain level. Mr. Prale reported that identified incoming eighth graders are supported through ninth grade. While this has been beneficial, O.P.R.F.H.S. may not have enough programs to meet all of the needs of the individuals who need support. Discussion ensued about the responsibility of informing parents that their children have a reading or learning deficit. Ms. Fernandez stated that parents can be informed and reject that information, but they must be informed.

Ms. Hill stated that some preliminary PSAE information had been received. The District had until November 3 to submit corrections to the assessment file to the state, i.e., eliminate names that had been duplicated, note any students that had withdrawn, etc. There is some concern with the factors about who is and who is not counted for the purpose of performance data. She continued that the corrections that were submitted to the state are not yet on the ISBE website. At this point, the results seem to be:

- O.P.R.F.H.S. will not make AYP in math for African-American students.
- O.P.R.F.H.S. will meet AYP in reading for African-American students.
- O.P.R.F.H.S. will meet AYP in math for Special Education students.
- O.P.R.F.H.S. will not make AYP in reading for SPED or for free and reduced lunch students
- O.P.R.F.H.S. will not make AYP in math for free and reduced lunch students.

While O.P.R.F.H.S. is required to test for science, the results are not being assessed according to an AYP standard held to a bar. Writing will be treated in a similar way next year.

Ms. Hill stated that this is the fourth consecutive year that O.P.R.F.H.S. will not make AYP. The District will have ninety (90) days from the time the state officially notifies the District that it did not make AYP to adjust the school improvement plan. Mr. Prale, Ms. Neuman, Ms. Cada and Ms. Hill are meeting to determine some preliminary steps to address these results.

Discussion ensued about the fact that some schools do make AYP because they test differently. Some schools count the number of credits earned by the student versus the student's year in school to determine junior status. In order to graduate, a senior must take the PSAE test. Legislation states that juniors must be tested. Thus, students can skip over their junior year to become seniors. Because they were never juniors, they did not have to take the test and have their scores counted; yet, they could still take the PSAE

as a senior. Dr. Bridge did not advocate for this course of action but she did want the Committee members to understand how other schools might be making AYP through this kind of policy. Discussion ensued about this viability, as some Committee members objected to the legislation mandating AYP. Ms. Fisher felt a better course of action would be to "face the music." She felt if more districts gave true statistics, the more it would point out the legislation's flaws. If districts manipulate the way students are tested, it will hold the legislation in place. She preferred the mandate to be changed at the national level.

Ms. Hill continued that the District would continue to look at the criteria and bring this discussion back to the Committee in the December/January timeline. Mr. Prale stated that he would confer with legal counsel regarding the eleventh year definition.

Tutoring Report

Mr. Prale presented the Instruction Committee with a written report on the District's tutoring program for first quarter.

A chart in the written report summarized student participation in the athletic study table program for the first quarter of the school year. An average of 40 percent of the students placed on study table use Room 393 at least once per week, approximately 80 percent of the students using Room 393 attend more than one session during a given week, and approximately 85 percent of the students attend morning sessions.

This year a math tutoring center was opened in Room 228A and the math tutor has been working more closely with the Math Division. The written report contained a chart showing the number of students being tutored. There was an increase over last school year's totals for the quarter.

The District provides tutors to support students who cannot attend school but still need to maintain their educational program. These tutors meet students at in branch libraries during specified times of the day. Six tutors provided services to twenty (20) students over the course of the first quarter of the 2006-2007 school year. The chart in the written report details on a weekly basis the branch locations used for the mandatory tutoring, the number of students who used the tutors at the branch location in that week and the total number of hours spent tutoring in a given week. It reflected the total number of hours a tutor was available at the specific library branch in a specific week. This is not a per pupil number of hours as tutors can work with one, two or three students at the same time.

An additional chart detailed week-by-week summaries of the number of students receiving tutoring and the number of hours devoted to tutoring at the library branches.

In a separate program, two faculty members, one math teacher and one English teacher, have been recruited to work after-school once or twice each week to tutor freshman students identified by the dean counselors as needing specific help in completing

homework or studying for tests. This is part of the dean counselors' efforts to track the progress of a group of freshman students who need support and positive interventions.

In addition to these four tutoring programs, additional programs may be developed later in the year. An assessment of their effectiveness will be made later in the school year.

Ms. Hill and Mr. Prale felt the summer transition program had been a positive experience because a number of the Dean Counselors and teachers had continued to monitor those students. Along with Ms. Cada and Ms. Neuman, they brainstormed other possibilities. They proposed early targeting of as many as 100 students per class and prepare for the two sessions, each four hours per day during the summer. Using the EXPLORE data from eighth grade, identified students could take a pre-algebra course in order to be prepared for an Algebra I or the Algebra block schedule in the fall where the program Agile Mind is being implemented. This program is working and students like it. Those successful students may advance to geometry.

Ms. Cada's analysis of the Special Education data found that many of the students who did not meet or exceed were in the one specific portion of the Special Education continuum. Teachers who attended literacy-training classes were mostly in another portion of the continuum and are showing success in terms of reading instruction. Thus, the District will consider hiring a reading specialist for a larger range of the Special Education continuum.

Ms. Ranney was concerned about being able to get parental buy-in for the suggested summer courses, as the schools has been somewhat unsuccessful in past endeavors of this type. Mr. Prale acknowledged that parents have commitments during the summer and they do not always want their children to have to go to summer school. He also informed Ms. Fernandez that scholarships were available for those students unable to pay summer school tuition. Mr. Prale felt that students should be referred more strongly.

Course Proposal

It was the consensus of the Board of Education to approve the articulation summer field experience as a credit court at the Special Board Meeting following the Policy Committee meeting. This was being approved before the other proposed courses' approval due to a time limitation.

Adjournment

The Committee adjourned at 8:53 a.m.

