

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

**An Instruction Committee of the Whole Board
September 21, 2006**

An Instruction Committee meeting of the Whole Board was held on Thursday, September 21, 2006, in the Board Room. Chair Barbara P. Fernandez opened the meeting at 7:34 a.m. Committee members present were Jacques A. Conway (arrived at 7:43 a.m.), Barbara P. Fernandez, Valerie J. Fisher, Dr. Barry S. Greenwald, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Yasmin A. Ranney, and John P. Rigas. Also present were: Dr. Susan J. Bridge, Superintendent/Principal; 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, Michael Averbach, Kara Bohne, Michelle Bayer, Leigh Remack, Yoko Schmadeke, Paul Wright, and students who participated in the summer field courses—Tina Frank and Erik Mikelsons, Mike Satinover, Julia Burgi and Maranda Herner.

Acceptance of Minutes

Hearing no amendments to the minutes of August 15, 2006, the Committee accepted them, as presented.

Feedback from Summer Field Course Experiences

The sponsors of the summer field courses and the students who participated in them were invited to share their experiences with the Instruction Committee members.

Costa Rica

Ms. Bohne, a fourth year sponsor of the trip to Costa Rica, reported that the trip was started approximately sixteen (16) years ago. This year eighteen (18) students were selected to participate from one hundred and twenty students who had submitted inquiries of interest. The course focuses on conservation of tropical species, rain forests, and biology. The two students who spoke attested to the importance of the trip to all the participants and to the unique experiences they had in the rainforest. They learned much about preservation that could not have been learned without having gone through this experience. Everyone on the trip had the same interest and they were appreciative of the many guides who taught them about things in the rainforest; things they would not have ordinarily been able to see without them being pointed out. The trip had a huge influence on their lives. Tina Frank, after returning, immediately signed up for AP Biology and made the decision to minor in Spanish in college. Both students wanted to do more to help conserve the earth's natural resources. Another important aspect was that of

experiencing a new culture and the comparison of that culture to their own. They interacted with some of the locals and visited towns untouched by tourism. When asked how the students protected themselves in the rainforest, Ms. Frank explained that they wore long pants, but did not put bug repellent on their hands so not to injure any frogs that they might handle. One of their guides was an author and illustrator who unexpectedly expanded his stay with the group to twelve (12) days.

Marine Biology Course

Michele Bayer, sponsor of the Marine Biology Course, noted that 99 percent of the biosphere is made up of ocean. This program is, thus, very important for Midwesterners to be able to take. Marine Biology has run for eleven years. Three of the students who participated on this trip also attested to it being a life-changing experience. The work focused them on the environment and they learned many things, including how speedboats can affect and destroy marine organisms. They dissected fish and snorkeled. The students were very impressed with the people they met, as well as with their teachers.

One student spoke about visiting the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute where they learned about bioluminescence, the destruction of coral reefs and toured reconstructed coral reefs. One student became scuba certified after participating in Marine Biology I. Her caveat, though, was that a student must be interested in this type of learning, as the work involved in completing field notebooks and projects was intensely time consuming. O.P.R.F.H.S. is one of the few schools that offers a program in marine biology. Ms. Bayer reported that the founder of the course, Chris DePasquale, was conducting research off the coast of San Diego with the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute. She was trolling 900 meters and pulling up organisms that have never been seen. Many important relationships with national organizations have been formed because of this course

Field Biology Course

Leigh Remack, sponsor of the Field Biology Course, has led this course for four years. Because the required number of students for O.P.R.F.H.S. to host its own field biology course was not met, Ms. Remack organized an independent study for the students who were interested and they participated in Camps I and II at the Smokey Mountain Park Institute in the Smokey Mountains. Two students joined Ms. Remack in this presentation. One student attested to this being an “amazing time.” Because she had not been into hiking previously, she was not sure what to expect. Ten students attended the camp and there were knowledgeable guides who taught them about plants and heightened their appreciation of the forests. Her best experience was getting to know nature on a personal level. She related a story about hiking alone in the middle of the Appalachian Mountains, in a temperate rainforest by herself, when she saw a bear. She and the bear both respected their spaces and each went in the opposite direction. Ms. Remack later assured the Committee members that there were many students not far away when this event occurred. The second student had never thought about not being able to shower for four days or trampling through a rainforest. However, that experience converted her.

Later during the summer, when visiting in California and entering a forest, she noticed a personal change within herself because of the trip. She also offered that the others who participated in the camp were amazed that she could earn high school credit for this experience.

Japanese Exchange Program

Ms. Schmadeke took twenty-two students on a four-week trip to Japan. This is one segment an exchange program in which students from Japan visit O.P.R.F.H.S. in the spring and in turn, O.P.R.F.H.S. students visit Japan in the summer. Mike Satinover spoke eloquently about this trip being more than just a learning experience; it had an astounding affect on students and it dramatically increased their desire to learn. The trip changed his perspective on Japan, he has new morals, new knowledge, and a new family. No website, worksheets or photos could provide such a first-hand experience such as this. The trip was eye opening. He now feels more connected to everything he is learning.

Dr. Millard wanted to see more teachers encourage students to seek out these wonderful opportunities. The cost of these trips, approximately \$2,500 to \$3,500 per trip, can sometimes be reduced with scholarships made available through the Alumni Association. Ms. Foran added that, thanks to Dr. Millard's initiative, there is now a travel booklet that describes the many exchange and field science opportunities as well as opportunities for grants to which students may refer. Ms. Cindy Milojevic and Ms. Kim Asbury have been active in getting the information and the applications to students. Students are required to fundraise individually, but the Alumni Association is very interested in assisting. The Alumni Association was disappointed not to have received more applications. It was also noted that funds were available from the Tibensky Scholarship for a student to go entirely for free.

Dr. Greenwald suggested offering trips that would focus on music and art as well. Mr. Prale stated that the History of Chicago class, offered in the summer, was another option for students who wanted to learning about area architecture and history.

Summer School Report for 2006

Mr. Prale introduced Mr. Averbach in his role as the director of the O.P.R.F.H.S. summer school and while Mr. Averbach has had this directorship for many years, this was his last year as he was retiring in June of 2007.

Mr. Averbach provided the following written report.

“Oak Park and River Forest High School’s summer program continued to be a popular choice for students in the two communities. Twelve hundred two (1202) students (vs. 1217 in 2005) took seventeen hundred sixty seven (1767) academic classes (vs. 1683 in 2005). The required electives accounted for much of this enrollment. There were sixteen sections of Health, six of Art Foundations and Consumer Education, and four of Keyboarding. A few offerings- in History, Spanish, and the Career Field courses- were

canceled in the interest of cost reduction, while enrollment continued on the low end in the Musical Theatre Workshop. Athletic camp registrations increased from 1579 to 2139, undoubtedly because one of Summer School's most popular programs, the Huskie Swim lessons, returned due to completion of the pool repairs. Overall Summer School came very close to breaking even. Savings came from less than expected transportation costs and the blending of the cost of a trainer into the bid for the annual cost of the position. Revenue was increased by taking an additional \$5 from each athletic camp registration and adding it to the general administrative fund for Summer School.

"As usual, Summer School offered a combination of remedial and enrichment courses. The 8 to 9 Connection program, which brought forty-two students from the junior highs to work on transitioning from the grade school to the high school experience, continued for a second year. The program added two courses, a Sophomore Practicum in English and a Junior Practicum in English, to assist current high school students needing to strengthen their skills. The Basic Science and Reading Strategies courses remained at one and three sections respectively. Two of the Career Education Camps were offered, but neither drew sufficient enrollment. The future of these camps, originally five in number, needs to be examined, as in theory they would seem to provide interesting experiences for a wide range of our students. The Math Division's second year five-hour Plane Geometry course continued to flourish, as did the rest of the Division's "bump up" courses. The Geology field studies course returned to Science, and the very popular trips to Costa Rica (Environmental Studies) and Florida (Marine Biology) continued, though the Conservation and Cultural Studies course (to Tanzania) was not offered. The effort to attract foreign language students remained unsuccessful.

"The Oak Park Youth Township Service again provided close to \$3000 in funding for students in need through the Work/Study Volunteer Program. Twenty-nine students participated in the program to subsidize the cost of either academic classes or sports camps. Altogether, these students performed over five hundred hours of volunteer service for the benefit of the Oak Park and River Forest communities.

"Overall, the summer session ran very smoothly. There were very few problems with discipline, and overall, a positive atmosphere for teaching and learning was sustained, thanks to the combined efforts of the teachers, deans, and support staff. Many thanks go to Donna Sebestyen for her help in putting Summer School together. A special thank you goes to Linda Hayes, the now permanent Summer School secretary, for taking care of all the details essential to running the program. Without the assistance of just these few individuals, Summer School, which services about half or more of our school population, simply would not have functioned as well as it did."

He also presented the following suggestions/questions:

1. Better marketing is essential to boosting revenue for the Musical Theatre Workshop. However, it is possible that these revenues will not increase. The Board will have to address the value of the educational experience from the musical vs. its persistent shortfall financially.

2. Programs such as the 8 to 9 Connection and development of classes like the Sophomore and Junior Practicum should be continued, as they provide summer opportunities for our students most in need of additional education.
3. The Career Camp courses are good opportunities for students within Summer School, but they need better ownership and marketing in order bring students in.
4. Increasing the administrative cut for each athletic camp registrant was a wise move for increasing Summer School revenues. Prorating this charge may be fairer and lead to even more revenue.

In his oral comments, he highlighted the following:

1. Summer school is in good financial shape, as the intention has been to break even.
2. While students have been receptive to many different academic courses, foreign language is not one of them. He suggested being more active and aggressive and, perhaps, aligning these courses with excursions to draw more interest.

Discussion ensued regarding the degree of success of the summer musicals. Ms. Ranney stated that last year's response to the musical was tepid. The reason might have been the musical chosen to produce, as some are more popular than others. Mr. Averbach stated that significant marketing to nursing homes, private schools, etc., should be conducted to reach a bigger audience. He noted that enrollment in the summer musical, Music Man, had been down drastically; sixty percent less than when the musical Grease was produced. Ms. Ranney noted that one of her children participated in the summer musical who was disappointed with the music selected, etc. Mr. Averbach reminded the Committee members that if this was to be an educational experience, it was not imperative that it make money. While he advocated for continuing to offer the summer musical, Mr. Averbach offered that some people were interested in classes that would enhance the musical, such as acting workshops, etc. They could be run as part of a class, expanding the theatre program during the summer. Mr. Rigas suggested that only four different musicals were needed over a student's career at the high school. The most popular musicals could rotate every four years. Mr. Prale will suggest this to Mr. Hallissey and Mr. Boulware. Mr. Prale added that summer school was the entry point for students getting involved in theater, crew, make up, set design, etc. Mr. Averbach noted that two middle schools had run musicals and had recruited graduated eighth graders, which might have contributed to a lower enrollment.

Mr. Averbach noted that the titles of the career education camps were as follows: "Walk in Wall Street," "Walk with the Stars," "Always on Call." He stated that these classes do not capture anticipated enrollments and that they are expensive to run because two teachers are required and there are costs for transportation. Mr. Averbach felt that business education teachers and the dean counselors need to be more aggressive in advocating student participation in these courses. Another obstacle for students is that these courses do not slot easily within summer school hours. Mr. Rigas observed that they would preclude participation in a summer sports class/camp. He continued that there were many things that make it difficult for students to take summer school classes; one of them being that if more than so many days are missed, the student is dropped from

the class. Sports camps are popular and they restrict what a student can do academically during the summer. Mr. Averbach reported that Academic Support, Math, and English classes were well received.

Mr. Prale noted that at the parents' forum held the week prior by the Special Education Division included a discussion of what a parent could do for a child who has a reading problem and wants opportunities which may be pursued as part of summer school in 2007.

Mr. Prale attested to the fact that the library was being used regularly by summer school classes.

Mr. Prale added his appreciation to the Alumni Association for supporting the summer practicum, math classes, and field experiences. It is a great partner in summer school and its support and contributions were a huge asset.

Mr. Prale noted that a search committee for the new summer school director would be chaired by Ms. Hill and Ms. Witham would be a participant.

Update on Recent Initiatives for this School Year

Mr. Prale provided the following written report on the Initiatives.

"Mentor Program"

"Several months ago the Board of Education reviewed a mentor program that we have implemented this year. Earlier this month the Faculty Senate Executive Committee approved the mentor program as it was proposed. Based largely on a successful model in an area district, the program partners teachers new to the district with veteran teachers who serve as mentors to the newer teachers. A committee of teachers and administrators was formed last spring to monitor and revise the program as needed. The planning committee will meet during the first quarter to review the program and plan for additional activities.

"The mentor program is a two-year program and includes visits by mentors to the classrooms of the teachers new to the district. In the first quarter of the school year, the program incorporates a series of checklists that identify explicit tasks that the mentor teacher must accomplish with the teacher new to the district. Teachers who have reviewed the program have commented favorably on the specificity and positive structure of the program.

"We plan to submit the program to the Illinois State Board of Education and seek formal recognition from ISBE for the District's program. This may allow some teachers to use their experience in the program to change certificate status in the state system and may allow other teachers to earn continuing professional development credits. Success of the program will be measured by surveys and interviews of program participants.

“Agile Mind Online Mathematics

Our district is providing our students access to a high-caliber online mathematics program offered by an entity called Agile Mind. Every 9th grade algebra student enrolled in course #211 or #212 (the Block) has a login ID and password for this service. As is sometimes the case with programs that involve online technology, the students and staff have encountered a few minor difficulties in moving the program forward. However, by the second week of school, all students have their individual login ID’s and passwords and are listed in the program under the correct teacher’s roster.

“To use Agile Mind technology in the classroom, the teachers need to connect their classroom LCD projectors with their classroom desktop computers. Teachers working with the double period block classes have been equipped with three wireless tablet computers. We also plan to install a small number of computers in one of the classrooms to allow students to use the computer-based self-assessments without having to travel to a computer lab. Currently, the computer labs can accommodate the program; however, a concern over the capacity of the computer labs has arisen.

“Debbie Neuman, Division Head for Mathematics, observed an instructor use Agile Mind to teach a lesson on the order of operations. The students had to read a problem, analyze the information, compare the solutions presented in the problem and then defend their choice of the solution. These skills mirror the kinds of skills students are asked to perform on the PSAE. We hope that this program better prepares students to meet and exceed state standards in mathematics. Student progress will be measured by the Agile Mind program and by our own comparison data including success in math courses and student performance on standardized tests.

“Learning Support Reading

“Four sections of structured study skill and support classes have been created to provide assistance for identified freshman students enrolled in regular level college preparatory courses. Students are identified by their English teacher or dean counselor for enrollment in the program. Students’ grades are tracked weekly. A teaching assistant works with each of the teachers to tutor students, track student progress, or intervene as needed.

“The curriculum of the class focuses on teaching students the skills necessary to navigate the high school system effectively and succeed in the college preparatory or regular program. Students receive explicit instruction in learning strategies and reading improvement.

“Class size in each of these sections is kept at a level that allows for individual attention and support. The program will be measured by the success of the students in their academic classes.

“C.R.I.S.S. (CReating Independence through Student owned Strategies) Training

“While not new this school year, I have contacted our school support person at West 40 who informed me that West 40 would support CRISS training for our district at levels comparable to the support they extended last year. Catherine McNary, a reading and English teacher in the District and a certified CRISS trainer, and I have scheduled a two-day Level I workshop for October 19 and 20, 2006. We have begun recruiting faculty and staff for this opportunity. An additional two-day workshop is scheduled for the spring semester of this school year.

“We will continue to update the Board of Education throughout the school year on the progress of these and other programs.

“Any plan to use computerization software for math class? Want to know that it is working. When students take the test on line collecting data and reporting how they do and hope to expand if it is successful. There is athletic youth program AYP program expansion, affective program of learning. work with students over the summer so that they become the leaders. Agile mind program has this component, although it is not yet being applied. In the future, additional funding will allow this component to be implemented. Funding was just learned about.

“C.R.I.S.S. Training – recruiting has begun, but help me understand just how this CRISS training can benefit the students other than empowering them to learn and help the process, but curious why there is a great effort to recruit teachers for something that is designed for students.”

Discussion ensued.

One desired outcome of the C.R.I.S.S. training is to develop a report tracking the efforts of teachers who use C.R.I.S.S. strategies regularly and then see the impact on their students’ progress. Student feedback would also be sought.

Mr. Prale informed Ms. Ranney that there were approximately fifty students enrolled in Learning Support sections. The teachers of this course are very focused and meet before school to share ideas. They have access to the student’s electronic data in order to be able to discuss the student’s academic progress in all classes.

The question was raised, “Should more be done with the Agile Mind Program to help the District make AYP?” Ms. Hill noted that any effect from the implementation of the Agile Mind Program would not have an immediate affect that could be assessed. However, when she visited Mr. Wright’s Algebra I class where the program was being implemented, the students were engaged, attentive, and on task, even though the class size was large. She felt this program as well as the combining of the Algebra and Algebra I block had the potential to help many students. While Agile Mind is not only a professional development program, Mr. Wright gets new ideas on how to teach more

effectively. Other programs, such as Test Prep, also have an impact on juniors in a short-term way. Ms. Hill concluded that no one thing would help the District make AYP by 2014; that will only occur through a complex set of approaches.

Mr. Prale continued that O.P.R.F.H.S. has gathered information for three years on student reading levels. The averages in the college prep experience are at grade level. When further analyzed, the District discovered areas in which it could do better. That was the goal of collecting the data. The information noted above on the reading program will be shared first with Instructional Council and then with the teachers. Dr. Greenwald was informed that students were recommended for this class by virtue of their reading level. Parents may override this recommendation and place their children in other areas. However, parents are very receptive at this level. Mr. Prale was very comfortable with the Gates test used as a barometer, as it provides feedback about the District's program. Dr. Greenwald asked if there were an instrument that would be better identify a student's reading skill strength. He was informed that the Special Education Division offers a reading test that is more individualized. Dr. Greenwald commented that every freshman entering UIC is tested on his/her reading skills with instruments that parcel out strengths and weaknesses. He suggested exploring this avenue with the president of Citizens' Council, as he was also the president of UIC's Counseling Center.

Mr. Prale then talked about the process of making student placements. Ninth graders take reading tests at the high school and eighth graders take math and science placement tests before their arrival. Dean counselors and the sender schools are involved in identifying students for certain classes. Experience has shown that a pocket full of students is not making it. Who are they? Why are they not making it? That conversation would be more beneficial if it occurred after they were at the high school. If a student moves from Transitions to English 1 at the start of the year, he or she will do better than the student who moves in the middle of the year. It would be substantial to know what was going on in that classroom. What is not welcoming to these students? Ms. Fernandez asked if an integrated curriculum were being taught. Mr. Prale stated that it was, but he was unsure if there were integrated instruction.

Textbook Review

It was the consensus of the Instruction Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education approve the following textbooks at its regular September Board of Education meeting.

History Division:

The Challenge of Democracy, reviewed by Mr. Rigas

Special Education Division:

World Literature; Pacemaker Curriculum, reviewed by Dr. Millard

World History, reviewed by Ms. Fisher

AMP Reading System – Level 1, reviewed by Ms. Ranney

AMP Reading System – Level 2, reviewed by Ms. Fernandez

AMP Reading System – Level 3, reviewed by Dr. Greenwald

Adjournment

The Committee adjourned at 8:54 a.m.