

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

**An Instruction Committee of the Whole Board
December 14, 2006**

An Instruction Committee meeting of the Whole Board was held on Thursday, December 14, 2006, in the Board Room. Ms. Fernandez opened the meeting at 7:35 a.m. Committee members present were Barbara P. Fernandez, Valerie J. Fisher (arrived at 7:47 a.m.), Dr. Barry S. Greenwald, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Yasmin A. Ranney, and John P. Rigas. 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; Mary Wiltjer, F.S.E.C. Representative; and Ralph Lee, community member (arrived at 7:44 a.m.).

Approval of Instruction Committee Minutes

Dr. Millard moved to approve the Instruction Committee Minutes, as presented; seconded by Dr. Greenwald. A voice vote resulted in all ayes.

Proposed Changes to Academic Catalog 2007-08

Ms. Hill provided the Committee members with a summary of the proposed changes to the Academic Catalog for the 2007-08 year (attached to and made a part of the minutes of this meeting), and noted that these revisions, deletions, and additions reflect a consensus of the dean counselors, Instructional Council, and parent, faculty and student groups. Ms. Hill asked for any Committee comments.

Ms. Fernandez expressed her desire for all freshman students to take Algebra. She continued that not having this math foundation negatively impacts achievement on standardized testing. Mr. Prale concurred and noted that he would like to see Algebra a requirement of eighth grade.

Ms. Wiltjer responded to Ms. Ranney's inquiry as to the gender of the students in the statistics class. She shared that in her three sections of Calculus, the number of males and females was close to being equal.

Dr. Greenwald reflected on the comment made by one of the superintendent candidates that students should not take remedial classes. Dr. Greenwald asked the administration if a student who does not have the skill set could be enrolled in a class that has the

expectation of performance. How would they catch up? Can teachers include them in these classes without damaging the rest of the learning process for the other students? Ms. Hill noted that the school was doing that in small ways with the Project Scholars Program. The subject area teachers work with these students on content, study skills, and reading. There has been success with this approach. This is the third year of the College Prep Scholars Program and the District should begin to have a sense of how these students are performing. Teachers who work with transitions-level students work more collaboratively together with those students. Thus, the students have the same teachers who would identify problems and create interventions for them. For those students, Mr. Prale suggested that it might be advantageous to take away their option to take electives, i.e., art, music, etc. For the targeted students, provide a more focused study hall. Mr. Rigas suggested looking at the local graduation requirements in Applied Arts and in Fine and Performing Arts, etc. to help with this process.

Ms. Fernandez felt student accountability was imperative. There are students who take great pride, even when struggling, to set up their own strategies for success, to meet with peer study groups, etc. They strive for success as opposed to failure. Mr. Prale concurred but noted that the onus was still on the high school to bring those things to the students. O.P.R.F.H.S. needs to identify more of these students and to help them. Ms. Ranney noted that community colleges mandate double periods; one period is for the teaching of the class and the other period is for mandated tutoring.

Dr. Greenwald commented that reading, writing and arithmetic were the basic skills in which more energy should be directed. The University of Illinois has dropped all remedial-level classes. The high school does not have that option. Dr. Greenwald feels that the high school has to consider the offering of remedial classes.

It was the consensus of the Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education approve this proposal as presented at its regular December Board of Education meeting.

Update on Evening and Weekend Tutoring

Mr. Prale provided the following written information regarding evening and weekend tutoring:

“The program is sponsored and organized by A.P.P.L.E. Ms. Eleanor Taylor, a representative of A.P.P.L.E. has recruited volunteer tutors, talked with families, and scheduled students for tutoring sessions. Tutoring has begun on Thursday evenings from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. and on Saturday mornings from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. The high school furnishes a liaison who provides logistical support and responds to ongoing program needs.

“Despite the difficult turn in the weather these past few weeks, approximately a dozen students have come to the school for tutoring. Tutoring began on November 30, 2006, and has continued on the schedule identified above. We are exploring the option of

assisting the tutoring program operation during Winter Break during hours the building is scheduled to be open January 3 through January 5, 2007.

“The cost of the program has been within the budget discussed at the November Board of Education meeting. As of this writing, all of A.P.P.L.E.’s membership, including the program coordinator and tutors who have worked on this program, have volunteered their time. I will continue to talk with A.P.P.L.E. leadership and program representatives to resolve any ongoing budget matters.”

Mr. Prale noted that this was an example of bringing specific students to a resource. A.P.P.L.E. has a direct link to those families who might not ordinarily participate and motivates them to do so. Ms. Taylor is the liaison to A.P.P.L.E. Special Education teacher Bill Young is the liaison from the school. Six to ten students have participated per tutoring session. Mr. Young facilitates the teachers’ needs and regularly follows up with them. Mr. Rigas learned that there is email coordination between the students and their teachers. While there is no matched control set, the District looks for these students to receive higher grades than D’s and F’s. While there were halting initial starts, the program is now moving forward effectively.

Ms. Fernandez thanked Mr. Prale for including funding in the budget and continuing to talk with the A.P.P.L.E. leadership about ongoing budget matters. Dr. Greenwald stressed that this program should be perceived as being open to all students.

2006 PSAE Tutoring Program Results

Ms. Hill prepared the following written report on the 2006 PSAE Tutoring Program Results.

“In the spring semester of 2006, 37 junior students participated in an in-house PSAE- ACT test preparation course. The course ran for eight weeks and was offered during the school day to students scoring in the range of 14-17 on the math and/or reading sections of the sophomore year PLAN test. Students met in small groups (≤ 6) during their study hall periods with certified teachers hired on a temporary basis to teach the course. Students without a second semester study hall period were invited to take the class after school; the class size for that group was 22.

“The structure and content of the 2006 program reflected several changes from the previous year. We offered test prep in reading/English and math to all the targeted students, increased the number of days each student received tutoring, and used KeyTrain software at the end of the program to help students prepare for PSAE Day 2 tests in reading and math. We purchased student ACT prep materials from ExcelEdge; our tutors attended training sessions in the use of those materials as well as in the use of KeyTrain. We monitored attendance via Skyward and offered an incentive for good attendance. We were optimistic these changes would have a positive impact on students' ACT scores as well as on their rates of meeting or exceeding state standards on the PSAE.

“We compared the test results of our in-house test prep students with the results of students in two control groups. Our first control group consisted of students whom we invited to participate in our in-house program who chose instead to enroll in the private ACT prep course offered by ExcelEdge. The second control group was comprised of students in our target group who declined to participate in either the ExcelEdge course or in our in-house program. (I was not able to ascertain whether they had participated in any other private test preparation activities.) There were two measurement criteria for success: the average growth in reading and/or math scores from sophomore year PLAN to junior year ACT, and the percentage of students who met or exceeded state standards as measured by the PSAE.

“The results indicate that our in-house program had a greater impact on students' math performance than on their reading scores and that the ExcelEdge participants from our target group had better results than the in-house students on all of our measures. Our tutored students had an average gain of 2.84 points in math performance from PLAN to ACT, compared to 3.64 for the ExcelEdge participants and 1.74 for the non-participants. Forty percent of the tutored group met or exceeded state standards in math compared to 53.6% of the ExcelEdge students and 36.3% of the non-tutored group. The average gain in reading for the in-house group was 3.06 points, compared to 4.98 for the ExcelEdge group and 3.15 for the non-tutored group. 43.2% of our in-house students met or exceed standards in reading, compared to 58.9% of the ExcelEdge participants and 50.5% of the non-participants.

“Further analysis may reveal factors that contributed to the differential outcomes of each group. I will be looking at course-taking patterns in math and English, as well as junior-year grades in those subject areas, to see whether there are any correlations with the test performance of these students. One implication of the current analysis is that we may need to develop a more sophisticated model for identifying students most likely to benefit from explicit instruction in test preparation. Debbie Neuman has provided analysis of junior year course-taking patterns and their value for predicting students' chances of meeting/exceeding state standards, and I have applied that analysis to narrow the target group of students for 2007. We also may need to differentiate the methods of instruction and/or the specific course content to more closely align with students' needs.

“While the results of our in-house test preparation efforts have been mixed over the past three years, we have compelling practical and moral reasons to make quality test preparation opportunities available to the greatest possible number of our students as one prong in our efforts to address achievement gaps. This year, the bar for Adequate Yearly Progress rises again to require 55% of our students to meet or exceed state standards in math and reading. We will continue to seek ways to improve the content, delivery, and impact of the in-house test prep program.”

Ms. Hill stated that this was the third year that the high school has made specific efforts to prepare for the PSAE. Based on the results from last year, changes were made to this year's program in the hopes for greater gains. Mr. Prale and she are talking about creating a more sophisticated way of identifying students who will and will not do well in

that program and then encourage those that will do well to enroll in the program, i.e., offering financial assistance. They are also discussing the creation of a second semester course for students who have not made AYP, i.e., Special Education, African-American and those who qualify for the Free & Reduced Lunch Program. The Test Prep could be beneficial to their success.

Ms. Hill informed Ms. Fernandez that it was still too early to tell how effective is the Agile Mind Program. The program is currently being used with freshman students and there will be no substantive information with which to compare until the end of first semester. Those students would take the test prep class in their junior year.

In response to a question about whether the school teaches students test-taking research strategies, it was stated that ExcelEdge materials, which is targeted at strategies for the ACT are used. In addition, math tests include a couple of ACT questions.

A question was raised as to what was being done to improve enrollment in culinary arts and auto tech classes. The response was that Mr. Boulware was bringing these programs to the Dean Counselors and asking them to encourage their students to register for the classes. However, these are academic electives and they are a challenge for the dean counselors because there are few spaces open in a student's schedule for elective courses.

Regarding dual credit classes, Ms. Hill stated that some O.P.R.F.H.S. courses earn college credit but at Triton College only. Students may also earn credit for O.P.R.F.H.S. by taking a Triton course. Mr. Prale added that O.P.R.F.H.S. reimburses students up to \$500 per class if they successfully complete a course at Triton for O.P.R.F.H.S. credit.

Textbook Review

Instruction Committee member Fernandez volunteered to review *Lifetime Health* for the Science Division.

Adjournment

The Instruction Committee adjourned at 8:12 a.m.