

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

An Instruction Committee of the Whole Board
April 17, 2008

An Instruction Committee meeting of the Whole Board was held on Thursday, April 17, 2008 in the Board Room. Dr. Millard opened the meeting at 9:18 a.m. Committee members present were Valerie J. Fisher; Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, and Sharon Patchak Layman, and John P. Rigas (departed at 9:32 a.m.). Also present were: Dr. Attila J. Weninger, Superintendent; Jason Edgecombe, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Phil 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, O.P.R.F.H.S. Director of Community Relations and Communications; Linda Cada and Andrea Neuman; James Paul Hunter, Faculty Senate Chair; Barbara Nelson, PTO Chair; Bridget Kennedy of the Oak Leaves and Terry Dean of the *Wednesday Journal*.

Acceptance of Minutes

It was the consensus of the Instruction Committee members to accept the minutes of the March 15 Instruction Committee meeting, as presented.

Update on Reading Lab

Mr. Prale, Ms. Cada and Ms. collaborated on a memorandum to the Instruction Committee members, as presented below:

Background

“The focus on reading in the Special Education program was renewed several years ago when teachers began exploring professional development activities to support teaching and learning efforts. Reading across the curriculum, SRA, Lindamood-Bell, and CRISS workshops have all been incorporated in recent years to address student needs and to improve teacher performance. Evidence of improved outcomes includes Special Education students meeting AYP standards in the most recent April 2007 PSAE testing.

“However, in order to continue to improve results for teachers and students, a year ago Special Education staff proposed a reading lab that would incorporate four software packages – Lexia, Reading Plus, Soliloquy Reading Assistant, and Kurzweil 3000 – to meet the range of student needs. Teachers use Lexia to address core-reading strategies including phonemic awareness, word-attack and comprehension skills. Reading Plus is used to improve comprehension, build fluency, and increase reading rate. Soliloquy Reading Assistant improves prosody, the skill of reading with expression. Kurzweil 3000

is a comprehensive reading, writing, and learning program that reads text to students allowing struggling learners to access content beyond their reading level.

“Summary of Findings

Student results from using Lexia have been positive. In the Lexia program, for students who have been introduced to the program, all students have met or on pace to meet individual goals at all levels of the program.

- Using composite grade level equivalent reading score as a measure, and looking at 34 students who have been enrolled in reading classes using the lab and for whom we have start of school and end of first semester scores, the following results have been obtained:
 - ✓ 13 students have added a full year or more of growth during the first semester,
 - ✓ 7 students have made gains from 6 months to one full year during the first semester,
 - ✓ 8 students made gains under 6 months of improvement during the first semester,
 - ✓ 6 students did not make measurable gains during the first semester.
- Students who have used the reading lab have success fractions in English and history classes of .6275, which means that they receive grades of ‘A’ or ‘B’ in approximately 5 of 8 situations. The range of success fractions for classes of students was from .415 to .80. This data is used to establish a baseline for student classroom performance.

“Recommendations

- Concentrate reading lab efforts using Lexia and Reading Plus software packages. Discontinue using the Soliloquy Reading Assistant software package.
- Continue to monitor student progress in the reading lab.
- Expand use of the reading lab to include regular education classes currently taught in the English Division.

Discussion ensued. Dr. Lee was informed that even though it was not in the recommendations that Kurzweil 3000 would continue to be used in different, e.g. assistive technology, etc. Dr. Lee had been impressed by the fact that any teacher could make use of it. Ms. Patchak-Layman learned that O.P.R.F.H.S. had a license to install this software on seventeen computers. She asked if students had to go to the reading lab to use this program. The response was that students do not have to go to the reading lab to use this program; however, if all seventeen (17) computers are being used, other students may not use the program at that time.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if students not a part of the program were able to make use of these kinds of support. Mr. Prale reported that the English teachers who teach reading are beginning to use the reading lab for their instructional purposes. O.P.R.F.H.S. has a base of 102 to 108 students using the reading lab. After the first semester’s usage and a

review of the program, the lab was opened to other teachers. There is a timing challenge, however. The program recommends students have three full class sections on it per week; that would create a logjam in that lab. The District is in the process of determining the number of minutes for either a “drop in” or whether to open another lab and get more licenses.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if Kurzweil was just a reading program. Her interest was in science. Many students have the capability of being part of a discussion in the science class but, perhaps, because of their reading ability they are not able to participate at that textbook level. She said some students react better to book on tape rather than the actual books. Mr. Prale agreed and noted that the Drivers Ed booklet, an American History and a Science book are scanned in into this program. Regular education teachers do have the ability to use it. Dr. Lee noted that the program would help students identify the main ideas in a paragraph.

Mr. Rigas suggested asking for books in an electronic format, eliminating the need for scanning. It was noted that a teacher could download his/her files and put them into Kurzweil. Some states use Kurzweil for in-state testing, as it works as a reader. Do regular O.P.R.F.H.S. teachers understand the applicability and ability of this software and were more licenses needed. While the LD program teachers use it, there was a question as to whether all teachers knew about it. Ms. Patchak-Layman stressed that regular education teachers needed to know about this and be able to access it.

Committee members were informed that next year twenty to twenty-five computers would be purchased for the ED Program. The teachers in this program made a strong proposal and were willing to devote their professional time, so the District used initiative money to purchase them. The technology budget includes maintenance costs on a five-year rotation; and there are twelve hundred (1,200) computers in the building. Between two hundred fifty (250) and three hundred (300) computers per year are replaced as well as the upgrade of software packages. Dr. Weninger reported that more information about technology spending would be sought from Mr. Lanenga. Dr. Lee reiterated that this Board of Education has said this was an area to consider strongly in closing the achievement gap. The District is at a starting point and he was concerned that long-range dollars need to be used to do the kinds of things being talked about. Mr. Prale stated that the English Division is talking about revising its curriculum.

Regarding success, Dr. Lee asked if any non-special education students had completed the same experience in the reading lab. The answer was no. He asked how the District could determine the level of success of regular education students. Dr. Weninger suggested running a pilot. Dr. Millard was asked to include the discussion of technology relative to student achievement on an upcoming Instruction Committee agenda.

Q: Were all of these special education students part of the college prep basic transition programs.

A: Most of these students are self-contained students reading at the third or fourth grade reading levels. Academic Strategies is for students who want to drop in.

Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that schools are transitioning to Response to Intervention (RTI) Instruction model, including middle schools. There is not a large population of students who would be addressed in a reading initiative. The Board of Education wants reading teachers to work with regular classroom teachers to accelerate learning in regular education students with the regular body of students. RTI stresses this. The idea is that the students are in the mainstream population. Much criteria are used to get into a self-contained classroom is obtained in the regular education staffing. The more knowledge regular educations teachers have about this the more it will help. She hoped that all teachers were in-serviced about what is available to them, noting that reading occurs in math and in science. Mr. Prale concurred and stated that he should share these thoughts with Instructional Council that day to determine their level of interested. Dr. Lee felt that the District should “think out of the box” on ways to present this vehicle to teachers, in addition to taking the route of going through Division Heads.

Q: Are students able to tap into this program if they bring their own computers?

A: Only one student does that. While it has much to do with usage, i.e., who is on the computer, it does have that capacity.

Ms. Patchak-Layman reported that RTI is coming from because of federal and state initiatives; it is included in IDEA and NCLB, which are across-the-curriculum initiatives. Mr. Prale reported that OPRFHS has a RTI Committee, a learning team. The participants in this team include not just teachers from Special Education, but Janel Bishop and a math teacher. As that group expands and as the principal takes on the role of RTI chairperson, Mr. Prale felt the interventions would be accessible to more curriculums and not to just specific areas.

Student Achievement

Mr. Prale presented an Update on the Plans to Improve Student Achievement, as follows:

“BACKGROUND

Administrators and faculty have begun planning for the 2008-2009 school year. Instructional Council members have met to consider action steps to increase the achievement results for students in the regular and basic freshman programs.

“SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Using results from the EXPLORE test students and their course enrollments were identified and reviewed as to how to work best with these students.
- Division Heads will determine the teachers for these students. When possible, schedulers will identify teacher teams looking for as many shared teacher/student sections as possible.
- Division Heads are meeting with teachers to examine ninth grade course curricula to establish guidelines for the ninth grade basic and regular level courses. Division Heads will meet to share the guidelines to see what common expectations can be set for the entire ninth grade program. This will help the effectiveness of any existing teacher teams.

- Teachers and staff will make site visits to area high schools that have adopted PBIS school wide. Consideration is being given to expanding PBIS training as a way to support the behavioral expectations and guidelines for the courses.
- Mastery Manager training will be expanded for teachers in ninth grade basic and regular level courses.
- Summer workshops for teachers will be planned as needed. Additional professional development options, such as TESA where teams of teachers observe each other and share instructional strategies for improving student achievement, are under consideration.

“NEXT STEPS

Administrators, faculty, and staff will continue to plan for the ninth grade instructional program. Updates will be provided to the board in the coming months. Additional topics for program development, some of which will address goals for students throughout the school, may include the following:

- reading/Literacy Instruction in All Classrooms;
- additional Minutes for Extended Academic Support - Options for increasing structured study time include Saturday school, after school, or evening school sessions. Students would need to be identified, scheduled, and encouraged to attend additional sessions;
- counseling and Support Services/Advisory - Don Vogel and Rich Deptuch will continue discussions the counselors about advisory ideas;
- creation of a parental support program including a liaison to act as an intermediary between parents and school and increase and improve communication between parents and school;
- the pupil support services program needs to look at a parent outreach program; and
- professional development for all staff that focuses on race and achievement.”

Discussion ensued.

Q: Because students have already completed their course selections and their parents have agreed with that, how does that would interface with what is being put in place?

A: Parents would see continuity across their students’ courses, e.g., in the expectations and the guidelines. This is not necessarily a set of courses that everyone will take. The District will explore pairings, e.g., math and science. There may be continuity between those course selections. This will not be sent up as an academy with its own set of classes.

Q: Would incoming students identified with a score of fourteen (14) or below be in the same classes?

A: The District looks at the course selections.

Q: Some students may have scores of 14 or below in math, but not in English. Will they have experiences with the rest of the student body in the same areas?

A: The greatest opportunity would be provided in science.

Q: Was it the goal to move these students to the next level?

A: The District wants them to be successful at their highest level and in their class work.

Mr. Prale affirmed that there were still one-hundred fifty (150) students identified and that a disaggregation of gender and race had not been done but would be when the outcomes are reviewed.

Mr. Prale also reported to Dr. Millard that just as the Board of Education has had its conversations about race and student achievement, the administration would have its own discussion at an Administrator's Academy scheduled for June 9 and 10 and it would continue next year.

Ms. Patchak-Layman admitted to being nervous about this program. Mr. Prale noted that the focus of this program was more about the teachers than it was the students; it is a conversation the District can engage in with its teachers. Ms. Patchak-Layman was concerned about how many would be successful. The District could say it is going to work on teaching and that it will put all students in honors classes and at the end of nine weeks the District could evaluate their progress, then expand, improve the teaching at the honors level, and give the students more support. Mr. Prale concurred that it was a terrific and dramatic idea and that discussions with occurring right now with Districts 90 and 97 about this. There is a basis for working in that direction through articulation, summer work, etc. DM felt that venue could backfire because the District would be asking struggling students to do something they were not prepared to do. She used the example of someone who ran a mile and one day was told to run a marathon. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted there were many possibilities. She suggested looking at the goal and at what happens in the seventh and eighth grades.

Dr. Lee felt one could have a program with zero risk of failures. If the goals of the program are so unspecific and so immeasurable that one cannot evaluate whether that program succeeded or failed, then one cannot possibly fail. However, one is going through the motions that can be defined as trying. If the District becomes more specific, it runs the risk of failure and that is a risk he would accept. Dr. Millard noted that the District's goal is not necessarily that students succeed when they enter the high school, but that the high school prepares them for the long-term success.

Discussion: Evaluation Measures for Achievement Initiatives

Dr. Millard noted that Dr. Lee had suggested a proposal at the last Committee meeting as follows:

- 1) State a specific goal in the Board of Education in the development of expertise in the evaluation of movement in the level of achievement in the District;
- 2) Establish a framework for adopting the measures by which movement in student achievement shall be measured; and

- 3) State the plan by which the Board of Education intends to increase its own expertise in evaluating movement in achievement levels.

Dr. Millard believed that as the initiatives come forward for which the Board of Education hired Dr. Weninger to lead the charge, the Board of Education has the option to suggest an embellishment of it. She asked if a subcommittee were necessary to tell the educational professionals what they should be doing, how well they were doing their jobs, or reaching their goals. Dr. Lee stated that his distinction was that the Board of Education agrees on criteria for evaluating the extent to which the Board of Education is meeting its own goals, not the administrative goals. If the Board of Education decides it wants to close the achievement gap, he proposed that the Board of Education agree on criteria for deciding the extent to which the Board of Education has closed the achievement gap, as opposed to waiting for the administration to make proposals. This must be done in conjunction with the administration. If the Board of Education sets goals but does not have a common understanding of how to evaluate those goals, the Board of Education is not holding itself accountable for achieving those goals if it cannot evaluate its own progress. Dr. Millard felt it was more relevant to the achievement goals of the District; it did not have to do with specific programs implemented, but more of an evaluation of where the Board of Education wants to go. Dr. Lee concurred noting that he was talking about process of doing what the Board of Education said it wanted to do. The Board of Education may agree that there is no way it can come to an agreement on how it is going to judge its own progress on reaching these goals. If the Board of Education decides it is inappropriate or impossible, the Board of Education should discuss it, come to that conclusion, and make it public. The Board of Education should state what its understandings are of the evaluation of its own progress. While Dr. Lee felt this was far more important for instruction, Ms. Fisher stated she could make an argument for all of the committees' works.

Dr. Lee continued that the Board of Education had yet to initiate a discussion on how in five years would it determine if progress had made in closing the achievement gap. What criteria would be used to see if the District was closer or farther away from that goal? The Board of Education needs to reach some set of understanding of how it expects to go about evaluating progress toward that goal. Ms. Patchak-Layman concurred suggesting components would include the financial wellbeing of the District, the climate of the District, etc. She understood Dr. Lee's proposal to be rather than taking the whole committee's time that a couple of board members would discuss it and bring it forward to the whole committee. Dr. Lee concurred but noted that without the administration's input, it would be useless for the subcommittee to pursue. It would have to involve Mr. Prale, Dr. Weninger, Ms. Hill, and Dr. Spight.

Dr. Lee stated that the Board of Education has already been presented with the information from which to work. Requests for anything beyond that would need to be discussed and evaluated because it would involve an expenditure of time and resources. He did not want to build a structure that gets too expensive in terms of time and attention, if not money. He was speaking about something that would be useable, as opposed to theoretical perfection. Dr. Lee also assumed that it would be impossible to determine

how well the achievement gap is closed, as any measures would be imperfect, meaning that a specific set of measures would be used with an understanding their limitations. Once understood, the imperfect measures could be used because there was agreement on them. When asked to clarify the work of the subcommittee versus that which the administrators are currently providing in assessment of the programs, Dr. Lee stated that the difference would be that what the administrators are currently providing is their best guess based on the Board of Education's input. Because the Board of Education has not decided how it will evaluate this, all the administration can do is to give its best guess. The Board of Education needs to put out what it wants.

Ms. Fisher asked why not have the whole Board of Education involved? Why just have a subcommittee? Dr. Lee felt it was a matter of efficiency. Ms. Fisher stated that except for the Instruction Committee, the committees have operated as whole of the Board; the Board of Education serves the board members well because they have an interest. Dr. Lee stated that if the entire Board of Education is willing to devote the time and interest necessary to do this, it is fine. However, he has not seen that interest.

Dr. Millard felt that this was a job for those who are guiding and directing and being paid to effect the changes the Board of Education is requesting and who also have expertise in the area. She felt it was a starting point and if something is missing, the Board of Education can request it. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that as an elected official she asks what criteria one would have in place to judge how well things were going. She felt it was a different philosophical orientation to having the administration bring forward the indices. Dr. Lee had no problem with the administration taking the initiative in presenting a starting point. He suggested a Board subcommittee because in previous conversations with Dr. Weninger, he had formed the impression that Dr. Weninger has a full plate. If this were something that could be started quickly, then that would accomplish what Dr. Lee wanted. However, a subcommittee, in his judgment, was the fastest way to do this. He agreed with Ms. Patchak-Layman that it was a philosophical difference, but the conversation here is about process. What is constructive about the idea is it would focus the conversations about student achievement; it would not prolong the conversations until the time for which they were prescribed. It would focus the conversation and help make the work more productive. Dr. Weninger felt that the community only focused on PSAE numbers and, in his opinion, they were inaccurate. If the PSAE were looked at as growth model over time, it would have more legitimacy. He appreciated Dr. Lee's comment about his having a full plate, but he preferred the Board of Education charge the administration to come up with the indices by a certain date.

Ms. Patchak-Layman responded that this was policy work; it is the Board of Education's responsibility to evaluate whether the District is moving forward and how the Board of Education will make those judgments. She did not find a policy statement about determining how well the District is doing. Dr. Millard noted that any Board of Education member could feed information on their perspectives as to what Dr. Weninger should provide. Ms. Fisher concurred with making a charge to administration. Dr. Millard added that if the Board of Education comes up with an understanding that other things need to be incorporated into a policy, as a global view, it could add a policy to that effect. Dr.

Weninger added that it would also help the District move forward in defining student achievement. Mr. Prale felt it would be helpful to have the new administrative team in place to help with this concern. He suggested an appropriate timeline would be to have a preliminary report in June and a final report in August.

Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that there is a list of the kinds of documentation that are already in place, e.g., PSAE, PLAN data, etc. She asked for a listing of the data currently being collected and the new pieces of data that would be necessary in order to get a picture of success.

Dr. Lee suggested that examples of feedback at the June meeting would be:

- 1) This is much too short.
- 2) This list of indicators is much too long.
- 3) This is much too involved.
- 4) This is not too involved.

Because agreement by the Board of Education would be time consuming, he hoped to start discussing the concepts in June rather than in August.

Dr. Millard proposed adding to the June Instruction Committee meeting the indices as measurements of student academic success and she requested that all Board of Education members feed information to Dr. Weninger to help him create the criteria.

Ms. Kalmerton was asked to send out an email to the Board of Education members asking them to send Dr. Weninger their points of view on what they feel would be indices of achievement in closing the achievement gap. Dr. Millard noted that she would verbally discuss this issue with the missing Board of Education members so that they have an understanding of the discussion.

Textbook approval

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

Special Education Division:	<i>Practical Mathematics: Consumer Application and Pre-Apprentice Training: A Test Preparation Manual for the Skilled Trades</i>
World Language Division:	<i>Integrated Chinese</i>
Science Division:	<i>Biology: Glencoe Science</i>

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked the following questions:

- Q: How this biology book differed from the previous one.
A: This course was an effort to bolster the basic level biology course. Students only receive one credit for their work.

Q: What is the difference between having a student in this class as opposed to having in Biology 1 and 2?

A: It is based on factors discussed at last the Instruction Committee meeting, e.g., standardized test scores and parents' input would be relevant for students placed in this course, as opposed to Biology 1 and 2.

Discussion ensued about the effectiveness of using CD's rather than books in an effort to keep costs down. A suggestion was to keep books in the classroom for student use and that students be allowed to take home just the CD's. However, Could students sustain extensive reading online? This question will be raised with both the Science and English Divisions.

Q: One textbook had a fifth grade reading level. Why?

A: The special education math course textbook is used to explain the math problem, as well. A higher reading level book would be a complication to math achievement.

Additional Instructional Matters for Committee Information/Deliberation

Dr. Millard felt that directing the Board of Education's discussion about whether the program was working might facilitate more efficiency. Ms. Fisher expressed her desire for each Board of Education member to restrict themselves to three follow-up questions. If the Board of Education member still had unanswered questions, he/she should go directly to the administrator involved and ask those questions. Dr. Lee concurred.

Ms. Patchak-Layman was directed to speak to the head of the Drivers' Education Department directly to seek out the answer to a question she had because she, as a parent, had just been sent a notification letter stating that students would take the test for their driver's permit next week. While Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that she brought this issue forward as a systemic issue to be reviewed, the Committee members felt she could secure the answer directly with the department head.

Referring to a petition by students for a particular computer science course not to be dropped, Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the students were able to find other students interested in registering for this course, would the course be reinstated. The response was that the students now interested in this course would be coming from other areas, which could, in turn, be affected. Ms. Patchak-Layman was also informed that the high school supports students who would be eligible for this higher computer science course through Triton classes, etc.

Adjournment

The Instruction Committee adjourned at 11:18 a.m.