

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

**An Instruction Committee of the Whole Board  
September 20,2007**

An Instruction Committee meeting of the Whole Board was held on Wednesday, August 15, 2007, in the Board Room. The meeting opened at 7:35 a.m. Committee members present were Jacques A. Conway, John C. Allen, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Sharon Patchak Layman (arrived at 7:40 a.m.), and John P. Rigas. Also present were: Dr. Attila J. Weninger, Superintendent; Jason Edgecombe, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Cheryl Witham, Chief Financial Officer; Phil Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Jack Lanenga, Assistant Superintendent for Operations; 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; James Paul Hunter, Faculty Senate Chair; Cindy Milojevic, Assistant Principal for Student Activities; Betsy Farley, Dr. Steve Goldberg, Michele Bayer, John Costopoulos, and Lee Remack, O.P.R.F.H.S. faculty members; Anthony Gulley, Jack O'Brien, Gary Nelson and Angela Franco, students; Dr. Carl Spight, O.P.R.F.H.S. Institutional Researcher; Terry Dean of the *Wednesday Journal* and Bridget Kennedy of the *Oak Leaves*.

**Approval of Instruction Committee Minutes**

The Instruction Committee minutes of June 21 and August 15, 2007, were approved, with an amendment to the August 15 minutes.

**Student Travel Experiences**

**India**

Dr. Goldberg reported that he, and Drs. Dietra and Anthony Millard every spring supervise a 16-day trip to India for up to 14 students. The trip includes visits to historical, religious, and cultural sites throughout India and meetings with nongovernmental organizations that address educational, environmental and social issues. At the end of the trip, students are paired for short home stays with friends of the Millards in Mumbai. Dipak Shah, a noted scientist, educator, musician and travel consultant, accompanies the group during the entire stay in India. While the cost of the trip is approximately \$3,000, Dr. Goldberg and the Millards have personally raised funds for minority students. Many of these students have gone on to study Hindi, etc. Dr. Goldberg informed the group of the cities they traveled to in India, and their participation in various activities including the helping of victims of the Union Carbide accident.

### Italy Exchange Trip

Betsy Farley supervises a two-week journey to Italy for up to 28 students who have studied Italian, as well as French, Spanish, or Latin, on a space available basis. The trip includes five days of sightseeing in Rome, followed by a stay in Florence where students live with families for about 12 days and attend school just outside of Florence to study Italian. During their stay in Florence, students take several day trips to surrounding sites, including Venice, Siena and Pisa. O.P.R.F.H.S. has participated in this exchange with this same school for 20 years; it is an experimental high school that focuses on technology and language. The Italian students will visit O.P.R.F.H.S. October 20, 2007.

### English Exchange Trip

Kristin Knake, the English Exchange Trip's sponsor, and Gary Nelson and Angela Franco, students, gave testimony about the value of the Exchange Trip to England. O.P.R.F.H.S. students clicked well with the English students and both groups felt they had made life-long friends. This exchange takes place in the spring. About 20 students participate and they visit the Saffron Walden School, which is an hour north of London. Students stay with families, attend school during the day, and visit areas of historical interest in the afternoons and on weekends. Students also tour London on this trip. The students from England visit O.P.R.F.H.S. in late summer and stay with families in the communities. When the English students visited, they were impressed with our countryside.

### Marine Biology Trip

The Marine Biology Course focuses on Florida Marine ecology. About 30 students participate in two successive summer field courses, taught by science teacher Michelle Bayer, that conclude with field studies in Florida. The trip lasts 10 days and includes visits to Orlando, Fort Pierce and Key Largo where student travel to such research informational facilities as Sea World, Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute and Marine Lab. Students learn about sea grass, mangrove, reef, open ocean and deep sea habitants through experiences on, in, and near the water.

Michele Bayer, sponsor of the field biology field trip for over 12 years, introduced student Jack O'Brien who participated in this year's trip. Jack spoke about the fact that he was able to snorkel, ride in a boat, study organisms, and make a field notebook. While he received lots of information to digest, it was great experience. The students worked the entire time, but it was rewarding. He hopes to participate in the Marine Biology II trip next year and scuba dive.

### Summer Arctic Trip

Student Anthony Gully participated in the trip to the Arctic this summer. He offered some of the details of his trip, i.e., taking a two-day train trip where they experienced weather that ranged from 70 degrees to 20 degrees. He studied with Jerome Jackson and

focused on the Arctic's birds on the Hudson Bay, close to the Beluga whales' inhabitant. The group studied Arctic terms, examined eggs, saw polar bears, trapped and tagged Arctic birds. He displayed pictures of the birds for the Committee members to see. Science teacher John Costopoulos was the sponsor of this trip. Mr. Costopoulos and Anthony were appreciative of the Board of Education's support of this trip. The cost was \$3,000.

### Great Smokey Mountains Field Trip

Leigh Remack, sponsor of this trip, noted that thirteen students participated in this year's trip to the Great Smoky Mountains. The trip concludes with field-based study in the Smoky Mountains National Park at the Great Smoky Mountain Institute in Tremont, Tenn. For one week in the summer, students participate in environmental research and learn from expert environmentalists about conservation, biology and geology. As they travel the trails and rivers of the Great Smoky Mountains, students have a chance to observe wildlife such as coyote, black bears, deer, hawks, and salamanders in their natural habitat. Because the cost of this trip is just \$450, it serves another demographic of students.

### France

Rena Mazumdar, World Language Teacher, was the sponsor of the two-week trip to France. She was very proud of the students who participated in living conditions that were less than what they have at home. While it was a hectic schedule, the students have many positive stories and experiences to share. The trip starts in Paris. The highlights in Paris include visits to the Louvre Museum, the Notre-Dame Cathedral, a climb to the top of the Arc de Triumph, a day trip to the Chateau de Versailles, and shopping at the Galleries Lafayette. The group continues on to St. Malo, a medieval coastal town in North Brittany, where students stay with host families. Excursion visits include Mont St. Michel and to Carnac to view megaliths erected during the Neolithic period. This is a fantastic journey through French history and civilization. It also furthers the students' linguistic goals and communications. Ms. Mazumdar was thankful for the opportunity to sponsor these trips.

Ms. Milojevic looked forward to bringing forward several more applications for different opportunities.

Mr. Prale noted that O.P.R.F.H.S. also offers other trips, such as a Geology Field Trip to Costa Rica, a Spanish Exchange Trip, an Adventurers' Club trip, overnight trips with the music program, etc. The trips vary in size but all require much work. The Board of Education had at times struggled with the decision to allow travel and Mr. Prale felt it was a good decision.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked:

- 1) How many graduating students participate?

- 2) How does the travel connect with their educational experience?
- 3) What proportion of the senior class goes on these types of trips?
- 4) How can more students have these opportunities?

Ms. Milojevic will prepare that report. Part of the cost of some of the trips is for summer school credit. Opportunities for funding include the Linda Tibensky and Linda Levine scholarships.

If the District's goal and passion was to have students travel, Ms. Patchak-Layman felt it needed to discuss how to get a higher percentage of seniors to do so. The school does not say cohesively that all students should have this opportunity or how it provides higher experiences to the graduating class. Ms. Milojevic presented a brochure that Dr. Millard had initiated which listed all of the trips and pertinent information relative to each trip. Scholarship opportunities were listed as well.

Ms. Patchak-Layman felt the school should make a concerted effort to recruit students, preferably minorities. Trip leaders and sponsors should make a concerted effort to raise money for a minority student on at least one of the trips. Dr. Lee was willing to assist in the process of fundraising, but asked for help with knowing the deadlines in order to have enough time to fundraise effectively. Dr. Millard stated that there were other community members were willing to help with this also. She noted that the Alumni Association's enrichment program would help fund trips during the summer.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if all trips had prerequisites. Do some trips' prerequisites only require the student to have an interest in it? The trips that are also courses may have prerequisites. Ms. Patchak-Layman felt there were many barriers for students to hurdle. Ms. Milojevic stated that there were no barriers; the students in the language programs would have more of an interest, however. Ms. Patchak-Layman felt it a barrier for students to plan for the long term, as some adolescents cannot plan for the next week. Mr. Prale noted that there were several ways of assisting students. The Field Biology trip has classes to prepare students for the trip, because it is credit bearing. The India trip provides seminars to students to make them feel more comfortable before they depart.

The District has trips for music groups scheduled for Atlanta, Disney World, Prague and Vienna during spring break. It is very unusual for a high school to have this many exchanges promoted by both the Board and outside the school. The District needs to: 1) continue to find opportunities for students, 2) let students know in advance the opportunities, 3) involve the students, and 4) involve the community in terms of support.

### **Standardized Test Report**

Ms. Hill provided a detailed report on the standardized test scores (attached to and made a part of the minutes of the meeting) to the Instruction Committee members and highlighted the following information.

## ACT

“Taking the long view, aggregate composite and subject-area ACT scores for OPRF graduating classes have steadily increased since 2002, which marked the first class in which nearly all of our students took the ACT as part of the state-mandated PSAE in their junior year. Among 2007 graduates, we successfully tested 801 students, representing nearly 99% of the class. Scores for these students reflect increases relative to 2006 in all subject areas and in the composite average, which has surpassed the pre-PSAE composite in each of the past two years (23.1 in 2006 and 23.4 in 2007). We have also seen increases since 2003 in the proportions of our students achieving College Readiness Benchmarks<sup>1</sup> (or better); 41% of the class of 2007 met the benchmarks in all four areas (English, Math, Reading, and Science), compared to 21% of Illinois graduates. The District is pleased that taken together things are continuing to go as they are but is concerned about the gaps that persist. Troubling is the fact that the ACT over the last four years the gaps between white and black students have increased. Students taking honors or college prep classes number 85 percent but perhaps as many as 53% are not making the benchmark. That is a call for the District to look closely at the college prep program so that students are experiencing a rigorous program to provide them with success.

## SAT

“Among the class of 2007, 279 students—roughly one-third of the class—took the SAT. Our students’ combined average score was 1840, compared to a state combined average of 1793 and a national average of 1511. Of the twelve OPRF SAT-takers who identified themselves as African American, the combined average of 1565 exceeded the national average but fell below that of our 212 self-identified White students, whose combined average was 1876. These data are confounded by the fact that over 10% of the total number of OPRF students who took the SAT chose not to specifically identify with one of the racial/ethnic categories provided.”

## PSAE

Ms. Hill stated that the final numbers confirmed that O.P.R.F.H.S. did not make AYP.

“The aggregate performance of our students was not sufficient for the school as a whole to make Adequate Yearly Progress, because too few African American, low-income, and special education students met or exceeded standards in reading and/or math. 2007 marked the second year of declines in reading performance in the aggregate, as well as for girls, African American students, multiracial/multiethnic students, and low-income students. This effect was most pronounced among African American students, among whom there was a 52.5 % rate of meeting and exceeding in 2005 and a 30.9 % rate in 2007. While the numbers in math are also down from 2006, the declines are not as dramatic as those in reading.

“In science, an area for which we are not required to make AYP, the aggregate meets/exceeds rate (68%) was down slightly compared to last year but was within the range of meets/exceeds percentages from the previous four years. Compared to 2006, African

American students' rate of meeting/exceeding increased nearly seven percentage points as did the rate for low-income students. Special education students experienced a 2.6 percentage point increase compared to 2006."

Mr. Conway asked if Division Heads had instituted plans to deal with the achievement gap. Mr. Prale responded that all divisions are setting goals for this year and those goals will articulate with District goals. Mr. Conway wanted more articulation with Districts 90 and 97.

Ms. Hill had not yet seen the state PSAE averages, but she had communicated with other CADCA members about their experiences and they varied widely. Some schools had increased their scores.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the divisions' plans were based on the present numbers. Mr. Prale responded that as each division sets its divisional goals in August and September, PSAE results could influence those plans. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if they would present their plans for each of the four classes. She felt each class should have a different set of activities, i.e., one for seniors, juniors, sophomores, and freshmen. Mr. Prale responded that plans tend to be developed by curricular programs, i.e. Math works with an algebra program, Agile Mind, etc. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if they started at the course level or the student level. Mr. Prale stated that the divisional plans start with the students by looking at the courses they take and then working to improve those experiences.

Dr. Weninger reminded the Committee that he would present a comprehensive plan in October. While these numbers were disturbing, the students in some of the initiatives specifically targeted in literacy and math have not yet taken the PSAE. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked whether the other report showed the initiatives in math, as they were sophomores. Mr. Prale's response was no; no new initiative was profiled in the report. Ms. Patchak-Layman was disheartened to see that the scores across the last couple of years were static. There was little movement and the institution does not have anything to show for it. She felt alarmed. She wanted to see a kind of tension saying that this is not acceptable and that the District is turning over every stone. Mr. Prale stated that the District has reviewed curriculum and bringing in assessment programs, programs at the transition seminar, and support programs. The administration has not been idle or lacked intensity. The District has professional development and specific academic support programs at work. Many of the 3,000 students enrolled at the high school are successful. Articulation with Districts 90 and 97 has increased.

Dr. Lee stated that he considered the content of the report just made, the importance was obvious, the true significance of it, he did not grasp. He did not grasp it because he has not been able to come up with questions that he considered helpful. He expected to be able to do that after putting more work into it, but there were many questions that have to be asked in order to be able to deal with what was presented. They do not come easily. He preferred to keep looking for the right questions. He did not feel a reaction from him would be considered useful or helpful at this point.

## **Research Report**

Mr. Prale provided the Instruction Committee members with the following written report:

### **“Overview**

At an earlier Board of Education meeting a board member suggested using existing standardized test and achievement related data to create a framework for tracking student progress through their experiences in the high school. Picking up on that suggestion, Amy Hill, Dr. Carl Spight, and I have collected and organized information related to several groups of students of varying sizes and demographics. Over a series of meetings, we identified areas of inquiry where we thought the available information would produce an analysis of behavior patterns and/or factors that could be linked to achievement outcomes. The behaviors and factors could then be further explored for opportunities to change school practices, address the need for improving instruction, or present interventions for supporting student achievement.

### **“Available Information**

We decided to review student test scores for the class scheduled to graduate in 2009. For this school year, those students are eleventh graders or juniors. Available test information for these students included the ISAT scores given by District 97, placement tests given by the high school in advance of a students’ registering for ninth grade courses, an EXPLORE test, given in October 2006, and an instructional ACT (IACT) test given in April 2007. Linking names and scores for both ISAT and EXPLORE tests yielded 427 students with matched scores. Additional information for those students used for this review included course taking patterns, weighted grade point average (WGPA), grades earned in specific courses, and attendance and discipline information. For purposes of predicting whether a student would meet expectations on the PSAE as a junior, we used the college readiness benchmarks identified by the ACT and a measure of successful performance in a sophomore core academic course. In this review of the information we used the following criteria to establish whether a student was likely to achieve college readiness - a subscore of 21 or greater on the math portion of the IACT or earning an A or B grade in his or her sophomore math class and a subscore of 20 or greater on the reading portion of the IACT. An assumption here is that students who meet these criteria are likely to meet or exceed standards on the PSAE exam given towards the end of the students’ junior year at the high school.

### **“Analysis**

(This analysis is significantly abbreviated and summarizes several days of work and conversations among the staff in the office of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.)

Setting aside the challenges faced in identifying appropriate and useful scores and information sets, we started this investigation with two group of students, one white and one African American, from the class of 2009 who met expectations on their eighth grade District 97 ISAT math and reading scores and may or may not have reached the college readiness benchmarks as described above. It turns out that 108 students were included in the sample of students who met standards on the eighth grade ISAT, 74 white students

and 34 African American students. This represented the approximate proportion of white and African American students in the school. The 108 students appeared from the analysis displayed in Table 1 printed in the appendix to this report.

“We then considered how many of the 108 students went on to meet college readiness benchmarks by the end of sophomore year. For the 108 students, 40 reached the college readiness benchmarks as defined above. The 40 students are shown in Table 2 printed in the appendix to this report. Of the 40 students who reached college readiness benchmarks, 37 were white and 3 were African American. Stated as a percentage, 50% of white students who met standards as eighth graders met college readiness benchmarks as sophomores, but only 9% of African American students met the same standard as sophomores. This pattern is strongly statistically significant.

“This gap in performance led us to examine the courses the students took when they came to the high school and the results from their experiences as ninth and tenth graders. We looked at WGPA, eighth grade ISAT scale scores, ninth grade placement tests, and results on the EXPLORE test subscores in math and reading. While this information mapped the performance gap and confirmed existing and known patterns, it did not suggest any specific intervention.

“However, as part of the analysis of these students and their course taking patterns, we found that students who enrolled in the honors math and English programs more likely to reach the college readiness benchmarks than students enrolled in the college preparatory curriculum and that the differences we found were statistically significant. We directed our attention to success in math, leaving English for another report. Stated as percentages, just over one-third of the white students who met eighth grade ISAT standards and took college preparatory math went on to reach college readiness benchmarks. However, less than eight per-cent of African American students who met eighth grade ISAT standards and took college preparatory math went on to reach college readiness benchmarks. The significance of this difference in achievement prompted us to focus more closely on the math area of the ninth grade curriculum, the Algebra 1-2 course.

“We understood that though the Algebra 1-2 course enrolls students from the regular academic track of incoming freshmen students, not all of those students succeeded in reaching college readiness benchmarks as we defined them. Dr. Spight created a new sample of students, drawing from all races and all achievement levels, who took the Algebra 1-2 course and for whom we had eighth grade ISAT, EXPLORE, and IACT test scores. These criteria yielded 130 students who varied by race and by test score; it should be noted that this information set extends beyond those students who met standards on the eighth grade ISAT score and looks instead to the overall Algebra 1-2 course experience as it relates to reaching college readiness benchmarks as we defined them.

“We found that of the sample 130 students who took Algebra 1-2, 33 (25%) met college readiness benchmarks as described as sophomores. When looking at specific subgroups



we found that 27 (34%) of the white students in the sample reached college readiness benchmarks as described and 3 (7%) of the African American students reached college readiness benchmarks as defined by the end of sophomore year. It should be noted that a similar pattern of performance is demonstrated on the reading subscores for students enrolled in other college preparatory courses. This information and drill down of student performance linked over three years and two districts demonstrates the need to continue to improve the academic courses for students in the regular academic program.

#### “Recommendations

This review of the available performance information shifted to a focus on the math program. Continuing review should be made of all areas of the school curriculum. Though a fuller plan for addressing achievement is due in the near future, at this time and based on the review of this information the following recommendations are made:

- Enhance the information services environment to make identifying the students who are not on track to reach college readiness benchmarks as early as possible.
- Work with District 97 to prepare as many students as possible for entry into the Intermediate Algebra math program when they enter ninth grade. Algebra proficiency by the end of eighth grade may be a key to all students reaching college readiness by the end of 11<sup>th</sup> grade. The first articulation meeting for this school year has already been scheduled for October 3, 2007. Districts 97 and 90 have already committed to attending the meeting and we are in the process of inviting the private schools that send students to the high school after they complete eighth grade.
- Report on the success of the Algebra Block/Agile Mind Program. The first students who received this intervention are current sophomores, Class of 2010. They will take an IACT this spring, which will provide a comparison with the Class of 2009 data we reviewed for this report.
- Review the way the current Algebra 1-2 course is targeted and taught. Right now, the Algebra course does not appear to ensure success for all students, white or African American, on the PSAE. That program needs to yield more benefits to all students who come through that course.
- Look more closely at a small group of 14 African American students who as sophomores we suggest college readiness and who are projected to meet and exceed state standards on the PSAE scheduled for this school year. The success stream for those students might hold insights for improving the college preparatory program here at the high school. A preliminary analysis is included in the appendix to this report as Table 3.

“Appendix of tables.

TABLE 1:

## CROSTAB FOR ISAT MATH AND READING PERFORMANCE BY RACE.

ISAT Reading Performance \* ISAT Math Performance \* RACE Crosstabulation

Count			ISAT Math Performance				Total	
RACE			B	E	M	W		
1	ISAT Reading Performance	B		13		4	4	21
		E	1	1	62	21		85
		M		22	54	74	2	152
		W					1	1
	Total		1	36	116	99	7	259
2	ISAT Reading Performance	B		20		3	11	34
		E		1	4	4		9
		M		32	6	34	3	75
		W		1				1
	Total			54	10	41	14	119
4	ISAT Reading Performance	B		1				1
		E			4			4
		M		1	3	4		8
	Total			2	7	4		13
5	ISAT Reading Performance	B				1		1
		E		1		3		4
		M		2		4		6
	Total			3		8		11
6	ISAT Reading Performance	B		2				2
		E			8	2		10
		M		3	6	4		13
	Total			5	14	6		25

**TABLE 2:  
CROSTAB FOR ISAT MATH AND READING PERFORMANCE BY RACE FOR THE SUBSET OF STUDENTS WHO MEET THE BAR FOR COLLEGE READINESS AS MEASURED BY THE INSTRUCTIONAL ACT AND THEIR SOPHOMORE MATHEMATICS COURSE PERFORMANCE:**

ISAT Reading Performance \* ISAT Math Performance \* RACE Crosstabulation

Count			ISAT Math Performance			Total	
RACE			B	E	M		
1	ISAT Reading Performance	E	1	1	60	15	77
		M		5	43	37	85
	Total		1	6	103	52	162
2	ISAT Reading Performance	E			3	2	5
		M		2	4	3	9
	Total			2	7	5	14
4	ISAT Reading Performance	E			4		4
		M			2		2
	Total				6		6
5	ISAT Reading Performance	E				2	2
		M				1	1
	Total					3	3
6	ISAT Reading Performance	E			7		7
		M			6	4	10
	Total				13	4	17

a. COLLRDY = Y

Discussion ensued.

It was noted that articulation with the feeder districts should be enhanced. Dr. Weninger planned to appeal to Dr. Collins, Superintendent of District 97, and Dr. David Bonnette, Superintendent of District 90. Dr. Weninger planned to send a proposal to them the

following day. One thing that the District believes to be true is that eighth graders must have Algebra before coming to the high school. Many schools do teach Algebra in the eighth grade. If students have a successful experience in Algebra, they are more successful in higher-level classes.

Dr. Lee asked 1) Why does it appear that the concern was greater in the area of math skills than in reading skills? and 2) Is it possible that the answer to the first question is that there is not that much information about reading skills. Mr. Prale responded that there was not enough time to look at their English, history or science courses for this report.

Dr. Lee asked if the English courses concentrated on specific reading skills, as opposed to other things. Mr. Prale stated that the District has a literature-based program, not a reading-based program, particularly at the honors level. Mr. Hunter noted that the learning team he serves on is examining this. The problem is a difficult one. The tests are too comprehensive; thus, students do not test well. He thought one would see an incorporation of college-based skills, but the goal is to teach holistically so students in a comprehensive setting go forward. If O.P.R.F.H.S. decided to teach-to-the-test, it could. However, the majority of students would suffer. The District has to be able to assess how it is doing and the desired outcomes. The faculty looks forward to seeing Dr. Weninger's plan.

Regarding data sets, Mr. Prale asked for more discussion concerning the math courses sophomores need to take to be on track for college. The success streams contain the two honors level courses. The question for the school was, can a student go into the regular program and prepare for college?

While Dr. Lee asked if the students read well enough to be able to be successful in any of the courses, he was not sure the school could answer that question. Mr. Prale stated that it was dependent upon what the course asked of the student. The school does reading testing for ninth and tenth college-prep levels. The average skill level is 10.1 or 10.2. However, there are students with a reading skill of 8.4 who can still be successful in the course if the course instruction is engaging enough to make the student interested to read at that instructional level. A reading skill level of 8.0 and above should be successful in college prep classes. What about the success of students with a reading skill level of less than 8.0? Those students struggle. When a student comes in as a ninth grader with a reading level below the eighth grade, how does that match with District 97's recent ISAT scores? How can these students be meeting AYP at the eighth grade level, but come to the high school with lower than an eighth grade reading skill.

Dr. Spight was at a recent meeting of D97 where ISAT standards were discussed. D97 had not been meeting the reading standards in ISAT until recently. To meet AYP, is not difficult because even if a district makes AYP, there may be a minority group not meeting the standards. The majority of African-American students coming from District 97, even with that district meeting AYP, are not meeting the standards. If any students come in deficient in reading, it is a problem. The high school does not teach reading. It

begs the discussion if all regular level courses need this evaluation. Dr. Weninger noted that there were many wheels in motion to address African-American student achievement. In October, he will bring many of the pieces together. The District also needs to address issues such as behavior in the classroom, the community, curriculum for freshman, sophomore, and junior students who are not achieving, and their reading skills. From what Dr. Spight said, the students who met AYP in District 97 have not taken those tests, so this needs adjustment. It will not be a quick fix, however. Dr. Lee asked if were possible to get a short statement from him without imposing a burden on Dr. Spight, Ms. Hill or Mr. Prale. Mr. Allen concurred. It sounded like the school was being evaluated on the benchmark of the minority subgroups.

Dr. Weninger stated that at the macro level, some students were not achieving at a necessary benchmark. The District must find a way to determine where a student is when he/she arrives at the high school and then decide where he/she needs to go. It will take a lot of hard work by many people. He cautioned that the District does not want to destroy a good educational system so that students can pass a test. That would be foolish. Dr. Lee asked if the District was also working to find a larger number of benchmarks that can be determined within a three-hour exam. Mr. Hunter stated that the District is doing research on a topic that is not written about in journals. It takes a concerted effort of buy in and explanation. The discrepancy is hard to understand and it is difficult one in which to respond. The Board of Education wants the District to tackle the problems when they are defined.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the District had textbooks on tape. Even if a student did not have the reading ability, he/she could still have the intellectual ability. Mr. Prale was unaware of books on tape for textbooks for regular education students. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the District had them, why would they not be universally used. It would be good backup for any student with a specific skill development. Dr. Lee noted concern about the District making it unnecessary for students to improve their skills. He opposed using tapes versus the improvement of students' reading skills.

Because the EXPLORE Test and the ACT Test are predictive tests, Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the District had goals for the students in an acceleration model that are above the benchmark of 20, i.e., 22 or 23. Does the District assign students to class based on the EXPLORE test? Mr. Prale stated that it was one of five different pieces of information used.

Dr. Millard hoped that the October Plan would reach beyond the test; its purpose would be to educate students. The District should be trying to teach students to go beyond, to have another skill set.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if there were any discussion occurring about school tradition, the structure of the school, or the impact it has on whether all students are able to achieve. That way of providing education may have a negative or positive impact on the performance of all students. The District assumes that nothing should disturb the students who are achieving at the high levels. However, is there discussion going on

about whether that was having an influence? Mr. Prale noted that there has not been that kind of discussion at the high school for several years, if at all. The District is better served to expend its energy to help lower achieving students. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the District were exploring the idea of small schools.

Dr. Weninger stated that his plan would not turn the school upside down. Dr. Lee wanted to share his reaction to what is now referred to as the “October Plan.” If the Superintendent presents the Board of Education with a full-blown, detailed plan for what the District is going to do about the achievement gap, for him, it would have no credibility. For him, credibility means coming up with a reasonable way to come up with a real plan. Dr. Millard looked forward to a plan that was focused and fluid.

Mr. Prale thanked the Instruction Committee members for the opportunity to bring forward direct information. Dr. Millard stated that the Board of Education members were not the educators, but were the stewards of the District and they rely on the Superintendent to bring a plan.

### **Adjournment**

The committee adjourned at 9:20 a.m.