

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

**An Instruction Committee of the Whole Board  
June 19, 2008**

An Instruction Committee meeting of the Whole Board was held on Thursday, June 19, 2008 in the Board Room. Dr. Millard opened the meeting at 7:37 a.m. Committee members present were Jacques A. Conway, Valerie J. Fisher, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Sharon Patchak Layman, and John P. Rigas. 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; Don Vogel, Interim Principal; 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; Dr. Carl Spight, Institutional Researcher; James Paul Hunter, Faculty Senate Chair; Geri Rhode, Community member, Becca Bloch, O.P.R.F.H.S. graduate; Emma Lewis, student; Bridget Kennedy of the *Oak Leaves* and Terry Dean of the *Wednesday Journal*.

**Acceptance of Instruction Committee Minutes of April 17, 2008**

It was the consensus of the Instruction Committee members to accept the minutes of the April Instruction Committee meeting, noting that Dr. Millard was not in attendance and Dr. Lee chaired the meeting.

**Report on Professional Development Activities**

Mr. Prale provided the following information:

“The 2007-2008 Professional Development Committee (PDC), a joint committee of faculty and administration from across the divisions, determined the following goals for the 2007-2008 school year.

- Continue building awareness of Response to Intervention (RTI) including exposure to and application of specific instructional methods and assessments for use by general education teachers.
- Develop teacher expertise in using classroom assessments and technologies to analyze and address the effects of classroom instruction.
- Use divisional time to develop teacher-led learning teams to improve classroom performance.
- Use the 2007 student survey data and cross-divisional discussions to continue the dialogue among faculty, staff, and students addressing school climate.
- Continue work on evidence-based efforts to narrow disparities in achievement.

“The calendar of activities for the school year had been set at the end of the 2006-2007 school year. Teacher-led learning teams were organized within divisions at the start of this school year. In October 2007, Dr. Weninger presented a series of ideas for raising student achievement, which the faculty and staff began discussing and addressing between November 2007 and May 2008.”

A summary of activities follows:

### **“Full Faculty Activities**

#### **“Opening of School and Close of School Celebrations**

- As in the previous school year, we began and ended the school year with gatherings of the entire faculty and staff to celebrate our work and our shared experiences across the school community.
- The events focused on establishing a culture of respect and celebration of the work taken on by all employees of the district. These meetings are important for creating a shared sense of vision and for building morale and mutual respect.
- Representatives from all employee groups spoke at each assembly.

“The January 17, 2008 Institute Day focused on defining institutional excellence and understanding the process of creating that definition through four critical lenses. Dr. Kevin Kumashiro of the University of Illinois – Chicago addressed the faculty and staff, who then met in cross-divisional and divisional groups to discuss what high school students should know and be able to do because of having attended OPRFHS.

“In September, November, January, and April full faculty meetings were held to improve communication and address pressing issues before the school. For example on November 10, 2007, a full faculty meeting was held to discuss the ideas for raising student achievement that had been presented to the Board and community during the previous month.

#### *“Divisional Learning Teams*

“Each division organized learning teams that were asked to set goals, meet during the eight late arrival mornings (or more often), and issue a report summarizing the team’s work. The learning team model of professional development provides teachers with time to improve teaching skills, develop curriculum, instruction, and assessment materials and assess the impact of their work on student performance. Division heads were responsible for monitoring the teams and ensuring that the work of these teams aligned with the goals of the district and aimed to improve the quality of instruction for students. While several divisions organized teams according to specific courses, a broad range of learning team topics was covered this year.

At the May Instruction Committee meeting, the Board of Education previewed a calendar for 2008-2009 that created additional professional development time in the school schedule. The specific goals and calendar of activities will be developed by the PDC after additional direction from the Board of Education, and the administration.

Mr. Prale provided summaries of surveys of faculty taken after the Institute Days, as well as summaries from the divisional learning teams (attached to the minutes of this meeting). Mr. Prale added that these reports ensured accountability.

Mr. Rigas stated that the responses to the survey conducted after the Institute Day in January on the Keynote Speaker, Division Discussions, and Cross-Division Discussions were less than optimal. Mr. Prale responded that the work focused on institutional excellence and raising student achievement. There are many new faculty in the building with varying opinions. The surveys do help the administration focus the work as to what needs to be accomplished in individual divisions. The comments, which were not part of this report, will help the Professional Development Committee in its work. Dr. Millard asked, "What can the District do in the classroom to make a difference in the student?" She was fascinated with the report that stated students scored better on tests after having an active PE class. Mr. Prale keeps a binder of the learning team summaries and he offered to make these available to the Board of Education members.

When asked if there were cross-divisional work being done, Mr. Prale responded positively. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if there were reports on actions and any documentation as to whether the actions worked. Last year's learning teams had actionable activities and Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the District had gone back to see if they were effective. Mr. Prale stated that Math had done that, because mechanisms are in place to do so. In the case of history, unless the team stays together and builds a measurement, there is no place to do a determination. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked how they judge whether the work they did had an impact. Is that a requirement of next year's teams? How does one know this made a difference? Mr. Prale stated that every learning team is responsible for providing the goals and measurements and the administrator is in charge. It then becomes a matter between Mr. Prale and the Division Head.

Ms. Patchak-Layman felt a piece was missing in terms of the needs of the school and for all of the teams. Where does the information go? Where is it used? If the history team found that history changed writing, it would be valuable information for any division in the school. There has to be more of an opportunity for teachers to be together to learn and to take ownership. Teachers have first hand information. The District could say to history to find out something, document it, and then share it throughout the school via Board of Education policy. While the reports are good conversations, how does this information get back to the students and the rest of the faculty at the school? There are too many messages heard to keep it in such a narrow form in front of the learning team. It should be across the entire faculty, so that individuals that are less successful can be helped. Mr. Prale reported that any document brought to the Instruction Committee is also shared with all Division Heads and FSEC. That is the purpose of cross-divisional teams. There is much accountability, as the faculty too wants their time well spent. Ms. Patchak-Layman did not see the student part in this. What parts of what is known is or is not beneficial to the students. If one found something constructive on reading comprehension, then the District would have that piece of concrete information and a parent would have the information. Mr. Prale stated that there are action-research learning teams, e.g., reading readiness and math, etc., and they would like to be their own

learning team. Having tested some of their work, this most likely will be allowed. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that there should be something for the student in every one of the learning teams. Perhaps there are things that are learned from that which will help in the alignment of other courses and impact other teachers. While this is a complete picture of what the teachers did, it did not represent of what the students did.

### **Achievement Initiatives Update**

Mr. Prale reported that at the end of each semester the District conducts a review of progress made on the different initiative and intervention programs. As the information is gathered, reports come to the Board of Education regarding specific programs. He provided reports on the Behavior Interventionist position in the Special Education ED Program, School of Limitless Opportunities (SOLO), the alternative educational setting in the high school, and a comparison of results for students who participated. The reports follow.

#### ***“Behavior Interventionist Position***

- This position was created to reduce the number of discipline incidents for ED program students.
- Comparing end of year statistics for 2006-2007 with end of year statistics for 2007-2008, a statistically significant **increase** appeared in the average number of detentions issued, but a statistically significant **decrease** appeared in the average number of after-school detentions and the average number of in-school suspensions issued.
- This shift in reported discipline incidents shows a statistically significant decrease in the total number of incidents between 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, and a change in the kinds of incidents reported.
- Decreases were noted between 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 in the average number of out of school suspensions, average number of unexcused absences, and average number of tardies. While these are encouraging trends they are not statistically significant.

#### ***“SOLO***

- In the 2006-2007 school year, fifteen (15) students were enrolled in the SOLO program. In the 2007-2008 school year, seventeen (17) students were enrolled in the program.
- Difference in attendance and behavior patterns are not significant year to year for the SOLO students.
- SOLO graduated three students at the end of this school year, the same number as last year.

#### ***“8 to 9 Connection***

- End of ninth grade outcomes for students from the summer 2007 cohort of students when compared with end of ninth grade outcomes for the summer 2006 students do not show any improvements. This information has been shared with the teachers so program changes can be made.

Mr. Prale's recommendations were

- The Behavior Interventionist position will be continued for another year. The teachers will continue to work on improving attendance and reducing tardy behavior for ED students.
- SOLO will continue in a new space and with some staffing changes. The total FTE for SOLO will not increase.
- The 8 to 9 Connection program is currently in operation, with changes, to provide students with additional co-curricular opportunities and a curriculum focused on preparing students for entering and completing ninth grade math and reading programs with greater success.
- Additional reports on initiatives and proposed changes will come at subsequent Instruction Committee meetings after PSAE data has been received and analyzed.

Dr. Millard asked what else the District could do to enhance these students' success. Mr. Prale replied that the District is making changes to the program based on what did and did not work for the students.

Mr. Prale reported that the social services piece was necessary for these students. He paralleled it to Project Scholar students. When the District started offering it in the sophomore year, only enough registrations were received for one section. This year thirty-four (34) students requested that class, as more parents and students wanted structured study halls.

Dr. Lee understood that the District's change in the counseling program included the move toward encouraging better behavior rather than carefully defining tailored punishments for bad behavior. He felt this had been a part of the initiatives. Last year a report was given that included the correlations between student interaction in the discipline system and grade point averages. He asked if the same report would be made this year. Mr. Prale stated that ED Program explored the question of whether a decision in the program to do things differently would result in a dramatic change in student referrals. The results were: 1) referrals were down differently and the patterns were different, because adults are working more with positive reinforcement; 2) there does seem to be less discipline; and 3) the GPAs, however, are similar to last year's GPA. There are 133 students in the program.

Dr. Weninger added that the shift included the deans working with the counselors and a resource manager. The same report will be presented at regular June Board of Education meeting. Dr. Spight will provide the statistics. The District has not tried to isolate that variable and has not tried to determine whether it made an improvement on the GPA, better attendance, better grades, etc., as other factors are involved. The assumption is that it had an impact because there is a dramatic decrease in suspensions and expulsions.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked why the fact that more students want this program is not included in the evaluation of the program. Was it capped based on FTE or because of space? Mr. Prale responded that the answer would be because of FTE. He has heard

from counselors that they had students who wanted the program but not that they did not get placed. Students move in and out of SOLO, making it challenging. He did not know whether it were one or ten students who did not get in. Ms. Patchak-Layman suggested asking the counselors.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked for a list of the alternative school days, e.g., SOLO, HARBOR, OMBUDSMAN, work study, Triton, etc. Are there caps on the number of students allowed to attend? What is the official cap? What is the past practice cap? Are there caps on the number of students the District would send? What are the criteria for SOLO?

Regarding an analysis of GPA in the ED Program, the District did look at the GPA of the one hundred twenty (120) students in 2006-07 and the one-hundred thirty-three (133) students in 2007-08. While they are not matched scores, the program yielded almost no change in GPA, either weighted or unweighted. The District needs to talk with the team and the students about their experiences with the new philosophy. A survey was given to students and the team is learning from that. Dr. Millard suggested looking at the GPA of the students who were in the program both last year and this year and compare them. Mr. Prale stated that it was possible, but that because it was a smaller number, there may not be any major conclusions. He hoped to send something out to the Board of Education in this regard. Dr. Lee was interested in learning what the District can do to extrapolate what is learned from this program for the entire population. Ms. Patchak-Layman added that what the District is learning could be shared with other parts of the school and other schools. CPS teachers are using PBIS and have visited Addison Trail High School to talk about they have learned. She continued that PBIS is a universal model and it seems that the work the interventionist did with PBIS and the other interactions would be helpful.

### **Report on Proposed Indices**

Ms. Hill presented the following information:

“At the February meeting of the Board of Education, Dr. Weninger presented a set of initiatives to raise student achievement, to be implemented in the 2008-2009 school year. Among those initiatives was a plan for the school to develop a definition of institutional excellence, stated in terms of optimal student outcomes. Discussion among Board members resulted in a request for the administration to develop a set of indices for measuring the student outcomes. At a series of separate meetings in April and May, the Professional Development Committee, Instructional Council, School Improvement Planning Team, Faculty Senate Executive Committee, and District Leadership Team worked to develop and revise a list of such indices. Members of the community will have an opportunity to review the indices and provide input at a Schoolhouse Town Meeting at the Dole Branch Library on June 17.

“The list of proposed indices contained on the following pages is categorized according to broad areas of student achievement. Some indices appear in more than one category. For example, semester course grades are listed as a measure of academic knowledge and

also as a measure of academic behaviors. These indices would be used to measure student growth in the aggregate. We also hope to disaggregate data by race, gender, special education status, and low-income status (based upon free and reduced lunch participation).

“Further development of the indices will involve a second round of stakeholder meetings in August and September to gather input. In addition to refining the indices, we will use existing data sets to identify current baselines and determine appropriate rates of change indicative of improved student achievement. A second report, highlighting more detailed indices, will be issued at the September meeting of the Instruction Committee of the Board of Education.”

While it had been the intent to talk with stakeholders about this at the Town Hall meeting on Tuesday, June 17, no one attended. When asked if this item had been on the agenda, Ms. Hill replied that it was not. Dr. Lee did not expect much community input or interest, as this would not be of interest to the average citizen. Some people care about the result but not how one gets the result. He was more concerned about the product and the applicability of that product to measuring growth toward the achievement gap and providing concrete measurable indices, in spite of the fact that none of these indices could be exact and precise mathematically.

Dr. Millard was interested in tracking to see how successful students were after they leave the high school. She realized that this would take some effort, but computers and email will now make this easier to do. She was also concerned about using just test scores as some students are brilliant yet this is not reflected in their test scores. Ms. Hill responded that standardized test scores are measured. Dr. Millard wanted to know what students felt the school could do better. Dr. Millard had other indices she would like used, but she will provide them at another time.

Dr. Lee stated this was a better feel for the general direction that this is heading and what kind of report would be presented in September. Ms. Hill explained that these indices were part and parcel of a larger document of institutional excellence. The report presented in September would include the areas of student of achievement that are of concern, broken down by academic areas, and more precisely defined indices, e.g., test scores defined by grade level, experiences at the end of sophomore year, the junior year, etc. and possible changes as a result of various feedback from different stakeholders.

Dr. Weninger asked for clarification whether this information was what the Board of Education sought. Dr. Lee responded yes, partially. He wanted indices of academic achievement, not just for the administration but also for the Board of Education, and movement toward all agreeing on the definition of “achievement gap.” He did not believe Board of Education agreed on a definition of the achievement gap and that should not be tolerated over the long term. The Board of Education should be moving toward a common understanding of what it is referring to when talking about the achievement gap. He was looking for better tools with which to work. He understood that it could not be done by the administration alone, the Board of Education must be involved.

Dr. Weninger asked if the administration was being asked to define the achievement gap and, then, determine how great or small the gap is. Dr. Lee felt that it would more appropriate for the administration and the Board of Education to determine the achievement gap. Dr. Lee would rather an O.P.R.F.H.S. definition of the achievement gap than one from the State of Illinois. Dr. Weninger asked if the Board of Education wanted to pursue that goal. Dr. Millard felt it noble and an exciting goal, but she saw it as a huge step.

Ms. Patchak-Layman reflected that when she looks at the list she wondered about the things that she would like to see that a student had achieved, e.g., critical thinking, problem-solving skills, etc. Where would that come in this process? Writing skills would give an indication of critical skills and how would one get to those activities. What is the goal to be measured? While these are knowledge indicators, there are many activities. Ms. Hill responded that the definition of institutional excellence is not reflected here. It would include key cognitive strategies, problem-solving, inquiry, analysis, research, etc. The best indicator of a student's ability to do something is not a standardized test. A way to measure that is a collection of evidence, something similar to a folio, specific standard of skills to do research and synthesis to develop an argument, i.e., it might be a history paper in the folio. Questions to be answered are who collects that information? How is it managed? Where is it housed? It is part of the bigger picture. The District wanted to start with a more manageable set of indices and work in that direction.

Dr. Lee felt Ms. Patchak-Layman's point was essential and inevitable right now. He thought they would be talking about them in September, October, and November. Everyone must be clear about the fact that the school moving toward a goal of closing the achievement gap is different from closing the gap for an individual student, i.e., the gap between what he/she is doing and what he/she is capable of doing. The District will need to compromise in the area of resources. Ms. Patchak-Layman offered an exception would be if there were programs that met the student's needs, then there should be no problems. Dr. Lee stated that was harder to do.

Ms. Patchak-Layman felt the "collection of evidence" should be part of the preliminary document even if the resources were not yet available. Learning teams should be the place to start; they are a wealth of information. Ms. Patchak-Layman added that part of being able to develop critical skills is that one must have a knowledge basis. The question has to be asked, "Where does the District want students to be in four years?"

The question was also asked if the District is prepared to provide a multi-cultural experience, a trip away, by the time a student finishes high school. It was noted that Walter Payton High School has that an international goal for every student.

## **Textbooks**



It was the consensus of the Instruction Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education approve the textbooks The Long Goodbye and Never Let Me Go for the English Division.

**Adjournment**

The Instruction Committee adjourned at 9:15 a.m.