

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

**An Instruction Committee of the Whole Board  
December 13, 2007**

An Instruction Committee meeting of the Whole Board was held on Wednesday, August 15, 2007, in the Board Room. Dr. Millard opened the meeting at 7:35 a.m. Committee members present were John C. Allen, Valerie J. Fisher, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, and Sharon Patchak Layman. Also present were: Dr. Attila J. Weninger, Superintendent; Jason Edgcombe, 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; Barbara Nelson, PTO Chair; 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 November 5, 2007, were accepted as presented at the table.

**Discussion of Plan to Raise Student Achievement and Board Resolutions**

**Board of Education Resolutions**

Dr. Millard felt it was important for the public to be made aware that she was out of the country on a personal mission for part of the month of November. She was unaware that Dr. Lee's two resolutions would be brought forward at the Instruction Committee meeting. She learned of the resolutions when she returned. She was concerned that there was not appropriate input from the Board of Education members at the time those resolutions were presented. She was one of three members absent at the November Instruction Committee meeting. She felt it important that all officials have input on Board of Education policy issues; otherwise she felt it was being ruled more dramatically than appropriate for elected officials. It is not clear what effect these resolutions may have; what concerned her most was that the wording of the resolution may be divisive and does not convey the true intentions of the resolution. She was hopeful that the Board of Education members continue to use procedural methods through policy discussions, not resolutions, except in the case of emergencies. She would have hoped for a stronger consensus and she felt more discussion would have provided more input and consensus.

## A Plan to Raise Student Achievement

Dr. Weninger presented the Instruction Committee members with a status report on the plan to raise student achievement. Since the time the Instruction Committee members received their packets of information for this meeting, Dr. Weninger noted that he had met with additional faculty members, SEA parents, and a variety of groups of students since Monday. He noted that feedback continued to be healthy.

Dr. Weninger continued that at the end of January, DLT, BLT and others would develop a more integrated plan with a projected cost for each item. Part of the purpose of meeting with stakeholders (faculty, parents, students, the Research Team, etc.) is to determine if there are any emerging trends and to hear the thinking of all stakeholders. When asked if he planned to present the Board of Education with focused initiatives with which to start, Dr. Weninger replied affirmatively. Presently, the plan has sixty facets; that number will be culled down and the administration will show how the connections will move together. Other opportunities are also coming to light: a federal grant in the area of social/emotional issues just arrived that the school may apply for and use with the social/emotional part of the plan. Dr. Weninger stated that an interesting theme of expectations was emerging, e.g., students of students, students of teachers, teachers of teachers, teachers of students, adults of adults, etc.

Dr. Lee asked Dr. Weninger what he hoped to receive from the Board of Education at the January meeting. What is the role of Board of Education members in this process? Dr. Weninger's response was

- A. for the Board of Education to approve the administration's continuance of developing programs for the fall;
- B. for the Board of Education to individually and collectively provide reaction/feedback to the ideas presented and to make additional suggestions, i.e., being a part of the process in a dynamic way.

Dr. Weninger noted that he did not want to define what the Board of Education did.

Dr. Millard stated that any Board of Education member should share specific concerns with Dr. Weninger and the Board of Education. Dr. Lee was concerned about having sufficient time for the Board of Education members to discuss their concerns. Dr. Millard asked him to enumerate them at this point.

Dr. Lee believes that the school has in place now, and has had for at least thirty (30) years, a program that is generally referred to as ability grouping. His observation is that over a number of years it has been carried out in such a way as to lower the expectations of the students enrolled in basic level courses. That is his personal experience of 16 years. It would take time and extensive discussion to get to examples. Lower expectations are not something that is inherent in ability grouping, but it has been made easier in an ability group. He did not expect everyone to take his word for this idea; he believes there is an obligation and ways to find out whether or not this is the case. It will require time, investigation, talking with faculty members who have taught courses at the basic, regular, honors, and AP levels, and finding out

the conditions in which they feel pressure from their peers and supervisors. Peer pressure is more important than pressure from supervisors. Does the teacher believe that students in basic level courses are required to spend as much time doing homework as students in honors courses? This is an important fact to know and it is a reasonable expectation to find out in a systematic way. This is a discussion the Board of Education has not done. Dr. Lee brought this up to the Board of Education about 11 years ago and it was dismissed as being not true; the then superintendent also said it was not true. It was at that point that Dr. Lee decided to become a Board of Education member rather than a faculty member. He believes the organization has the obligation to find out if this were true under reasonable conditions.

Dr. Weninger stated that the first steps would be to 1) determine if there were a significant number of faculty members who have taught a various levels, 2) determine if there were a significant number of faculty members who believe this is the case, and 3) determine if there were sufficient numbers to warrant specific investigation. Mr. Prale, a former teacher of history who taught all levels, stated that a purpose of ability grouping is to best serve the needs of the students and not encourage lower expectations. Placements are made in collaboration with the parents, the counselors, and the previous teachers of the students. .

Furthermore, the new course proposals reflect changes to the curriculum. Dr. Lee has identified an important issue and one that is often discussed. Honors and advanced classes have lots of homework beyond the classroom activities, yet not counted on the grade sheet. The District has not integrated how that affects student grades. Having less homework does not equal having lower expectations. Dr. Lee understood that was the school's official position. He believed there was justification for exploring the effect.

Dr. Lee asked if the school were willing to find out what faculty members actually believed when asked the questions: Do you believe that students in the basic level courses are expected to spend as much time at home preparing for this class as the students in the regular and honors courses? Do you believe that the work ethic expected from basic level students meets the same standards as the work ethics expect in the regular and honors courses? Is there a possibility that less is expected of students in the basic level courses as a result of a lifelong belief that these students are not able to work as hard to value hard work, to be able to eventually learn at the same rate as the students in the regular and honors courses? He asked if it were worth investigating to find out whether the claims made were true. Mr. Prale stated that getting information from teachers is always valuable and the administration hears from the faculty a great deal.

Dr. Millard encouraged Dr. Lee to put his ideas in writing and share them with Dr. Weninger and the other Board of Education members. Dr. Millard expected students to put in more time in order to be able to achieve, not less. Dr. Lee disagreed saying that his experience was that they put in far less time and that was the District's expectations.

Dr. Weninger asked Dr. Lee if he would accept not asking teachers about their expectations, curriculum, and pedagogy but to ask if the curriculum is rigorous enough for all students. Dr. Lee suggested starting by asking the faculty their impressions. He was not optimistic about finding out the truth suddenly. Dr. Weninger agreed and noted that it was a theme that ran

through the proposals but not explicitly stated.

In addition, Dr. Lee's experience with ability grouping indicated that there were more behavioral problems in basic level courses. He felt even more faculty members would agree with that. When one looks at the behavioral problems that a teacher has to deal with, the teacher has to do triage by devoting more time and effort to the behaviors that are most destructive and to devote less time for those things considered minor by comparison. The behaviors that might be dealt with in a regular or honors course are simply tolerated in a basic course because teachers do not have the time to consequence the students. Thus, rudeness, inappropriate language, etc., has to take a lower priority to things that are more serious such as bullying, gross profanity, i.e., using the word "Nigger" in class. Time does not allow a teacher of a basic course to address a rude tone of voice. It was his experience that there is an erosion of behavioral expectations in the classes where behavior is a great problem and is so because a teacher has to make choices as to how he/she spends his/her time. This results in lower behavior expectations and an erosion of expectations in the lower level courses. It is an assumption that is worth testing.

Mr. Prale felt it was worthy of examination. Areas of the school have implemented the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) to help teachers learn how to manage their classrooms and reward appropriate behavior in intermittent fashion. Dr. Lee was concerned about this aspect because he had been surprised at the correlation that was discovered six months ago between behavior problems and grade point averages. Even a slight erosion of behavioral expectations based on the District's research shows that minor behavior issues have an enormous impact on academics. The District has an obligation to look into it in more depth.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if it were the District's goal to make sure that basic and transition students are the best in those classes or to have those students move to higher level classes. Is the goal to get them to further their education with post secondary education? Do students now in basic and transitional classes have the same options as the other students? One of the goals of special education is to include students into the mainstream part of the school, both socially and academically. To Ms. Patchak-Layman that was a universal goal or philosophy and she hoped students not in special education still had these opportunities and goals. The goals Dr. Lee expressed in academics and behaviors should go back to the main goal. They would be important considerations to feed into this plan. The Board of Education needs to discuss and come into agreement so that it can direct policy. Dr. Millard noted that the District has written goals but perhaps the best approach would be for her to suggest readdressing the goals. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that the Board of Education did not write the goals, it responded to the goals. Dr. Millard noted that the Board of Education had the right to alter the goals.

Ms. Patchak-Layman continued that sometimes one can reach policy by bringing the discussion forward, e.g., possible ways that the question could be researched if that is the question. One can arrive at things philosophically or take the specifics and move them up the ladder to the broader issues of the Board. The philosophical issue by Dr. Lee is what is meant and where the District should go with ability grouping, as it related to broader goals and laws

that need to be followed. Dr. Weninger asked Ms. Patchak-Layman if there were something she felt was missing from ability grouping. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if it were the goal to keep students in a tracked system. What is the best track provided or is the goal to say that basic transition students should be part of the mainstream of the school and to provide a plan for them to do so, i.e., college prep?

Ms. Fisher did not believe the school had a tracking system in that students were freely placed in courses at all levels, depending on their placement in Math and English, etc. She asked if that were Mr. Prale's understanding of tracking. Mr. Prale would use the word tracking in that there are two broad categories of courses, some allow for indexing of grades and some not. In honors and AP classes there is a .01 index attached to the grade point average for the purpose of determining a weighted grade point average and weighted grade point average rank. However, students can select and opt into either level per their interest and their abilities and per the request of their parents.

Dr. Weninger noted that this discussion needs to happen with any proposal regarding achievement. The administration must know the Board of Education's wish. Is it not to provide support to all ability groups?

Ms. Fisher concurred with Dr. Millard about Board of Education members informing Dr. Weninger of their desires in order for the information to be approved at the January meeting. It would be a disservice to the superintendent not to do so. It was suggested that the Board of Education members missing from this meeting be informed to do so. She also appreciated receiving the written input and noted that it clearly showed that Dr. Weninger was talking to a wide variety of groups. She asked for an update on the conversation with the members of the SEA group.

Dr. Weninger reported that seven or eight parents and one community member, a former parent and current taxpayer in the district, attended. Discussion ensued regarding transitional level classes, the establishment of two additional ability groups (one between basic and college prep and one between college prep and honors, which goes against virtually everything high schools are doing nationally), repetitious versus substantive homework, a summer program and internships, providing Special Education students with assistive technology (laptops), as a matter of course, the relationship of co-curriculars to the academic program and whether it should be considered "icing on the cake." Perhaps the larger question was what is learning and the nature of learning with regard to Special Education students. How does the school address Special Education students who have difficulty learning in a comprehensive, competitive high school? How does the school demonstrate that the students have learned the material and how does the school change teaching in order to address individual learning needs. Other concerns included reaching out to students, assessing abilities, assessing expectations and level support in LRE, high expectations with students of IEP and then so doing provide them, establish measurable goals, look at academic strategies classes to see if they are being used to their full potential, are supports in place to keep students connected to students by being responsive to their needs, e.g., counseling, tutoring, support for faculty, assistive technology to every Special Education student.

Dr. Lee asked to what extent are students moving from the basic level to the regular or honors level. It is important that the Board of Education see such data. Has there been a study on how well students were doing who were making the transitions. Mr. Prale stated that the school has not done a study of how many students transition between academic levels. It has looked at some of the students who have moved up in English and Math and that has had some success but also some students have struggled. Mr. Prale continued that every year a section of basic student English courses is deleted at the start of second semester. Dr. Weninger suggested that the District could seek that data using its present technology and Microsoft Word could be used to track students, identifying those students to see if these students moved. One of the proposals is to have transitional, basic level courses for some freshmen and sophomores with the understanding there would be support for juniors and seniors. However, the students must acquire the necessary skills in the first two years in order to go to honors courses. That would be one way to raise the bar and set student achievement. Dr. Lee wholeheartedly supported that suggestion and Dr. Weninger stated that it was already in the plan.

Dr. Lee was more concerned about having a broad policy discussion rather than the school just giving him the information. Dr. Millard noted that she was hearing more of a detailed approach. Ms. Patchak-Layman offered that Dr. Lee could not have a policy discussion without backup information. Ms. Patchak-Layman believes it the Board of Education's responsibility to determine what excellence means to the District and to come to the definition with input from the community as to what the high school should define as excellence. That is what the core needs to be doing; it should be the Board of Education's work to determine institutional excellence. Where the Board of Education wants the school to be is not the administration's responsibility, but rather a public discussion. Dr. Millard asked what form that should take, e.g., Board meetings, committee meetings, a special task force. Ms. Patchak-Layman felt everything was on the table. Dr. Millard continued that the mission statement addresses that question. It talks about the full potential of every student. Is that not excellence? Ms. Patchak-Layman stated what constitutes excellence may be all individual statements that people consider as excellence and wrapped into a broader statement. The District thinks that excellence is a school that sends all of its students to a four-year college. There is a range of excellence for today and for the future. It is a conversation that the Board of Education needs to initiative, direct, bring together so that it can be part of the goals/policy of the District. The plan says this is an administrative activity, not a Board activity. Dr. Weninger stated that the plan calls for the superintendent to establish a school and community committee that would embark, over a six month period, on gathering together stakeholders to get those ideas and bring them to the Board of Education for discussion to come up with a definition. Ms. Patchak-Layman felt it was a Board of Education responsibility, not the superintendent, and the Board of Education must take that initiative.

Dr. Millard asked that the policy book be reviewed to see if there were a policy regarding excellence.

Mr. Prale felt the present discussion was helpful in that it address student experiences in transitional classes; it could help the administration set priorities. If the Board of Education wants an after school program, there are resources that have to be allocated to it and the Board

of Education approve it. Dr. Weninger, too, appreciated the discussion.

Mr. Allen was concerned about the lack of time available to Board of Education members to discuss tough issues and wondered if discussions were too difficult. Dr. Millard noted that it was difficult to have these conversations during the day, as some of the Board of Education members have regular jobs. Mr. Allen suggested scheduling a day, perhaps a Saturday, for a more in-depth discussion. While other Committee members concurred, Dr. Lee stated that no matter what was said the conversation would end at the January meeting. Dr. Millard stated that the plan to have things in place by January came from the October Board of Education meeting. If the Board of Education truly intends to deal with this on a global basis, there should be no timetable.

Ms. Patchak-Layman felt there could be two sets of planning—immediate/short term, and long-range direction of change. Because of the PSAE results, she felt the school had to make some course direction for students. When the results were not as good as had been hoped, the school needed to decide how to support not only the freshman but the seniors who only six more months at OPRFHS. She expected the plan to have both short- and long-term ideas and relate to the four grade levels at the school, as a beginning. There are short term things that have to be done as things come forward on individual students. Dr. Millard stated that the information should be brought by the administrators and it was not the Board of Education to tell them what to do. She wanted the administration to tell her how the data would be addressed.

Mr. Prale offered that when Board of Education members have made request for information, whether it be data or topical, the administration responds to all of the Board of Education members. There is information that the administration looks at daily, weekly. If the Board of Education wanted an in-depth discussion, the administration could assist with that. If the administration knows what the Board of Education wants, it can provide that information and the conversation would be more helpful than the one just had. Mr. Allen agreed that would be satisfying.

Dr. Weninger asked what the objective would be at the end of a special meeting. Mr. Allen said it would be to hash out the issues brought up by Dr. Lee, e.g., what is the effect of race on the achievement gap and what is the work toward solving that problem. How can the Board of Education help? Mr. Allen wanted to fine tune the plan so that the school is addressing some of these issues, e.g., race, class, economic issues. Through discussion more information will be gained.

Ms. Fisher felt the same frustration about the time constraints and not getting to the more important facts during meetings. She was also frustrated with the passing of the resolutions and she had asked for a delay so that all Board of Education members could have that discussion. She was still not clear on the resolution and the Board of Education's number one goal. A reporter from the *Trapeze* asked her what difference the resolution would make and she had said that she did not know because there had been no time to discuss the impact. She wanted to set aside time to discuss these issues and she liked Dr. Lee's points on expectations and behavioral standards; yet it is ironic that the Board of Education does not have time to

explore these discussions. Dr. Millard reiterated that yet the Board of Education voted on the resolutions without the discussion of the impact of them. Dr. Lee noted that he was able to overlook the fact that Dr. Millard had been out of town because of the timeline; it was necessary to deal with those issues at the risk of how Dr. Millard may have felt.

Dr. Millard said the Board of Education pushed for something quickly without having the conversations to help the community and school understand its priority. It seemed that the passage of the resolution was the goal, not the discussion. The Board of Education needs to take heed. While Dr. Lee interpreted the January date as a deadline, Dr. Millard said it was a timeline, not a deadline. The ultimate goal is to help reduce the differences of achievement. The school is on a route to see and do those things on a timeline that is relatively expeditious, but it does not have an arrival time. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that there was a deadline because a vote was scheduled for the January meeting.

Dr. Weninger clarified that his intent had always been to present the plan as a working document; the Board of Education could approve what it wanted to do for the following year. Dr. Weninger stated that last August, a Board of Education member demanded that the administration arrive at an immediate plan in response to the PSAE scores; at the time references were made about implementing a strategic plan. There was clearly a lack of direction and agreement, so the administration embarked on a need/directive to come up with a plan to raise student achievement. As it was proposed, it is a working document and the administration will present a plan in January to move forward as to what the school will do in 2008. That does not preclude the Board of Education from saying what it would like to do.

Dr. Millard reiterated that she did not see this as a deadline, but a timeline. She did not believe the Board of Education needed to vote on it. She thought of this plan as being fluid. Dr. Lee asked if Dr. Millard felt Board of Education members should bring their concerns about the plan to Dr. Weninger. Dr. Millard replied affirmatively as the superintendent, the Board of Education's employee, should have input on the directives.

At Dr. Weninger's suggestion, the Instruction Committee members decided to continue the discussion about setting additional time for the discussion of student achievement and whether the administration should continue to proceed or extend the conversation beyond January at the regular November Board of Education meeting.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked how the District would discover information if the conversation is continued. There are still goals to improve student achievement and how will those goals continued to be measured? How will the plan be tied into that? Dr. Millard responded while that would be part of the conversation in a workshop, she believed that the administrators did that every day, individually and collectively, for the students. She considered that their top priority every day.

Mr. Hunter applauded this discussion because he did not feel that the Board of Education had talked enough about the basics. While he will not be available at the regular December Board of Education meeting, the Board of Education owes it to the community and to the school to have this conversation because if there is no cohesion between the administration and the



faculty, it will be difficult to make it work.

Dr. Millard was unclear as to how the resolutions would affect the educational plan. Mr. Allen did not believe that could be answered until further discussion had occurred. Dr. Lee felt that to give the minority achievement gap the highest priority means for the Board of Education itself and the administration to spend time discussing those specific issues as opposed to the much broader issue of how they are going to help all students do better. From his perspective, some things are done well and some things are done less well. To talk about how to help all students means spending time in an unfocused way of dealing with the entire spectrum of what the school does. He suggested spending time on things done less well. The school is less adept at addressing the needs of the less performing students than the higher performing students. Ms. Patchak-Layman concurred.

Dr. Millard noted that the resolution specifically mentioned Black and White; it does not talk about the non-Black students who are not achieving. The way the gap resolution was passed it is Black and White students in the discussion. Whites are underachieving, so does this mean they will not get any advantage. Dr. Lee replied that those things were so intricately intertwined that one cannot separate them and there is no point in trying to phrase things in such a way that one thinks one can separate them. Dr. Millard asked if the resolution needed to be rewritten.

Mr. Allen has always heard about the achievement gap between Black and White students. There are not enough minorities to measure up to a separate subgroup. There is a group of Black students who test significantly lower on standardized testing and it cannot be addressed if there is no acknowledgement that it is racial. He knows this issue may not be politically correct, but for this issue and at this time, there is an achievement gap.

Dr. Millard reiterated that there are other students who did not meet or exceed the state standards, e.g., Special Education and Hispanic students. Having not been a part of the conversation and from her eyes and perspective, the resolution offers a point of view that was very questionable. She had no objection to dealing with race, but the fact that there is no other reference as to the category of students; she is trying to figure out how this affects the educational plan. Do Special Education students not need attention? She wanted clarification as to Dr. Lee's intent as to what was to guide and direct the plan. She would like to see the Resolution wordsmithed so that it represents his intention. Perhaps her experiences and her mind are not the same, but she would like the Board of Education to guide and direct beyond the intent. She saw groups of students omitted from this resolution. She requested clarification.

Dr. Lee did not believe this District has given adequate attention to those students regardless of the race of the students whose academic achievement level is at the lowest end of the spectrum. He regretted saying the following: If the District were 100% White, he believed there would be general happiness with the spread of academic achievement levels, ignoring the needs of the lowest achieving students; he was talking about the community as a whole. He believes this issue has come up because the majority of the students in that position happen to be Black and that there are a sufficient number of people in the community who are

not satisfied to leave things status quo. He believes that the parents of those white students who are at the lowest level of achievement should be happy that there are so many black people around to raise concerns about this issue. In his opinion, it would not be addressed if this were not the case. While uncomfortable saying so, he felt White people should be glad that there are unhappy Black people who were not satisfied with the status quo. It is possible to re-word these resolutions so that there was no mention of race, but it would be dishonest of him to pretend that he is just looking out for the interest of students whose academic achievement levels are lowest, because he feels the majority of them are black. He cannot divorce that part of him from his job as a Board of Education member. To pretend to do so would not be honest or productive. Dr. Millard did not object to race but she wanted a more inclusive approach. She knows of a White neighbor with an underachieving student who feels that the focus will be given to the Black underachievers; there are other people who will feel that way also. Dr. Lee responded that the wording of the resolution also has another basis. When he hears the expression the District ought to be concerned about the raising of achievement level of everyone and using the analogy that a rising tide lifts all boats, that analogy has a drawback that the rising tide lifts all of those boats who do not happen to be chained to the bottom. So as the tide rises, they simply get swamped; a rising tide does not lift all boats and he is talking about cutting the chains before the water comes into the boats. Dr. Millard noted that while race is a huge factor in underachieving, it is not the only one. Mr. Allen referenced the phrase at the end of the resolution where it talks about raising achievement of Black students without lowering the academic achievement of any other groups. Dr. Millard stated that she did not want to lower, but to raise achievement for all students.

Dr. Lee stated that history shows the words “an emphasis on black achievement level” has been used often over the last 20 to 30 years, but to no avail. Dr. Millard felt the tide turned when the Board of Education hired the new superintendent; Dr. Weninger’s knows his mission is to change that course.

Ms. Patchak-Layman felt this was wording to that emphasis. Dr. Millard reminded Ms. Patchak-Layman that it had been her emphasis that it would be all students, e.g., Special Education, etc. Ms. Patchak-Layman responded that the resolution is not exclusive to everything on the table for the goals for the District, so it cannot be taken in isolation to what is happening in the District. This is an emphasis to do what the District can, e.g., consideration, research, what is learned about students who are African-American and whether the plans to be presented are representing that knowledge. Dr. Millard reiterated that it was important to pass resolutions that accurately state what is meant. She hears something different in the resolution.

Mr. Allen stated that the District is going to address this issue as it pertains to race not to denigrate or take away from other students, e.g., White or Special Education students. Dr. Lee added that if the school proposes a tutoring program and one said that the Black students would have the benefit of a tutor and the White students would not, it would not only be ridiculous but illegal; yet some people are claiming that is what this resolution means. Board of Education members should be given credit for being intelligent enough to know that would be a stupid scenario because it is so illegal on the face of it. Some people are claiming that

there would be sections in which only African-American students could enroll. That is illegal and yet that is what the Board of Education is being accused of doing.

Dr. Weninger asked, administratively, what is the net effect of the resolutions. Dr. Lee outlined several net effects.

- 1) If the resolution had not been submitted in the first place, Board of Education members would not have had such a conversation. The letters to the editor, and editorial about the two resolutions, whether they passed or not, would not have happened. The attention of this community with the extent to the attention brought to this issue within the last six months has been greater than ever before in the history of this District. He believed that to be important. For him, part of the purpose has already been served. That was his chief goal because that would be a passing thing which few people would remember. Therefore, it needs a more lasting effect.
- 2) More time and attention to be given to the achievement levels of the lowest achieving students. He cares more about that because he has a larger interest in the achievement level of Black students. He has to recognize that and try to behave in a fair way, in spite of that, just as he expects White people to behave fairly in spite of the bias they have. Everyone has biases and must behave well in spite of them. He expected the administration to spend more time and attention on this issue than previously administrations have done; to gear conversations more toward concrete action as opposed to what has been given in the past 20 to 30 years, not just the past three years. He believes the District is at a point of action, as opposed to polite chitchat.

Mr. Allen stated that all of the Board of Education members care about every student in the building and they would not have supported the resolutions if they thought they would hurt anyone. Dr. Weninger's question needs further discussion.

Ms. Patchak-Layman felt one of the issues would be to make sure the District knows its students, the African-American students, and what happens to them during the day. When looking at best practices, focus on best practices for African-American students, making sure those best practices have helped others achieve at schools in other parts of the country.

Ms. Fisher felt that the heart of this resolution states there should be a priority of one group of students over another, instead of the student body as a whole being the priority. She felt it was the heart of the superintendent's question as to how the resolution will affect the District. At the very least, before spending hours of discussion, the timeline issue should be readdressed as to when the plan comes forward. She did not know if the conversations could take place prior to the January Board of Education meeting, but she felt the Board of Education was putting the superintendent in a "catch 22" position.

Literature Ms. Patchak-Layman has read states that there are keys to having good academic experiences in schools. This school may not be working for minority students. When talking

about the whole student body, she was not sure the idea of a traditional school was meeting the needs of minority students. The District has pulled out the criteria as to what will work better for minority students vs. traditional students. For her, that is why the plan is being put forward.

It was the consensus of the Instruction Committee members that the Board of Education members would discuss scheduling special meetings for the continued discussion of the plan to raise student achievement and its timeline at its regular November Board of Education meeting. Dr. Lee noted that had he known that the Board was able to relax the deadline, he would have been more amenable to waiting on the resolutions.

### **Course Proposals**

Ms. Hill provided a summary of the course proposals that would be provided to the Board of Education for approval at its regular December meeting, with special note to the addition of two sections of a Chinese language class.

While believing the addition of the Chinese class was a good thing, Ms. Patchak-Layman was concerned about the static number of students taking foreign language and if there would be a reduction in FTE in other divisions to pay for this. Ms. Hill felt that students who would take this language would come from other areas of the language program and that would not necessarily raise the number of FTE.

Ms. Patchak-Layman had questions involving course additions and whether they could piggyback on other classes, e.g., the video gaming class. Ms. Hill responded that Instructional Council was aware of the Board of Education's comments and suggestions. The video gaming class curriculum is not cast in stone and continues to be developed. There has been a shift in the development and teachers are not opposed to asking students to create games that have academic content and might do so. While this change is not in the course proposal, it could be reflected in the syllabus. Ms. Patchak-Layman supported the video gaming class if it included coordination of academic content areas.

It was the consensus of the majority of the Instruction Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education approve the Course Proposals at its regular December Board of Education meeting.

### **OPRFHS Opinion Survey on School Community**

It was the consensus of the Instruction Committee members to table the discussion regarding the OPRFHS Opinions Survey on School Community until the next Instruction Committee meeting.

Mr. Prale informed Ms. Patchak-Layman that the School Improvement Plan Committee (composed of 30 people) had scheduled meetings for December 18 and January 24, 2007. Discussion at the Instruction Committee meeting would occur in February and March. Each parent group was asked for representation on the committee. Ms. Patchak-Layman felt these

were important discussions and interested community members should be able to listen to the conversation at the meeting. She felt these should be open meetings. Mr. Prale noted that the administration was following the guidelines of the State.

**Adjournment**

The committee adjourned at 10:31 a.m.