

The Board meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Thursday evening, October 25, 2007, in the Third Floor Library of the high school.

**Call to Order**

President Jacques A. Conway called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. A roll call indicated that the following members were present: John C. Allen, IV, Jacques A. Conway, Valerie J. Fisher, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Sharon Patchak-Layman, and John P. Rigas (arrived at 10:30 p.m.). Also present were: Dr. Attila J. Weninger, Superintendent; Jason Edgcombe, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Amy Hill, Director of Research and Assessment; Jack Lanenga, Assistant Superintendent of Operations; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Cheryl L. Witham, Chief Financial Officer; Don Vogel, Interim Principal; Christian Fernandes, Student Council Representative; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

**Visitors**

The Board of Education welcomed the following visitors: Kay Foran, Director of Community Relations and Communications; Dr. Carl Spight, O.P.R.F.H.S. Institutional Researcher; Linda Cada, Director of Special Education; Sandy Campbell, Dan Amorella, Catherine and David McNary, Peter Hostrawser, Ted Domanchuk, Elaine Hlavach, , Cindy Milojevic, Jacqui Charette-BassiriRad, Joe Herbst, Naomi Hildner, Tony Bush, Jim Goodfellow, Patrick Pearson, Rich Mertz, Tom Tarrant, Francisco Arriaga, Courtney Breen, Pat Crane, Bill Boulware, Michelle Carrow, J. McCoy, Peggy Markey, Carolyn Ojikutu, Colleen Biggins, G. W. Qualls, Daphne LeCesne, Craig Larson, Paul Wright, Debbie Neuman, and Mary Ann DeBruin, O.P.R.F.H.S. faculty and staff members; Bobbie Raymond-Larson, O.P.R.F.H.S. Alumni Association Chair; John Williams of the Oak Park Township; Becca Bloch, and Emma Heidorn of the *Trapeze*; Angelica McClean of the League of Women Voters; Merry Beth Kowalcyk, Burcy Hines, Wyanetta Johnson, Wiley Samuel, G. L. Clay, J. Whalen, Michelle Harton, George Bailey, Dennis Rohling, Frances Kraft, Joan White, Collaboration for Early Childhood, Kim White, Lee Pulliam, and Ann Petroliunas, parents and community members; Terry Dean of the *Wednesday Journal* and Deborah Bayliss of the *Oak Leaves*.

**Board Member  
Comments**

Dr. Millard remarked that everyone's input will be welcome on the plan to be presented later that evening.

Dr. Lee stated that when he joined the Board of Education, he was assigned the duty and given the privilege of being the liaison to the Collaboration for Early Childhood Care and Education. A number of things have been unfolding recently, which lead him to bring a proposal

he wanted the high school to consider. The Collaboration is asking for \$50,000 to fund a feasibility study, as well as work with early childhood care in the Oak Park area. In conjunction with this, Oak Park Police Chief Tanksley wrote an article that appeared in the *Wednesday Journal*, citing a connection between early childhood education and the likelihood of a child ending up in the penal system. There have also been references to the relationships between early childhood care and the achievement gap. Dr. Lee proposed that District 200 donate \$15,000 of the \$50,000 that the Collaboration was seeking from the Village Board. While he had stated that the District's providing of this funding was dependent upon the Village of Oak Park providing the balance of the \$50,000, this was not true. Dr. Lee felt this endeavor was very important and he wanted to discuss this with the Board of Education at a future date.

Ms. Patchak-Layman announced that her requests noted in last month's minutes concerning 1) textbooks, 2) questions on the residency forms, 3) parent participation in Title I Program, and 4) the issue of legal counsel F.O.I.A.'ing her email, were answered. The Board of Education had received a letter from the Attorney General's office stating that no F.O.I.A. request had been made by the school's legal counsel. She had misread the communication. However, she would continue to watch and make sure that the community has full involvement and participation in the actions of District 200.

Mr. Conway concurred with Dr. Lee, Chief Tanksley and several other chiefs of police who believed the push should be for the early childhood community. He supported this request.

**Visitor Comments** Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if it were possible for the community to make comments on the plan to raise student achievement to be discussed later in the meeting. Mr. Conway responded that public forums would be scheduled to receive community input.

**District Liaison & Community Reports** Student Council—Mr. Fernandes apologized for not being at the last Board of Education meeting. He reported on the events of the 2007 Homecoming. The events the week before Homecoming included having dress-up dates, having competition in various activities/dances, etc. The winners received Homecoming tickets. A grand opening ceremony of the mall in which the doors to the mall from the cafeteria were opened and many students have commented on its beauty. He commented that the Homecoming parade was also successful. A camel was incorporated into the theme of the Homecoming dance. The dance this year was moved from the Student Center to the Fieldhouse and 1800 tickets were sold.

Student Council also plans to sponsor talent and fashion shows to raise money for a charity.

On Friday, November 2, Charles Carey, Class of 1971 and Chairman of the Chicago Board of Trade, and John Register, Class of 1985 and Veteran of the Gulf War and silver medalist at the 2000 Paralympics Games, would be honored at the annual Tradition of Excellence Award Convocations. The Board of Education was also invited to an Awards Dinner Thursday, November 1, where these recipients would be present.

Ms. Patchak-Layman suggested that Student Council take the lead on getting student input on raising student achievement plans and then report to the Board of Education. She felt that Student Council was in a position to do this as its membership includes students from all four grades. Mr. Fernandez was happy to see that there was student involvement. Dr. Weninger noted that the Plan included soliciting student feedback; he had already had one interview with the *Trapeze* and more interviews would be scheduled between now and December.

### **October 1 Data Housing Report & School Year Statistics**

Mr. Lanenga presented the October 1 Data Housing Report and School Year Statistics, which included the following:

- Official all-school enrollment (3,176 with 78 receiving services outside of the building)
- Ethnic/racial distribution of student population with historical data
- Historical enrollment by class
- Elementary school sources of entering freshmen with historical data
- % of Graduates from District 97 attending O.P.R.F.H.S.
- % of Graduates from District 90 attending O.P.R.F.H.S.
- Average class size with historical data
- Enrollment statistics by division/department
- Class size data by division/department
- Departmental enrollment totals with historical data
- Departmental enrollment, registration, and FTE data 2006-07 and 2007-08
- Staffing comparison, 2001 through 2007
- Analysis of released periods (management)
- Analysis of released periods (activities/other)
- Individual teacher/class statistics by division/department

He reported that the official class size of 22.5 is based on all regular education classes, excluding performance classes and PE. Basic transition classes average 15.4 registrations. Class size would be 23.1, if basic classes were excluded.

Students this year averaged 4.95 registrations versus last year's average of 4.96. When all classes are included, registrations are 6.41 versus 6.44 from last year.

Discussion ensued.

Ms. Patchak-Layman, noting that some divisions had a wide variation in the number of students, i.e., 36 students between one teacher and another. She asked how that could be made more equal. She also asked if the Spanish teacher who taught advanced Spanish received additional help due to her large class size.

**District Committee  
and State Reports**

P.T.O.—Mr. Allen reported that Dr. Spight and Mr. Prale made a presentation at the meeting on Tuesday, October 16 similar to the one presented to the Instruction Committee members. Discussion ensued about incoming programs for new parents. PTO is initiating a fundraising through Dominick's and it is selling its Student Directory.

A.P.P.L.E.—Dr. Lee reported that Dr. JoAnne Wooten Roberts was the guest speaker at the last A.P.P.L.E. meeting.

ED-RED—Dr. Millard reported that ED-RED was an organization to educate schools about the events in Springfield and advocate for them.

Alumni Association—Dr. Millard reported that the Alumni Association had a reception for the students and their families who received summer enrichment grants. The students were grateful for having received, collectively, \$11,000 in scholarship money for such programs as music and master classes, computer science programs at the University of Michigan, a writing workshop at Southern Illinois University, a filmmaking class at Northwestern University, etc., as well as local math and writing enrichment programs. She commented on Paul Wright's enthusiasm for calling students in the morning to get them to school. These students learned to love math and they participated in a way they had not previously. Mr. Hunter taught the writing enrichment program. She reported that the enthusiasm at the reception was exciting to see and she urged all to go to this event in the future.

Collaboration for Early Childhood Care and Education—Dr. Lee noted that he had attended the Collaboration for Early Childhood Care and Education meetings.

**Student Transfer/  
Withdrawal Report  
2006-07**

Mr. Vogel presented the Board of Education with the Student Withdrawal Report for the 2006-07, as listed below.

		<i>Freshman</i>	<i>Sophomore</i>	<i>Junior</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<b>Transfers</b>	<i>Out of District</i>	22	57	66	46	<b>191</b>
<b>Administrative Withdrawals</b>	<i>Residency</i>	2	8	6	4	20
	<i>Expulsions</i>	1	1	1	2	5
	<i>Illness</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Subtotal</b>						<b>25</b>
<b>Student/Family Withdrawals</b>	<i>Refusal to attend</i>	0	3	3	17	23
	<i>G.E.D.</i>	0	0	0	6	6
	<i>Evening High School</i>	0	0	0	12	12
<b>Subtotal</b>						<b>41</b>
<b>Total Transfers &amp; Withdrawals</b>						<b>257</b>

A student who withdrew, reentered, and remains in school is not considered withdrawn. A student who withdrew more than once over the course of his/her high school career is considered as having withdrawn only once for the reason associated with the withdrawal. Student Family/Withdrawal Rate 2006-2007 (Dropouts): 0.013 (Number of withdrawals (41) divided by the total number of students enrolled (3,245).

### ***School Profile***

Mr. Vogel presented the Board of Education with the School Profile for the 2007-08 school year (attached to and made a part of the minutes of this meeting). Mr. Vogel acknowledged Richard Deptuch, Assistant Principal for Student Services, for preparing this document.

### **Principal's Report**

Mr. Vogel reported that over 1800 students attended Homecoming and that there were no incidents of students being removed from the dance.

Mr. Vogel reported that 250 Alumni were warmly welcomed back for their class reunions Homecoming Weekend.

Mr. Vogel congratulated the Girls' Cross Country Team for winning the regional championships.

Mr. Vogel reported that 1,000 parent teacher conferences had been scheduled and that parents still had another five days to register. He would provide the exact totals next month.

Mr. Vogel announced that the District made application for the Library/ LSTA Grant—Poetry NOW in conjunction with Dominican University, Trinity High School, Fenwick High School, Oak Park Public Library and River Forest Public Library for the purpose of bringing the Poet Laureate to the community in the March/April time frame.

Mr. Vogel announced that Huskiepalooza Night was Friday, October 26, 2007.

Mr. Vogel also congratulated Avi Lessing on his direction of the successful play *Rhinoceros*.

**Superintendent's  
Comments**

Dr. Weninger recognized that an O.P.R.F.H.S. student, Tracy Ewert, has played an integral role in the showcasing of original works by students aged 12-22 on the Girls' Speak website.

Dr. Weninger announced that BP Amoco awarded \$10,000 to Cindy McGuckin to be used in her AP science classes.

Dr. Weninger reiterated that 1800 students attended the Homecoming Dance and recognized Cindy Milojevic and others for making Homecoming a success.

Dr. Weninger announced that O.P.R.F.H.S. would soon observe the Moment of Silence in combination with the Pledge of Allegiance over the PA system. This was a result of an amendment to the Silent Reflection and Student Prayer Act (105 ILCS 20/1) which became law due to the Illinois General Assembly's override of Governor Blagojevich's veto. The amendment requires all public school districts to observe a brief period of silence at the beginning of each school day:

“In each public school classroom the teacher in charge shall observe a brief period of silence with the participation of all the pupils therein assembled at the opening of every school day. This period shall not be conducted as a religious exercise but shall be an opportunity for silent prayer or for silent reflection on the anticipated activities of the day.”

Dr. Weninger spoke of the high school's proactive steps to prevent an outbreak of the MSRA bacteria. They included the nurses' office:

1. Forwarding all information from the OPHD and IDPH and other sources regarding MRSA to the Athletic Department, the P.E. Department, and Buildings and Grounds (B&G). More recently, information has also gone to Cheryl Witham because of Food Services and the Day Care Center.
2. Posters encouraging hand washing were displayed in restrooms throughout the building last spring.
3. An inservice with the Oak Park Health Department for B&G and the Athletic Department was offered last spring on MRSA.
4. Student teaching on an individual basis regarding wound care and the importance of taking antibiotics in the prescribed manner.

5. Ongoing communication with John Seltzer, Marcia Hurt and Robert Zummallen.
6. Handling of all contaminated materials in the manner prescribed by universal precautions.

They included in the B&G Department:

1. January 07 began using Virex\* in all athletic areas: Wrestling mats, locker room floors, shower room floors, bathroom floors.
2. Provided coaches with bottles of Virex\* to spray equipment being used by students and staff.
3. July of 07, sprayed both synthetic turf fields with Bac-Shield - a chemical that combats bacteria growth (including MRSA). That was completed by Sports-Install from St Louis, MO.
4. Recently all B&G staff were supplied with product to fill hand sanitizing dispensers in labs and gyms. New soap dispensers were installed in labs and athletic areas.
5. June 07, old open-fill soap dispensers were replaced in the student bathrooms with the new factory sealed bacteria-free foam dispensers.
6. Currently, a new chemical, Oxivir \*\*, which targets the MRSA bacteria, is being used in conjunction with the Virex in all athletic areas, cafeteria, and bathrooms. Staff will have a supply of spray bottles to spray equipment, as well as supplying the Technology Department with this chemical to spray keyboards.
7. March 07, B&G Staff attended a training seminar on MRSA given by the Health Department. Additional training has been scheduled on MRSA for November 9, 2007.
8. Meetings have been scheduled with Marcia Hurt and John Stelzer on how their staff can assist by making students take home dirty clothes, etc.

Dr. Millard added that MSRA was bacterium and not a virus. It is a common germ that becomes very nasty when it enters the body through a wound in the skin. Continued hand washing is the key to containing it. Doctors may no longer be wearing coats and ties in the hospital, as both are loaded with these organisms.

Dr. Weninger noted that Ms. Patchak-Layman's inquiry regarding the duties of the principal was also responded to in writing.

**A Plan to Raise Student Achievement**

Dr. Weninger unveiled his plan to raise student achievement at the high school to the Board of Education. The Plan is a 29-page document with two attachments 1) Guidelines of the School District Articulation Council and 2) a Student Achievement Program/Initiative Summary. It contains a cover memo, providing 1) the background as to reason for creating this plan, 2) the plan's purpose which is to create a culture of high expectations and high achievement, 3) a descriptor of the gap, 4) common themes and messages, 5) a caveat that the plan is a work-in-progress, and 6) a disclaimer that the plan is not intended to be "the comprehensive plan," as well as a diagram of the plan and an at-a-glance table of the proposed activities, program, initiatives, strategies, etc. Dr. Weninger noted that there would be input from Board of Education members, faculty/staff, District/Building Leadership Teams, Instructional Council, the African American Faculty and Staff Advisory Council, students, and the community.

Dr. Weninger characterized O.P.R.F.H.S. as a comprehensive, competitive, suburban, excellent and achieving high school without equivocation, without compromise, and its students do achieve. The District will continue to work on what has been implemented in the past. Many initiatives have been implemented to address student achievement, minority student achievement and special education achievement. Some include the collaboration of reading and math, i.e., the Agile Mind Program, PBIS intervention strategies, literacy coaching, MAC scholars, and professional learning teams.

Dr. Weninger then showed three film clips from *Apollo 13* and *Star Wars*. In the first clip from *Apollo 13*, the astronauts were circling the earth when they discovered that something was wrong. That is where the famous line "Houston, we have a problem" originated. Dr. Weninger likened this to O.P.R.F.H.S. having a problem/a challenge. The challenge is to raise student achievement of minority students to that of the majority students and to narrow the achievement difference between minority and majority students.

The second clip, also from *Apollo 13*, has all of the engineers throwing down on the table the items that the astronauts circling the earth had available to them to fix their problem. Dr. Weninger aligned this to the District using what it has to solve its challenges. There is no silver bullet. There is no pot of gold. There is no magic potion. The District has to narrow the achievement difference between the majority and minority students and to raise student achievement while at the same time providing the services, supports and academic programs to all students.

The third clip was from the movie *Star Wars*. This was a scene emphasizing unlearning what was learned. The word "try" should not be in one's vocabulary. One must stop "talking" and starting "doing." Dr.



Weninger agreed with that statement. The plan he presented was a to-do list created within two months for one purpose: Raising Student Achievement.

Dr. Weninger explained that this was the time for Board of Education members to give their reactions to the plan. The community would be invited to do so at public forums. He continued that there was little about Special Education students and minority students in the plan. He noted that 20 percent of the Special Education population was in self-contained classes (programs taught by Special Education teachers in Special Education programs). Eighty percent were in the regular curriculum. Those students would be necessarily be touched by whatever changes were made.

Dr. Weninger provided a diagram showing student achievement at the center with four extensions—the groups responsible for raising student achievement—community, parents, school and students.

Dr. Weninger provided a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the various components of the plan.

The goal is to raise student academic achievement of all students and the people responsible are the Community, Parents, School, and Students.

A Systemic Approach will include being systematic, inclusive, planned, prioritized, budgeted, and assessed. Dr. Weninger stated that this plan proposes that the school make priority decisions and live within the budget.

The Communities' Responsibilities are Leadership, Support, Cooperation and Collaboration. Dr. Weninger plans to form an African American Leadership Roundtable to advise him about race in the community. He hoped that the community would provide support not only in the form of tax dollars, but by providing students with computers, and access to technology. He did not intend that each student would be provided a computer, however. Dr. Weninger will also look at the intramural program to see if that can be expanded beyond athletics, i.e., perhaps a program in the summer. Dr. Weninger asked for human resources for the freshman mentoring program.

The Parents' responsibilities include being actively Involved, Partnering, Caring, Sharing Accountability, Setting Expectations, and Resources. Caring means supporting what the school does and sharing the accountability of homework, passing classes, etc.

The School's responsibilities are providing Climate, Curriculum, Instruction, Professional Growth/Development, and Research.

Climate hurts, prevents, inhibits or excels student achievement. Having teachers in the hallways has made a difference. The PSS Teams include counselors and social workers and have made a difference in how students are thinking about their school and themselves. The rate of discipline issues is down significantly from the past. The school must have high expectations, a rigorous course of study, and access to the best programs and teachers, etc. It should provide a positive, encouraging, and motivating environment. When reading about O.P.R.F.H.S. in the media in the past, Dr. Weninger wondered how the negativity impacted the parents, students, etc. Living in a house every day that is positive, encouraging and motivating is different from living in one where there is fighting, accusations and blame. The District must create an atmosphere of belief and honesty. The District needs to be honest about what it is doing.

Curriculum standards must be set within each course by teams of teachers. The District has to assess curriculum and have the courage to change it if necessary.

The school must provide research, best practices, and instructional behaviors/strategies/assessments.

The school must provide professional growth/development which is research founded. It must look at best practices regarding training and use more frequently the peer coaching model. Much has been done for professional growth and development and the District must look at it in a larger systemic way.

O.P.R.F.H.S. is a member of the Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN) which is now a part of the Wisconsin Center for Educational Research in Madison, Wisconsin. Dr. Weninger also wants to partner with a university within a three-hour drive radius. Dr. Weninger recently met with the group who put together the 2003 research paper and its members were more than willing to help seek out ways for professional growth and development, best practices, curriculum, etc.

Dr. Weninger has contacted two superintendents of the three or four other high schools doing things with regard to student achievement, i.e., Homewood Flossmoor, Hoffman Estates, Bloomington, and Evanston Township High School. The Bloomington middle school has been successful in raising student achievement.

Students have the responsibility to develop, strive for and reach personal goals and believe in themselves so that they learn self esteem. They must develop habits of achievement. They must take responsibility/ownership for themselves.

What are the next steps? The timeline includes discussing this at the October, November and December Instruction Committee meetings and Board of Education meetings. There will also be opportunities for the faculty/staff, DLT, BLT, and students to discuss this plan. In addition, Schoolhouse Town meetings will be scheduled in November and December. He hoped to bring the plan to Board of Education for approval in December and then from January to May, the District would set the priorities, identify the costs, set the timeline and assign responsibilities.

Dr. Weninger noted that some things listed in the plan were already in the works: articulation with 90 and 97; further development of the PSS Teams; the review and evaluation of initiatives and programs (some developed in 1990's) and determination of their effectiveness.

Dr. Weninger reported that the details were in the body of the report and opened it up for discussion and questions.

Mr. Conway asked if this plan were to raise minority student achievement or to raise all students' achievement. He felt minority student achievement was a needed area of work. Dr. Weninger responded that it was both. There were areas in which minority student achievement is specifically addressed, but it will touch other students also. Some minority students are not achieving and some are to a lesser extent. He would not identify or target one racial ethnic group to achieve. Many of the programs will address the students who are not achieving. Mr. Conway's concern was that removing race from the formula would make the plan less effective.

Mr. Conway asked what would be put in place to evaluate the programs, particularly when it comes to curriculum and instruction. How will the information get to the classroom and to the teacher so that there is a way to evaluate what happens in the classroom? Will there be measurements? Dr. Weninger responded affirmatively and that the District would use lots of data. Mr. Prale and Dr. Spight have already done some and Skyward will be used to a greater extent to collect data on student achievement. What data will be used to determine whether students are achieving? Discussion is occurring with Districts 90 and 97 about a proposal to identify a growth model assessment. What tests will show achievement in grades 6 – 12, etc. The research group that developed the 2003 Report has indicated that it is interested in assisting. An assessment research arm must develop what are those assessments and research.

Is the school willing to admit that students are not reading at the grade level to achieve that success? Reading deficiencies must be acknowledged. Discussion must occur with the feeder schools. Dr.

Weninger is working on an articulation model for Districts 90 and 97 in which the principals, superintendents, teachers are involved regarding English, math, language arts, and science.

Mr. Conway commented that the District must go where the parents are, and not between the hours of 8 to 3. Unless faculty and staff are willing to go beyond the normal call of duty, the District will fail. The District needs to reach out to the parents. What worked for him, as an African-American male, were strong African-American male mentors, caring adults who went beyond the call of duty, and persons who were willing to pull and support students. The District is the parent in place of the parent. Students need someone in this building to take the place of their parents. There must be a connection between the adult and child that can make the difference. Many of the District's white teachers need diversity training. An application indicates that a teacher has graduated in a certain field, but it does not indicate whether he/she has the experience to deal with students at O.P.R.F.H.S. They need to get the training to do that. Dr. Weninger concurred. The plan contains a proposal to have a parent outreach as Mr. Conway described. To be successful, students need significant adults in their lives who are pushing and pulling. If there were one thing that was not academic about student achievement it is about relationships with teachers, administrators, custodians, paraprofessionals, sponsors, and students.

Dr. Lee read the following statement:

“(Note: This reaction was written in response to the written plan which was received by members of the school board on the evening of Monday, Oct. 22. The verbal presentation on Thursday, Oct. 25, included emphases on the achievement gap which did not appear in the original written document.)

“My reaction to the plan submitted by Dr. Weninger will very likely sound illogical, inconsistent, and contradictory. Since I feel that it is none of the above, I request your very close attention. Since what I am about to say is an expression of my own opinion, it is NOT being offered at this time as an object of debate or argument, and I therefore request of the chair that I not be interrupted for questions or responses. I am asking for permission to say what I have to say all at once, rather than interspersed between audience reactions.

“I believe that Dr. Weninger has done a very good job of doing what he proposed to do in August, and he has done a very good job in offering a starting framework for doing what the Board of Education contracted with him to do (and I say this after looking very carefully at the specific wording of the contract that he and the Board executed.)

“At the same time, I am very disappointed with the content and focus of the plan itself. The plan offers a rich smorgasbord of some of the most popular ideas that American education has developed over the past twenty five years. Yet, it does not focus squarely on the set of problems that many of us have assumed that we have to address: the gap in academic achievement between African American students and white students. This proposal is analogous to taking a population of well-fed carnivores and omnivores, plus a minority of starving herbivores, and serving them large quantities of thirty-five or forty different kinds of meat. The average weight gain of the population would certainly increase, and the majority of meat-eaters would claim that it was a wonderful diet.

“I think I understand the aversion that the superintendent has to the references to the “gap”, and the emotional baggage that the term carries with it. While the terminology itself may give discomfort to blacks and whites alike, avoidance of the term can lead to much worse—overlooking the facts of life that made the issue so emotionally charged in the first place.

“There are many people here tonight who believe that our school board has stated that seeking closure of the achievement gap is its highest priority. I quote from the latest edition of the Wednesday Journal: “The school board has made student achievement and eliminating the achievement gap between black and white students at OPRF its number one goal.” The people who assume that “closing the gap” is the school board’s highest priority would expect that the plan for doing so would involve a careful assessment of the most serious causes of it that are under the school’s influence or control, and development of a sharply focused plan to deal with the most serious factors. It would be a plan to “get the maximum bang for the buck”. It would not be a plan that uses enormous resources spread over a myriad of programs and initiatives.

“So we really have to ask the question: Has the current school board actually set closing the achievement gap at the top of its list of priorities? I am not aware of any such action. Should the school board do this? I believe that it should. The current superintendent’s contract indicates no priorities. It does state that one goal, among several others, is to “Improve academic achievement across the entire student population, and with particular emphasis on improving the achievement of minority and special education students.” While this goal is listed first, there is no indication that it has any higher priority than any other goal. More to the point, there is no mention of a disparity in the achievement levels of black and white students, and certainly no statement to the effect that it wants the superintendent to do anything about it.

“In any event, both the school administration as well as the public has a right to know exactly what the priorities of the school board really are. Their unequivocal and clearly stated priorities would set a tone and create a framework of educational policy direction that would profoundly influence the way in which the starting framework that has been placed before us, is actually developed over the next several months.

“The school administration and the public also have a right to know what the current school board’s educational policy is with respect to the teaching of specific reading skills to those students who have a need for such specific skill improvements. For at least the last forty years, this school district has had a *de facto* policy of not providing for such instruction, except in the special education program and for an almost negligible handful of students whose parents have vigorously requested it. Does the current school board also support that policy of almost refusing to teach reading to all of the students who need it? It seems likely to me that we are now ready to re-think such a policy.

“It is the obligation of the school board to make its policies clear to the superintendent and to the public before we invest an enormous amount of resources based on possibly incorrect assumptions.

“If the school board chooses to set policy in the way in which I am advocating, it is my observation that we already have on board a superintendent who is well equipped to lead us in these new policy directions. It is also my sense that he would likely be willing to exercise leadership in these new directions if he were specifically asked to do so. However, it would certainly not be reasonable to expect him to do this without first being asked to do so by the school board.”

Ms. Fisher appreciated that this was the initial presentation of the plan and she recognized that the PowerPoint was broad strokes, more of an outline than the plan. She looked forward to the discussion of those points and to consideration of the more specific initiatives thoughtfully put together. Her question was about articulation with Districts 90 and 97 regarding a single tracking system for elementary and high school students and tracking meaningfully. That is critical and needs to happen as soon as possible. She asked if the timeline piece been initiated in those discussions with Dr. Collins and Dr. Bonnette. Dr. Weninger referred to the articulation model proposed to both superintendents attached to the plan. A tool needs to be identified that will allow us to determine who is and who is not achieving. Ms. Fisher asked if there were buy-in from Districts 90 and 97. Mr. Prale responded that there was buy-in and reported on the steps presently being taken. He continued that it was difficult to find a single testing instrument because sixth graders and 11<sup>th</sup> graders cannot be tested with the same test. A ladder

assessment is necessary. ISAT and ACT do not articulate well together, but that is what the state uses.

Mr. Allen appreciated the fact that so many committees and groups had been involved and would be involved in the future. Dr. Weninger noted that a part of plan would be to establish costs, timelines and responsibilities between now and December. In another four or five months, a more in-depth model could be presented.

Mr. Allen felt Dr. Weninger had done an admirable job on this plan. As another African-American, he wanted people to know that he had succeeded because of the sheer force and will of his parents. No one knows what will have a positive effect on students. It may be that career goals work well for some but not for others. He felt the plan was good because it involved concrete goals for all elements of the community. There is no place in life where one is not responsible for themselves—not in one's career, not in one's religion, not in economics, etc. What happens to someone depends upon his/her decisions and processes. The students must be involved.

Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that as she looked at this plan, she thought it good for those students who would graduate in 2012. She was worried, however, about the students currently in school. The seniors will graduate in six months and some of them have not met the standards. Nothing in this plan addressed the juniors not taking the PSAT test prep class. She wanted a plan that would address what could be done immediately. There were lots of suggestions that did not have a vetting between groups who are concerned, those who could have provided information, possible solutions prior to unveiling the plan. She had hundreds of questions about the specific details of the plan but this was not the time and place to go into each and every one of them.

She noted her concern about the tenor of the plan as is it was built on deficit places rather than talking about strengths. There were many statements that were judgmental and found to be offensive to parents as part of the school, i.e., “students who are motivated and ready and then there are other students.” Dr. Weninger had imposed his own values on what they should be doing instead of supporting depth. She felt it would have been helpful to have a definition of raising student achievement. What is the goal being sought and what is the problem? What was happening with college prep classes? That is a change that should be made second semester. Freshman parents are told that college prep classes get their students ready for college. The District has a responsibility that the students who graduate do not have to take remedial college classes. How does the District compensate those families, because it did not do the job?

It is a time to do things, not to talk about it. Seniors should immediately be offered assistance to have a good step to college and step it up with the juniors. There is no less urgency in making that turnaround. This plan suggests that all of the things will happen in the future. When one puts the visuals together and adds things up, this plan is for the longer term. There needs to be a second set of plans. She suggested that the community would be able to provide input on contracting out for the students who are here at this time. The defining of what excellence is for the institution and the students needs to be a Board of Education-led discussion. She was concerned about the number of committees appointed and selected by the superintendent. She felt the Board of Education needs to take the lead on this, set the policy, work with the community to bring forth its ideas and work with administration and staff. She was concerned about keeping the process open. She looked forward to having additional discussions with the community, staff and students in hours outside of school hours and she hoped for something that could make changes second semester.

Dr. Millard noted that she was overwhelmed by this, as she had just received it. There was much to digest. She noted excitement about some things and she was unsure about others. The District needs to set priorities and make choices and she was interested in seeing other people's reaction to the plan and how priorities would be set. Is there something for everyone? The appeal is for those students not achieving to his/her potential, but she suggested that maybe every student is not achieving at his/her potential. There is no limitation; it is a matter of dreaming and dreaming even bigger. Everyone must be on board for this plan to work. She wanted the District to be more creative. The District must know who is coming to the high school, what is being done while the student is here, and what is going on with the students beyond high school. The District needs to keep track of the students after they graduate. The District needs objective tools to make assessments. She wanted something for now and for the long term. She felt the plan was a recipe for long-term achievement, but she realized that there was no silver bullet. What can the Board of Education do to get everyone on board? That may be the biggest obstacle to saying all of this will work. She was eager to have the public's input.

Dr. Weninger originally looked at the superintendent's contract when developing this plan after a question was raised at the August Instruction Committee meeting about what the school was going to do to address minority student achievement. He understands that the plan appears as a menu/recipe. In two months, he and others put together an elegant framework and to address some of the issues that impact student achievement which may have been narrow or anemic. He felt the plan did so, although may not explicitly address minority student



achievement. A list could have been included in the presentation but because of time, it was not.

Dr. Lee agreed that the District has to identify the causes. It was important for him to read 8 to 10 research studies on student achievement. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that the community needs to define the benchmarks and the goals as to what student achievement is and what does that look like at O.P.R.F.H.S.

Dr. Weninger concluded that a few people on the staff and in the community know him quite well. He would never use any word that would be disrespectful, demean or denigrate anyone in any way, especially when it related to the achievement of minority students. He has had open conversations about race and what the inhibitors are regarding race. If there were a single word in the document that caused any one discomfort, he publicly apologized.

It was noted that the first community forum would be held on November 13 at 7:30 p.m. at the Buzz Café – 7:30 p.m. Another Town hall meeting will be scheduled in December.

Dr. Lee felt that coming up with a plan by December made no sense. He did not think anyone had the capability of coming up with an adequate plan within the next six weeks. What can be done is to come up with a plan to make a plan. He believed it was expecting too much to have a finished plan by December. Dr. Weninger noted that he had responded to the pressure the administration felt in August to come up with a plan, even sooner than tonight. The December timeline is a continued effort to respond to that pressure. While more need to be done, things are already occurring. He was concerned about delaying any further.

Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that some of the things currently being done have not had much direct effect on the juniors and seniors. There is urgency for the seniors. What opportunities will help them in their last six months here? It is like someone who is sick and needs medication. There is the same urgency for juniors. The District needs to be able to offer them something. In the medical system, there are three levels of care, i.e., 1) a triage system, 2) primary care, and 3) secondary care. There is a group of students in the school that the District needs to be targeted to help change the tide. Mr. Prale stated that Ms. Patchak-Layman statements implied that nothing was being done to help these students. The implication that the College Prep students do not exceed is not true. The regular education program has to do better and the District is working with the Division Heads on that at this time. The District continues to be assertive. Half of the students in the College Prep Program are successful. Juniors and seniors do have an articulation program with Triton that more students could access and the District is

encouraging Counselors to do more with these dual courses. The District continues to apply a specific credit recovery program, SOLO. It is an alternative school within the school day for originally only 10 to 12 students. It has now grown to 20 students (15 juniors and seniors) and the District needs to discuss committing more resources to it. Students are provided with a different learning environment to keep them involved, allow them to earn credit, and increase their skills and knowledge. He agreed that there was a need to do more, but the District has current programs here with which to work. Are more teachers needed for the SOLO Program? Perhaps.

Mr. Conway noted that the District and the Board of Education would continue to work on these items every day.

### **Consent Items**

Dr. Millard moved to approve the consent items as follows:

- The open minutes of September 20, 27, and October 16, 2007 and the closed session minutes of September 20, 27, and October 16, 2007, and a declaration that the audiotapes of March 2006 be destroyed;
- Personal recommendations;
- Resolution Ratifying and Confirming Execution of certain vouchers and payment of certain bills and expenses, fund transfers and list of bills for October 2007 (attached to and made part of the minutes of this meeting);
- Resolution Authorizing Execution of Certain Vouchers for the Month of November 2007 (attached to and made a part of the minutes of this meeting);
- Check Disbursements dated October 25, 2007 (attached to and made a part of the minutes of this meeting);
- School Illinois Grant

seconded by Mr. Allen. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Patchak-Layman learned that the review of the library would be scheduled for the spring and how the money received would be used would be decided by the staff, either for materials or staff development. The District will receive \$.75 per student.

A roll call vote resulted in six ayes. Motion carried. Mr. Rigas was absent from this vote.

**Policy 5114-1  
Amendment**

Dr. Lee moved to amend Policy 5114-1, Suspension and Expulsion for Students with Disabilities; seconded by Dr. Millard. A roll call vote resulted in five yeas and one nay. Motion carried. Ms. Patchak-Layman voted nay and Mr. Rigas was absent from this vote.

Ms. Patchak-Layman could not support Policy 5114-1 because the policy did not set the guidance for procedures. She believed students given out-of-school suspensions should be able to continue their education within two days of being assigned that consequence.

**Policy 5114-2  
Amendment**

Dr. Lee moved to amend Policy 5114-2, Behavioral Interventions and Isolated Time Out/Physical Restraint for Disabled Students; seconded by Dr. Millard. A roll call vote resulted in five Yeas and one Nay. Motion carried. Ms. Patchak-Layman voted nay and Mr. Rigas was absent from this vote.

Ms. Patchak-Layman believed that the policy would better serve the district if it stated that an adult would always be present and that the parents would be notified. Mr. Edgecombe responded that the procedures adopted by Special Education include the concerns that Ms. Patchak-Layman expressed. Ms. Patchak-Layman made a general comment that policy trumps procedures as to what the District wants and procedures should not be relied on to carry that forward.

**Approval of  
Policy 5200**

Dr. Lee moved to approve Policy 5200, School Choice, as presented; seconded by Dr. Millard. A roll call vote resulted in six Ayes. Motion carried. Mr. Rigas was absent from this vote.

**Approval of the  
Meaning of the  
Seal, for First  
Reading**

Dr. Lee moved to approve the Meaning of the Seal, for First Reading, seconded by Dr. Millard. A roll call vote resulted in six ayes. Motion carried. Mr. Rigas was absent from this vote.

**Approval of Policy  
12 for First Reading**

Dr. Lee moved to approve Policy 12, American Flag, for First Reading; seconded by Dr. Millard. A roll call vote resulted in six ayes. Motion carried. Mr. Rigas was absent from this vote.

**Approval of Policy  
103 for First Reading**

Dr. Lee moved to approve Policy 103, Philosophy of Discipline, for First Reading; seconded by Dr. Millard: A roll call vote resulted in six ayes. Motion carried. Mr. Rigas was absent from this vote.

**Approval of Policy  
104-1, for First  
Reading**

Dr. Lee moved to approve Policy 104-1, Change of Grade, for First Reading; seconded by Dr. Millard. A roll call vote resulted in six ayes. Motion carried. Mr. Rigas was absent from this vote.

**Presentation of  
Aid to Needy**

Ms. Witham reported that the recommendations for financial assistance for books and required supplies for needy students are processed

## Children Report

through the Business Office. The requests for free and reduced lunches Originated by parent applications. The Food Service Department processes the Free and Reduced Lunch Program applications. All approved applications must meet government guidelines. The reimbursement received from the State and Federal Governments helps to defray the cost for the total lunch program. Ms. Witham provided the following statistics:

### I. Free and Reduced Cost Lunch Program

#### A. Free Lunch Program

2006-07	350	Students participated
2005-06	345	Students participated
2004-05	299	Students participated

#### B. Reduced Cost Lunch Program

2006-07	100	Students participated
2005-06	67	Students participated
2004-05	60	Students participated
2003-04	70	Students participated

### II. Deferred Payments

Students and their parents request a deferred payment for books, supplies and fees. This is available to all families upon request.

2006-07	595 Recommended	
	Balance Outstanding as of 6/30/07	\$24,317.30
2005-06	52 Recommended	
	Balance Outstanding as of 6/30/06	\$ 9,057.60
2004-05	461 Recommended	
	Balance Outstanding as of 6/30/05	\$10,129.69

Students do not bring books and then owe money.

NOTE: Families are sent an invoice each month.

### III. School Loans

Books and required supplies are paid for by Oak Park and River Forest High School for needy students using the same State guidelines provided for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program. A fund transfer pays costs, from the Education Fund. These books and required supplies are distributed on an equal basis. Students are instructed to return their loaned books to the bookstore at the termination of the course.

2006-07	410 Approved applications	
	Balance Outstanding as of 6/30/07	\$18,404.85
2005-06	354 Approved applications	
	Balance Outstanding as of 6/30/06	\$17,651.37
2004-06	34 Approved applications	
	Balance Outstanding as of 6/30/05	\$10,461.60

Ms. Witham responded to Mr. Conway's inquiry about the meal program with District 97 saying that it was going well and that compliments had been received. Dr. Millard asked if there were a way to recoup the outstanding balances. Ms. Witham reported that when students return with outstanding, deferred payments, the District tries to collect by giving the students an opportunity to defer the total amount. The District is being

more successful in collecting money with the installment plan. Once students graduate or leave the District, success in collecting the balances is limited.

**Presentation of Preliminary Levy**

Ms. Witham presented the Preliminary Levy noting that it must be placed on display no less than 20 days in advance of adoption. The Board of Education will adopt the 2007 Levy at its regularly scheduled Board meeting on December 20, 2007. A Public Hearing meeting will be held at the regularly scheduled Board Meeting on December 20, 2007.

For the 2007 Levy the CPI used is 2.5% and EAV for new property is estimated at \$20,000,000 plus \$20,345,170 in TIF carveouts. The estimate of the 2007 aggregate tax Levy is 104.56 percent of the Preliminary 2006 Levy.

<b>Fund</b>	<b>Preliminary 2006 Levy</b>	<b>Preliminary 2007 Levy</b>
Education	\$ 43,075,463	\$ 44,612,278
Liability Insurance	1,113,616	1,141,456
Special Education	406,372	476,232
O&M	5,009,319	5,067,320
Transp.	810,790	831,060
IMRF	998,347	1,023,306
SS	998,347	1,023,306
Working Cash	310,640	997,029
Life Safety	1,015,930	1,024,058
Total	\$ 53,738,824	\$ 56,196,045
Bond & Interest	\$3,006,954	\$3,008,516
<b>TOTAL LEVY</b>	<b>\$ 56,745,778</b>	<b>\$ 59,204,561</b>

**The following is the Timeline for the Levy**

October 16	Finance Meeting	Estimated Levy
October 25	BOE Meeting	Estimated Levy
November 6	Finance Meeting	Estimated Levy
December 20	BOE Meeting	Truth in Taxation Hearing
December 20	BOE Meeting	Levy Adoption

Ms. Witham had a PowerPoint presentation in the Board of Education’s packet on levy terms. She noted that the average increase to a homeowners’ bill would be 2.5%.

Ms. Fisher asked Ms. Patchak-Layman to expand upon how she envisioned the District would contract out for additional services. Ms. Patchak-Layman responded through a re-shifting of the present dollars.

**2007-08 Certified Staff Seniority List Profile**

Mr. Edgecombe provided the Certified Staff Profile Report based on October 1, 2007 data. He stated that the Fulltime equivalent (FTE) designation on certified Staff Profile Report represents the contractual service for employees who are members of the teaching faculty. As a result, the FTE statistic includes all certified teachers, supervisors, coordinators, guidance counselors, deans of discipline and the portion of Division Heads responsibilities devoted to classroom teaching.

There were 235 certified FTE at the end of the 2006-07 school year. As of October 1 of the current school year, the District's FTE for certified staff is 230.2. The decrease in FTE results from the Division Head for Guidance, the Coordinator for Student Health and Safety and the Division Head for Information Systems becoming the Assistant Principal for Guidance, the Assistant Principal for Student Health and Safety and the Principal, respectively. The remaining decrease in numbers is due to a reduction in English, History, Mathematics, Music, Physical Education and World Languages. resulting in 4.8 reduction in certified staff.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if it appeared that there were more minority teachers now. Mr. Edgecombe responded negatively and noted that it continues to be an issue. Dr. Weninger noted that this was one of the District goals on which the superintendent will start working.

**Presentation of Educational Support Personnel Profile**

Mr. Edgecombe presented the data that was based on the records as of October 1, 2007. The changes are in the following areas:

- Buildings and Groups (+1)
- Food Service (-1)
- Classified (+1)
  - Teacher Assistants (+1)
  - 308 Secretary moved to secretary for the Assistant Principal for Student Health and Safety
- Non-Affiliated (-2)
  - Decrease of two Technology technicians
- Security (0)

**EAP Contract Renewal**

Dr. Lee moved to renew the EAP Contract for FY '08 with Workplace Solutions; seconded by Mr. Allen. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

The annual estimated cost of this recommendation is \$8,500.00.

**Probationary Teachers by Division**

Mr. Edgecombe provided a list of faculty members holding probationary status during the 2007-08 school year (attached to and made a part of the minutes of this meeting). There are 81 non-tenured teachers or 35 percent. Ten are first year teachers, 23 are second year teachers, 19 are third year teachers and 14 are part time teachers.

Ms. Patchak-Layman commented that Ms. Quane was listed as part time, but had a full load. Ms. Patchak-Layman was informed that Ms. Quane has five classes first semester but only four classes second semester and thus does not qualify as a full-time teacher.

Dr. Millard learned that teachers need four consecutive years of full-time service in order to attain tenure.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the number of mentors had been increased in the last four years. The response was yes. Each non-tenured teacher has a mentor from his/her division. The mentors of instruction are the division heads.

**Non Agenda Items** Dr. Lee recommended awarding \$15,000 to the Collaboration for Early Childhood Care and Education, in addition to the \$15,000 it provides annually, as a one time payment. The timing would be contingent upon the Village providing the additional \$35,000. The Village will vote on its final budget at the end of December. It was the consensus of the Board of Education to bring this suggestion to the Finance Committee meeting in November for further discussion. Ms. Witham stated that the District has a legal opinion that presently taxing bodies are not to make donations to other entities. The present agreement with the Collaboration is that it provides services and the District has an Intergovernmental Agreement for services it provides to the District. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked for the background on CDBG money vs. coming out of its general budget. Dr. Lee needed more information to answer that question. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that being able to look at the continuum of services is important to do, but the District needs more information.

Ms. Fisher will continue to be the Alumni Association liaison.

**Visitor Comments** Becca Bloch, student, current editor of the *Trapeze* and resident of 325 N. East Avenue, Oak Park, addressed the Board of Education.

Ms. Bloch noted that she while she had attended the Board of Education meeting as a representative of *Trapeze*; she was speaking as a student, a senior student with only six more months at the high school. She noted that she really loves the high school and it has been the best four years of her academic career. She urged the Board of Education to include students when working on this plan. She objected to Ms. Patchak-Layman referral of students as sick people in a hospital. She referred to Mr. Allen's statement that everything one does one is responsible for and the answers students give might be surprising. When students are asked what motivates them to exceed, the answers would be different for every student. She encouraged roundtable discussions. Even asking the questions would be motivation for the students.

Dr. Millard asked her how easy would it be to engage students who are not achieving, who are truant, etc. The reply was that the majority of them would not engage. But the highest achievers could be in the remedial classes. By just asking someone would be showing him/her that someone was interested in them and it could empower them. If Board of Education tries to engage students and creates a dialogue between administrators and students, it will make a difference. She knew that people cared about her opinions, because they asked her what she thought. It changes the climate.

Ms. Patchak-Layman apologized for her poorly phrased analogy about medical care.

**Closed Session**

At 10:45 p.m., on Thursday, October 25, 2007, Dr. Millard moved to go into closed session for the purpose of discussing the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the District or legal counsel for the District, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee or against legal counsel for the District to determine its validity. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1), as amended by PA.93—57; Student disciplinary cases 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(10); The placement of individual students in special education programs and other matters relating to individual students 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11); Litigation, when an action against, affecting or on behalf of the particular District has been filed and is pending before a court or administrative tribunal, or when the District finds that an action is probable or imminent, in which case the basis for the finding shall be recorded and entered into the closed meeting minutes 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11); and to adjourn to the Board Room; seconded by Mr. Allen.

Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that she did not feel she had a conflict of interest on any of the closed session agenda items.

A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

At 12:14 a.m. on Friday, October 26, 2007, the Board of Education reconvened its open session.

**Student Discipline**

Mr. Allen moved to expel student, EXP 10/25/07-02 as of October 25, 2007, for the remainder of the 2007-08 school year through summer school 2008 with services as determined by the Special Education Division and to be eligible to return to campus for Fall 2008; seconded by Dr. Lee. A roll call vote resulted in six ayes. Motion carried. Ms. Fisher abstained.



**Adjournment**

At 12:25 a.m. on Friday, October 26, 2007, Mr. Allen moved to adjourn the Board of Education meeting; seconded by Dr. Millard. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Jacques A. Conway  
President

John P. Rigas  
Secretary