

February 9, 2008

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Saturday, February 09, 2008, in the Board Room of the high school.

Call to Order

President Conway called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: John C. Allen, Jacques A. Conway, Valerie J. Fisher, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Sharon Patchak-Layman and John P. Rigas. Also present were Dr. Attila J. Weninger, Superintendent; Jason Edgecombe, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Don Vogel, Interim Principal; Cheryl Witham, Chief Financial Officer; Amy Hill, Director of Assessment and Research; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board of Education.

Visitors

Mark Janda, Facilitator, Kay Foran, O.P.R.F.H.S. Communications and Community Relations Coordinator; Dr. Carl Spight, O.P.R.F.H.S. Institutional Researcher; James Hunter, FSEC Chair; Kevin Peppard, Lee Pulliam, Burcy Hines, Wyanetta Johnson, George Bailey, Helen Chukwu, Dr. Bill McMiller, G. Crayton, community members; Angelica Kuehn, League of Women Voters; and Terry Dean, *Wednesday Journal*.

Visitor Comments

George Bailey, resident of 724 S. Clarence, Oak Park, addressed the Board of Education.

He congratulated the Board of Education for getting this far. He noted that he has lived with a white woman for 37 years. There is a view that there has been more investment in whiteness, as evidenced by the suburbs. Whites started living in the city and then they migrated to the suburbs because the perception was that the suburbs had better schools, better parks, and were safer. Leavitt Town is an example of this. The possessive investment in whiteness is that whiteness does not name itself, one cannot see it. It structures its reality to maintain an investment in itself. He would like to think about the comfortableness of whiteness; he would argue that the discomfort is the place that this discussion has to go for a while. Most people would not last long at his dinner table, because the conversation is what African's talk about. He wanted to get the "real deal" as the republic of this country says it should.

Mr. Lee Pulliam, resident of 719 N. Elmwood, Oak Park, addressed the Board of Education.

Mr. Pulliam thanked all of the volunteers who gave of their time so freely by coming out to engage in this discussion. While he had not planned to speak, he was angered by the article written by Kevin Peppard that talked about Black people wanting education directed toward them. It is almost as if Blacks had this medical malady, sickle cell, Black women who has breast cancer, etc., and the medical professional failed to explain why Black people have the disease. Blacks will not be offended by being called Black and he hoped Whites would not be offended by being called White. The need is to find out what is wrong and to fix it. He has lived in Oak Park for twenty-three years and his family chose Oak Park because of its background, e.g., the notion that Blacks could be accepted. His children have matriculated through this school. Blacks are not just saying give us something, they are invested. Blacks are willing to do what it takes to get this done. He was disturbed about the stream of vindictive remarks about Black people that he has read in the paper recently. When he helps a student, he does not care about the color of the skin; he cares about fixing the child's problem. That is what he expects and demands from the school board.

Student Achievement Dr. Weninger introduced the facilitator for the meeting, Mark Janda. Mr. Janda's credentials included 1) being a social studies teacher at Hickman High School, a K-12 district, in Columbia, Missouri; 2) having six years experience as a study circles facilitator, 3) teaching at inner city schools, 4) being an teacher of African American studies for 12 years, 5) being the chair of Student Achievement Committee for seven years, 6) being a member of his district's achievement gap task force for four years, and 7) facilitating and presenting to communities, regions, universities on race and racism, as well as race and student achievement. Hickman High School is a part of the Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN).

Mr. Janda reported that when he was working with junior and senior African-American students, he observed capable and talented students whose paperwork, however, did not support his observations. Having found no research to account for this, he brought the discussion to the students themselves who asked him to then share that information with others. That is when he decided to do something in a bigger format. Being a reflective teacher, he started seeing changes in his classroom and he started a committee of like-minded teachers and who read books such as "Why Are All the African-American Students Sitting Together in the Cafeteria." These teachers challenged themselves and brought this subject to the attention of other faculty members. It has turned into a district-wide mission of "empowering students to achieve academic excellence, to develop personal integrity and responsibility, to

value diversity, and to become continuous learners capable of contributing to a changing society.”

Mr. Janda stated that dialogues such as these were generally very sensitive and volatile and being uncomfortable must be expected and accepted. Normally, he would have this conversation in a private, a smaller setting, as trust takes time to build. Having an audience could inhibit the process, but he asked the Board of Education members speak as honestly as possible. This process would start with a conversation but he could not forecast that the problem would not be solved in three weeks or even a year. He advised that it was O.K. to disagree and there would not be a neat closure at the end of this meeting or possibly ever.

Hickman High School has 2100 students, which included 23 percent African-American and a small Latino student population. When asked how successful Hickman High School has been in closing the achievement gap. Mr. Janda stated that opening people’s minds is wonderful as it translates to real student achievement. They were seeing very small increases in pockets, e.g., a larger number of African-American students enrolling in honors courses and a 20 percent increase in the number of African-American students who took the ACT test. Previously the baseline score was 20 and now it is 21.6.

Mr. Rigas asked the Board of Education what is the ultimate goal when this process is complete. There are two different discussions about the achievement gap, as defined, on the basis of the proportionately and based on race in each quartile. Even if everyone were moved up from the bottom quartile, an achievement gap would still exist. He submitted that given the two feeder districts, it will be impossible to eliminate the gap given the fact that the White students at District 90 overachieve the White students at District 97 by a half to three-quarters of a percentage point. To eliminate the gap, one has to raise the achievement level of Black students over the level of White students at District 97. Mr. Janda responded that it is one thing to raise achievement for everyone and another to close gaps. What one does to raise the achievement for everyone and accelerate the lower quartile are different strategies in the classroom. Mr. Rigas remarked that the O.P.R.F.H.S. could meet AYP in every subject and still not eliminate the gap. Ms. Hill commented that it would be the case for a time.

Discussion then ensued about prioritization of the discussion of the four outcomes decided upon at the February 7 Special Board meeting, which were

- I. Outcomes
 - A. Answer the question of how do the Board's Resolutions impact the student achievement plan?
 - B. Prioritize the plan for student achievement.
 - C. Decide which initiatives of the student achievement plan will be implemented in 2008-2009.
- II. Outcome

Agree to reach a consensus as we identify the factors that affect student achievement, that we will make all necessary changes in policy, curriculum, and administrator/teacher/ staff behaviors that impact the identified factors.
- III. Outcomes
 - A. Agree that racism has an everyday impact on activity and education at the high school.
 - B. Agree that racism can be reflected in everyday/ordinary decisions and actions.
 - C. Will develop a strategy to review those everyday actions/decisions that the Board of Education has responsibility for.
- IV. Outcome

Start a personal process of a better understanding of specific factors that impair/limit achievement of African-American students at the high school.

Regarding the resolutions and based on community reaction, Mr. Allen believed that the White community felt it was going to lose something and it did not "get" why the resolution passed. He wanted everyone to understand the reasoning. He was not foolish enough to think that the gap would be closed in a year because one cannot undue a forty to fifty-year old problem in that time frame. The gap has many causes. The only things he can control are the things in which he is involved and he is involved in the high school. He hoped that the process of understanding other people's feelings could begin.

Dr. Millard stated that she had not been a part of the discussions regarding the resolutions as they had occurred within a short period of time. She asked if the school was being inclusive or exclusive with these resolutions. She believed that race, the Black race in particular, which differentiates from other races, does need special attention. But, if the focus is on underachievement, it cannot focus on race. She was offended that others were not included in the resolutions. The resolution said Black versus White. She had no problem giving special emphasis to Black students, and asked how the resolutions would affect other students not achieving when the Board of Education says Black versus White. She was upset on how the passage of the resolution had occurred and what was said. She did not believe anyone who voted for it meant for it to be

exclusive. It is an eye-opening experience to work in a culture where one is not the majority, as she has. As she thought about the Board of Education's goal, she wondered if it were about trying to raise achievement for all or that of Black versus White students.

Dr. Lee, having proposed and worded the resolutions, gave an explanation. Part of this grows out of his own history at the District. The Board of Education in 1993 declared that its first priority was to close the achievement gap. His experience and attitude between 1993 and seven or eight months ago, while this was done with all good intentions, was that it was simply lip service; there was recognition of the problem, but not a resolve to seriously address the problem. He understands that there is a prejudice point of view. He understands that it is unfair to the Board of Education who served from 1993 to six months ago and he accepted the fact that he could not be entirely fair in every word that he spoke. Getting to what he meant by closing the achievement gap, as defined, is a gap between the achievements of Black and White students. He knowingly left out Hispanic and Asian students and understood that was unfair, but he believed they will benefit from the process. He defined closing the achievement gap as follows: there will by definition always be a 1, 2 and 3 and the lowest quartile. They will always exist. To close the achievement gap means the percentage of the Black students in the lowest quartile will be close to those in the overall population. Is that achievable? No, the achievement gap is not totally under the control of District 200. It does not even start at District 97, but at birth. He proposed that this Board of Education give \$15,000 to a program to address the problems of what happens between birth and age five. That is a token for something the District has no control over. He believed District 200 does not have control over some things and that it does have control over some things. District 200 is not going to directly raise the income levels of the lowest income population; that has something to do with the achievement levels and the District will do little to affect that. When reading through the various papers that were given to the Board of Education members, almost everything assumes that what The District can do is change the behaviors of students, parents, and teachers and the only role that administrators and Board of Education members have is of changing the role of students, parents, and teachers. There was no mention of the structure of the school system itself. The administration and the Board of Education can change that. Are there assumptions that underlie the basic structure of the school system that contribute to the achievement gap? He believed little attention has been paid to that. Ability grouping can be controlled. Dr. Spight calls this "performance" grouping. On his meanest days, he would say the purpose of ability grouping is to 1) keep the average students and

dummies from interfering with the progress of the bright students; and 2) keep the dummies from interacting with the middle students. He believed that people have learned to talk about it in acceptable language, e.g., programs that are appropriate to the abilities of the students, as opposed to keeping the dummies out of the way of the bright students. He believed one expected reaction to a proposal where we questioned the foundation of ability grouping is that it is being torn down. When he was younger he would have done just that. Now it is too big and there are some aspects of that structure that are positive. However, I wanted the Board of Education to question the entire structure to see what was useful, both positive and negative, about it. For a Board of Education to do nothing is a powerful protection of the school board. He would like the Board of Education to analyze ability groupings to justify the justifiable. Some aspects of that are changing the perspective of teachers. His experience is that teachers tend to protect students from the harm that is done by the structure. Overall, he believes teachers have done an excellent job. He would like to look at those things not in their power. He wanted to look at the school's entire structure.

Dr. Lee continued that the word "plan" implied that there is a plan to be addressed and to which priorities should be addressed. There is only the beginning of a plan and the Board of Education has not had the opportunity to talk about specific aspects of that plan.

Mr. Janda asked the Board of Education where they thought they would like to start with the four outcomes.

Dr. Lee and Mr. Rigas choose 1A and 1C. Mr. Rigas' reasoning for choosing these were because they were action oriented.

Mr. Conway chose 3A, 3B, and 3C. He knew of students who felt alienated as a result of the way business is conducted in the school. He felt it was important to recognize the obvious. If a White patient and Black patient go to doctors in Chicago with the same ailment, the White patient would get the right medication and the Black patient would get something else. These are his personal experiences. He feels the students who can achieve do not because of how the school works.

Mr. Allen stated it was his reality to do 4, 3, 2, 1, in that order, but felt the Board of Education needed to start with 1A and 1C.

Ms. Fisher concurred with starting at 1. This is the conversation that has been missing from the beginning and that is what she said when these resolutions were presented to the Board of Education, i.e., she hoped that the Board of Education could wait one month

for the members who were out of town to be included in the discussions. She was disappointed that the Board of Education, that does its governance through first and second readings, passed such a resolution in a short period of time and without the discussion by the full Board.

Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that this discussion is where each of them has personally entered into it. She entered the discussion on No. 3, racism. She has done the analysis in her head, with the community, and she is ready to react to how the situation in the building can be improved. It relates to a lot of the other things that appear. She is tired of raising academic achievement being the number one goal of the school, yet the school is not moving ahead. If the Board of Education were the Supreme Court, it would light the fire of what it controlled in the school. The Board of Education can set institutional activities, expectations, priorities, and it can look for accountability. She is concerned at hearing that this could take years to do; students only have four years at the high school and she did not want 3,000 or 4,000 students to go through the school over the next five years without the best education possible. She felt that racism occurred every day in this school and the Board of Education needs to act on that fact.

Dr. Millard stated that more people must be smarter than her and farther along in the process, because the school knows which students are underachieving. When reading the articles on achievement, she did not know where to start first; there are many choices. There are too many factors for her to say which one she thought needed top attention to move forward in the menu of achievement. She is not Black and does not know what they feel. She needed more understanding and felt that should be the school's top priority. She felt Ms. Patchak-Layman was ahead of her in her thinking. Even though Dr. Millard has worked in foreign countries, she would not pretend to think that there are not differences in dealing with Black students. She needed to know about the students who were not achieving. While she was impressed with the knowledge that the school has about the students, she did not have a sense of how the Board of Education needs to move forward. Ms. Patchak-Layman felt a big step forward would be to admit that there is racism at the school. It needs to be admitted, tackled, and addressed at the policy level by the Board of Education.

Ms. Fisher expressed her opinion that the intent of the workshop held on February 7 was to create and prioritize the discussion for the meeting. Thus, the list stood as presented. She felt they were in a situation where the administration critically needed direction. Prior to all this, the Board of Education directed the administration

to formulate a plan; the administration is anxiously waiting to see where the plan should go. In the meantime, the administration has been made motionless by the Board of Education.

Reflecting on Dr. Millard's statement of how one could evaluate and give guidance, Ms. Patchak-Layman said that she would look at the plan to see if it includes academic achievement for Black and White students and the influences as to whether the influence of racism is involved in that analysis. She has a set of criteria to see whether the plan would fit the resolution that is in place. She also saw #3 as being action oriented rather than just talk. She asked how an evaluation of #1 could be made if one did not look at #3. Mr. Rigas responded that racism is not something one can get a medical shot for and be cured. While he has not been at the high school for thirty years, he was sure racism existed. Not one person would disagree with the statements in 3A and 3B; they are statements of fact in the world, not just at the high school. He did not understand statement 3C.

At Mr. Conway's suggestion, the discussion began on Item 1.

Dr. Lee stated that the resolutions have already impacted the plan. The Board of Education would not be discussing this issue if there had been no resolutions. One of the purposes of the resolutions was to give it a priority to the discussion now, i.e., to spend time considering things the Board of Education would not have otherwise considered. The Board of Education is now in the act of giving first priority to the achievement gap. He specifically added the words "between black and white students" against advice he received.

Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that in order for the Board of Education to make decisions, it should know what data would be coming forward and what is the expected change based on this item being proposed; she stated that while the current data could be looked at, it would only be a best guess as to the goal. The resolution says that new initiatives have to be related to this priority of changing/narrowing the gap. She is looking for data and a conversation about the data necessary to show this is a good idea and the direction in which to go. She stated that the data should correlate with each item in the plan as it was the Board of Education's responsibility to know why 1) a part of the plan is proposed, 2) the data to support its being suggested, and 3) the hoped-for outcomes. Only then can the Board of Education say it is the best way to go. The Board of Education controls the budget and it has to decide whether to spend money on "a" or on "b."

Dr. Lee stated that the first purpose was to have the discussion of what the resolution meant and what Dr. Millard said gives attention to the second resolution. To her, the second resolution meant that reading shall be the District's number one priority. He did not say that or mean it that way. That is the reason he used the word "a" primary vs. "the" primary.

Mr. Rigas stated that the Board of Education voted for a specific resolution which does not outline anything else; that would lead to the conclusion that it is the number one goal, or why else have it. Dr. Lee noted that he meant for reading to be a primary goal. Mr. Rigas reflected that the Board of Education spends three or four meetings on minutiae policy, but these resolutions were pushed through without one board member even being present for the discussions.

Mr. Prale stated that the District teaches reading only in the Special Education programs; it is an adjunct to other courses.

The resolutions were then read and each Board of Education member was asked to explain what they meant to him/her.

Resolution 1: Be it resolved, that this Board of Education considers the continuous narrowing of the academic achievement gap between black and white students in this District to be its top priority, including priority over new initiatives to raise the academic achievement levels of the student body as a whole, provided that such prioritization does not substantially lower the academic achievement levels of any other group of students.

Resolution 2: Be it resolved, that this Board of Education considers the improvement of the reading skills of those students whose levels of academic achievement are lowest, to be a primary and one of the more intense focuses of those approaches to be considered in raising student achievement.

Ms. Patchak-Layman felt, for the present, that the number one goal was to a continuous narrowing of GPA for Black students and that the priority should be used in determining new initiatives for raising the academic levels of students related to priorities in narrowing the gap. In looking at this, everyone has different reasons for supporting that. There is nothing that says forever and resolutions are for the moment. The priority of new initiatives is the second key phrase; the initiatives will work specifically to narrow the achievement gap between Black and White students; they will have a priority to target a broader range of students.

Mr. Allen responded that as the school initiates new policies, goals, etc., the priority will be on Black students, without harming others.

Ms. Fisher concurred with both Ms. Patchak-Layman and Mr. Allen.

Dr. Millard stated that she generally agreed with the interpretation, but asked if it did not leave out certain groups of students, as not every student is Black or White. She read this resolution to be exclusive, i.e., the Board of Education will give top priority to Black students.

Mr. Rigas agreed with Mr. Allen, but challenged him on the words “substantially harm” noted in the resolution. Mr. Allen explained that he used that term as he did not know what unsubstantial is to the academic achievement of the others and that was why he was comfortable with adding it. Dr. Lee felt the meaning of the word “substantially” is what the Board of Education agrees is substantial. If the Board of Education decides that there is something it cannot live with, then it is substantial. The Board of Education will determine that.

Dr. Lee felt giving the highest priority had more to do with the time and attention by the Board of Education and the upper administration to the Board of Education than anybody else. The Board of Education and the upper levels of administration can spend a great deal more time and attention on the achievement gap. That might mean spending more money, e.g., the cost of the meeting that morning, albeit not a substantial cost. He did not see it as directing the activities of individual teachers. He felt there has been an attention deficit over the past years. On the use of the term Black and White students, he had detected an unstated attitude that the District should be color blind in all that it did. It is practical to be color blind. He put the words “provided that such prioritization does not lower the achievement levels of other students,” in the resolution to soothe the fears that the Board of Education will leave everyone out but Black students. Most people would say there is no need to put something like that in the resolution, but obviously there was. He has seen letters stating that the resolutions mean the District will build programs that only Black students have access to and that Asian and Hispanic students would not have access. That is ridiculous; thus, he put that statement in there, but it did not do the job that it was intended to do. He believed there is a difference between a resolution and a policy and he crafted this as a resolution and not a policy. A resolution to him is an expression of resolve. “We hereby declare

that we have taken on a resolve to do the following things....” This is not the same as a policy, even though he has seen it expressed as a policy that the Board of Education has adopted. It is an expression of seven people at one time. He believed the fact that the Board of Education was discussing this issue this morning was a statement of resolve.

Mr. Conway understood that resolutions were a way for people to express themselves in a format that sounded intelligent and meaningful and does not necessarily equate to actions. How does it feel for a Black man to be America’s problem? This resolution says Blacks are a problem in this school and the school needs to find a way to manage it. The majority who seems to take offense must be educated, as they point the way and seem to be firmly seated in the American dream; Blacks have gotten to this zip code, but there is a long way to go. The resolution is asking the administration to come up with solutions to help solve the problem.

Mr. Janda observed that the only place the Board of Education seemed to be seeing the resolution differently was in the meaning of “exclusivity” and the use of the term “substantially.”

Mr. Rigas suggested that Dr Lee insert the sentence of the resolution to alleviate the fears of the majority. Mr. Rigas suggested that if the resolution ended after the word Whole, there would not be fear. Dr. Lee and Mr. Allen concurred with that change.

Dr. Millard felt that to be exclusive as well. She did not want to leave anyone out. Mr. Allen stated that it was discussed that it was not the intention to leave anyone out, but she continued to read in exclusivity. Dr. Millard said that she was reading the words and words were very important.

Dr. Lee asked if using the words “minority” and “non minority” students would work. Dr. Millard replied that it would. Mr. Rigas stated that the District was trying to raise the GPA of the entire student body.

Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that none of this was done in an isolated fashion as there were all kinds of things on the books, e.g., the school’s mission statement. This resolution just focuses on this right now. The rest of the student body still exists. Dr. Lee stated that the school has spent more time and attention on raising student achievement of Black students than raising the ACT scores of those students with scores of 27 to 29. The school needs to spend

more time on raising the academic achievement of the lower achieving students.

Ms. Fisher stated that she, too, was focused on the exact language used and she found it ambiguous; this is why she had wanted to work on this language. She believed that the sentence, as Mr. Rigas read it, was still ambiguous (including theas a whole). One could interpret it to mean the priority is on the achievement gap between the designated group of students and that it includes the priority to raise the whole level or that the priority would include initiatives intended to raise the initiatives as a goal. People on this Board of Education have different interpretations.

Dr. Lee stated that the Board of Education does not act on only one priority at a time. This Board of Education has to act on many things at one time.

Mr. Janda noted that there was agreement that there are gaps and it was important for all of the Board of Education members to say the same thing. He asked if they could agree to target specific gaps or did they not prefer to say achievement gaps in general? Dr. Lee felt it was meaningless to talk about closing the achievement gap in general. It is the achievement gap that exists between the lowest quartile of students regardless of race and the highest, regardless of race. The only way to close the achievement is to guarantee the same level of instruction. That would be impossible. So, when talking about a gap, to talk about closing the gap in general is meaningless unless discussion occurs about specifics. The only point of disagreement is the level of exclusivity being talked. If the needs of Hispanic or Asian students were ignored, the Board of education would hear about it. He did not have to imagine ignoring the needs of White students.

Mr. Allen felt that fixing the gap was too nebulous. His thinking was the racial gap; the Board of Education has to address race as a factor. He does not believe one can address an inherent characteristic as a gap. No one should be excluded. While anyone can profit, the Board of Education should focus on the narrowing the gap between all of the students.

Dr. Lee asked if the school should place as much attention on Whites catching up with the Asian. Dr. Spight stated that he has not focused on that component. There is a common feeling around country that there is a subgroup of Asians that perform higher than white students. He did not know if the Asian American group at the high school was in fact the stereotype group across the nation. Dr. Lee clarified that it had been a rhetorical question.

Discussion ensued about prioritization in the resolutions. Dr. Lee stated that other things could be of a higher priority at one time or another and preclude the Board of Education's focus. Dr. Millard stated that the school wants to do anything it can to help students achieve whether it is a parent group, social awareness, extra curricular activities, etc. Dr. Lee acknowledged that in the real world, many things are necessary. Dr. Millard stated that things could sidetrack the Board of Education but one would hope that the priorities would not change. Ultimate priorities do not change. Dr. Lee suggested adding the wording "a long-term priority" instead of "to be a primary" in the second resolution.

Mr. Rigas viewed the resolution more as a statement of philosophy more than anything else. In six months, it will have little impact on what is being done. If one group is left behind, the Board of Education will be informed. He did not want to spend all of the time to wordsmith. If the Board of Education wants to help the students, it has to start making progress. Dr. Lee felt it was a statement of resolve versus philosophy. Mr. Rigas felt the Board of Education was handcuffing the administration by not making a decision. Ms. Fisher concurred. To her, the resolution was more than a philosophy and the administration needs to know the Board of Education's direction. Thus, it is valuable to have a discussion as to what the resolution means.

Dr. Millard agreed with Ms. Fisher that the language was confusing and there was consensus to discuss this again at the Instruction Committee meeting.

Ms. Patchak-Layman raised the issue of data. The Board of Education has no data, no specifics, etc., as to why it is addressing the problem. The Board of Education thinks there is a problem and it thinks that by doing this, improvements will be made on the next set of data. Data needs to be behind it to determine where the Board of Education should put energies and dollars as there is not an unlimited supply. Mr. Rigas asked to data she was referring. Ms. Patchak-Layman, referring to the proposed senior project, asked how the administration knew it would work. Data is needed to decide to how choose the programs.

Because Mr. Janda brought up the term "literacy," Dr. Lee asked that a discussion of literacy versus reading be placed on the Instruction Committee agenda.

When asked what could be implemented beginning next year, Dr. Weninger responded that the plan presented in October had evolved. He continued that while the Board of Education was

trying to find its direction, the administration had moved forward significantly; it was not directionless.

Dr. Weninger then passed out a shortened version of what would ultimately be presented at the February Instruction Committee meeting and the February Board of Education meeting. To Dr. Weninger and the administration, it was clear that there were four rubrics in the October plan, e.g., parents, community, student, and school. This was an important piece to remember, as the District does not believe it can narrow the achievement gap without the four groups working together and research bears that fact out. Dr. Weninger then went through items in each of the four areas.

Community: African American Leadership Round Table

The purpose of the round table will be to advise the superintendent, administration and, perhaps the Board of Education, on issues it can help with that can affect both the community and the District.

Parents: Support Programs

These support programs will help the District in being successful in getting the African American community to attend events. Dr. Weninger stated that of the three nights of incoming parent meetings held in February, 47 percent of the Black parents did not attend and 25 percent of White did not attend. Black parents need to be engaged and the District must discover the inhibitors.

In addition, the school needs to ask the Black parents with students who do not achieve to support the school's programs that go beyond the school day. There is a direct involvement between parental involvement and student achievement. Parents will be part of the planning of these programs if the school can get them to participate. One of the action items in The School Improvement Plan (SIP) is to get a commitment from the parent organization to bring in parents.

School: Define Institutional Excellence
Review and Evaluate Current Programs/Initiatives
Freshman Programs

A review and evaluation of current programs and initiatives has begun. There is a strong feeling that

programs be created that address sophomores, juniors, and seniors. If the District is going to affect measurable gains, it must expend the most effort on the incoming class, freshmen, so that by the time they take the test in their junior year, it will have made a difference. As the freshman class becomes sophomores, the District will continue to revise a cohort of programs for each year and continue to adjust programs for the next freshman class in order to improve their success.

Discussion has ensued regarding a school-within-a-school, using a collaborative teaching model, focusing on reading, identifying deficiencies, and getting students into honors classes.

Dr. Weninger reported that Mr. Vogel has been responsible for changing the freshman transition program.

The school has been developing the PSS Team, and a proposal regarding social workers will be brought forward.

As the school comes forward with other programs and proposals, the District will look at the following eight areas and whether what is being brought forward meets the following criteria.

- 1) High expectations for students, staff as embodied by the school motto
- 2) Goals and Measurable Targets
- 3) Professional Development
- 4) Cycle of Improvement
 - a. Continuous cycle of goals/plan/implementation/evaluation/decision
 - b. Use of data and evidence-based research
 - c. Commitment, accountability, teamwork (Board, Administration, Staff, Students, Parents, Community)
 - d. Systemic, systematic, sustained, supported.
- 5) Race, Culture, and Socio-economic status
 - a. Identify and understand the role that race plays
- 6) Effective uses of resources
 - a. People, time, money
 - b. Effective use of instructional time
- 7) Student Centered
 - a. Identify and address student's social-emotional needs
- 8) Communication
 - a. Transparency among stakeholders

b. Timely, accurate, complete/thorough communication

Mr. Rigas noted that communication was still lacking, even though Mr. Hunter's goal had been to increase communication. Parents do not get information early enough which can then lead to minor problems becoming major problems. Prior to Dr. Weninger's tenure, there were many times that parents did not know about infractions. He, personally, would want to know more about his child getting an after-school detention than missing a study hall. Dr. Lee concurred that the Board of Education needed to consider developing the resources necessary for communication. He did not believe that when a teacher calls home and the parent does not return the call, it was reasonable to expect a teacher to call a third, fourth and fifth time, and to devote enormous amounts of time to chasing the parent. At some point, there has to be backup for that teacher. Mr. Rigas said it cannot be dropped. Dr. Lee agreed and felt that a better way to spend money might be to involve some substance recourses. Mr. Rigas added that when enough time is not spent up front, more time will be spent on the backend of the situation.

Dr. Weninger concurred and wanted to stress that under the parental part of the support programs, the District's desire to establish a climate that parents are not just called when there is a problem. There is a reference to a mentoring program for parents in that section as well. Mr. Rigas suggested listing Parent Support Program for Parents under Community and asking the African-American Leadership Roundtable to help with this.

Mr. Conway asked where the counselors and deans come in as far as their expectations/responsibilities who can have an immediate impact on students vs. teachers in the building. Is there something that will explicitly spell out the kind of contact they will have over the course of a student's tenure in this building? They understand their duty, but not their responsibility. What kind of contact occurs on an ongoing basis compared to schedule changes or other incidents in their life? He was not sure that 12 counselors could manage 3,000 students effectively. A big piece to students' success is if they have persons who can motivate, direct, and talk with them about classes, careers, etc. What is the interaction of the deans when they have students that repeatedly go through the discipline system? What is the connection between the students and the counselors?

Dr. Millard wanted students to be involved in co-curricular events. If defining institutional excellence is the responsibility of the Board of Education, how will that proceed? Dr. Weninger shared a process that he planned to share with Instruction Committee. After

speaking with hundreds of students, he proposed requiring every student to be involved in one co-curricular activity every year, e.g., clubs, activities, athletics, intramurals, etc. Initially, the students jumped to the logistical problems, but the more they talked about it, without his prompting, they said that it would make a big difference. He asked the Board of Education if it would entertain such a proposal. Asked if it were legal to have this as a requirement, Dr. Weninger was unsure but said that the offerings would have to be expanded in order to implement this. Dr. Lee asked how many participated now. If the answer were 95 percent were participating, then it would not be worth forcing the remaining 5 percent to participate. If the answer were 30 percent, then he thought it would be good to do. Dr. Weninger did not have the statistics, but his empirical observation was that there were a far greater number of Black students that were not involved in co-curricular activities than are White students. Dr. Lee felt more statistics were necessary in order to make that decision.

Mr. Conway suggested requiring seniors to apply to at least one or two colleges, as it would create more interaction between students and staff.

Ms. Patchak-Layman, relative to Outcome 2 and making policy changes, stated that the plan presented is asking students to change their behaviors and work with the habits of achievement and expectations. The Board of Education needs to ask and expect that the administration, teachers and staff would have comparable behaviors they were able to look at and change, just as students are being asked to do. Dr. Weninger pointed out that on page 17 of the original plan, under section of Professional Development, CRISS and PBIS training, instructional coaching models, and an internal professional development program regarding race and readings and discussion of certified staff. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that support staff played a big part at the school and they should be included as well.

Ms. Patchak-Layman's other concerns were:

- 1) The impact it would have on sophomores, juniors and seniors and not enhancing their statement.
- 2) Not having hard numbers to identify the measures of success.

Ms. Patchak-Layman stated what has been presented is what the Board of Education will determine and there is board work. She felt that the discussion at the March meeting should be on where the Board of Education thinks it should make changes in policy, curriculum, finance, and the workings of the school. Mr. Rigas stated that he did not have the competency to be involved in, e.g.,

curriculum. Dr. Lee stated that he would not start to change the curriculum because much information is still necessary. Much is also not known as to how the school works. He has specifics about the information he thinks should be investigated.

Dr. Millard understood No. 2 as an outcome that if the Board of Education identified a fact that needs attention as it relates to student achievement, the Board of Education would look at the policies, curriculum and behaviors that impact that and make changes at the time. If Ms. Patchak-Layman knew of something factual, the Board of Education needs to look at that policy now. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that the Board of Education has agreed that everyday impacts student achievement; if so, then the Board of Education must look at all of the things on the table. She would start by looking at the school's mission statement and how it is activated in the school, i.e., ability grouping to see what part racism plays in that.

The next meeting on student achievement was scheduled for Saturday, March 15 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Adjournment

At 12:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 09, 2008, Dr. Lee moved to adjourn the Special Board Meeting; seconded by Mr. Rigas. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Jacques A. Conway
President

John P. Rigas
Secretary