

July 21, 2009

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Tuesday, July 21, 2009, in the Board Room of the high school.

Call to Order

Dr. Millard called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: John C. Allen, IV (arrived at 8:05 p.m.), Jacques A. Conway, Terry Finnegan, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Amy McCormack, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, and Sharon Patchak-Layman. Also, present were Dr. Attila J. Weninger, Superintendent; Jason Edgecombe, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Philip M. Prale, ASCI; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board of Education.

Visitors

James Paul Hunter, Faculty Senate Executive Committee Chair; Judie Wilson, League of Women Voters; Jennifer Hansen, community member, and Terry Dean of the *Wednesday Journal* and Chuck Fieldman of the *Oak Leaves*.

Visitor Comments None

Discussion on Goals For the 2009-10 School Year

Dr. Millard asked the Board of Education to contain its discussion of the individual goals to thirty minutes.

Goal 1: Racial Inequity

It was noted that the goal had been revised to reflect Ms. Patchak-Layman concern about communicating to the community what the District was doing. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated the original goal was more specific and more understandable to all. To say the District will work towards predictability and disproportionately in student achievement, e.g., that the active words “we will work toward” does not have the same punch as “our goal is to provide an inclusive education for all students where racial predictability and disproportionately are eliminated. While Ms. McCormack appreciated Ms. Patchak-Layman’s comments, she stated that the original goal was not measurable. Ms. Patchak-Layman responded that the objectives could be the measurements of the goal. One could say that there will be more conversations in professional development and the measure can be how that conversation moved the goal forward. An example of a smart objective would be that there would sixteen (16) more teachers who would be able to modify their curriculum based on the conversations, etc. While the goal may remain constant for a number of years, the objectives may change. She continued that the goal should include racial disproportionality. Ms. McCormack felt the Board of Education should look at the big picture; the goals are an expression to the public of what the Board of Education is trying to accomplish. Because these are annual goals, they should be annual projections.

Mr. Prale felt Ms. Patchak-Layman's statement about providing inclusive education for all students as being the action of the goal is cogent. He suggested exchanging the word eliminating with reducing, as that would show progress. As one would move forward, even AYP is designated by a 10% move on an annual basis and that is how safe harbor is defined. If one provided an inclusive education for all students, thereby reducing racial predictability for all students, this would get the Board of Education to where it wanted to be. Ms. Patchak-Layman concurred and felt that the reduction should be more than 10%. Her goal was to make sure students were not losing instructional time. If there were racial predictability and disproportionately, then the District would not necessarily have inclusive education for all students. While discussion ensued about what percentage to use, Ms. McCormack suggested that the Board of Education leave it to the divisions and departments to develop program. Dr. Millard agreed that Goal #2 gives some very specific data collections that would help determine a percentage including those that Ms. Patchak-Layman mentioned relative to disproportionality, e.g., the number of students who get A's and B's, GPA, visits to the deans' office, or behavior. Mr. Finnegan was uncomfortable with including a percentage at this point.

Goal 2: Student Academic Achievement

This goal incorporates Goal #6 focusing on information systems that will allow the District to review data collected on scores on specific tests in order to compare OPRFHS students with what they have done in other locations. Dr. Lee suggested adopting the language as presented.

Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that "tutoring or online access program" was unspecified. Students in ISS and OSS do not receive enough instructional time. She wanted students to receive 200 minutes of instruction per day, e.g., tutoring, online, etc., to make sure students placed in ISS or OSS were not losing instructional time. When asked if the District were prepared to spend \$50 per hour, Ms. Patchak-Layman responded that these are OPRFHS students and the District is required to provide them with an education. Dr. Lee asked if it were not the student's responsibility. Ms. McCormack stated that as long as the student is an OPRFHS student, the District owes them the best academic achievements it is able to give them. While Dr. Millard concurred, if the student had economic or social problems, the school could not control them all. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that it involves an adult being aware of what has happened to that student and making sure that the services, both emotional and educational, are being provided. The Board of Education should review the cost of the tutoring. Mr. Finnegan stated that the real question is when someone who is already struggling falls further behind, will he/she ever be able to catch up? If not, he/she will degrade the learning community for everyone. Ms. McCormack

concluded and noted that her son missed a week of school because he was sick and the reality is that there is no coming fully back, even though he had parental support. As a Board of Education, it needs to be careful about setting goals with a level of specificity that is not appropriate. Mr. Finnegan pointed out that even if the District could provide the students with the things they need, they may not avail themselves of them.

Dr. Weninger and Mr. Edgecombe noted the Board of Education wanted the administration to come back with the relative costs for different academic, social, and emotional support models. Ms. McCormack stated that the Board of Education was expressing a concern for the students and it wanted options. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that in the end it serves the school better to work with students individually, because the numbers show that those in ISS and OSS have lower GPA and struggle at the school. This would be a perfect opportunity to give them one-on-one time to move them forward, as they are already identified by their behavior. Mr. Prale stated previously the District provided individualized tutoring to OSS students, but often they will not show up. Ms. Edgecombe now manages the current structure of setting up tutoring in Maze and Dole Libraries for three hours with groups of students so that the cost was contained. Dr. Millard noted that often students do not show up. Mr. Prale stated that the issues that these students bring are often not academic issues, so ramping up the tutoring may not address their needs. If the program had the other features, they might have more of an effect and, perhaps, then their academic needs could be addressed.

Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that the disconnect between academic and discipline systems should be corrected. One does not know about the tutoring program when it is supposedly an academic activity. Mr. Prale stated that the tutoring is the Board of Education's commitment to provide education to those students who are being consequence within the frame of the support system, i.e., discipline system. Ms. Patchak-Layman suggested having a point person who would become an academic advisor and knowing what students need in their academic program.

Mr. Finnegan wanted to see computers and online activities utilized because there is better accountability and the ability to access what teachers are doing with their classes. This would also free up resources to address their emotional issues. Mr. Prale acknowledged that more and more teachers take their teaching online. Dr. Lee stated that the Board of Education was now doing program development, not goal development.

Goal 3: Recruitment, Employment, and Retention of Professional Staff

Dr. Millard was concerned about the immediacy of this goal and she wanted to add the urgency of this goal as the District has significant hirings to do for the following year. Dr. Weninger concurred and suggested setting a date under Activities and Strategies 1, 2, and 3.

Discussion ensued regarding the most advantageous time to complete the review and evaluation of recruitment and employment procedures for all employees. Mr. Edgecombe noted that the review and evaluation would include more than just DLT team and, as such, he suggested the date of September 15. Dr. Weninger suggested posting administrative positions October 1 with a closing date at the end of December or January and teacher openings in mid November with a closing in March. Posting all six administrative positions and 12 faculty positions September 1 would bring a rush of undesirable candidates. As other districts begin to post their positions, the serious candidates will look at the newer postings. While the District who posts early is in the mix, it becomes blurred with the others districts. Administrative types look earlier than teachers do. Teachers who are looking to move from district to district do not know until after the first semester. If a non-tenure teacher, he she would be 1) move to a more reputable district after 2 or 3 years, or 2) are on the bubble because of economy, performance, etc. Many serious job fairs occur after winter break. Based on her recruitment business, Ms. McCormack concurred. Teachers do not know their status until March 1. Job fairs for serious candidates held in the northern Illinois region are held after winter break. Mr. Finnegan concurred with posting the administrative positions first.

Mr. Edgecombe stated that OPRFHS does not have trouble attracting nonminority candidates and suggested staying with September 30 date in order to make real changes next year. He stated that the school does not have an employee handbook for staff other the *Faculty Handbook*. Ms. McCormack reported that a legal firm would have a boilerplate handbook, which would need to be adapted for the District. Ms. McCormack stated that employee handbooks typically are designed for existing employees and given to them when they start employment. It will spell out the rules and procedures. It is important document for all employees not just the faculty and the Faculty Handbook may have many of the policies that would be applicable to all employees. The District may not have to spend a great deal of money on an employee handbook, as they are really forms; it should not be a drawn out process. Employee handbooks are good for a day or for 20 years.

Ms. Patchak-Layman said that for employees to understand the District's procedures it should be in the employee handbook and not specifically related to recruitment and employment. Mr. Finnegan asked for a January/February report on #3 and #4.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked where was the review of staff evaluation forms related to staff retention. Dr. Weninger stated that staff evaluation is a negotiated item. It can be reviewed, but nothing can be done because it is a contractual issue. Mr. Edgecombe stated that while the District has an obligation under the Collective Bargaining Agreement to confer with faculty on the evaluation program, there does not have to be agreement. The dormant evaluation committee makes a recommendation to the Board of Education as to what changes should be made. Mr. Allen stated that the Board of Education should look at the evaluation if that were true. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that it could be addressed under retention because of the question of whether there was a connection between the evaluation and the retention of minority employees. Mr. Edgecombe said that certainly there was a connection between the evaluation and retaining a non-tenured teacher. Dr. Weninger suggested this would be very aggressive issue for this year. Mr. Prale stated that evaluation system has moved to growth model. Several people who served on original committee retired several years ago. The growth model was designed to help employees set professional and improvement goals. As progress was measured in alignment with the Charlotte Danielson domains, the District would make a decision about retention and the person would see that the District's focus would be on better teaching. The non-tenured tenure model is based on professional growth and is worth reviewing to determine whether people are being encouraged to stay here.

Dr. Millard suggested looking at this in the context of the contract and in committee. Ms. McCormack and Mr. Finnegan concurred. Ms. McCormack stated that this does not mean the Board of Education is abandoning it for the year but it is just not putting it into a goal. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that it was not just about the employee but also the evaluator. Because the District is going to be hiring new administrators, all of this converges. It is circular to know the requirements that the District wants the evaluator to have the knowledge and skills.

Dr. Millard stated that the piece missing was something composite beyond students and working towards equality opportunities for all members of the community. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that the goal was proposed. All of the conversations are to move students forward to improve their academic achievement. The original goal included the Board of Education, the administration, the faculty and the staff.

If Dr. Millard applied for a job at OPRFHS, she wondered how she would feel about working here. Mr. Finnegan felt that it needed to be the entire school community that is living and breathing it and that fact must be understood. Ms. Patchak-Layman concurred, noting that was a supporting objective. The conversation for the community and the Board of Education is to have the achievement gap eliminated. Whatever work is done should work toward that objective.

Goal #4, Finance

Develop a new budgeting process that includes program priority procedures, identification of additional revenue sources expenditure priority procedures, and cost containment measures.

In reference to Dr. Lee's confusion about what were listed in items 1 and 2 as being two separate models as he thought they were one model, not two, Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that the originally proposed goal was to adopt a model of cost containment. All of the other points are the same. Ms. McCormack preferred that the Board of Education's January 2009 financial resolution not be referenced in the goals, as she did not support some of its language. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that in the original proposed goal, it was not referenced. It was suggested that this be replaced with the "revenue and expenditures are equitable."

Dr. Lee stated that the model for setting financial priorities is not a model for cost containment and there was a misstatement in No. 2. The wording in No. 1 and No. 2 was not intended to indicate that there would be two models, but that the Board of Education would adopt a model for setting priorities. No. 2 refers to the same model so that it would align the long-term projection model with the Board of Education's financial planning resolution. Dr. Lee stated that there was nothing wrong with having two models, if they are models for different things. That was not this case, however.

Dr. Lee reiterated that setting financial priorities might not have anything to do with how one cuts costs. Mr. Finnegan concurred, but they could use the model to prioritize. He did not want to make a second model. He suggested prioritization and at the same time understand that the District cuts costs and maintains revenue neutral movements wherever possible.

Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that the change as originally proposed in Number 2 was the change in dates. The date of September 2009 was originally proposed. Dr. Weninger stated that after conversations with Ms. Witham, that date was unrealistic and that was why 2010 was listed.

Ms. McCormack reiterated that she did not agree with that resolution, not an action item. Dr. Lee stated that it was a significant action item. It stated what the intention is of this Board of Education until it says something else. Dr. Lee stated that a decision was made by the Board and he can choose to go along with or not; there is no in between. Ms. McCormack felt the resolution was forward and ambiguous in a way that she did not need to make a new motion.

Dr. Lee was not concerned about mentioning the resolution of January 2009, but he is making it clear that it is the position of this Board of Education until it changes that position. Under No 2, it talks about what

the Financial Advisory Committee will do. He felt this was similar to the tail wagging the dog. It involves citizens with financial expertise and he preferred the involvement of staff and Board of Education.

Dr. Millard suggested eliminating #2 as it b. iv states the procedures will include a method for identifying options and prioritizing items for cost containment. Dr. Weninger suggested incorporating the PMA projection model assumptions and identifying options and prioritizing items for cost containment into 1 b. iv.

Dr. Weninger stated that the Financial Advisory Committee is made up of staff and expert financial community that would make recommendations to the Superintendent and to the Board of Education. It is not the tail wagging the dog. Dr. Weninger stated that Ms. Witham has started this process.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the evaluation was the same thing as identifying options and priorities for cost containment. The response was yes. Under 2 C. was the evaluation the same thing as the method for identifying options and prioritizing cost containment. Again, the response was yes.

Dr. Millard was concerned about the timeline in No. 3. It had been affirmed with Ms. Witham that the timeline was appropriate. While Dr. Millard also questioned the value of spending the time to develop a communication plan for the community as its seemingly lack of interest, Dr. Weninger felt it was important to communicate to the staff, partially as a result of what occurred this spring and to let the larger community know via the website. Mr. Finnegan also felt it was admirable and necessary to explain/market that cost containment is vital from this day forward.

Goal #5, Learning Environment

Improve the learning environment for students and staff considering aspects of respect, safety, academic promise and social-emotional well-being.

Dr. Millard was concerned about listing the ethnic groups that the District is targeting. Is that fair in the discussion of racial equity. Dr. Weninger stated that the Mr. Rouse, Ms. Bishop and he discussed this. The student discipline report shows disproportionality in the number of students receiving infractions. Thus, the decision was made to address that. How can the District reduce the number of infractions for minority students?

Ms. Patchak-Layman saw no action for No. 1. Dr. Weninger stated that the District needs data integrity. It needs to compile the discipline data and establish a baseline. A complete initial report will be presented to

the Board of Education by October 1, implement the tutoring on-line action program, assuming that there is disproportionately in the students suspended, and develop a program for them. Ms. Patchak-Layman did not see how developing a baseline line would get the District a reduction of 15%. Dr. Weninger concurred, but an action is the compiling and analyzing of data. Ms. Patchak-Layman restated that just because one has the data does not give one the action. By knowing that of the 40 students going to lunchroom, 20 will end up in Deans' office, does not reduce anything. Dr. Weninger stated that the percentage of 15% was a reasonable number. Ms. Patchak-Layman suggested saying by using PBIS as an active activity one would reduce infractions by 15%. Dr. Millard asked if the Board of Education wanted the administration to have different options. PBIS might be appropriate for some but not for others. She wanted more strategies as options.

Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that the District strategizes every year; she wanted to see more dimensions and more definitions. She recommended the action of choosing between PBIS and another program that would be used with all staff throughout the school so that there is a common language for all students with adults on behavior. Dr. Millard wanted to leave options open as no strategy used across the board will affect each group of these students. Mr. Finnegan concurred and said that the Board of Education would hold the administration to reducing infractions by 15% by whatever strategies it choose. Both Mr. Conway and Dr. Lee concurred.

Mr. Prale reported that an African-American faculty member after reading this goal was concerned about identifying African-American, Latino and mixed race students, as being the students who get Class II infractions, as that assumption was embedded within the current phrasing. The faculty member asked if it would be acceptable to the Board of Education if the District reduced infractions by 15% for white students and that the percentage stayed the same for Native American students. He suggested the goal should say, "Reduce the number of Class II infractions in these areas for all students." Would that not accomplish a 15% reduction for these students, in addition to other students? That way there would be no association with African-American, Latino, and mixed race students getting into trouble. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that the original goal was to reduce the number of students by 15%. Dr. Weninger did not believe that would have the desired results. Ms. McCormack suggested saying 15% for every ethnic group. Dr. Millard stated that the District wanted to do this for all students, just as it does all it can to improve academic achievement for all the students. Dr. Lee asked what was wrong with addressing specific problems. Mr. Prale stated that it is not that African-American students are getting in trouble more but that the system is built in a way that identifies them as Class 2 infractions and does not offer them other positive behaviors nor is the District teaching them positive behaviors.

The language should not associate bad behaviors or infractions with a specific racial category. Ms. McCormack stated that a big message in the Courageous Conversations is the subtle messages that are sent by the language and the language in the goals is meaningful. Dr. Weninger said that there was a sound argument for both ways. He had spoken to the same faculty member who asked what that said about African-American students. His response was that an overrepresentation of African-American students was in the discipline system. The faculty member, looking at it both ways, asked what it said about white students.

Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that it would be easy to reduce Class II infractions by choosing not to report them, e.g., smoking, tardies, not fulfilling detention, etc., as they are Class II infractions. Dr. Lee asked if African-American were not over-represented in Class I, III and IV infractions. Dr. Weninger responded negatively, but that Class II was where the District felt it could make a difference. Dr. Millard stated that Class II infractions were often a gateway to more serious problems. Dr. Lee felt the change in language was avoidance. Ms. McCormack stated that the District does not want to stigmatize a group further by naming them. Mr. Finnegan suggested keeping the breakout in No. 2, Academic Enrollment and including something positive.

Discussion ensued about using the word “Latino” versus “Hispanic.” Dr. Weninger stated that he had been informed that Latino was the word of choice today and that

Dr. Lee stated that there was a similar discussion when the Board of Education adopted the number one priority of closing the academic achievement gap. It was noted that if one says it is racial it implies that African-American students do not make as good as grades white students. Mr. Allen stated that no other minority groups came to the Board of Education to complain when the number 1 priority was chosen; only the majority came to say that it was being excluded.

Ms. McCormack suggested that within the discipline numbers the Board of Education should not delineate specific ethnic groups. Mr. Allen asked if a problem existed of which he was unaware. In his vision, the expulsions and the discipline statistics were down. Ms. McCormack liked the fact that the Board of Education was addressing an earlier goal. When there is a discipline problem, the District will provide education differently.

Mr. Finnegan wanted to disaggregate No 1 for all groups and leave No #2 as is. Mr. Prale informed the Board of Education that AP courses are market driven and the current staffing would allow this. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the District had a raw number. Mr. Prale stated that it

was about 5 to 10 African-American students, and less Latino courses in AP honors.

Regarding #3, Ms. Patchak-Layman suggested informing parents of substance use and abuse awareness. She was informed that there will be four or five pages posted online that will deal with substance abuse, which is a first step. The Illinois Drug Education Association put out a newsletter (booklet) and the District received permission to put it in the newsletter. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that Parent Visitation Day might be an avenue to get information to parents but she was told it was not on the calendar. Ms. Patchak-Layman was concerned that an activity that involves parents would be discontinued without any other options. Dr. Weninger stated that a decision in that regard had not been made. He will speak with Mr. Rouse regarding that concern.

As a result of the conversation that evening, the following amendments will be made to the proposed goals:

Goal I:

“Goal 1: Racial Equity.

OPRFHS will provide an inclusive education for all students by reducing racial predictability and disproportionality in student achievement and reducing systemic inhibitors to success for students and staff of color.”

Goal II:

Line 1: Remove the word “of” after the word “definitions”
Under Activities and Strategies: “A” will become number “1” and eliminating “Define in specific and measurable terms “student academic achievement” and “racial achievement gap.”

Add new 3: Each student in ISS and OSS will receive academic support e.g., through the implementation of tutoring and/or online academic programs.

Change: The old 3 to 4.

Goal III:

Add after the word employees “by October 31, 2009.”

Item C: Replace the word “adopt” with the word “review”

The following adjustments will be made to #2.

Add after the word “program” in line 2 “by December 31, 2009.”

The following adjustments will be made to #3.

Replace “Develop a faculty and administrative mentoring program.” with Item A, after the word “mentoring” add “for additions and changes to be implemented in Fall 2010.”

Make Item B, A;
Make Item C, B;
Make Item D, C;
add Item D: “Report at the Board of Education Personnel Committee no later than February 2010.”

The following adjustments will be made to #4.

Replace “Develop a faculty and administrator retention program” with Item A.

Make Item 1, A

Make Item 2, B

Make Item B, C and replace “Implement the program in Fall 2010” with “Report at the Board of Education Personnel Committee no later than February 2010.”

Goal 4:

Under Activities and Strategies 1b, add “v. The procedures will include a review of the current finances and the PMA projection model assumptions, including a method for identifying options and for prioritizing cost containment measures. Complete in time for the 2010-2011 budget.”

Under Activities and Strategies 2 replace The Board will adopt a model for setting financial priorities that aligns the long-term projection model with the Board Financial Planning Resolution of January 2009” and “2a” with “The Board of Education will align the long-term projection model with cost containment measures.”

Delete 2d.

Goal 5:

Item 1: Delete “a.” after the word “Discipline”

Item 1: Capitalize the word “for”

Item 1: Insert the word “the” after the word “decrease”

Item 1. Delete the words “in these areas”

Item 1: Add the word “in” after 15%

Item 1: Add the words “racial category of students” after the word “each.”

Item 1: Delete the words “semester for African-American, Latino, and Mixed-Race students; and b. each student in ISS and OSS will receive academic support.”

Item 2: Add the words “make preparations in order to” after the word “academic”

Item 3. Replace the words “to 100% of” with “available for”

Item 3. Add the words “faculty, and staff. The program will be communicated to parent(s) and guardians(s), and they

will be strongly encouraged to avail themselves of this resource.” After the word “students.”

Item 3: Delete the words “100% of faculty and staff; and X% of parents and guardians.”

Under Discipline

Item 4: Delete #4

Item 5: Change to #4.

Adjournment

At 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 21, 2009, Mr. Finnegan moved to adjourn the Special Board Meeting; seconded by Dr. Lee. A roll all vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Dietra D. Millard
President

John C. Allen
Secretary