

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

**Human Resources Committee
Tuesday, November 10, 2009
Minutes
Board Room**

A Human Resources Committee meeting was held on Tuesday, November 10, 2009 in the Board Room. Mr. Allen opened the meeting at 7:33 am. Committee members present were John C. Allen, IV; 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, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Nathaniel L. Rouse, Principal; Cheryl Witham, Chief Financial Officer; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors: Kay Foran, Communications and Community Relations Coordinator; James Paul Hunter, FSEC Chair; Kristen Knake and Sarah Rosas, OPRFHS Faculty members.

Approval of October Meeting Minutes

It was the consensus of the Human Resources Committee to accept the minutes of the Human Resources Committee minutes for October as presented.

Sabbatical Reports

Kristen Knake and Sarah Rosas both gave reports on their sabbaticals.

Kristen Knake

Ms. Knake spent the 2008-9 school year doing research and writing curricula related to modern American civil liberties jurisprudence. She read the following report.

“Because, since 2001, questions about due process and equal protection in our country have overwhelmingly been asked and answered (to varying degrees of satisfaction) in the context of the ‘War on Terror,’ my specific research question became: How have civil liberties and the rule of law fared in America in an age of modern terrorism?”

“Initially, the bulk of my time was directed toward understanding and answering the question for myself – reading the books and articles, the daily news coverage and analysis from a number of sources across the political spectrum, the cases, the relevant domestic and international legislation and treaties, and the primary sources (like the torture memos) as they were released to the public.

“Over the course of the sabbatical, as I gained a deeper understanding of the politics and jurisprudence of the last eight years, I continued my research but shifted my focus to developing curricula that would help students understand the material.”

Ms. Knake briefly highlighted the significance of this year on her own classroom and the History Department overall. She thanked the Board of Education for the amazing opportunity for the personal and professional growth that the sabbatical year offered.

“The particular topic I studied, of course, is relevant to teaching American history in the spring, when American history teachers chronologically arrive at a logical place to begin discussions of the political and judicial cross-currents that help explain 9-11, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the domestic responses to those events.

“Having curricula for 9-11 and the domestic response is, in and of itself, of great significance to us. There are some hurdles to doing it well – hurdles that my sabbatical has cleared.

“First hurdle: This is a topic that (like all topics) is not handled thoroughly and in sufficient depth by any available high school level text book. And we can’t really afford to wait while authors of high school texts figure out how to package and present the material. The gravity of the issues, the emotion they evoke, and their connection to NOW, mean that we teachers have an opportunity we can’t squander to promote better engagement, better reading, and deeper understanding of some critical themes.

“Second hurdle: It is incredibly complicated. There are 1st Amendment free speech and freedom of association issues; 4th Amendment privacy issues; 5th, 6th, and 7th Amendment criminal procedure and fair process issues, 8th Amendment concerns raised because of interrogations and torture; habeas corpus issues; the questions of the validity of tribunals versus trials; questions about American obligations and adherence to international treaties; freedom of information versus government secrecy; the growth of the executive vis-à-vis congress; and more. Teachers who work full time in the classroom understandably have not comprehensively studied these topics. And they are rightfully hesitant to approach such an important topic in any superficial or inaccurate way.

“We needed me to do the leg work and to bring back – with the confidence born from fully researching the issues – lessons and units that go well beyond a textbook approach to incorporate into our various levels of instruction.

“I created a number of such lessons. Most are action-based– that is, they are mock trials, debates, simulated Congressional hearings. I developed an exciting way to try John Yoo, for example, that can involve a class of as many as 29 students in various specific roles. The readings for each witness are where the differentiated instruction comes in. I have primary sources, mostly unedited, for higher level learners; and I have synopses of arguments and smaller sections of the primary sources, edited, for students with emerging reading and comprehension skills. The trial questions remain the same for the different levels of learners. Steve Goldberg brought our division a ‘Truman Trial’ curriculum that we could similarly adapt to different class levels in both American and World History. I hope my trial (or the one I created for Bush or for Obama) will be as widely used. The interest generated by good questions and the recent nature of the history; together with the fun and competitive nature of trials and debates will engage students and promote good effort at understanding the materials.

“Again, the confidence that comes from studying the subject in depth means that I have learned where readings can be made easier or edited down in length, or specific tricky details can be omitted, without compromising the interesting questions or simply missing important parts of an analysis. This is often a difficult problem in history, where students at all skills levels can appreciate good, thought provoking questions, and the problem is one of finding skill level-appropriate materials that preserve the richness of the topic while allowing students to access it successfully.

“This alone, would have made the sabbatical incredibly meaningful for me, and for us. But the topic is not only relevant in American History at a certain point in the spring after “The Rise of Reagan and Conservatism.” The topic is a modern and meaningful way to approach some broader themes, two of the most significant ones being:

1. That American political history is, in large part, about arguments over the proper balancing of “liberty versus security” in our system both politically and constitutionally; and;
2. That American history needs to be understood in an international context rather than in a vacuum.

“As introductions to these themes, the materials and lessons I’ve compiled could be used at the very beginning of the year in American History, especially in non-AP classes, (where the AP test perhaps requires an immediate start to chronology.)

“Finally, the materials and lessons are useful for a number of our electives. I will incorporate the materials, as a standalone unit, in my law class, and they will be useful in Government as a standalone unit, or in pieces where relevant – i.e. a reading modernizing the executive power unit; a reading modernizing the Bill of Rights discussion, etc. They will also enhance the Social Problems curricula, especially, I think, the materials on racial and religious profiling.

“I am excited to bring my work into my own American History and law classes. I shared it at the ABA’s LRE conference with teachers from across the country at the beginning of October, and I’m excited to work with other teachers here to bring what I’ve done into their classrooms. I’m excited to feel a deep understanding and confidence in teaching materials that are so new, and still daily unfolding.”

Rosas

After several years, Ms. Rosas noticed that freshman readers were struggling and she were unsure of what to do. As such she decided to enroll at DePaul as a full-time graduate student, concentrating on reading. She learned much and it changed the way in which she looks at students, what she can do. She is already seeing the benefits. She was 1) having the best teaching year of her career, 2) talking with her colleagues about it, and 3) working with History Division on Monday mornings.

Dr. Lee asked if she were aware of any changes in the field on the teaching of reading. Ms. Rosas replied that shifts in reading were occurring where teachers move from hope to part to whole, phonetics. Other schools are teaching holistically, as teachers feel students are learning

to read because they are mentored. She felt there was a change of focus in the classroom, e.g., helping students do better by teaching reading in the content area classroom. While she had not known the theory previously, she was not able to do it with intentionality; that it is important. Because she now understands the instructional strategies, she can modify her teaching. Dr. Lee asked how she would expand her skills to the majority of teachers in the high school. Ms. Rosas replied that when teachers have more background theory, there will be a tipping point, as most already use the instructional strategies.

Recessed

The Human Resources Committee recessed at 7:51 a.m. until after the Special Board Meeting.

The Human Resources Committee meeting resumed on Tuesday, November 10, 2009 in the Board Room at 12:59 p.m. Committee members present were John C. Allen, IV; 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; Chief Financial Officer; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Employee Assistant Program Services Agreement

It was the consensus of the Human Resources Committee to recommend that the Board of Education approve the contract for EAP services with Workplace Solutions, at its regular November Board of Education meeting, as presented. It was noted that more services would be provided at no increase of fees.

Recruitment and Employment of Certified Employees

No discussion ensued regarding the document on the recruitment and employment of certified employees.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked about the composition on the interview committees for administrators and how parents and students will be chosen for these committees. An update will be provided at the November 19, 2009 Board of Education meeting. She was interested in teaching assistants being participants on the committee for the Special Education Director. Mr. Edgecombe noted that the DLT member will be the final selector. Once he/she has seen the committee members, he/she will make sure person there will be diverse representation, e.g., minorities, etc.

Adjournment

The Human Resources Committee meeting adjourned at 1:06 p.m. on Tuesday, November 10, 2009.