

**Oak Park and River Forest High School
201 N. Scoville
Oak Park, IL 60302
120**

**An Instruction Committee of the Whole Board
February 18, 2010**

An Instruction Committee meeting was held on Thursday, February 18, 2010, in the Board Room. Dr. Ralph H. Lee opened the meeting at 7:38 a.m. Committee members present were Jacques A. Conway, Terry Finnegan, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Amy McCormack, and Sharon Patchak Layman. Also present were Dr. Attila J. Weninger, Superintendent; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Amy Hill, Director of Assessment and Research; Nathaniel L. Rouse, Principal; Michael Carioscio, Chief Information Officer; Cheryl L. Witham, Chief Financial Officer; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors included Kay Foran, Community Relations and Communications Coordinator; James Paul Hunter, FSEC Chair; Debra Mittleman, OPRFHS Outreach Coordinator; Linda Cada, Director of Special Education, Tom Tarrant and Therese Brennock, OPRFHS faculty, and Terry Dean of the *Wednesday Journal*.

Approval of January 2010 Instruction Committee Minutes

It was the consensus of the Instruction Committee members to accept the January 21, 2010 minutes of that meeting, as presented.

Outreach Coordinator

Mr. Rouse introduced Debra Mittleman, OPRFHS's Outreach Coordinator. The Outreach Coordinator position was added last April. Ms. Mittleman will make a formal report at the end of the school year. Ms. Mittleman hosts monthly parent meetings to inform parents of the programs and services available to them, e.g., summer enrichment programs, grants and scholarships, support programs, math programs, the Percy Julian Symposium, etc. Being a parent herself and as the parents' first contact with the school, her goal is to make this large school more welcoming. The parents have been receptive and open to meeting with her.

Amy Hill used the results of the EXPLORE test to help determine which families should be contacted. While the list originally included over 400 names, the students who might benefit the most were targeted. Mr. Rouse noted that the School's Improvement Plan (SIP) prescribes targeting the lowest achieving students.

Dr. Lee asked if Ms. Mittleton had been required to initiate contact with a family based on the experience in the discipline system. Ms. Mittleman responded affirmatively as she works with the PSS Teams: some students struggle academically and some have discipline issues. Both counselors and deans will refer the names of students who need additional outreach.

Ms. Mittleton scheduled a parents meeting prior to the registering of parent/teacher conferences prior to the general population's ability to register. While the software company could not turn that feature on to let the parents register at the time, Ms. Mittleman gathered the

parents' best times and the next day signed them up and sent follow-up reminders. She also provided them with a list of key questions to ask the teachers. All of the parents showed up for their conferences.

Her vision for next year included continued working with the families in the database and working with the class of 2014. She sent out introductory letters to them, telling them about the Open House where she had a table and set up one-on-one appointments at that time.

Dr. Lee thanked her for her presentation.

Update on Behavior Interventionist Initiative

Mr. Prale introduced Tom Tarrant, OPRFHS's Behavior Interventionist. In 2005, the Board of Education voted for the phase-in dollars to be used for specific interventions that could be tracked. One of the interventions was for a full-time Behavior Interventionist attached to the ED program. The premise was that if the District could address behavior before an incident occurred, students would spend more time in the classrooms. Mr. Prale complimented Mr. Tarrant on his efforts in this position.

Mr. Tarrant reported that he was the coordinator of the program's use of PBIS, a model which defines expected behaviors. The expectation cannot be that students know how to behave; the behaviors have to be defined, role modeled, and constantly reiterated. Students are rewarded for being on time, doing well academically with gift certificates, movies, pizza, etc. A matrix of the program was developed that clearly defines behaviors. If a student is told to be more respectful, that means:

RESPECT

Responsible for your own behaviors

Efforts is required to succeed

Self discipline

Being prepared for class

Energy

Concentrate on the task at hand, the work.

Timeliness.

PBIS has its own language and that too is modeled. The two languages students need to know and when to use them are: 1) language for the street; and 2) language for work or school.

Mr. Tarrant noted his varying responsibilities as follows: counseling; mediating disputes between teachers and students; being a liaison for the parent and the teachers; training others in PBIS techniques and collaborating on effective strategies with other teachers; contacting each parent at a minimum of two times per semester; making presentations at Board of Education meetings; assisting students transferring into the community; checking weekly progress reports and assigning study table if necessary; and assigning and monitoring independent courses for those students who are missing credits.

He noted his appreciation to the Deans and to the support staff. Mr. Tarrant will also set up a meeting with Ms. Mittleman to talk about parent conferences, homework, strategies for parent meetings, etc.

In terms of how data is collected, Mr. Tarrant stated that the District uses the SWIS system. The data collected only shows the troubled areas. In those areas different interventions are used, but since humans are constantly involved and evolving, sometimes the interventions are successful and sometimes they are not. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the interventions were documented and whether they were intentional and transferrable. Mr. Tarrant responded affirmatively noting that he would be happy to meet with her to have a fuller conversation about this. Believing that data was important, Ms. Patchak-Layman asked how teachers would know how to reinforce a student in mainstream math if they did not know the PBIS techniques and interventions that been successful. Mr. Tarrant stated that this year statistics are being kept in the mainstream classes. Ms. Cada added that each behavior intervention plan goes with the student and includes those that work most effectively with those students; although not all of the teachers have been trained in PBIS. A comparison was done using the SWIS data of this year and last year and discussion focused on where to look for improvements in the program.

Mr. Tarrant stressed that parental involvement and more academic parent meetings are the key to getting students to succeed in school. Many single parents must work and find it difficult to get their students to school. Many of the staff in the program play sports and are using that as a way to know these students on a different level. Mr. Tarrant was thanked for his report.

Update on Learning Support Reading Classes

Mr. Prale presented an update on the Learning Support Reading Classes. The goal of this program is to have students enrolled in this program show similar patterns of GPA and discipline involvement as the students enrolled in English 1-2. At this time, the results show that student are not accelerating, only maintaining, average growth.

Ms. Patchak-Layman reflected that this program was not showing accelerated GPA, but they had not looked at the reading scores. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the reading growth was scattered. The response was that after six months, students see six months growth with some individual students have one year's growth in just one semester. Individually it is possible for a student to have accelerated growth, but as a program, not enough information is available to affirm that as a fact.

Discussion ensued about exploring the idea of instituting a global reading program. Dr. Lee cautioned about moving in this direction as there was a significant cost for this. He wanted to know what types of information were needed in order to make a decision of that sort. Discussion ensued as to how data was being kept, either by content or discreet skills. Mr. Prale stated that discreet reading skills were not as yet broken out for the majority of OPRFHS students. The District does not collect skill scores, a ranking of student fluency, multi syllabic comprehension, etc. Ms. Patchak-Layman suggested that it was important information to have.

Mr. Rouse stated that RtI enables the District to create a progress monitoring tool to gauge skills; it is a matter of strengthening the skills of the teachers. It will impact the way students are addressed and how scores are reviewed. Mr. Prale's opinion was this would work if there was a basis for a larger plan. He will bring to a future Instruction Committee 1) 1) a plan for rethinking the reading acceleration levels at the high school; 2) a review of existing projects or pilots; 3) what policy considerations would be necessary; 4) what measurements and benchmarks would be used; 5) what the staffing needs would be and the costs associated with it; and 7) what the anticipated outcomes would be.

Additional Deliberations

Dr. Lee asked if the District should have a minimum set of reading skills in order to graduate. By the spring of the junior year it is known that some student reading levels are unacceptably low. The District has no idea when students walk across the stage at graduation if they will be able to earn a living. If a student has earned a certain number of credits, does the District not care to set minimum standards? He wanted the Board of Education to discuss that issue. It was reported that while no other schools in Illinois have addressed that fact, some other states such as New York and Ohio have done that.

Dr. Weninger noted that the high school's standard for graduation is 43 credits. The questions to ask are: What does it take to pass the class? Could a student with a third-grade reading level pass all of the classes at OPRFHS? How could a student pass his/her classes with that low of a reading level? What is the minimum standard expected for a diploma? Dr. Lee asked if a sixth or seventh grade reading level would allow one to pass all of the classes. He felt the District should know the answer to those questions.

Ms. McCormack wanted to focus the Board of Education's time, energy, and money on getting students to a higher reading level.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked about the District's definition of institutional excellence. Ms. Hill reported that she has met with the core academic division heads to see what progress they have made on indentifying their content specific knowledge (Domains 1 and 2). Science has agreed that it will use the Regional Office of Education's project of a regional assessment in biology and chemistry. English is looking at its curriculum guide as a starting point for identifying skills. Things are in place in the core subject areas, e.g., history, math. Now with some of the hiring work completed, more attention will be delivered to this project. Mr. Prale informed Ms. Patchak-Layman that grading would become a part of the conversation.

Adjournment

The Instruction Committee meeting adjourned at 9:02 a.m. on Thursday, February 18, 2010.