

Oak Park and River Forest High School
201 N. Scoville
Oak Park, IL 60302
An Instruction Committee of the Whole Board
June 17, 2010

An Instruction Committee meeting was held on Thursday, June 17, 2010, in the Board Room. Dr. Ralph H. Lee opened the meeting at 7:40 a.m. Committee members present were Terry Finnegan (departed at 8:47 a.m.), 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; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors: Kay Foran, Communications and Community Relations Coordinator; James Paul Hunter, Faculty Senate Executive Committee Chair.

Approval of May 17, 2010 Instruction Committee Minutes

It was the consensus of the Instruction Committee members to accept the May 17, 2010 meeting minutes, as presented.

Report on Joint Committee on Behavior & Discipline

Ms. Bishop provided the Committee with a summary report from the Joint Committee on Student Behavior and Discipline in the packet. The committee is composed of parents, community members, and faculty (including five Deans, a Social Worker, and a Counselor). Students were not included. The committee had discussed overarching themes and made recommendations, e.g., closing the campus, testing for drugs, resolving conflicts, using cell phones/listening devices, hiring another dean, etc. Ms. Patchak-Layman was not surprised by the desire to add another dean, considering that the makeup of the committee was mostly deans. Ms. McCormack suggested adding someone with a criminal defense background which might provide an important perspective. Mr. Rouse wanted to have a better sense of the Deans' workload before adding another Dean. Mr. Finnegan concurred.

Mr. Rouse looked forward to dialoging with students about the number of unexcused absences.

Dr. Lee noted that the document had changed his opinion about maintaining an open campus. He felt the next step would be to gather input from all of the various groups and then design a timetable. He felt that every recommendation deserved serious Board of Education consideration and concrete decisions. Mr. Rouse continued that each Dean had led a subcommittee and he suggested allowing the subcommittees to continue their discussions through the summer and fall, and include Student Council in the fall. Mr. Rouse will speak to Ms. Bishop about a schedule of bringing these subcommittee reports to the Board of Education. Mr. Finnegan noted that he favored open campus, but he felt it should be an earned privileged. He questioned how the lunch hour would be handled if the campus was closed as the school could not accommodate all of its students with its present schedule. Ms. McCormack receives communication from parents daily, both pro and con, regarding closing the campus and she appreciated both viewpoints. Ms.

McCormack suggested that closed campus be a discussion for the fall to give guidance to the subcommittees.

Mr. Rouse cautioned that closing the campus would not solve all of the problems. Dr. Lee stated that the community was saying there is too much freedom; students would react to a change in their freedom. Dr. Lee asked if these recommendations had the strong support of the Board of Education. Mr. Finnegan wanted to explore each of these points. Ms. Patchak-Layman added that these discussions were about things the District thought the students were doing, maladjustments, etc., and that was not how she wanted the school to look. She asked how a secure and safe school was created. The recommendations are about fixing negative things for students in the hopes that they will create a positive and safe place. Mr. Finnegan stated that the discussion is about making a safe and secure learning environment for all students. He felt it must be done and wanted to return to the principle that students should earn their privileges.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the school could guarantee that students would have continuing relationships with staff members in the building so that the students are not anonymous. These recommendations are being brought forward because this is a large school and many of the students are unknown to many adults in the building. Mr. Rouse stated that each day every student meets with eight staff members and asked for more clarification about the statement that students were unknown. Ms. Patchak-Layman continued that the school was instituting the use of lanyards because adults do not know all of the students. So one must ask, is this the right environment at OPRFHS? Schools are trying many ways to create relational campus structures, e.g., small schools, breaking down campuses, etc. This makes the assumption that OPRFHS will continue this way in order to keep the same structure. Any conversation about improving relationships and increasing as many touch points a student may have with adults in the building is valuable. Discussion ensued about the A-period utilized in the past. While this can be a valuable tool, it is dependent upon the teacher. Most of the teachers who had A-periods opposed it as it provided two additional opportunities for students to be tardy or leave the building. Dr. Lee stated that the Joint Committee on Behavior addresses only those periods of time when students are not in class and not under the supervision of a teacher. He disagreed with Ms. Patchak-Layman's assessment of negativism as he saw a great deal of positiveness in these approaches. Mr. Hunter stated that the cost of improving relationships with students will be high. One Board of Education had decided the cost was too high and eliminated A-period. A-periods either decrease instructional time or increase the time students are in school. The New Trier model would require the restructuring of the school day, reducing the minutes for lunch, providing additional time in classrooms, and scheduling advisory periods once per week. He volunteered to participate on a committee to discuss this subject.

It was the consensus of the members to talk about closed campus and relationship building in the fall.

Courage Conversations about Race Update

It was the consensus of Board of Education members to engage in the district-wide diversity training on October 12 and 13 at a cost of \$6,000 for the two days. The Board of Education appreciated the work of Devon Alexander and the faculty for embracing this work.

Dr. Lee stated that while this has to do with professional development of teachers, the goal itself includes “reducing systemic inhibitors of staff and students of color.” To him that includes the racial makeup of faculty. He wanted to also deal with the process of hiring teachers. He wanted to see a larger number of qualified African-American applicants pursued. He disagreed with the statement that one could not determine from a resume whether a person was African-American. Mr. Rouse stated that the administration emphasized to the division heads that the Board of Education wanted more minority teachers and the minority hires were 45.8%. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if any minority staff had resigned and asked what kind of support was there for minority staff as they move into a majority of a white teaching staff. Mr. Rouse responded that only two African-American staff members had retired and that an African-American Advisory Council meets regularly to talk about school issues. Many of these Council members had mentored newer faculty and staff. He, himself, found it helpful.

Professional Development Activities

The list of professional development activities for the 2009-2010 school year presented by Mr. Prale included a series of presentations and activities in preparation for implementation of RtI approaches across classrooms as noted below. The Professional Development Committee (PDC), composed of faculty and administration, assisted with the planning of the RtI presentation days. Districts 90 and 97 were also invited to participate in the tri-district institute day which focused on RtI.

Summary of Activities

- Opening of School and close of School Celebrations
- Tri-District Institute Day, January 25, 2010
- Technology Workshops/Faculty Meetings about specific hardware and software applications.
- Divisional Teacher Collaboration Teams which met on Monday mornings and a detailed description of the topics discussed were included by division.

Also included in the report were the summaries of Surveys of Faculty Taken After Institute and In-service Days.

In addition, Mr. Prale stated that some teachers participated in a Solution Tree Conference on their own time and received CPU credits. The Administration strongly supported attendance at this conference. As a result, Division Heads and teachers are talking about learning targets which has a direct tie-in to RtI. This will be the focus of the Administrator Academy. The District has reached out to local consultants about talking with administrators about how to lead this work.

Mr. Prale will send to the Board of Education a piece of research on literature review on formative assessments and how it affects learning.

Discussion ensued regarding the reading level of students. Dr. Lee wanted specific information as to what level of success was being had due to the Districts efforts to increase the reading level of some students and what the District knew about the reading abilities of its students. Mr. Prale stated that he would forward the reading report to the Board of Education. Dr. Lee asked, what does the District know about the reading abilities of its students? What percentage of the total

students is reading below grade level? What percentage of freshman has inadequate reading skills? What percentage of students graduating does not have adequate reading skills? He asked for data. Mr. Prale stated that the District does not test every student because a number would score post high school level. Courses are identified in which the District thinks the students should enroll. He continued that the District gives the Gates/MacGinitie at the beginning and end of the freshman year. The test is also given at the end of the sophomore year to basic or regular classes. Juniors who are in basic level classes are also given a test at the beginning and end of their junior year. This is data that could be obtained. At OPRFHS, the local mean is a higher standard than the national grade level, which would be an appropriate benchmark. Incoming freshman (eighth graders) are not given reading tests. The number of students tested after the freshman year is smaller and smaller. A comparison could be made by grade level and then compare that against that mean. Mr. Prale stated that he would provide this information by August 1. Dr. Lee believed in having a reading standard; anything would be arguable, but if one decided that a standard is not good enough, then it could be improved.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the District provided reading instruction. Mr. Prale reported that it did, for example, some science teachers talk about reading strategies specific to science and apply those strategies in their classrooms. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the work done by learning teams would continue next year or would new teams be created and was the team composition based on trying to solve a problem? Mr. Prale responded that some teams will continue; however, in some areas the teams had completed their work. It is the responsibility of the Division Head to share the information with other members in the division as well as the rest of the faculty. The Division Head would also make notations in their observations of the teachers. Mr. Prale added that the CRISS training brings reading into most classrooms and many teachers have taken that training. There is no quantitative data as to who is actually using it, however.

Mr. Finnegan noted that the technology sessions were well received.

In response to Ms. Patchak-Layman statement that the integrated lab science program has outcomes that have taken a more traditional sequence, Mr. Prale stated that Mr. Grosser is reviewing standardized PSAE test results and others in order to build a more data driven program by setting benchmark exams. A problem with ACT subscores with regard to science is that those scores are normed against the performance of first year undergraduate science majors on those tests. In the science subtest, it is harder to obtain a higher score. Ms. Hill added that some of the results looked at over the years was college reading; the lowest benchmark is English at 18. One would have to earn a 20 in English and Math on the PSAE. The ACT research indicates a likelihood of success in an introductory course in science is 24. Nevertheless, Mr. Grosser is looking to improve the curriculum. A common set of assessments is being given to many students. All three districts have worked to develop a K-12 set of standards. Mr. Grosser's approach to addressing the performance outcomes is to measure standards and measure progress against those standards.

Adjournment

The Instruction Committee meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, June 17, 2010.