

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

**An Instruction Committee
August 19, 2009**

An Instruction Committee meeting was held on Wednesday, August 19, 2009 in the Board Room. Dr. Ralph H. Lee opened the meeting at 8:20 a.m. Committee members present were Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Amy McCormack, Terry Finnegan and ex-officio member Dr. Dietra D. Millard. Also present were: Dr. Attila J. Weninger, Superintendent; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Amy Hill, Director of Research and Assessment; Nathaniel L. Rouse, Principal; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/ Clerk of the Board.

Visitors included Kay Foran, Community Relations and Communications Coordinator. James Paul Hunter, FSEC Chair.

Approval of June Instruction Committee Minutes

It was the consensus of the Instruction Committee members to accept the June 18, 2009 minutes of the meeting by acclamation, as presented.

Discussion and Agreement on Preliminary Rules of Procedure

Dr. Lee drafted procedures that he hoped the Committee would adopt for conduct at the meetings. His purpose in drafting the document was to insure that all Board of Education members would have equal rights in speaking and voting at the Instruction Committee meeting and he encouraged all Board of Education members to attend all meetings. Dr. Millard noted that he had codified in a somewhat different form the discussion that had occurred at the May 2009 Board of Education meeting.

Discussion continued that the procedures Dr. Lee recommended should be adopted by all of the Board of Education members for all of the meetings at the regular August Board of Education meeting. Dr. Millard suggested discussing these procedures with the entire Board of Education at its retreat on August 24, 2009.

Discussion ensued about adding something to the procedures that would indicate that the committee would follow Roberts Rules of Order as the guidelines. Dr. Lee felt it would give the committee chair more authority. It was noted that the attorney had suggested that the Board of Education delete using Roberts' Rules of Order as guidelines from its Board of Education Policy, as they were too cumbersome. No such addition was added to follow Roberts' Rules because if the Rules were not followed precisely, someone might be able to challenge a decision on that fact alone.

A question was raised as to whether a president could remove a committee chair? Policy 20 authorizes the president to appoint the chairs of the committee. Dr. Millard responded should she want to do that she would state her reasoning.

Ms. McCormack suggested that Board of Education members limit their questions/comments at meetings to three minutes per item.

Dr. Lee wanted the chair to have the ability to use Roberts Rules of Order to control the committees when necessary. Mr. Finnegan stated that the only time a three-person committee would want the Rules to be applied would be when two members agreed and the chair disagreed. If the chair was in a minority position, then Roberts' Rules of Order would not help the chair.

Report on MSAN National Conference

It was reported that the 11th Annual MSAN Conference was held in June in Dearborn Michigan and that the following participants from OPRFHS attended: Dr. Attila J. Weninger, Amy McCormack, Nathaniel Rouse, Carolyn Ojikutu, Devon Alexander, Jessica Stovall, Neal Weisman, Amy Hill, and Phil Prale attended. Excellent contacts were made with other teachers from other schools. The keynote speakers were Dr. John Diamond of the Harvard Graduate School of Education who presented his recent research on how race, ethnicity, and social class intersect with school leadership, practices, and policies to shape student educational opportunities and outcomes and Horacio Sanchez who provided a powerful presentation that examined the intersection of student socio-emotional learning needs and brain research.

For the second consecutive year, OPRFHS English teacher, Devon Alexander, presented at the conference. Mr. Alexander's breakout session was titled *Navigating the Roadblocks: The Pedagogy of Critical Race Theory for White Educators*.

OPRFHS and Evanston Township High School will co-host the student conference in Evanston, September 23-26, 2009. Mr. Alexander, Ms. Stovall, and OPRFHS students are helping with the coordination.

Mr. Prale reported that he participated in the Research Practitioner's Conference (RFC) following the conference. He will participate on a subcommittee to contact every RPC school about the status of their courageous conversations so that these experiences can be shared with others.

Dr. Weninger noted that the Governing Board had changed its leadership and its focus. He appreciated Ms. McCormack's participation in those meetings. The Governing Board wants to replicate those things that are working in schools needing help, collect that information, and then share it. Its purpose will be take the good experience of five schools and multiply it fivefold.

Ms. McCormack felt the experience was outstanding. The connections and the ability for her to ask questions of different board members were invaluable. She too thought the speakers were outstanding. MSAN is a valuable resource and she supported having Horacio Sanchez speak at OPRFHS.

It was decided that the annual conference would now be held every other year because of the expense to host and to participate. There will probably be more mini conferences for the RPC in the future. Ms. McCormack noted that there were also conversations about having video conferences.

Ms. McCormack, as the liaison to APPLE, took two full pages on notes of ideas from other districts to share with this group. She learned of some terrific, concrete ideas at this conference.

AYP Results

Ms. Hill stated that three weeks ago OPRFHS learned of its AYP status. In reading, comparing one group to another, more students met or exceeded in every category. However, there were not enough students in Special Education to satisfy Safe Harbor in reading. Thus, OPRFHS did not make AYP in reading. In math, a number of subgroups did not make Safe Harbor, i.e., African-American and Hispanic students. OPRFHS has a small number of Hispanic and multiethnic student populations. This is the first year that OPRFHS has had a Hispanic subgroup and last year was the first time it had a Multi-Ethnic subgroup. A subgroup exists when there are more than 45 students in it.

If only one group does not make AYP, then the entire school does not make AYP. Special education and low income students did not have enough to meet and exceed. This puts OPRFHS in year six of not making AYP. At the federal level that means that the school is in the restructuring and implementation mode. The Board of Education approved a School Improvement Plan in June. The school must continue to look at the plan and it must specifically address AYP deficiencies.

Mr. Finnegan asked if students with disabilities were held to the same standards in the testing scores. Ms. Hill responded that there were cut scores at every level. To achieve a meets or exceeds score, whether a Special Education or regular education student, he/she has to meet the same cut score, a combination of the day 1 (ACT) and day 2 ACT test called WorkKeys and then a state-produced test in science. Meeting or exceeding in math means the students achieved a 19 or 20 on the ACT test and a 4 to 5 on the WorkKeys section. Mr. Finnegan asked how many districts met this category. Ms. Hill was unsure as the information has not been shared with other schools. There is a state provision that says if the only subgroup not to make AYP is Special Education, then the school would make AYP. There are other factors such as the confidence interval that also affects AYP.

Dr. Lee found it difficult to get invested in AYP and how it is applied in Illinois; it was not meaningful to him. He was more concerned about how OPRFHS met its own standards. How do the standards that OPRFHS has mesh with the state standards? He did not understand what it meant to say 75.1% of the students met or exceeded the standards. What are the administration's personal figures? Mr. Prale responded that his would be that all students should read at grade level when they leave the high school. Right now about 75% percent do which means there are approximately 150-170 students in the 9th grade who do not. If students come in reading below grade level, they will not accelerate as much as they need to do. There is an assumption that Safe Harbor is a 10% improvement rate. In reading, all students had a 10% improvement rate or Safe Harbor. It is significant for OPRFHS to be able to say it can make a 10% improvement in the subgroups. He was unsure what had happened in Special Education. He will give this challenge to the Division Heads and ask them what it would take to get a 10% improvement rate each year.

Dr. Weninger agreed with Mr. Prale and stated that there was also a political reality. The problem with targeting a percentage is that it is not the same students that will have 10% improvement; it would be a new group of students. He suggested identifying the incoming students not reading at

grade level and improving their scores by 10%. In addition, the standard should be that every student should be reading at grade level.

Dr. Lee noted that 75.1% of the students met or exceeded standards in reading, which means that 24.9% or 188 students did not, half who are African-American and half who encompass the rest of the ethnic groups. The 11th grade is too late to be concerned about whether a student can read. The school has to ask where they were in the 9th and 10th grade and what was being done to help them earlier.

Ms. Hill concurred with Dr. Lee about focusing on a longitudinal study. The internal standards have to do with growth. Incoming students who are reading below grade level do make gains, but not enough to meet or exceed the standards.

Dr. Lee asked if the District could predict which incoming students will make AYP their junior year. The response was that they had a sense, as the ACT has a predictive model. Dr. Lee asked what the District needed to do now in order for them to make AYP. Ms. Hill replied that the scores of the testing given in the 8th grade along with the teacher recommendations and other things to place them in the appropriate courses in reading and math. Approximately 75 students are getting two courses, Essentials of Reading and Elements of Reading, to accelerate their growth. With the combination of that and the addition of Learning Support Reading, almost all students reading below grade level receive support. Ms. Hill also reminded Dr. Lee that parents have the ability to override that recommendation and courses.

Dr. Lee stated that the issue of whether the parents could refuse the school's recommendation is an important area for the Board of Education to address. Dr. Weninger responded that case law gives parents the ultimate say so as to what classes their students take. Dr. Lee felt it essential, then, that the District builds its data system so that it can identify the students who followed the recommendation of the school versus those students who opted out of those recommendations. He wanted to build an argument.

Mr. Finnegan wanted to see what steps could be taken with the identified students who were not on track to make AYP. What can the Board of Education and administration do to talk with these families and tell them that the chances of their student succeeding will be less if they do not follow the school's recommendations based on the current situation. Dr. Lee concurred. Ms. Hill felt that the school would be able to track students who took reading support. Mr. Rouse stated that the Outreach Coordinator, Debra Middleman, is to reach out to parents this year in the 8 to 9 Connection Program. She logs her contact with the parents and their participation at important events. At the end of the year the district can market the results of this program. Dr. Millard encouraged the school to reach out to these students as soon as there is as little as one failure. Many parents are unaware there is anything wrong with their children. The Board of Education asked to meet Ms. Middleman. Mr. Rouse said she will be invited to an Instruction Committee meeting to inform the Committee about what she does.

Adjournment

Dr. Millard moved to adjourn the Instruction Committee meeting 9:45 a.m. on Wednesday, August 19, 2009; seconded by Ms. McCormack. All ayes. Meeting adjourned.