

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Wednesday, February 3, 2010, in the Board Room of the high school.

Call to Order Dr. Lee called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: John C. Allen, IV, Jacques A. Conway, Terry Finnegan, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Amy Leafe McCormack, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, and Sharon Patchak-Layman. Also present was Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board of Education.

Visitors Kay Foran, Communications and Community Relations Coordinator; James Paul Hunter, FSEC Chair; community members; Dr. Linda Hanson, Dr. Allan Alson, and Dr. John Sawyer of School Exec Connect; Dan Kleinfeld, *Trapeze*, Terry Dean of the *Wednesday Journal*, and Chuck Fieldman of the *Oak Leaves*.

Visitor Comments None.

Superintendent Search First Dr. Hanson showed the Board of Education members the advertisement in *Education Week* for the OPRFHS superintendent.

Dr. Hanson presented an executive summary that included a compilation of the most important attributes that these communities said they wanted in a new superintendent and it itemized the strengths and challenges of the District. This summary consists of information gathered through 17 focus groups (152 people participated) and an online survey (372 people responded). This information will be shared with candidates and it, along with the profile, will be used to help formulate the questions the search team will ask of the candidates. Any candidate that is brought forth should be able to meet the challenges and demonstrate the attributes.

The report also included a summary of the survey and demographic information as to the types of people who responded and the ethnic groups. Some things on the survey did not make it to the attribute list; administrative competency did not make it to the summary list.

Dr. Hanson thanked Ms. Kalmerton and Ms. Foran for helping both advertise and organize the focus groups and the survey.

Dr. Hanson noted that the administrators felt that the overall strengths of the community were: this is a wonderful place to live, to educate the children, and they were grateful to be in this District. They were proud that they were able to have real conversations with one another and did not dodge the issues. The challenges and barriers included: 1) a concern about increasing taxation; 2) a disconnect between them and the Board of

Education; 3) better definition of the superintendent and principal roles; 4) Board of Education and governance issues, 5) the achievement gap, and 6) the role of the newspaper in this community and its support of the schools.

Dr. Alson was happy to have the opportunity to work with OPRFHS. Personally, as a long time superintendent, he had the opportunity to work with and interact with faculty and administration at OPRFHS and he had learned a great deal about the community. Oak Park & River Forest High School and Evanston Township High School have similarities, both academically and socially. He spoke with three focus groups: 1) the union stewards, 2) the formal community leaders from major institutions, and 3) a parent group. The positives listed were:

1. a strong sense that school continues to provide academic excellence at a high level. The new leader will have to address the fact that not everyone is fully educated to the same level and achievement.
2. this is a student-oriented climate with positive support;
3. there is strong collaboration between the faculty and the non-certificated staff in how they worked together. Everyone saw the strength in diversity; the flipside of that was diversity was always brought up in terms of the achievement gap and the work that needs to be done;
4. OPRFHS is an anchor of the community;
5. the quality of teaching was praised, with some comments about a slight unevenness;
6. stakeholders are very engaged. Parents, community, and faculty have high expectations of performance from both the students and the adults.
7. there is a long history of pride and it should be a magnet for a high quality candidate.

The challenges listed were:

1. the high demands of active stakeholders in terms of responsiveness and leaders;
2. are the roles of superintendent and principal defined well enough? It is clear that OPRFHS will have an incumbent principal so forging a collaboration is important;
3. the too frequent shifting of District goals; what is important has not always been clear and is not consistent;
4. lack of sufficient continuity and support for the student achievement initiatives; and
5. the media and its treatment of the institution was an issue from all groups.

The desired attributes were:

- 1) a capacity to have a thick skin; This is a political job and the person must be an educator and a leader who can handle that fact;
- 2) More democratic side than autocratic;
- 3) A good listener but decisive;

- 4) Where there is not clarity about the Board of Education versus the Superintendent, they do not want micromanagement either from the Superintendent to the Board of Education or the Superintendent to the Principal;
- 5) A people person;
- 6) Visible and accessible;
- 7) Future oriented;
- 8) Educational vision;
- 9) Can assist adults in roles; and
- 10) Is a consensus builder for an agenda and moves from that agenda.

Dr. John Sawyer reported on the OPRFHS student body's reaction to the questions about attributes, strengths, and challenges. He noted that the OPRFHS student body is very impressive. The strengths were:

- 1) high academic standards;
- 2) while awesome teachers, many had preconceived ideas of the performance of students coming into the instructional setting vs. waiting to see how they did;
- 3) supported their classes; and
- 4) athletic tradition

The barriers were:

- 1) the achievement gap. One African-American student described an internal division between those who are high achievers and those who are not; there was a degree of peer pressure to move away from academic excellence. That is a problem.
- 2) discipline and the implementation of discipline policies in the school setting are inconsistent. When students act in a way that violates the written policy, the approach to those issues should be consistent.

Attributes desired in a new superintendent were:

- 1) ability to have relationships with students;
- 2) open minded;
- 3) commitment to making OPRFHS a better school;
- 4) emotionally strong;
- 5) tolerant of the differences of people relative to all segments of the community;
- 6) a boldness to act out of conviction and address the achievement gap between the different races;
- 7) ability to bridge the differences in the groups; and
- 8) ability to work with everyone.

Dr. Hanson asked the Board of Education for a consensus on the profile of what the District wanted in a new superintendent.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the focus groups were evenly divided between male/female, White, Black, Hispanic, etc. Dr. Hanson noted that demographic information was not recorded. People came voluntarily. One group had only four people and one had thirty-four. Demographics were kept on the survey, however, and men, women, and all racial groups responded. The majority of the 372 people who completed the survey answered every question. Thus, the profile was built on the responses of 72% and there were five opportunities to answer. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked for the items that received no or limited marks that were not on the radar for enough feedback. She also asked if these results were typical and she was told that they were typical. Mr. Allen was disappointed that not more support staff had participated.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked Dr. Hanson to highlight which things were characteristics, skills, and attributes; she was not sure how these were categorized. Her image of skills was such things as being able to facilitate, speak good, write well, manage large projects, etc. A qualification would be to have a doctorate and experience in other districts. Where would those interests be documented and fit in, primarily as this was going to be used to screen candidates. Dr. Hanson suggested that the Board of Education not narrow its search to just doctors, as that would put an artificial filter on the search and limit the pool. If that was a requirement of the Board of Education, it could advocate for that in the interview; it should not be in the Profile. School Exec Connect has tried to reflect what this community has said and what the Board of Education said it wanted. In terms of breaking down by skill and attributes, Dr. Hanson was unsure if she could do that and she did not feel it would be helpful. Ms. Patchak-Layman wanted an orientation on what was used as a checklist. In terms of profiles, there are academic and administrative profiles and, for her, personal qualities and experiences. She was trying to match this to what things addressed academics and what things addressed education. It seemed to weigh heavily on personal qualities and experiences. Dr. Hanson directed her to the management quality and implementation and to the end product, as that is the part that will be looked for in the collaboration piece. Because of the consultants' skill in what they do, they will look at this, and build in the kinds of administrative pieces, management pieces, etc. Regarding closing the achievement gap, if there were a formula for it, everyone would be using it. They will listen to the candidates and their educational solutions and look at it from their educational backgrounds; the consultants will make their own judgments on that.

Ms. Patchak-Layman, after reading the description in the ad, noted that it mirrored what many communities sought. How does this get the Oak Park & River Forest profile to be distinct from other communities? To that end, Ms. Patchak-Layman suggested adding part of the District goals to this profile. Dr. Hanson suggested that the goal might be somewhat wordy for the profile.

It was suggested that if any Board of Education members had additions to this profile, they email them to Dr. Hanson. Dr. Hanson stated that it was clear to the consultants who they were looking for in a superintendent and a sense of the issues.

Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that the reading of the goals is what makes OPRFHS unique. Candidates would have looked on line to see our goals and the candidate would have to address that in a way to be meaningful to the district. Dr. Hanson stated that the Profile was to reflect what the Board of Education said during its focus group and it did. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that any time something is put together, it acts another way to communicate with the school community, and to clarify for the Board of Education itself, but it also should be as extensive for everyone in going forward, not just the present. Ms. Patchak-Layman added that she thought the focus group was a practice session; she had thought long and hard about desired superintendent qualifications, which the goals did not reflect.

Dr. Hanson stated that the Profile must reflect those things that if a superintendent accomplished, would make him/her successful. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that data was not addressed. Dr. Hanson said that it did not make it to the summary. Ms. Patchak-Layman felt more attributes related to content areas needed to be added and she will forward them to Dr. Hanson.

While Ms. McCormack noted that Board of Education members have the opportunity to ask the candidates questions about those things, Ms. Patchak-Layman said that the consultants would use this document to review the applicants and she wanted to make sure the people coming already had a head start.

Ms. Patchak-Layman also wanted noted success. Dr. Alson, knowing the work of Dr. Hanson and Dr. Sawyer, said that the consultants would be remiss in their interviewing if they did not seek people who could demonstrate more than just talk in their experiences and they will be asked to address a variety of key issues that will make a high quality superintendent. The candidates that are brought forward should evidence the knowledge, the skills, and the experience that gives the greatest promise that they will be successful in the current OPRFHS context. It was important to collect full feedback about what is essential to be here and it is important that the Board of Education weigh in together that the profile reflects all views.

There was consensus that any other Board of Education suggestions should be sent to Ms. Kalmerton and she will circulate them to the other Board of Education members.

It was also the consensus of the Board of Education members that the entire report would be included on the website with the detailed information accessible by clicking another link.

It was the consensus of the majority of Board of Education members to have a maximum of 14 people on the confidential committee and it would consist of the following: 3 faculty members, 2 support staff members from the support groups (CPA, B&G, Security, and Non-affiliated), and one each from the groups APPLE, CTA, Citizens' Council, Boosters, PTO and SEA, 1 student, and 2 community members. It should be stressed that the members should be current, past or future parents and each group will choose the participants. Sample questions will be provided to the committee before the first meeting. It is suggested that they meet an hour in advance bringing the questions that have been supplied and then signing the confidentiality statement. When asked if a student could commit to a confidentiality clause, the response was affirmative.

The final candidates will also meet confidentiality with the members of DLT, a representative of the BLT, and a representative of the Division Heads.

Ms. Patchak-Layman will send suggested revisions to Dr. Hanson. Dr. Hanson will revise the profile and then send it to Ms. Kalmerton for distribution.

The three consultants departed at 9:16 p.m.

Closed Session

At 9:17 p.m. on February 3, 2010, Mr. Conway moved to enter closed session for the purpose of discussing the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the District or legal counsel for the District, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee or against legal counsel for the District to determine its validity. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1), as amended by PA. 93—57; seconded by Mr. Allen. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

At 10:09 p.m., the Board of Education reconvened its open session.

Adjournment

At 10:10 p.m. on Wednesday, February 03, 2010, Mr. Conway moved to adjourn the Special Board Meeting; seconded by Mr. Finnegan. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes.

Dr. Ralph H. Lee
President Protempore and Vice President

John C. Allen, IV
Secretary