

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

**Policy, Evaluation and Goals (PEG) Committee  
Monday, March 12, 2012  
Board Room**

A Policy, Evaluation and Goals Committee meeting was held on Monday, March 12, 2012, in the Board Room. Co-chair Phelan opened the meeting 7:08 p.m. A roll call included the following members: Valerie Fisher, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Amy McCormack, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Sharon Patchak-Layman, and John Phelan. Also present were: Dr. Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent; Michael Carioscio, Chief Information Director, Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Nathaniel Rouse, Principal; Lauren M. Smith, Director of Human Resources; Cheryl L. Witham, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations; Jeremiah Wiencek, Assistant Principal for Student Services; Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors: Jeremiah Wiencek, OPRFHS Assistant Principal of Student Services; Bill Dwyer of the Oak Leaves, Community members Christy Hunt, Monica Sheehan, and others.

Discussion of Student Discipline/Suspension

The purpose of this meeting was to allow Board of Education members the opportunity to discuss discipline/suspensions. The Board of Education members present at its March 8, 2012 meeting expressed some of their initial thoughts on the philosophy of discipline. Mr. Phelan asked to hear the administration's thoughts.

Mr. Carioscio spoke about capturing discipline data. January 1, 2012, the District changed its process of collecting discipline data to reflect more accurately what was occurring. Previously, as an example, when one student had three separate incidents, he/she would receive one In-School Suspension (ISS). Thus, when pulling information out of the system, there was an overstatement as to the number of consequences. In attempting to provide meaningful data after the fact, the District used a process of bundling of infractions. If three infractions were included on an incident, the most egregious one would have the consequence associated with it and the lesser offences would be bundled together and excluded from the report. By virtue of that, staff attempted to take the overstatement out of the mix. Mr. Carioscio compared the letters that went out to parents to the numbers in the report. In doing so, he found that Out-School Suspensions (OSS) were fairly reported (only about 8), but the In-School Suspensions (ISS) had been overstated by almost 200 more than the letters/documentation that were found. He believed that the bundling process was not effectively carried out across the board and that some of this overstatement still resides in the data.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked how the Board of Education would be able to look at the data longitudinally with a change in the collection of the data. Beginning in January, discipline records are being entered only once with a select list from which to choose. Mr. Carioscio felt confident that data would not have to be reinterpreted and that the District was doing its best efforts to make past data reasonable. From a trend level, there is data, but a deeper analysis of it would be unsupportable. Mr. Carioscio stated that best efforts have been used to clean past data. Ms. Patchak-Layman observed that in order to see whether progress was or was not being made with regard to discipline and the Code of Conduct, one must have that history. In looking at data from several past years, the ISS numbers are similar. She had wanted an idea if the discipline in place for the past 10 years had produced a difference in suspensions. OSS seemed more true data, but the ISS was not. She looked at this data because she found the 2003 document that was issued for

an analysis of African-American achievement at OPRFHS and it had a section on discipline, data, and the Code of Conduct for that year.

When asked what other information the Board of Education needed for this discussion, Ms. McCormack stated she had wanted to know if the District was working within the range of disciplinary consequences available in the Code of Conduct. She wanted to look at incident by incident to see how many times the Level II fighting was given X times, as an example. However, that data is not available.

Dr. Isoye asked the Board of Education to consider what questions needed to be resolved, what information will be necessary for future discussions, where it wanted to end, what problems needed to be addressed, and what were realistic expectations for next year?

Board of Education members expressed their philosophies on discipline.

Mr. Phelan:

- Being a lawyer, listed the reasons he learned in law school for punishment:
  - Determent of the activity in the future, either for an individual or for a general deterrence. The second has not proven effective.
  - Incapacitation, removing someone who is breaking the rules from the environment so that he/she does not continue to harm others while there and to protect the victims, but some do not apply in the school context.
  - Retribution, eye for an eye.
  - Rehabilitation, how does one get the offender to change and not engage in that behavior again?
- His overall concerns were that the administration must have the authority to make students comply with the rules.
- He would avoid permanent consequences for adolescent behaviors. What effect does discipline have on college applications, job applications, etc.? Some deterrents have not worked, i.e. Plastro Track. The Illinois Youth Survey of 2010 showed 17% of seniors had been under the influence of drugs and alcohol on school property and yet the statistics provided at the meeting showed that only 14 to 16 percent of the students had been identified.
- The positive behavior incentive systems has worked well through Modified Closed Campus (MCC).

Ms. Fisher:

- The District has to balance the safety and welfare of 3,000 students.
- The District should explore consequences other than OSS for a range of behaviors. She was a part of the Board of Education that when students were expelled, they were just expelled. The option of alternating learning was not there. She stated the situation had been far worse in the past and she appreciated the present alternatives.

Dr. Lee:

- An assessment to see if something were working, i.e., the standards for determining if something different were needed. If something was not working, how could it be changed? Would it be through policy? The terms of “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” needed definition.
- He asked what Illinois law required of school districts. Did it permit families to take no responsibility if the District had done all it can with a student's behavior? Does the law say that it is the school's problem? Can the student be told another school may suit them better?

Ms. McCormack:

- The District needs to fix the problem of having too many students out of class as it negatively impacts student achievement. It is impossible for students to catch up if they are out of class and often those students with the most discipline consequences do not have the support at home to correct this. The range of discipline consequences must be used. Because of Ms. McCormack's personal involvement with the college application process, she understood that colleges ask questions about discipline. She did not believe the District understood what affect the discipline system had on the application process. She suggested inviting college admissions officers to talk with the Board of Education about this subject, i.e., how do the students' answers affect their enrollment, scholarship opportunities, etc.

Ms. Patchak-Layman:

- Since creating the Board of Education goals for 2009-10, she wanted those students who were not in the classroom to have access to the teaching in the classroom, as she had realized that students were missing thousands of hours of instruction. She felt it was the District's legal responsibility and a moral obligation to educate the students. If students are not in the classroom, the District must provide whatever instruction was needed in order for the students to move back into the classroom.
- She felt the Code of Conduct was punitive rather than positive and it did not support helping students to learn to be better citizens. Restorative judgment is not about what one did, but about being aware of the harm that was caused to not only the student doing the harm but to the person who was harmed. She felt the administration or culture of the school had veered away from the Board of Education's Policy 103, Philosophy of Discipline.

“...that its objective is to inspire and to equip each student to find a constructive and responsible role as a caring citizen; that students must learn how to achieve both as competitors and cooperators; that students must learn to respect, to understand, and to build on their own roots and the roots of others; and that it desires to foster a sense of the right, the good, the better, and the best as criteria for behavior.”

- Ms. Patchak-Layman continued that discipline comes from learning the above. By combining it with self-worth, she felt students would obtain the knowledge and skills to move forward. Under the restorative justice model, the behavior of being late would be addressed immediately rather than through a detention. The PBIS model is one small part to this process, as it gives everyone a vocabulary. Restorative justice takes it to another level within the student body and when used, dramatic changes have occurred. Evanston Township High School has instituted a peer jury whose purpose is to help students understand their behaviors and mete out consequences, with the caveat that the staff and counselors may say what is and what is not appropriate. The City of Evanston has implemented this also. She wanted to look at a broad-based community effort that would take discipline out of the criminal justice vent.
- Ms. Patchak-Layman asked the administration to look at schools in different states, cities, etc., to see what other options were available. What can the school do for the coming school year to change these outcomes?

Dr. Millard:

- The goal is for the school to be a safe place where students do not feel threatened. Because proper discipline starts at home, she did not know if the school could provide students with the appropriate discipline from which students would learn. However, the District does want them to learn without long-term consequences, in addition to providing a safe environment. She felt much more information was necessary in order for it to be most useful. While Ms. Patchak-Layman's

suggestion sounded wonderful, Dr. Millard felt it might be impractical because many students do not have the foundation at home. Some students must leave the classroom because of their disruption to it. She wanted safety, flexibility, and a determination as to what things could be done for the majority of the students. Dr. Millard suggested asking current and former students 1) what they thought about the Code of Conduct, 2) what did they think would help students with their behaviors, and 3) was it of value in their long-term growth.

Mr. Wiencek stated that the District does not have a zero tolerance policy. Many of the interventions that occur were not included in the discipline data. Students receive counseling session with social workers, psychologists, and Deans. The Deans work closely with the Substance Abuse Counselor (SAC). He believed that alcohol, substance abuse, and violent crimes should fall into the zero tolerance zone. Most other schools that issue 10-day OSSs will reduce those consequences if the students choose to attend growth programs. Mr. Wiencek stated that students who have violated the rules regarding substance abuse should receive rehabilitation. Mr. Rouse hoped that the District would not lose sight of the current progressive discipline model. It is difficult to show how a student gets to an ISS or an OSS. Because of the sheer volume of students, there are many situations where there the failure-to-serve turns into an ISS or OSS. Deans know the students personally and they do try to change students' behaviors. Many times Deans prevent things from occurring. MCC has allowed the Deans to forge stronger relationships between the Deans and the students and teachers and many disruptions are stopped before they begin because students make the Deans aware of the issues.

Mr. Phelan stated that having the administration's input was critical to the Board of Education. He then recapped what information the Board of Education desired.

- How can the school be made a safe place while not trying to establish a value system that should be provided at home.
- How can the District provide a more positive and preventative disciplinary system?
- What are the disciplinary statistics based upon race?
- How does disciplinary action affect a student's future?
- Discipline designed as a deterrent to substance abuse?
- How will the school do something about its observations?
- How can the Board of Education make a difference?

Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that the baseline/parameters for the philosophy of discipline was in the Board of Education's policy, which was most recently reviewed in November 2007. If there is something in the policy that allows many students to be suspended, then it needs to be amended or a determination made as to why with all of the interventions that have been put in place, the results continue to be the same. Dr. Millard remembered that in her first year on the Board of Education, there were 44 expulsions by May 2005, so there had been improvement.

Discussion ensued regarding removal of students from the classroom because of discipline. If the District did not have this option, what would be the outcome? Mr. Rouse believed that removing students from the classroom was dependent upon whether the incidents affected the safety of the learning environment, e.g., bullying, harassment, fighting, teacher insubordination, etc. The failure-to-serve detention was the most frequent consequence given. When students consistently refuse to serve those detentions, they enter into progressive discipline system, which may lead to an ISS or an OSS. The District is proud of what is offered to students to help them in this process, e.g., mediation, tutoring, ISS, a range of OSS consequences, Thrive Counseling, a substance abuse counseling, etc. When Deans have conversations with the students in the progressive discipline system, the parents need to be informed. Mr. Wiencek stated that some students refuse to serve and detentions and beg for a suspension. The most successful students are those with parents who care and participate. Many

times parents will refuse to become involved. When asked if a log was kept of whether there was or was not parental involvement, Mr. Wiencek responded yes, but it is not as accurate as need be. The parents that do not want to participate usually do not share why they do not participate.

Discussion ensued about the appeal process. Should parents want to appeal a consequence, they are to contact Mr. Wiencek who may stop the consequence, hear the appeal, and render a final decision. If the student has already served the consequence, the decision can be overturned and the record is expunged. Students are not penalized on participation or homework, or taking tests or quizzes. Other schools do allow their students who are out of school to make up the work they missed.

Mr. Prale added that to take a student out of class is a very difficult thing for teachers/deans to do. It is done because other events have already occurred. The District has an obligation to educate every student and the District allows students to make up their work, but it also has a responsibility to the institution, and a broader aspect is disruption. When a student is disruptive, the District has the right to provide an appropriate opportunity to proceed and for the student to understand the nature of behavior.

Ms. McCormack was appreciative of this information as she hears that many times a student is taken out of the classroom on the first offence. She asked if the District had a sense of what happens when a student has a 5-day OSS. The Illinois Youth Survey says that many students come to the school drunk or high. How can the school help them versus punish them? She wanted to explore other means of discipline that did not include taking students out of the classroom because, as a deterrent, it was not working. Mr. Phelan added that other interventions could be used that would not take students out of the classroom.

Mr. Rouse stated that students receive the Code of Conduct at the beginning of the year. While it is a deterrent for some, it is not for others. Students are given an OSS for doing something that stops and/or disrupts the learning environment. Mr. Phelan stated that the District has broader options than just keeping students out of school for 5 days or offering a treatment plan. One thing that the present policy does is to separate the parents from working with the school to address students' drug and alcohol abuse. If his student were using drugs or alcohol, he would not want the school to know because he would be afraid that his child would receive a disciplinary consequence that would have to be disclosed on a college application; it could affect his/her future. Mr. Rouse stated that parents may confidentially call the substance abuse counselor about their child's issues and that more conversations with students about how their actions affect their college applications would be worthwhile. Mr. Phelan stated that districts use drug and alcohol testing programs as a deterrent to students. The current policy identifies addiction as a disease but the school punishes students for engaging in the abuse of illegal substances. He would not want a student to be disciplined for testing positive; he would want them directed to intervention programs. While not wanting to force parents or students to participate in a drug-testing program, he suggested that it could be voluntarily. .

Ms. Patchak-Layman added that the peer jury system with restorative justice works similarly. It offers peer counseling by having someone else involved in the conversation about whatever instances are before it. If the District believes this is a mental health issue, the District must be more consistent in dealing with it. If something is a health issue, the District tends not to criminalize it, meaning that once one speaks about the punitive consequences that takes away education as opposed to a consequence that will help them deal with a disability/mental health issue. One must also ask if a student is being disruptive what may have happened to cause his/her reaction and being removed from the classroom. Does the teacher need to be educated on the disruptive behaviors. She felt it was a circular conversation. If some students do not want to be at school, they will arrive late to class and the school will facilitate them not being in school. What can the District do to change the environment so that students want to be in class?

Dr. Millard asked if the Board of Education not only wanted to but it also would provide a discipline system that includes substantial intervention and support systems. She did not believe she or the Board of Education knew the real consequences of the discipline system. She advised those applying to colleges to tell the truth about any disciplinary consequences received. She asked that a college admissions officer advise the Board of Education as to what answering yes to having had any discipline consequences meant. Ms. Fisher read from the common application, "Have you ever been found responsible for a disciplinary violation at any educational institution you have attended from the 9th grade (or the international equivalent) forward, whether related to academic misconduct or behavioral misconduct that resulted in a disciplinary action? These actions could include, but are not limited to: probation, suspension, removal, dismissal, or expulsion from the institution." She continued that the questions asked at higher levels are even more detailed. She believed that the response to a question about suspension would require a yes response. It is a serious issue. She cautioned the District to be careful with its use of the terms and she would not to use the word "criminalize" when talking about making disclosure with respect to disciplinary action. She hoped to focus on 1) disclosure on college applications and their impact, and 2) suspensions. Is there an alternative that the administrators can create when there are not issues of safety or a disruption to the classroom?

Mr. Phelan too believed that the students who did not want to be in school and who did not have the family support that pushed them to be in school, took every opportunity to stay out of school. What alternative punishments are available for students that would be considered by them painful rather than welcome? Mr. Rouse responded that Ms. Bishop and the Joint Committee on Student behavior worked to develop the failure-to-serve detention and social probation (students are not allowed to attend school events.) A Saturday school was also created for those who have the most detentions, but they are not responsive to these alternatives either. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked what plan had been developed to engage repeat offenders, because the present system is not working for them. Mr. Wiencek stated that the PSS Team flags students with issues such as attendance, discipline, social emotional, etc. The PSS Team consists of Deans, Counselors, Social Workers, the Substance Abuse Counselor, and he. It attempts to devise interventions to support the student, including home visits, local colleges, mentors, athletics, activities, conferences with parents, conferences with the teachers, and other resources within the community. Data is being kept on all of the students discussed. The psychologist interns will monitor what behaviors were evidenced because of what interventions taken, etc. He welcomed suggestions from the Board of Education or from other schools.

A question was asked about offering a community service proponent. Mr. Wiencek stated the Township offers a community service program and it is being used in lieu of the Face It Program. The Substance Abuse Counselor spends many hours speaking to students in the classroom. A suggestion was made to have MADD speakers talk directly to students about their real consequences.

Dr. Lee understood students not wanting to spend time away from their friends after 3 o'clock p.m. He asked about what the experience has been in dealing with parents whose children have multiple failure-to-serve detentions. He was informed that Deans work to get students to agree to serve their detentions, before, after or during school. Students are allowed to use their lunch or study hall time to serve the detentions rather than missing a class. What has worked for some students is the fact that the school been stricter on unauthorized tardies and absences this year. Parental involvement is sometimes missing for a variety of reasons, the parent works, has other commitments, etc. MCC has been a deterrent for some students, but not for others. It is difficult to find something encompassing for 3,000 students.

Dr. Isoye suggested that the Board of Education must consider that parents may not want their students to accept any of the services that the District can provide, i.e., community service, substance abuse treatment, etc. Therefore, the District does have to have alternatives.

Dr. Isoye provided the Board of Education with a timeline for the printing of the information contained in the student handbook as follows:

Board of Education approval of changes and modifications to Code of Conduct (for June 14 Meeting)	Friday, June 8, 2012
Cover and back art pages to printer	Monday, June 18, 2012
First draft to printer	Tuesday, June 26, 2012
Draft copy from printer	Monday, July 9, 2012
Final corrections to copy	Tuesday, July 10, 2012

Ms. Fisher stated that any change to a policy would be made through a first and second reading, which would take approximately two months. It is not the Board of Education's role to change the Code of Conduct matrix; it is the administration's job to reflect the Board of Education's policy. If the Board of Education's philosophy is not being reflected appropriately through the Code of Conduct, then the administration should be directed to conform the matrix to the Board of Education's policy. The way to communicate that would be through discussions such as this one.

Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that the current process does not allow for restorative justice, i.e., having peer juries involved, etc. How can the Code of Conduct be an educational experience to help students learn better behavior and to know what harm they caused to themselves and to others and then to move forward with additional support, if necessary? If one were late to class, then possibly he/she would be referred to a peer jury per a restorative justice model, etc. While Mr. Phelan wanted more information and more discussion on restorative justice before incorporating it into the Code of Conduct to be printed in a couple of months, that was Ms. Patchak-Layman desire. Ms. Patchak-Layman added that the school is obligating parents to have a supportive role in discipline, for their students to attend and to be prepared every day. If that is the parents' responsibility based on how the District sees their involvement, then parents are fulfilling that requirement. The state also puts the District in charge of students through local parents and many parents realize that the school has assumed this role. In many ways, they have been told they should not be involved in the school.

**Adjournment**

Hearing no further information requested of the administrators and being unable to set another PEG Committee date at this time, Mr. Phelan adjourned the meeting at 9:12 p.m.

Amy McCormack  
Secretary