

May 7, 2012

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Monday, May 7, 2012 in the Board Room of the high school.

Call to Order

President Finnegan called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: Terry Finnegan, Valerie J. Fisher, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Amy Leafe McCormack, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Sharon Patchak-Layman, and John Phelan (arrived at 5:35 p.m.). Also present were Dr. Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent; Michael Carioscio, Chief Information Officer; Amy Hill, Director of Assessment and Research, Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Nathaniel L. Rouse, Principal; Lauren M. Smith, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Cheryl Witham, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board of Education and FOIA Officer.

Visitors

Dr. Allan Alson, educational consultant; Janet Lorch and Michelle Uhler, community members; and Bill Dwyer of the Oak Leaves.

Public Comments

Janet Lorch, resident of 646 N. Grove, Oak Park, parent of current senior and incoming freshman, a member of the Julian School Improvement team, District 97 committee member regarding Special Education, World Language, and Middle Level Advisories, and an assistant professor in the college of education at NLU. Her primary work is done in urban schools where she trains teachers to work in turnaround schools in CPS. Thus, she has first-hand experience working with struggling learners.

Ms. Lorch had requested that a letter originally sent to Dr. Halliman be shared with the Board of Education with regard to her concerns about the cuts in the REI program for students in college prep courses. She summarized her concerns.

Ms. Lorch had been informed of the high school's excellent transition program for students entering the freshman class with special learning needs. The REI program had been explained as an opportunity for students who might struggle with the college prep curriculum to participate in these classes with support for a certified LD teacher in a co-teach model. This model is currently being introduced at Julian and has been very successful with many of the students. She was dismayed to learn that all REI taught courses for next year would be in remedial content and support no REI support given for college prep classes. She was disturbed because:

- 1) No notice or information was shared with the parents who had already attended transition meetings where REI cotaught college prep classes were determined to best meet the needs of their children.
- 2) No information communicated to the feeder middle schools, or to the staff and coordinators at these schools.
- 3) This change was made late in the school year, after transition meetings, and did not seem to include feedback from all affected parties.
- 4) The decision to move the REI opportunities to remedial courses clearly go against the published description of REI in the 2012-13 catalog which states:

“Increased numbers of REI courses are being offered to enhance mainstream opportunities.”

Moving REI support to remedial courses changes the entire definition of the program. It takes away opportunities to mainstream students into regular education classes, rather than enhancing opportunities.

Ms. Lorch did not question that decisions were always based on what is best for the students, but she said sometimes the consequences of those decisions are not initially clear.

Because REI support in college English and algebra is being replaced by an added period of support in each of these subjects, without REI support students would have a schedule including three support periods. They would lose the opportunity to be challenged academically in college prep classes, would not be able to take any kind of elective, and I question how they can even take the required number of classes with 3 periods of “support”.

The other option then, for students in what she might refer to as a “middle tier,” is to move to the remedial classes where the REI support is to be provided. Yet, when she sat in on Essentials of English and a Physical Science classes and then on REI College English and Biology, she was able to determine quickly that the courses are very, very different in content and rigor. She questioned whether those levels of classes would prepare students for entry into college.

Ms. Lorch felt a major change in program delivery should have been transparent and communicated to the feeder schools well in advance and with enough time to appropriately plan for all children affected by this change. Understanding that resources were scarce, she said it made sense to spread the resources to meet a wider range of children rather than taking from one set of students to support another. She felt that this decision contradicted most of current work she saw in schools where various tiers of students are identified and supported in various ways; higher tiers receive increasingly higher support, but middle tiers are not ignored.

Ms. Lorch asked the Board of Education to consider some creative thinking and planning to provide support to students who might struggle in college prep classes without forcing them into remedial classes, especially since there is such a huge gap between the lower level classes and college prep. She offered the following option: Include keeping fewer yet targeted REI sections of college prep courses based on careful and deliberate use of data of the incoming students to identify students who stand a good chance at success in college prep courses with support and then offering REI sections of these classes. This matched the definition of REI, as well.

While it is not the task of the Board of Education to design curriculum, it is charged to “evaluate the educational program and approve School and District Improvement Plans”. She strongly recommended that the Board of Education more carefully examine this change in the educational program. Any change this significant should only happen after careful and timely consideration, communication and input from all affected parties and a not until a plan can be put in place that meets the needs of all affected students.

Mr. Finnegan appreciated her research and the tone of her letter and he stated that the Board of Education would consider her request.

Agenda Review

It was the consensus of the Board of Education members to agree to the meeting norms

And Norms

presented and to the agenda. Dr. Alson appreciated the Board of Education's reading of chapters 1 and 2 of the book "Creating the Opportunity Learn" and he thanked Ms. Hill for assembling and making the data accessible.

Discussion of The Reading

Dr. Alson asked the Board of Education the following questions about the reading assignment. What were their cognitive learning and emotional responses to the reading? What things resonated with them about their roles or OPRFHS? How did this reading connect to the OPRFHS achievement gap? What else did they learn? Dr. Alson read the first two sentences of the first full paragraph on page 33, "Too often attitudes and beliefs that contribute to the normalization of failure are unchallenged and when failure is normalized, educators often grow comfortable seeing minority students underperform and fail in large numbers. When failure is normalized and educators are no longer disturbed by low student achievement, it can be extremely difficult for school outcomes or schools to change."

Dr. Lee confessed that he was happy to have learned nothing that he did not already know as he had been working hard to be aware of this for several years. It reminded him that there were large differences between recognizing a problem, deciding that something could be done about the problem, and doing something about it. He remembered identifying the problem around 1992-93 and this year is the first year that the Board of Education can show constructive steps toward addressing the problem, e.g., the initiation of a reading program this year and before that, a math program. The District has now created benchmarks that would likely yield fruitful results.

Dr. Millard stated that closing the gap is about raising achievement for all of students. Even the best American students cannot compete with global students. In the field of medicine, discussion occurs about how health benefits contribute to success in life, especially academics. Many different factors contribute to the success of students (environment, school, etc.) and schools are asked to make a big difference. It makes her feel inadequate. She asks herself what she needs to be doing with the babies.

Ms. Fisher was struck by the emphasis on the three components or areas of a gap: 1) the one schools are used to addressing, 2) the global or international gap, and 3) the timing of the change in the millennium. It can make one feel panicked at the difficulty involved with all of these things. There was some comfort that OPRFHS has been aware of the gap and addressing certain components of it. Dr. Lee should be complimented as being one of those people who continued to emphasize reading. She was surprised at the spin on NCLB, as it had been seen as only providing sanctions. Long before it was mandated, OPRFHS was disaggregating its data. NCLB continues to make more sanctions on districts that do not need them. The complimentary spin on NCLB was that it has brought this discussion to a national focus.

Ms. McCormack echoed the statements already made, feeling it was a good synopsis/update of where the high school is today. She felt the same about NCLB. It profoundly affected the way the school thinks. Perhaps history will find that it had a positive impact. She felt it was difficult to know why NCLB was originally implemented and that the schools had not solved the issues. She was frustrated and

she wished the administrators could tell the Board of Education the answers, because she did know what to do.

Dr. Alson noted that when MSAN was started in 1998-99, the member districts had committed to publishing their disaggregated data. Few schools did that even after three or four years. A positive of NCLB was that it forced schools to publish their data and make it a national conversation. He had participated on a panel where doctors were talking about health disparities and the achievement gap as they related to poor people and people of color. Those same gaps exist. That is a relatively new discussion in the health field. He believed there were many factors to the achievement gap and that the focus in this setting should be on things that schools can control. He felt this was one of the larger social justice equity issues facing America.

Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that the reading affirmed what she had thought, believed in, and had worked on since starting as a Board of Education member at District 97. She was frustrated that the high school's data had not gone anywhere. As long as data is grouped, one can hide behind it. A different impression and idea is formed about students if they are looked at as individuals, what they bring to the school, and how the school can support them. This discernment is needed before programs are planned. A reading program was implemented at the school based on percentages rather than the number of students that might need it, because it looked like the program would support them. She believed that schools and education implemented programs based on groups of students. She believed the best planning occurred when one knows the individual students. OPRFHS has 700 students in a class that requires it to do things that might not be necessary if there were only 35 or 50 students in a class. If the school had only 100 teachers versus 200 teachers, things too would be done differently. The high school's data has remained constant and no matter how many people have come forward to say something is wrong, it does not seem that the District can drill down far enough to see the individuals and plan for them.

Mr. Phelan was struck by just how many different perspectives there about the approach to reading. It was a sensitive topic it is. The value judgments articulated by the author and by the other authors were a sensitive area in which to be scientific. He thought it would be good to know the causes of the problem, but he found it dangerous for people to explore them. He felt there was a spin to the elements of society and culture and what the school does that contributes to it. While the Board of Education is to focus on what can be done to narrow the gap, it is important to understand how the school exerts itself in resources, whether it is time, money, and/or effort. Knowing the big picture would be helpful. This is a tremendously complicated issue and it was inhibiting to those who were devoting their attention to finding causes and thereby finding solutions. He looked for more spirit of cooperation for those who were devoting their attention to finding the root cause and then finding a solution without any finger pointing.

Mr. Finnegan said the reading gave a good voice to many of the things about which the District is learning and talking about via the Courage Conversations About Race (CCAR) process. Two aspects to culture were interesting 1) when the conversation is about the influencing of culture and the stereotypes that can be allowed to maintain

current culture and inequities. That can be destructive in nature. The school is learning that prior foci were not looking at the problem correctly. One cannot be pointing outward and then find a solution, and 2) the culture inside the building is very important. He then read from Page 26. “We take the position that if racial categories are indeed social and not primarily biological in nature, then it should be possible to fundamentally alter the predictability of racial patterns related to academic ability in performance *if we can eliminate the ways in which those patterns are entrenched within the structure and culture of a school.*” That is part of the culture that must be changed and that can be done by looking at each student individually.

Dr. Alson felt Ms. Patchak-Layman’s point was powerful. Disaggregation of data was important, e.g., attendance patterns, gender, etc.? Drilling down to individual students and understanding their circumstances becomes important. Because there is such a big scope of discerning patterns, it allows the District to create programs that could have individual components. Much research has occurred on the medical issues of children aged birth to five and learning. College readiness markers include kindergarten readiness, reading by the third or fourth grade at grade level, and being ready to take algebra by the 8th grade. Many students are not at grade level when they arrive at the high school.

Dr. Lee reflected that President Bush was largely responsible for the NCLB, a law that forced schools to look at the real data. For that, he was grateful. He also noted that the problems that have one or two solutions have been solved. The present problems have many contributing factors and the human brain is not allowed to deal with multi-dimensions simultaneously. The public feels there is only one solution and that the schools need to pick the right one. He believed that most of the problems have 20 to 30 aspects to them and schools need to find 6 or 7 things they can do something about with 60% efficiency, which may be something that schools can do well. No one acknowledges that OPRFHS does that reasonably well.

Ms. Fisher acknowledged that everyone would like to address individually each student’s needs. She was very impressed with the recent disaggregation of data by Ms. Hill and Mr. Prale. She did not believe the high school was hiding behind its data. At a Parents 4 Student Support meeting, Ms. Hill presented her most recent conclusions from the data. It had resonated with the parents, as they were surprised by the personal applications. She felt the District was using and mining the data and drawing conclusions that can be applied to those areas.

Discussion ensued about the implications for the work at the high school. Dr. Lee did not believe each teacher was an island. He felt what the Board of Education and the administration did was just as important as what the teachers did. He first started teaching at OPRFHS because he thought every teacher could do anything he/she wanted to do. He felt that was part of the problem. Dr. Alson reflected that the teachers were the closest to students. The Board of Education and the administration have policies to guide and hold teachers accountable via the superintendent. Should teachers be asked to have the same focus in servicing students? How much autonomy should they have? Can Algebra teachers use different textbooks? No, because using different textbooks it is an issue of managing resources. Can they choose a different curriculum? No, because the teachers have to know where individual students are at

the classroom level. Should there be similar assessments? The District needs to agree on where it is going and how that will be measured. Ms. Hill stated that the District has not begun to achieve the potential power of teaming. If all that is in common is the outcome and they use different resources, an opportunity is missed to team effectively. That is the best reason for adults to use common resources. Students From will not benefit from a move from one Algebra class that uses one textbook to another that uses a different textbook and has a different culture. The more teaching styles available means the more opportunities available to reach students because they have different learning styles. Teachers can also learn from each other. Mr. Prale stated one of the counters to normalization of failure is to have conversations with students and parents. Dr. Ferguson has stated that a conspiracy to succeed was necessary. Schools and teachers should inspire students through the policies and practices that address student needs. Dr. Lee observed that the management of complexity was important when teaching creative writing to 100 students versus chemistry to 900 students.

Dr. Alson stated that the purpose of the questioning was that of discernment: it begs policy questions such as: What are the limits of autonomy of teachers and the administration in moving the achievement of all students. An extreme example would be that if there were much research about the fact that students learn better and have a greater chance of succeeding if they are able to talk during their classes in order to make sense of what they are learning and/or to work in groups, as opposed to 45 minutes of lectures. Should administrators, while allowing freedom, encourage teachers to use a mixed repertoire of instruction to match the learning needs of the students? Where is the discernment about expectations and learning? Mr. Phelan questioned why teachers would lecture an entire period if they knew that the research showed that students did better with a different instructional strategy. Dr. Alson felt people resort to their comfort level in a variety of life experiences. People become habituated. It can be scary to have 20 students talking in groups, worrying about whether the teacher had control and wondering if the students were using the time productively. If students are quiet, it may mean that their attention is on learning. The school must agree on the outcome and the measurement of it. What is the accountability to reach those outcomes? If there is no accountability at the end, then one will resort to that which one is comfortable. In the critical reading goals, the administration must discuss literacy strategies and have certain expectations that teachers must enforce. Dr. Lee did not believe that an appropriate conclusion was that teachers should not be allowed to lecture. He felt that a 15-minute lecture should generate a 15-minute discussion. Dr. Alson's own value system was that it was good for teachers to have a broad repertoire of strategies, including lectures, students talking among themselves, etc. If students are performing at different levels, he believed the school needed to address the issue of the degrees of autonomy for adults. Discussion of what supports teachers should receive in order to hold them accountability should occur. Technology would add another dimension to how students learn in the future. Dr. Lee stated that having an arsenal of teaching strategies takes much time to learn, just as does becoming a good doctor or lawyer. One cannot learn to be a good teacher in a 4-year college curriculum or just after attaining tenure and that was reason that he supported step increases on the salary schedule. OPRFHS is beginning the endeavor of the new evaluation system as well. Dr. Alson continued that parents want their children to have the best possible and this places urgency on teachers being prepared.

He acknowledged, too, that the college preparatory programs were not where they need to be.

Dr. Alson asked what the implications were for the Board of Education in terms of policy direction. Dr. Millard stated that knowing that the Board of Education is charged in this culture, with this staff, to focus strongly on the kinds of differences that are possible despite the fact that this is a multifactorial issue. Perhaps, the data needs to be mined more deeply. Are the differences in achievement due to extracurricular involvement, avoiding behavioral issues, etc.? The answers are unknown. Ms. McCormack wanted to know more about how successful schools have allocated their resources in order to mediate the effects of the disadvantaged. She felt OPRFHS was doing that, but she asked if that were enough. Ms. Patchak-Layman wanted teachers to have the type of information they could use to make patterns and connections so it was not just a matter of trial and error. She wanted the information to be intentional so that teachers did not have to be inventive for weeks of the semester in order to get a sense of the students in the class. She suggested asking teachers what they would like in order to provide curriculum and content, critical thinking, problem solving, etc. What building blocks does a teacher need in order to help students expand their knowledge in the 21st century, i.e., take disparate information and put it together in a new way?

Dr. Alson stated that Ms. Patchak-Layman and Ms. McCormack had raised some interesting points about policy possibilities. The Board of Education will have to look at everything relative to how the school can influence classes, behaviors, etc. How can resources be allocated? What tools do teachers need from a data standpoint. If they had the tools, would they use them? Is there professional development to help them develop instructional strategies that would make a difference? Do they have the right assessments that measure higher-level thinking skills? It is hoped that the new test that will be unveiled in 2014 will be at a higher level than the current PSAE.

At 6:35 p.m., the Board of Education recessed its meeting and at 7:00 p.m. resumed.

Ms. Hill presented the high school's student demographics.

White 60%	5% multiracial
Black 27%	2% Asian
Hispanic 5%	

Concerning the above, the Board of Education considered the following questions: Is the preferred state that the top 10% of the graduating class represent these demographics? Dr. Lee would like that over time. Should AP classes represent these demographics? Should the behavior referrals represent these demographics? Should the distribution in reading and math be represented here from high to low? If that were the outcome desired, what policies might the Board of Education begin to develop to send a message to the administrators as to what it wanted them to do to achieve this? Ms. Patchak-Layman questioned whether the Board of Education's intent was to keep status quo or to find a different set of results. Dr. Alson suggested while the Board of Education could set annual goals on achievement and equity and own them, along with the administration and the community, a determination must be

made each year on the goals. Dr. Lee wanted African American students to have better anger management skills.

Ms. Hill presented data on reading and math, noting that the data displays were an outgrowth of the first retreat on the scorecard, and responses as to what the Board of Education had wanted to see, and what it was not seeing. From that conversation, Dr. Lee, Mr. Prale and she met about what data sets would be appropriate for the scorecard and they generated questions in six topic areas.

- Student reading progress and performance: How many students enter OPRFHS as ninth graders not reading adequately? After setting that baseline as a percent of the total ninth graders and as a number, disaggregated by gender and race, what kind of progress is made year to year?
- A similar scorecard that establishes the same descriptors in the area of math, using algebra skills as a baseline.
- Student discipline information laying out infractions and consequences over a five-year period. There may be an interest in producing a scorecard on the impact of discipline on academic achievement and perhaps a programmatic reporting component to indicate the impact of specific interventions.
- Exit outcome data, using our latest or highest known academic information (reading and math) and linked to National Clearinghouse information. The key question is how well prepared are graduates in the areas of reading and math.
- ACT scores and college/career readiness scores giving a 5-year view.
- Data on student use of substances, though acknowledging that further use of the Illinois Youth Survey could be problematic.

The District had since received the National Student Clearing House data on OPRFHS students. Ms. Hill would also want address Ms. Patchak-Layman's questions about the level of analysis and the use of the data and how different kinds of data sets were created to use when thinking about the student-level data, it is most benefit to the students, teachers, and the parents. The Board of Education should know how teachers are getting data and how they are using it to address student needs. Whether the District is giving assessments that will produce broad enough data to meet the skill needs was a more complex endeavor that the District continues to discuss.

Data was explored based for the six topic areas.

Student Achievement: Reading Baseline

What percent of entering freshmen score at/above the EXPLORE reading benchmark? What percent score below the benchmark? The graphs presented the following baseline information over three years.

- Each bar represents students by racial group within the graduating cohort.
- The bar height varies depending on the size of the racial group within the cohort.
- The graph disaggregates the racial data from the previous slide to show the number of males and females within each racial group who scored above and below the EXPLORE reading benchmark.

- On an interactive scorecard, similar data for each cohort (by graduation year) would be available.

The next graph continued to probe reading outcomes for one cohort of students (Class of 2012).

- Data reflect score information for 744 current members of the Class of 2012. Each bar represents the same group of students within that cohort.
- Data for students who have transferred out since the start of their freshman year are not included.
- Some students reflected in the graph transferred in after the start of the freshman year; in many cases, their late transfer explains why we have no data for a particular test.
- Each of the first three columns stands alone as a numerical breakdown of students' scores on a given test; a student who scored "in the green" on one test is not necessarily "in the green" on the other measures, except that all 528 students who scored at or above the ACT reading benchmark are also included among the 599 students represented in the fourth bar.
- The PLAN test is given in April of the freshman year. Scores range from 1-32; the benchmark score in reading is 17, which is equivalent to the 66th national percentile in a norming group made up of high school sophomores. Students scoring below the reading benchmark on the PLAN are at or below the 59th national percentile.
- ACT data reflect the highest score each student achieved in reading on any ACT taken. The ACT reading benchmark is 21, which corresponds to the 54th national percentile. Students scoring below the reading benchmark on the ACT are at or below the 48th national percentile. All incoming students.

The next slide looked closer at one subset of the Class of 2012: the 184 students who did not meet the EXPLORE reading benchmark. Each column reflected score information for the same 184 students. Each of the first three columns stood alone as a numerical breakdown of students' scores on a given test; a student who scored "in the green" on one test is not necessarily "in the green" on the other measures, except that all 77 students who scored at or above the ACT reading benchmark are also included among the 108 students represented in the fourth bar.

The next slide took the aggregated data from the right-hand side of the previous slide and disaggregates the data by race. Each set of columns reflects the year-to-year reading data for a racial group within the group of 184 students who missed the EXPLORE reading benchmark. Data for Asian and Native American students are not included because the number of students in each group is less than 10. Each set of columns tracks the same group of students over four years (e.g. test data for the same 82 White students are reflected in each column in the first set of columns). Special Education students are also not included because they take the Illinois Alternative Assessments test. Students self-report as to their racial ethnicity and as they become older, they are more reluctant to racially identify, making things more complex. The fourth column in each set, "Exit Data", refers to the achievement of one or more of the exit criteria in reading: scoring at or above the ACT benchmark in reading; meeting or exceeding in reading on the PSAE; or scoring at or above a 5 on the WorkKeys Reading for Information assessment. A student who scored "in the green" on the

PLAN test is not necessarily “in the green” on the ACT, but all students who scored at or above the ACT reading benchmark are also included among the students “at/above” in the Exit Data column.

Dr. Alson asked whether there was anything significant about the percentage of blacks in the class of 2013 who significantly dropped from the prior two years. Ms. Hill was unaware of anything and Dr. Lee suggested asking the District 97 superintendent.

An alarming point, despite the much smaller overall numbers, is that there were equal numbers of black and white females who scored below the reading benchmarks on the EXPLORE test. The District collects MAP data from feeder schools, which can be used for placement purposes to identify students whose reading needs are going to require level I and II reading interventions, as well as math interventions. OPRFHS also receives grades Districts 90 and 97. The EXPLORE test is given on a Saturday in the fall at the high school. The State has a waiver waiting for approval that would require middle schools to use the EXPLORE test in the eighth grade. ACT has researched MAP scores and how they might predict math scores. The state has announced that when new tests come on line, they will be part of the 8th grade test. Dr. Lee asked if the EXPLORE test remained constant from year to year? Ms. Hill stated that it did. Few organizations do more research than ACT and it will not include a question on a test until it has been field tested for two to three years and it has been normed against millions of test scores. It is a reliable data set. The fact that a student who meets state standards should be recognized, as it indicates that they are college and career ready.

Discussion ensued about the types of interventions may receive. Level I occurs within the regular classroom. Level II includes a support reading class and progress monitoring. Level III includes a double period reading class in addition to English.

What can the Board of Education members do to affect student achievement? The question posed is huge because of the time and money that will be devoted to it. The Board of Education has the authority to create an assessment policy and ultimately a comparability question as to whether the right assessment was being used.

Discussion ensued about whether administering the test in the last year of high school would make a difference? Students who are taking the instructional ACT are being compared to a norming group of juniors and seniors and it seems that students are dropping in scores. The administration discussed this and determined that it was because it was a measure intended for juniors and seniors and because of the way students scored on it, it was not an actual measure reading growth. The reading test is given in the freshman year and in the fall of the sophomore year. Dr. Lee asked if there were a way to do a norming fudge factor. While the response was not, a consortium that gives the same tests that OPRFHS does would provide a bigger data set. Dr. Alson suggested tracking it as a separate artifact to have a piece of data acknowledging that there was no norm reference group.

Ms. Hill stated that the EXPLORE test was a moderately good predictor, at best. An indication that some other factors are in play is when students score low on the EPXLORE test and yet have great ACT scores or the reverse of that. This data will

augment other data that the school collects. The District will be able to identify the individual students who changed groups to see if they had something in common at that time. Dr. Alson was curious as to what had helped the 77 students to move to that degree of success and by how much. Did they move by one or eight points? Did these students have behavior referrals? Did they have the same English teachers? What were the levers for their success?

Dr. Lee felt setting up routine procedures for making decisions as to what kind of time and effort is spent pursuing what type of questions was important. At what point does it make sense to hire more people to do research? How does one make a decision to spend money on one group versus another? Does the District have the right data tools? How much time is needed? Mr. Carioscio stated that the District is more disciplined in knowing what it wants from the data.

Dr. Millard asked if the Board of Education wanted a policy that says a student may receive a diploma if he/she has met the benchmarks. Is the District doing a disservice to students by graduating them if they do not have the basic ability to succeed? Ms. Fisher stated that it was exciting to hear that there would be a way to refocus time spent on the analysis and substance of what this data could provide.

Dr. Isoye stated that the Board of Education was reviewing the data that stemmed from the conversation about the scorecard. Some of the Board of Education questions will require drilling down even further. With regard to policymaking and bigger questions for the future, he hoped that the Board of Education was beginning to understand what the administration understands. Dr. Lee asked what shape the District would be in if it were not asking any of these questions. Mr. Phelan thought Dr. Millard's point with regard to the diploma was interesting, because he thought it was a matter of putting the right incentives in place for that performance. How can the high school motivate students to learn and motivate teachers to take ownership of student outcomes? How does the high school motivate parents to take a role in that dynamic? The value of this meeting was to hone in on what sorts of areas he felt the District could explore, as it moves into the strategic planning as to what the desired outcomes are. Ms. Fisher felt that exploring what caused the 77 individuals to make significant process would be worthwhile and then policy decisions could be made.

Things to be explored:

- Where a student begins and ends (colleges and then AP class)
- Attendance and discipline
- Hearing student comments about their high school experience

After hearing some anecdotal comments, Mr. Phelan stated that the District must do its due diligence when putting out statistics. Hypotheticals must be tested. If one jumps to conclusions, one will miss the opportunity to learn if the hypothesis was the reason or was it a variety of reasons.

Ms. McCormack felt the Board of Education was setting up the same thing legislators did with NCLB, which was to find ways to make sure students were meeting the test. That did not fix the problem. Ms. Fisher did not feel setting arbitrary percentages had

worked. Dr. Offermann, superintendent in the 1990's, had said that the goal would be of not being able to tell what cohort a graduate fell in as they crossed the stage.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the counselors were the constant for those students who scored below the benchmark. She felt that there might be some value to assigning these students to one counselor in order to gather anecdotal information. She was concerned that the numbers were endpoints and the others were for diagnosis. Based on the EXPLORE scores, students will be put into certain courses. When scores become the barriers or limitations to opening doors as opposed to being the last snapshot, then one must look to the adult who is opening the doors. She looked at this as being intentional and designating someone to know the students and building a relationship. Ms. McCormack felt there was confusion about the Board of Education's role with regard to counselors. She did not want to frame their work.

Mr. Phelan expected the administration to bring any hypothesis, the research that was necessary, and the tools that would be used, and if the hypothesis were correct, the solutions for improvement. He was worried about Board of Education members suggesting random solutions and having administration chase them down.

Dr. Alson stated that this work is about provoking the discussion to deepen the knowledge, to build communication between the administration and Board, and to begin to frame the issues. The administration could bring a hypothesis based on data, provide what they would like to test and ask the Board of Education to consider a policy to support it. The Board of Education could give some suggestions that would lead to a deeper evaluation of data that what might be needed for students/families to move achievement along. It is through the shared study of data, that one reaches common understanding and common vocabulary about the state of the District and its goals. When the Board of Education worked on its goals, it worked on categories, i.e., academic achievement and equity. The goals should frame the work of the administration and the District. The Board of Education's charge had been to discuss the achievement gap this year, to lead the administration to make practices and prepare for the strategic planning long-term, big picture goals.

Ms. Hill stated that the math data was parallel to the reading data. The genesis of these data sets was around scorecard questions and they will first be viewable by the internal and then the public. When asked if there were more time and more funding, what other type of data might be displayed, Ms. Hill responded that would be qualitative information, i.e., what can be learned about the students who have succeeded who looked as if they would not have been successful and comments from the students themselves.

Mr. Phelan wanted to see research or proposals of what the District should be doing to help student achievement and he wanted to have all of the data. The data that showed something worked and the data that showed something did not work. Dr. Millard only wanted to spend time on things that were effective. The District is looking at tools to make the evaluation of data easier.

Dr. Alson stated that these discussions were important for the administration to hear in order to know the kinds of questions boards of education are considering. The data is

revealing. Ultimately, the desire would be for the administration to choose a couple of high-level strategies that would get immediate success and for the greater number of students.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked what would happen to those students in the Class of 2016 who scored below the EXPLORE benchmark after this conversation. What conversations were occurring about the incoming class? How can the District verify that the class that is already here is moving forward? Ms. Hill stated that the numbers are available for the Classes of 2015 and 2016 and the data will be better because of reading program and the SRI, which has been administered to every freshman student and will be administered to incoming and exiting freshmen. Freshmen who did not achieve will be scheduled into support their sophomore year. The District believes the tiered reading support will build year by year. The idea is to narrow data to determine the reading needs. The EXPLORE test is a gross measure. Ms. Patchak-Layman looked for anecdotal and qualitative information and that there was intention in place, so that these students feel connected during their four years at the high school.

Dr. Alson felt the Board of Education's role was to create policy and to ask for information derived from the administration's work based on its research in order to help shape questions. He thanked everyone for his/her participation in this rich discussion. Discussion ensued about the agenda for the June 11 retreat. Ideas included:

- 1) Knowing what tools would give more clarity to the information. What will help the District get to deeper levels? How would that be accomplished?
- 2) A focus that was more concrete, focused, and less theoretical. Dr. Alson suggested that might include deeper research by the administration to understand or to recommend a practice that research would support. Ms. McCormack felt the Board of Education blurred the line between acting on recommendations, being the decider and being the ideas people. She worried about the Board of Education being the one to bring forth ideas.

When asked if the data could evaluate the current programs, Mr. Prale stated that data measures are stated at the time a program is organized. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the statement that the District had an excellent program because 400 students had met the benchmarks in EXPLORE was true, as she believed the District was saying that the students were not doing well and it needed to do something about that fact. Dr. Alson stated that a deeper question about causality might be why some students had done well and others had not over the course of their high school careers. This is about how the District can get data about its work that will make a difference for the students. Ms. Hill added that the data presented was a standard measure, as the District has relied heavily on the measures to the exclusion of others, e.g., GPA, etc. She did not believe any conclusions could be drawn on what was presented.

Dr. Alson received appreciation for his facilitation of this meeting.

Adjournment

At 9:10 p.m. on Monday, May 7, 2012, Mr. Phelan moved to adjourn this special board meeting; seconded by Mr. Finnegan. A voice vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Amy McCormack
Secretary

By Gail Kalmerton
Clerk of the Board