

OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST HIGH SCHOOL
201 North Scoville Avenue
Oak Park, Illinois 60302

TRI-BOARD MEETING

River Forest Elementary School District 90, Oak Park Elementary School District 97, and Oak Park
and River Forest High School District 200
January 10, 2012

The River Forest Elementary School District 90, the Oak Park Elementary School District 97, and the Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200 held a Tri-Board Meeting on Tuesday, January 10, 2012, beginning at 7:09 p.m., in the Multipurpose Room at District 90's Roosevelt Middle School.

Roll calls showed Board Members present were:

District 90 Board of Education

Jim Weiss, President
Patrick Meyer, Vice President
David Latham, Secretary
Roman Ebert
Elizabeth Fischer
Ralph Martire

District 200 Board of Education

Dietra D. Millard, President
Terry Finnegan, Vice President
Amy McCormack, Secretary
Dr. Ralph H. Lee
Sharon Patchak-Layman
John Phelan
Valerie J. Fisher

District 97 Board of Education

Peter Traczyk, President
Peter Barber, Vice President
Amy Felton
Bob Spatz
Denise Sacks
James Gates
Jennifer Reddy

Also present were: Dr. Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent District 200, Dr. Albert Roberts, Superintendent District 97, and Dr. Edward Condon, Superintendent District 90, Kay Foran, District 200 Community Relations and Communications Coordinator; Michael Carioscio, District 200 Chief Information Officer; District 90 Kevin Martin, Technology Director; Karin Sullivan Communications Director; District 97 Cao Mac, Technology Director; Chris Jascula, Communications Director; Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board of Education District 200.

Visitors

James Paul Hunter, District 200 faculty member; Anthony Cozzi, District 90 Business Manager Jennifer Den, technology; Chuck Finn, Anne Sullivan, Sandy Thorpe, Padma Venkatesan, Stacey Williams, Marcia Preston, Margie Cekander, Kinyata McGee-Swope, Daniel Swope, Molly Uhlir, Anna Schaidler, Terrie Rayburn, Princess Dempz, and other community members; and Nick Moroni of the *Oak Leaves*.

On behalf of his colleagues, Dr. Condon and Dr. Roberts, Dr. Isoye welcomed all. The superintendents, along with the administrators and directors have worked to put together a program that will allow of the districts to begin to engage in dialogue that will help guide them as a whole as they work to educate and support the children of the Village of River Forest and the Village of Oak Park.

The discussion will focus on two key points: 1) technology and 2) communications and public relations. Boards will learn about each other's current practices and then become engaged in a future oriented aspect of the topic. It is through their voices, that the administrators and the directors can better understand the priorities of the collective wisdom of the three boards in order to move forward in an articulated manner. Dr. Isoye encouraged them to think freely, think bold, be imaginative and creative, and make sure they shared their thoughts.

Welcome and Introductions

Board members of District 90, 97, and 200 introduced themselves, reporting on their years of service and what offices they presently held on their boards.

Technology

Dr. Condon stated that technology used to consist of working with a manual typewriter, then an electronic one, etc. At this point, students have different needs and require a higher level of technology. He reported on his own experience of looking for a clock when proctoring a test years ago and asking the students if anyone had a watch. One student responded by asking why they would want something that had only one purpose. Students view of technology tools and their integration in the students' lives must be acknowledged. Thus, the first discussion will be about technology in the classroom. The overview of the topics will be:

- Current and future initiatives
- Critical policy related issues
- Opportunities for collaboration
 - Economies of Scale
 - Coordination of policies and practices
 - Reconciling differences in deployment

Mr. Martin reported on District 90's initiatives with regard to infrastructure.

- 8/15/11 New VoIP enabled phone system
- 10/11/11 New fiber WAN
- 1/15/12 Additional Wi-Fi AP's to address Density vs. Coverage

District 90's infrastructure basics are:

- 10mb ICN Opteman connection
- 50mb Comcast business connection
- IGB fiber WAN
- 46 Wi-Fi access points
- Voice – 2 PRI circuits

District 90 Initiatives for the classrooms are:

- All K-8 teachers will have their own laptops
- Willard & Lincoln (K4), desktop lab, 4 laptop labs/carts, classroom pods, iOS devices, printers
- Roosevelt (5-8) desk top lab, 7 laptop labs/carts, 8th grade 1 to 1 iPads, 11c workstations, iTouch cart classroom desktops, printer
- K-4 smart boards in every room (enhances engagement)
- 5-8 smart boards in math/science
- 5-8 LCD carts with speakers available (one for every grade level)
- K-8 document cameras available (project a book or science environment (USB camera and in science higher end zoom camera used to enhance what is on the screen).

Mr. Mac reported on District 97's infrastructure initiatives

- District-wide 802.1N Wi-Fi access
- 1GB Fiber WAN
- Increased Internet bandwidth went to 45mb and noticed
- All certified staff have laptop
- By the 2012-13 school year, all classrooms will have LCD carts (projector, speakers, and cart) – perhaps smart boards in the future.

District 97's instructional initiatives include:

- Integrated Google Apps into middle school instruction, promote lesson plans
- Becoming a Google certified training center (only 2 or 3 now exist in Illinois)
- All technology integrationists are Google and SMART certified
- Trying to leverage the software with one of the boards years ago, trying to leverage the software loaded on the teachers laptops.
- Professional development opportunities for the staff.
- Approximately five to eight carts of Netbooks (26 machines per cart) have been deployed at every school.
- Integrated use of iPods, Smart Response VE interactive system and SMART Notebook collaboration learning software.

Mr. Carioscio reported on District 200's infrastructure initiatives

- Wireless – coverage will be complete in 2012-13
- Voice over IP (VoIP) is being considered for 2012-13
- All faculty members are scheduled to have Lenovo tablets over the next several years – currently, 25% have them
- All instructional spaces will have projectors by the beginning of 2012-13
- Building wiring and infrastructure changes are ongoing to support VoIP and wireless

District 200's Instructional Initiatives are:

- Tablets for faculty
- Online textbook pilots
- Ebooks
- Formative assessment tools: mastery Manager, TI Nspire calculator and navigator, clickers (capture the engagement during the course of the classroom)
- Technology professional development
- Consideration of new types of wireless labs that would allow for multi-functionality and students would bring their own devices.
- Rethinking technology for students: labs, laptop carts, 1:1 pilot, BYOD

The administration felt the Board members should give guidance about the alignment of technology between schools, including acceptable use policies. As such, iPod were distributed and board members were asked to respond to the following questions.

When should students in the District have district-supplied email services?

- A. Before middle school
- B. At middle school
- C. In eight grade
- D. At age 16
- E. When they go to college

The results were: A—13
 B—7
 C—2
 D—0
 E—4

Should students in the district have access to social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)?

- A. Restricted access only
- B. Access at teacher discretion
- C. No access to any site with questionable content
- D. Access with parental approval
- E. No access whatsoever

The results were: A—6
 B—8
 C—2
 D—3
 E—6

Even though the districts have different initiatives and are at different stages, they will not be successful if the infrastructure is not in place. Districts could work together to leverage economies of scale on such things as the purchase of equipment and services, e.g. VOIP. One district might manage one VoIP system for all three districts. Board of Education members answered the following question.

The best way to get technology in the hands of the students is:

- A. Have the district provide it – absorb the cost
- B. Have the district provide it – supplement cost with fee
- C. Have students bring their own technology
- D. Students who have the means bring their own, others subsidized
- E. Computer labs and laptop carts

The results were: A—12
 B—3
 C—0
 D—10
 E—1

Technology raises critical policy-related technology issues and opportunities for collaboration even though the districts are on different timelines. It is important to align the technology practices to address student and family expectations. Districts must have the tools to address the onset and forced alignment of the Common Core Standards in order to make the transition from middle school to high school not so jarring to the students and the families. The respective districts should create a coherent model of technology experiences, including policies regarding the use of district computing resources, web 2.0 tools, social networking applications, and email. Should districts spend money to educate students on the proper use of email in the eighth grade? Should it be sooner? The districts will need to implement data sharing policies and procedures as the intent is to share information between districts, i.e., pilots. Board of Education members then answered the following questions.

My District currently spends

- A. Too little on technology
- B. Just enough on technology

- C. Too much on technology
- D. I am not sure

The results were: A—6
 B—11
 C—1
 D—6

Areas of district collaboration I would like to see are:

- A. Purchasing equipment and services
- B. Policy and procedure
- C. Shared expertise among districts
- D. All of the above
- E. Collaboration is overrated.

5: The results were: A—2
 B—0
 C—0
 D—21
 E—0

Dr. Lee reported on a personal experience in 1971 where he and approximately 30 to 50 people responded to a set of multiple response questions electronically to which the results were analyzed almost immediately, very similar to this experience. At that time, the ambition exceeded the ability of the technology and the funding. He asked what kinds of things would need to be in place to see that that the schools’ ambitions, finances, and technologies capabilities stayed within reach of each other. Mr. Carioscio said that it was a matter of discipline and methodology. Consideration is given to all aspects before major decisions are reached. Piloting of programs is very important as it speaks to the proof concept.

Communications

Dr. Roberts observed that the previous responses showed that there were varying opinions. He shared a couple of perspectives about one of the two areas where the districts differ and can help each other. In his experience of 40 years in education and in working in three states, he noted that he had never witnessed the challenges posed to schools today. The demands are enormous, more complicated, come from many areas and cover more ground than ever before, e.g., NCLB is statistically impossible, etc. Schools have to do more with less funding, while dealing with poverty levels not seen since the depression, picking up tasks that were the responsibility of other agencies, i.e., counseling, mental health, police, and federal and state legislative requirements, etc. Faculty, staff, and Board of Education members are expected to meet the demands of a citizenry and their comments and/or questions may not be rooted in reality. Few parents have an in-depth knowledge of Senate Bill 7, NCLB or the 900 plus regulations associated with the IDEA. Those on the boards know that sometimes the regulations defy logic. Education is being dominated by factors that are sometimes not in its control or its comfort zone. The lens from which we view things guides our actions. Even at the national level, leaders are forced to have conversations about making a popular decision versus a right decision. We have to deal effectively with school and community mindsets and we can to community that builds promise for our students. The stakes are enormous, a generation who are college ready. Board of Education members will be the people who will make a difference in the school system. Communication will continue to be a friend and provide the biggest challenges. He worked with Ms.

Sullivan, Ms. Foran, and Mr. Jascula who worked on the framework for this discussion. The Districts can only be successful if all voices can be heard.

Ms. Foran stated that these communities were fortunate to have three Boards of Education that embrace clearly articulated policies that highlight the importance of communication and community engagement. She quoted from each of them:

District 90 wants the community “to be fully informed about the local schools and the schools to know of the community's interests and needs. For this reason the Board seeks to foster, maintain, encourage, and improve communication.”

District 97 recognizes that... “Communications should build a clear understanding of the role, objectives, accomplishments, and needs of the District...strengthen public confidence and support; engage the Community in promoting a culture of achievement.”

District 200 believes in its responsibility to keep “the community accurately informed about the school, for understanding community attitudes and aspirations for the school, and for initiating processes through which citizens may participate in the continued development of the school.”

The common theme is how much each Board and District values interacting with all stakeholders -- with integrity, purpose, and transparency. Much has changed in communications’ philosophy and practice over the years. With the virtual explosion of tools and resources, communications is no longer simply a distinct function of a centralized office providing officially sanctioned information from approved sources. On the contrary, school communications in the 21st century permeates everything that is done, with the reality that--like it or not—everyone has a stake, a role, and a voice.

The schools and communities today expect interactive, dynamic, and constant communication. They also want access to the information they need and want in the way and at the time that is most useful to them. The challenge to that it is increasingly difficult to manage the content and intent of information and messages that are out there about our schools and about their value and role in the community. She and her colleagues would argue that the benefit is the potential to generate much greater buy-in, since everyone has an opportunity to participate and, therefore, a stake in the outcome.

All three districts engage in common activities aimed at strengthening relationships with stakeholders. Examples include:

- Policies that emphasize involvement and community engagement;
- Public board meetings and study sessions;
- Community and parent outreach through such things as surveys, participation in Board and administrative committees;
- School improvement/strategic planning and media engagement;
- School sponsored events and activities
- And a broad array of communication tools and resources—from newsletters and mailings to your online presence through websites and electronic communications.

The meeting this evening was an opportunity for the Boards to have a meaningful opportunity to talk with each other and explore how our Boards and Districts can best harness their collective resources, vision, and abilities

- To inform and deepen the conversations with the communities;
- To increase engagement in the educational process across all stakeholder groups and both communities;
- To continue to generate awareness of and investment in the value of these communities' schools on behalf of all of our students.

Ms. Sullivan reported on the results of the survey that the Board of Education members took in mid-December in preparation for this meeting and in which they ranked communication vehicles and indicators of effective engagement. They also shared what they perceived to be their district's top three communication goals and top three communication challenges.

Below is the list of communication vehicles from which the Board of Education members ranked in order of importance.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print newsletters • Electronic newsletters • Annual report • Public Board meetings • Meet and greets • Listservs • Website • Family Access/Gradebook/PowerSchool (e.g. specific student information/data) • Electronic notification system (Blackboard Connect, SchoolMessenger, Skylert) • Social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter, et al. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blog postings • Meetings of District affiliated parent/community organizations • School events (open house, curriculum night, sporting event, musical performance, etc.) • News releases • Local media coverage • Individual meetings with stakeholders • Informal conversations with stakeholders (in the neighborhood, at a party, at the grocery store, etc.) • Other (please specify): |
|---|---|

The top five most important communications vehicles to the board members were as follows:

1. Websites
2. Family Access/Gradebook/PowerSchool
3. School Events
4. Electronic Newsletters
5. Local Media Coverage

The least most important communications vehicles to the board members were as follows:

17. Blog postings
16. Social media platforms
15. Print newsletters
14. Individual meetings with stakeholders
13. Meet and greets

Board members responded to which were the most important measures of effective community engagement within their schools, ranking them from 1 to 5 with 1 being least important to 5 being most important.

- General awareness of District successes/challenges

- Attendance at Board meetings
- Commenting at Board meetings
- Parent group membership (e.g., PTO)
- Volunteerism at schools
- Community/parent involvement on advisory committees/groups
- Media coverage
- Letters to the editor about the District
- Phone calls/emails to the superintendent/Board members
- Attendance at school events
- Donations made to schools or parent groups?
- Number of people signed up for Listservs or e-mail alerts
- Number of people who complete school or district surveys
- Number of people who run for open board seats
- Comments on District social media postings
- Certain number of hits on District website
- Voting yes on referenda or board elections
- Other (please specify)

They were asked to rank what they thought were the top three communications/community engagement goals and challenges for their Districts?

The top five indicators of effective engagement were as follows:

1. Voting on referenda or board elections
2. Attendance at school events
3. Volunteerism at schools
4. Community/parent involvement on advisory committees/groups
5. Parent group membership (e.g. PTO)

The Boards felt that the least effective indicators of engagement were as follows:

16. Comments on District social media postings
15. Commenting at Board meetings
14. Attendance at Board meetings
13. Donations to school or parent groups
12. Letters to editor re: District

The board members had felt that the most important communication goals for all three to collaborate on were as follows:

- Parent engagement
- Transparency
- Communication with stakeholders who do not have children in schools
- Communication with schools' value to taxpayers
- Easily accessible information

The board members felt that the most communication challenges on which to collaborate were as follows:

- Lack of participation/apathy
- Oversaturation of communications
- Reaching people without children in schools
- Privacy versus transparency (includes combating rumors)

- Cost

The three Boards again used the quick response technology to choose the top goal and the top challenge they believed that all three districts face. They were:

- Goal: Communicating the value of schools to taxpayers
- Challenge: Lack of participation and apathy

The Boards of Education broke into the following groups to discuss ways in which to address both of these topics and did so at 8:22 p.m. and resumed at 8:47 p.m.

Table 1

Dr. Edward Condon, District 90 Superintendent
 Dr. Dietra Millard, District 200 President
 Mr. Terry Finnegan, District 200 Vice President
 Mr. John Phelan, District 200
 Mr. Peter Traczyk, District 97
 Ms. Amy Felton, District 97
 Mr. Ralph Martire, District 90
 Mr. Patrick Meyer, District 90 Vice President

Table 2

Dr. Albert Roberts, District 97 Superintendent
 Mr. James Weiss, District 90 President

Dr. Ralph Lee, District 200
 Ms. Amy Leafe McCormack, District 200 Secretary
 Mr. James Gates, District 97
 Ms. Denise Sacks, District 97
 Mr. Roman Ebert, District 90

Table 3

Dr. Steven Isoye, District 200 Superintendent
 Mr. Peter Barber, District 97 President
 Ms. Sharon Patchak-Layman, District 200
 Ms. Valerie Fisher, District 200
 Mr. Robert Spatz, District 97 Vice President
 Mr. Jim O'Connor, District 97
 Mr. David Latham, District 90 Secretary
 Ms. Elizabeth Fischer, District 90

Dr. Roberts observed that the boards and superintendents in these breakout sessions were focused and respectful listeners. Everyone had the opportunity to speak and engagement appeared to be easy and trusting with one another. He asked that the results of these discussions be shared and that the Board of Education members consider at least one of these ideas for their administration to pursue. The results of these discussions were as follows:

Table 1

Mr. Traczyk reported on his group's discussion on communicating the Value of Schools to Taxpayers.

1. Home rule proposition is a challenge.
2. Provide clearer, more accurate communication about the achievements of students (aside from standardized testing)
3. Choose the words carefully in informing the community how students are doing academically and otherwise.
4. Provide statistics, graduation rates, etc. (how prepared are students for college and careers and what percentage go on to secondary education). It is just as important for the elementary districts to prepare the students for high school so that they can be successful. The challenges regarding the sharing of data can be resolved.
5. Trumpet inter-district relationships, such as technology sharing.
6. Provide more "strategic communication" to the community, meaning communication for the long term
 - a. Simple
 - b. Understandable
 - c. Thoughtful

Table 2

Mr. Gates reported on his group's discussion regarding reducing apathy. He used the term "cross marketing".

1. Post links on all three websites showing partnership, e.g., common press releases, etc.
2. Create web commercials where students would talk about their experiences at Districts 90, 97, and 200 and how they had been prepared academically.
3. Articulate with and engage editorial boards and board members to talk about the challenges and the ways in which the districts address them.

Table 3

Ms. Patchak-Layman reported on her group's discussion on the value of schools to the community. Thoughts/ideas included:

1. Develop a referendum information-type plan during non-referendum years, i.e., neighborhood conversations, etc.
2. Provide realtors with needed information about the schools
3. Schools are community builders. Property values are derived because of the schools.
4. Boards generally do not set aside time to talk about these things.
5. River Forest makes a state-of-the district presentation.
6. Community service provides a way for students to be out in the community doing things of value, helping others, making them good citizens.
7. Engage other governmental units as they work with people who do not have children in the school and convey the schools' message to their groups.
8. Develop a brag sheet.
9. Are the districts going to the right places? Parents are the ambassadors to outside groups, e.g., the River Forest Service Group. Citizens' Council at the high school operates in the same way and it is hoped that the information they receive trickles down to others in the community.
10. Develop a written piece to the community on some common activity that shows the articulation between the districts.

Dr. Roberts encouraged the Board of Education members to follow through with this discussion at future meetings of the respective boards and select one or two ideas that the administration to address.

Dr. Isoye thanked all of the technology and communication people for their work in putting this meeting together and the boards of education for their service to the community and the work they give to the schools. Their feedback is the catalyst for communication and sharing of resources.

District 90 received appreciation for providing the space for this meeting.

Adjournment

At 9:04 p.m., on Tuesday, January 10, 2012, the Board of Education adjourned its meeting by voice vote.

Amy McCormack
Secretary

By: Gail Kalmerton
Clerk of the Board