

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

**INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**  
**Tuesday, February 19, 2013**

An Instruction Committee of the Whole Board of Education meeting was held on Tuesday, February 19, 2013. Dr. Lee called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m. in the Board Room. Committee members present were Terry Finnegan, Valerie Fisher, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Amy McCormack, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, John Phelan, and Sharon Patchak-Layman. Also present were Dr. Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent; Michael Carioscio, Chief Information Officer; Dr. Tina Halliman, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services; 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; Karin Sullivan, Director of Community Relations and Communications; Cheryl L. Witham, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations and Treasurer; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors: Ken Florey, J., Mary Jo Haley, John Bokum, Tom Cofsky, Melanie McQueen, Jeff Weissglass, Julie MacCarthy, community members; Peter Nixon and Carolyn Ojikutu, ; grad student, and Vernecia. Carolyn Newberry Schwartz, Eric Gershenson, and Carollina Song, Collaboration of early Childhood Care and Education; William Dwyer of the *Oak Leaves* and Terry Dean of the *Wednesday Journal*.

**Update on Rank in Class Discussion**

The administration continued to update the Committee members about the Rank in Class discussion. Both internal and external research was reviewed, student information was examined on the distribution of grade point averages and student rank, and outreach was made to students, parents, and staff. The administration had direct contact with college admission officers as well.

The administration recommends eliminating the assignment of rank for the juniors who have made course selections based on individual rank. Both current juniors and seniors who have received a rank should continue to receive that rank through graduation.

The administration recommends the following.

- 1) Beginning with the current sophomore class, the Class of 2015, students no longer would be ranked. Student transcripts would contain nothing about class rank or would that information be available.
- 2) Recognition of students with high grade point averages remains in place, i.e., graduation ceremonies, cum laude, etc.
- 3) Beginning with the current sophomore class, the Class of 2015, the School Profile will show the highest, 90<sup>th</sup> percentile and 75<sup>th</sup> percentile weighted and unweighted GPA averages for the previous graduating class.

Some area high schools researched include some GPA/rank indicator (for example, GPA deciles); however, some area high schools do not indicate any rank. These schools believe that no individual ranking should apply to students.

Selective colleges, however, to which many OPRFHS students aspire, indicated that their admissions offices still value some relevant class placement data. In an effort to delve deeper into

student college application data, the number and distribution of sixth semester transcripts sent to colleges in the 2011-12 school year were reviewed. Over 2000 transcripts were sent to schools considered selective, those that accept roughly 30% or fewer applications, where admissions officers typically have sought additional GPA information. This portion of college applications represents just over a quarter of the initial transcripts that OPRFHS students sent to colleges in 2011-2012. The administration's outreach to admissions officers at a range of these selective colleges informs the administration's belief that this significant number of applications would benefit from a school profile that demarcates the highest, 90th percentile, and 75th percentile GPA averages for a graduating class.

The Board of Education will be asked to approve the transition plan as presented at its February 28, 2013 meeting.

Concern was raised by Committee members about hurting students by using both the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile and the 75th percentile. If OPRFHS decided not to rank students, one member preferred a ranking that would help students applying to the most competitive schools while at the same time not hurt others. Both counselors in attendance testified that colleges look beyond the numbers and use their own measures, i.e., trends, specific grades in specific classes and academic rigor, etc. The argument for not using any percentiles of rank was that the middle-of-the class students were the ones being hurt. It could be detrimental to students if their rank were 434 out of 800+, even if they were college bound. It is the counselor letters, student letters, etc., that are evaluated, not just the numbers. If colleges were provided only the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile, they might waitlist those students who were below that level. The purpose of providing both parameters is to provide enough information to colleges. Most candidates for scholarships are in the upper 25% of their class. Colleges who request a rank are part of Naviance and it is up to the individual student to provide that information to them.

Mr. Phelan asked for facts versus speculation that a change to the rank in class would make a difference. Mr. Prale stated that staff asked the following questions of 20 colleges to which OPRFHS students would apply. Would they be treated differently? What about eligibility for scholarships? How would the school be treated? Staff interpreted the responses and proposes a balance of the interest of the students, the school, and the colleges and admissions officers. What was heard from the colleges was that 10% and 25% were useful marks in decision-making. Other high schools did not report a lessening of student admissions, and perhaps had seen a slight increase. Colleges make their decisions privately and many other factors are considered. When asked if, hypothetically, all students had a 4.0 GPA, there would be no value in class rank, the response was yes. Colleges will continue to see grades and students will be concerned about getting A's but may opt not to take the class that gives them the A.

Ms. Fisher appreciated the research into the marketplace. Would this be an experiment as there did not seem to be hard and fast information on the ultimate effect on applications. It seems that colleges take the information and use it as they see fit. She was aware that high schools going in this direction had many students applying to high-end institutions and they were in a position to play that out and tell the colleges to build their own databases on them. The response was that some schools may not have the same number of students applying, so the decision benefits all students. Schools who have chosen to go away from rank in class have sustained that choice. That is the trend. Most schools provide multiples rather than providing no benchmarks or just the top benchmarks. Mr. Prale will provide specific information to the Board of Education from other area high schools regarding the effects of eliminating individual rank on student admission to colleges.

## **Institute Day Report**

The administration presented the Committee members with a report that summarized the January 7, second semester Institute Day, whose theme was “Mid-Year Reflections on Equity and Excellence.” Both certified and non-certified staff participated in a range of staff development activities.

Dr. Isoye and members of the District Leadership Team provided an overview of impending changes in the teacher evaluation system, including the incorporation of student growth components, a preview of the Illinois 5Essentials climate survey being administered to students, teachers, and parents across the state of Illinois, and an update on Strategic Planning. Following that presentation, certified staff assembled in their divisions to debrief on the presentation. Each group had a DLT member assigned to it to hear feedback and to record questions about the presentation topics. The majority of questions related to the new evaluation model, specifics of which will be shaped by state parameters and decided by a Joint Committee of faculty and administrators within the next two years. Division meetings followed the feedback session.

The final session for certified staff also incorporated a number of non-certified staff as the five Learning Strands met and continued their learning in Racial Equity, Social-Emotional Learning, Data-Driven Problem Solving, Literacy, and Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning. Adding questions regarding accelerated learning for nonwhite students and disparities. Members of the Buildings and Grounds, Safety and Support, and Food Service employee groups also participated in staff development sessions specific to their work at the high school. The first two groups attended a joint session designed to enhance awareness of protocols and responsibilities for safely handling emergencies and security issues with students. Food service staff was trained in cleanliness protocols. Copies of the day’s agenda and summaries of the participants’ evaluations were included at the end of the report. Staff has started discussing agendas items for the August Institute Day, and considering agenda items.

## **Calendar 2013-2014**

It was the consensus of the Instruction Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education approve this calendar with amendments at the regular February Board of Education meeting. The Administration brought forward the school calendar for the 2013-2014 school year. While changes may still need to be made due to ongoing meetings regarding professional days and needed District waivers, the Board of Education will be asked to approve this version at its regular February Board of Education meeting.

Finals are scheduled before winter break and school will start a week earlier. Starting the school earlier is an attempt to even out the days in both semesters, as this year second semester has 9 more days. This was an issue for some Committee members, especially as freshmen would be start Friday of the second full week of August, as this will affect the whole family. The date for Open House will be presented at the February 28 meeting as well a change in date for a final in December. Note: teachers generally have time off the day after open house.

Discussion will continue as to the effectiveness of having parent/teacher conferences 11 weeks into the 16-week semester.

## **Harbor/Ombudsman Report**

The Committee received the annual report about students attending Ombudsman and HARBOR Academy. This report provided an update as of the end of the fall 2012 semester and includes credits earned by students who enrolled in summer school at either site.

The administration reviewed all academic records for accuracy. Ten students were enrolled at Ombudsman and 1 of these students graduated, for a total Ombudsman enrollment of 9. Seven students were enrolled at HARBOR, and 1 of these students graduated. Three students enrolled at Harbor early in

the second semester, bringing the current HARBOR enrollment to 9. Two HARBOR students transferred to the Ombudsman program while 4 HARBOR students remained in that program.

**Adjournment**

Dr. Lee adjourned the meeting at 7:28 p.m.

Amy McCormack  
Secretary