

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, December 11, 2012

An Instruction Committee of the Whole Board of Education meeting was held on Tuesday, December 11, 2012. Dr. Lee called the meeting to order at 7:31 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: James Paul Hunter, FSEC Executive Chair; Ken Florey of Robbins Schwartz, Cathy Gustafson of West 40; Jeffrey Weissglass, Julie MacCarthy, Rubin Harris, and Thomas Cofsky, community members.

Presentation of Driver Education Waiver Request and Hearing

At 7:31, Dr. Lee called a public hearing on the District's desire to renew its previously approved waiver, requiring Driver Education courses to provide at least 6 hours of practice in a dual controlled car. The requested waiver would allow 18 hours of practice driving in a simulator system in lieu of 2.8 hours of instruction in a dual controlled car. Receiving no oral or written comments, Dr. Lee closed the hearing at 7:32 p.m.

It was the consensus of the majority of Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education approve the submission of the Application for Waiver of School Code to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) at its regular December Board of Education meeting.

District Improvement Plan Update

The Instruction Committee members received an updated District Improvement Plan (DIP) as an informational item. The DIP is an ongoing journal of school improvement, not only for the District, but for the ISBE as well. Ms. Gustafson of West 40 was available to answer any questions. Various stakeholders will also have the opportunity to vet this document. The ISBE will continue to use the PSAE until the learning standards are finalized. The intent of both the DIP and the School Improvement Plan (SIP) is to provide districts with focus with the use of the Rising Star Program, a "keep-moving" navigational tool that guides everyone in the same direction. Should a district does not meet the standards set, the State could restructure it. OPRFHS is in corrective action. In this case, the ISBE looks for changes in the curriculum; no other negative outcomes would occur.

Discussion ensued about the state having goals that are more realistic for schools. One member expressed that the current ones for OPRFHS are unattainable and concern was raised that when staff works towards goals that are unattainable, it diminishes the energy. Ms. Gustafson acknowledged that the ISBE does pressure districts, but OPRFHS's plan includes SMART goals with targets and indicators. Safe Harbor allows districts to increase their scores by 10% from the previous year. It is an obtainable goal within a percentage range. Ms. Gustafson also believed that because the ISBE had spent much resources and administrative time, there would not be any significant changes.

Approval of the DIP means that the Board of Education has reviewed the document. CG: Rising Star is a point in time that you have these indicators, more of a journal. The intent is for the Board of Education to review the SIP every two years.

Dr. Isoye stated that Ms. Gustafson would assist the District with inputting the indicators where offered by the state and offered as a journal with the SIP. West 40 will check to insure that the District is constantly monitoring improvement.

It was the consensus of the Instruction Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education approve the DIP at its regular December Board of Education meeting.

Scorecard/Snapshot Update

Ms. Hill provided a PDF overview of the data displays included the proposed scorecard/snapshot, noting that additional displays would be added. She welcomed feedback. The scorecard will allow the public to get a quick read on how the performance of the District.

Comments/questions included:

1. Will there be readiness performance for each grade in the school? Will the results be cumulative over four years along with the GPA for a specific class? Alternatively, is the end result what is known about the students who have been here for four years?
2. Can the District follow a cohort of students each year over their high school careers in order to find out how the program can be improved? He wanted to know how to improve what the District was doing versus what the snapshot was in a given year. He wanted to know, if over time, the experiences provided to the students with the greatest needs was working.
3. It was unclear that a member of the public could understand this snapshot without it being accompanied by an exhaustive report. Note: data snapshots are separate but not exclusive. Reports are posted in another area and could be linked to this site. Dr. Lee wanted data that would help the Board of Education help the District do better.
4. Mr. Phelan felt that the public could choose to do things differently by electing new Board of Education members, etc. He suggested creating for the introductory shot a dashboard in order to get an overview of how the school was performing, and then get the basic conclusive information.
5. Mr. Finnegan felt the public had an interest in drilling down the information. He suggested following a cohort as a whole to show the growth and effectiveness of the programs and the school as a whole.
6. Mr. Phelan felt that couching the data in context was important. Complaints were written in the local media about how OPRFHS ranked 49th in the Chicago area but if one separated out the magnet schools that picked the top schools from a broad area and looked at those schools who had a 20% or more low income base, OPRFHS was in the top 5 percent.
7. Dr. Lee felt there needed to be a match between the descriptor and the data set with regard to school climate and student discipline.

8. The District has no control over recognitions and awards and Ms. Patchak-Layman did not see them as a grouping, as it does not have an impact on student achievement nor was it a data snapshot. She suggested considering a place for student grades and including something about the District's goal for such things as reading, as well as the national and State averages. If the goal is for everyone is to be college ready, then the District can use the ACT numbers.

Rank in Class Discussion

The administration began conversations with the counselors, faculty, and administrators about how the District links and ranks students on transcripts. According to the State of College Admission report prepared by the National Association for College Admission Counseling, the use of individual rank in class has been declining for nearly two decades. Rank is now viewed as supplementary, rather than essential, information about a student's core academic record. For students and families, removing individual ranking allows the college application and admission process to focus more on the overall student and less on a single number. An individual student's background, experiences, overall grades, and test scores become more important because colleges like as much information as they can learn about prospective students. Changing how the District ranks students could improve how it works with and assists students in accessing a wider range of postsecondary options.

Preliminary research by the District shows that an increasing number of colleges use multiple sources and types of information as part of the admissions process. This trend is occurring in area school districts. As such, the District began to consider eliminating the printing of individual class ranks on OPRFHS transcripts. A further discussion on how to show student performance information would start with a consideration of how the change would affect students, families, and both communities. Removing class rank could eliminate a prospective barrier to college consideration for some students. The current system of individual ranking compares students to each other, and assigning individual ranks contributes to the increasingly competitive OPRFHS school environment. In a revised system, academic rigor, standardized test scores that use national norms, and an overall grade point average that shows overall school performance might provide enough information about the progress and promise of a student in the pursuit of post-high school opportunities. A student with a competitive grade point average and strong standardized test scores might still be ranked near or below the fiftieth percentile of his or her class. That midpoint rank may lead to fewer postsecondary options for that student. The District is seeking a reporting system that facilitates post-high school options for students rather than assigns any sort of restrictive factor. Mr. Prale felt that a different system might create different opportunities to rank differently.

The Administration has met with the counselors, the faculty closest to the use and effects of the individual ranking process about the elimination of ranking. The overall response supports a dialogue about changing the current system, and many high schools in the region are moving away from calculating ranking. The counselors noted that rankings provide colleges with a piece of information and that we probably still would need to provide some information to college admission officers to help them interpret OPRFHS students' transcripts and progress. The generally favorable response from the counselors caused the administration to further deliberate with the Board, parents, students, and the community.

Our first review of the research supports the notion that many high schools are moving away from individually ranking students. Nationally, many elite private schools do not individually rank students. In addition, several local public peer school districts have eliminated individual ranking of students; examples include Stevenson, Glenbrook, Maine, Lake Forest, Hinsdale, Districts 214, and 211, Highland Park/Deerfield, and New Trier.

Eliminating all aspects of ranking from transcripts probably will not be possible. Some schools provide deciles designating the ranges of grade point averages. Other schools show highest, lowest, and midpoint

averages, and still others show highest, upper quartile, and median points for grade point averages. Whatever option is chosen, the District should be sure that it provides a wider range of options for families and the key information for the colleges that will receive the information. A transition plan to set out when and how any changes in academic ranking will occur will be necessary. The District should reflect on current practices that rely on individual rank in class and groups or scholarships that use rank as determination for entry.

Next steps will include:

- Having wider discussions with faculty and staff, followed by a fuller discussion with the Board of Education and community, including information sessions to share research from conversations with colleges in how they would handle a shift in the current practice and how they handle changes already in place among area high schools.
- Talking with representatives from a number of college admissions offices.
- Developing a timeline for internal and external conversations to provide information and obtain feedback from different schools and each Board-supported parent groups and specific outreach to students.

It was the consensus of the majority of Instruction Committee members for the administration to continue this dialogue with the stakeholders. Mr. Finnegan wanted this discussion to be led by counselors and colleges. Ms. Fisher did not want to impede a student's ability with the admissions office by attempting to help but in effect, making it more difficult for them to be properly understood. Ms. Patchak-Layman was interested in what happens at the top of the ranking system, because that is what is used in terms of looking at scholars at graduation.

Additional Instructional Matters for Committee Information/Deliberation

None.

Adjournment

Dr. Lee adjourned the meeting at 8:41 p.m.

Amy McCormack
Secretary