

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

**INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**August 19, 2014**

An Instruction Committee meeting was held on August 19, 2014. Dr. Gevinson called the meeting to order at 6:12 p.m. in the Board Room. Committee members present were Dr. Steve Gevinson, Dr. Jackie Moore, and Sharon Patchak-Layman. Also present were Dr. Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent; Amy Hill, Director of Assessment and Research; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Nathaniel L. Rouse, Principal; Mr. Ruhland, Director of Human Resources; Dr. Gwen Walker-Qualls, Interim Director of Pupil Support Services; Sheila Hardin, Executive Chair of Faculty Senate; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors: Dr. Ralph Lee and Tom Cofsky, Board of Education members; Cindy Milojevic, Director of Students Activities; OPRFHS Faculty members Michele Bayer, Marci DiVerdi, Yoko Schmadeke, and Kyle Farley; Joe Troiani, Educational Technology Technician; students Alexander Peterson; Courtney Temen, Johnny Sullivan, Anna Rossa, Paige Kane, Micheala Fritsch, and Arney Bray; Pierce Boyd-Bagby, Jesse Benedict, Jeremy Pesigan, Ryan Lewis; and Terry Dean of the *Wednesday Journal*.

**Minutes**

Dr. Gevinson moved to approve the Instruction Committee minutes of June 17, 2014, as amended; seconded by Dr. Moore. A voice vote resulted in all ayes. Add “based on the 2013-14 Board of Education goals” after the word “information” in the first line of New Business.

**Summary of Summer 2014 Student Travel Experiences**

Every year the Instruction Committee receives information from students who extend their learning through the summer months in summer excursions and field science courses. Some of those who participated gave brief presentations on their travels to Florida, Costa Rica, Spain, and Japan. A summary of the comments follows:

**Costa Rica** - Tropical Ecology is an elective course offered through the OPRFHS Science Division. In this 10-day excursion students participate in humanitarian and environmental conservation projects, and ecotourism including river floats, rainforest hikes, sea turtle observation, and zip lining. They also enjoyed visiting orphanages, playing instruments and making their own tacos.

**Japan** - This exchange program involves visits between OPRFHS and a partner school in Japan. OPRFHS students visit during the summer and Japanese students come to Oak Park during the winter months. Our students live with host families (one per student) and attend classes and after school club activities with the host siblings for two weeks. Students also take part in their annual school festival and attend field trips. This was an opportunity for students to speak Japanese, attend high school, and immerse themselves in the day-to-day living of family life, potentially creating life-long bonds.

**Florida** - Field Marine Biology is an elective course offered through the OPRFHS Science Division. Students dive into the diverse and beautiful ecosystems of the ocean waters around Florida including the Everglades observing sharks, rays, barracuda, manatees, dolphin and turtles. Students team with researchers at Florida Atlantic University and marine conservation programs as part of this work. Ms. Bayer has been sponsoring this trip for 21 years and was appreciative of her co-chaperone, Michael Byars. Students are required to draw everything they see in order to have a memory of it. After great debate about whether they should go to Sea World after the bad press it had received as to whether it was commercialism or rescue and research, they went and were glad they did. They spent many hours doing research there.

**Spain** - This 2-week excursion for 21 OPRFHS students involved attending Centro Mundo Lengua, an international school for students of Spanish, run by OPRFHS 1989 graduate David Hirsch. Students take language classes in the morning and explore their surroundings through guided activities in the afternoon. Activities include making *paella*, cooking lessons, visiting cathedrals, Phoenician ruins and other significant sites. Students stay with host families in the city of Cádiz and spend a weekend visiting Granada, including a visit to the *Alhambra*.

Sponsor Marcia DiVerdi thanked the Board of Education for supporting the trips. One student went on a full scholarship and two on partial scholarships. She hoped more funding would be available for scholarships in the future.

A set of the pictures detailing the student travel experiences were shown at the committee meeting. The committee unanimously agreed to present the information and the pictures to the Board of Education for information at its next regular Board meeting, August 28, 2014.

Ms. Milojevic commended the sponsors for their willingness to give their time to go across the world and create these experience for these students. She reiterated the need for more scholarships. The number of field trips that the school sponsors remains constant, but some travel experiences (such as the China excursion) are new. The students were grateful for this wonderful opportunity and were inspired to revisit these countries or explore different career paths.

### **HARBOR/Ombudsman Report**

Mr. Prale provided a summary report about those general education students who were placed off campus at either HARBOR or Ombudsman schools. He highlighted the following:

- 1) PSS Teams referred 25 students last year.
- 2) Students attending Ombudsman were more successful than those who attended HARBOR. PSS Teams and saw more success in Ombudsman than Harbor, evidenced by the number who went through the graduation ceremony. Attendance issues related to HARBOR's location.
- 3) These students receive OPRFHS diplomas.
- 4) This year, OPRFHS has 10 slots at HARBOR and 10 slots at Ombudsman. Two students presently attend HARBOR and 2 students are slated for Ombudsman.
- 5) OPRFHS will provide transportation to HARBOR which is located in Hillside.
- 6) OPRFHS is exploring other options with regard to placement of general education students and site visits will be commenced this fall.

HARBOR provides certified teachers, social work services, a principal and some computer supportive curriculum, but it will not provide what OPRFHS offers in range or opportunities.

HARBOR is a Regional Safe School and not a day-school environment. Students enrolled at HARBOR are students who tend to be non-attenders and pranksters. OPRFHS holds 10 slots and Leyden holds 20 spots at HARBOR. The principal contacts OPRFHS on an as needed basis. Dr. Moore was concerned about the students being in classes with students who have serious behavior issues and them being out of OPRFHS and their reentry. Ms. Patchak-Layman explained that Regional Safe Schools were originally set up by the state for expelled students, so that expulsions could be held in abeyance. Ten percent of the student population is allowed to be identified as Special Education, but it cannot support 40 students. She wanted to explore another program/school that OPRFHS could sponsor, with the idea that just because OPRFHS is not the right fit for a particular student, a student can choose a smaller setting and have an equally good experience. Mr. Prale agreed that it would be valuable to explore more options. Conversations occur between the counselor, PSS Team, family and student before the student is scheduled to come back to OPRFHS and some students prefer staying where they are. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that the conversation at a conference on student

discipline was about small settings offering more opportunities rather than a mindset of if a student cannot make at the high school, he/she must go elsewhere. Dr. Gevinson remembered OPRFHS's XP program for students who were not successful in a larger setting, noting that it worked well for a number of years. Mr. Prale, Dr. Walker-Qualls, Dr. Isoye, Mr. Rouse, and Mr. Altenburg have had conversations as a result of transportation issues, about OPRFHS having its own program. It is an idea that would start with the needs of students.

Non-attending HARBOR students are either reassigned to Ombudsman by their counselors and SIDS or reassigned to attend the high school. The off campus schools are not an option for students wanting credit recovery here in the high school. A request was made for the reasons students were assigned to either Ombudsman or HARBOR, whether it is because of discipline or non-discipline issues.

### **Teacher Evaluation**

Recent changes in legislation and Illinois School Code guidelines necessitated a review of our district's teacher performance review and professional growth plan. For several months during the last school year, a small workgroup comprised equally of teachers and administrators reviewed and revised the district's current plan. Linda Burns, Dan Cohen, JP Coughlin, Julie Frey, Manuel Gonzalez, Sheila Hardin, Chala Holland, Matt Kirkpatrick, Lindy Novotny, Phil Prale, Nate Rouse, Claudia Sahagun, Neal Weisman, and Bill Young devoted many hours of time to this effort to focus on improving the teacher evaluation process. The result of their meetings was a consensus to more specifically align the District's current plan with the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT), and PERA, and to reinforce the main purpose of the teacher performance review. IEA associates and the District's counsel concur that our plan meets their standards. The documents can be used this year. This collaborative group will continue to meet during the year to 1) revise existing documents if necessary (included in the packet); 2) design rubrics for counselors, social workers, and other non-classroom based faculty positions, and 3) work on student growth so that it can be piloted in the 2015-2016 school year, as is required for the 2016-17 school year evaluations. Ms. Hardin appreciated Mr. Prale, and the partnering of the administrators and faculty members. This was well received by the faculty last week and she encouraged them to bring her feedback on the 3 goals stated above.

Both Dr. Gevinson and Dr. Moore felt it was a missed opportunity not to have student feedback as a requirement for all faculty, not just non-tenured faculty. Ms. Hardin explained that the faculty wanted to begin this school year knowing the forms and the methods to be used for evaluation. Student feedback will be present this year. The same process that has been used for the past 4 years with non-tenured staff will continue, baseline data has been gathered, and tenured teachers are using their own forms. The one format did not distinguish between Fine Arts versus the Math Division, as an example. Ms. Hardin encouraged teachers to bring forth their ideas to their divisions to see if the form should be division-based or based on years of experience, etc. Teachers are required to have a reflection process and conversation about student feedback occurs in the evaluative conversations. Dr. Gevinson felt that a mandatory component of student feedback was needed and should be developed. Dr. Moore concurred with Dr. Gevinson, noting that certain areas are germane to classroom management, presentation of materials, preparedness, etc., which transcend tenure and deal with just teaching. Something systematic should be in place until something else can be developed. Mr. Prale stated that everything needed to come back to Danielson and evidenced-based, the core spirit of the PERA law.

Walkthroughs are not to be used in the evaluative process. A student engagement survey may be used, which would be a four-question survey administered to an entire class. While the Walkthrough Committee has not yet met, its membership is growing. The idea is to learn how what the observer sees and what the students say align. The goal of building walkthroughs is to gather school-wide information about student engagement observed in the classroom and to spur conversations among faculty members about the nature of the engagement.

Discussion ensued about the elements of pre-conferences, observations, and summative reports and what data would be required for each phase and who would be required to gather it. Dr. Isoye noted that the District and faculty were in intensive discussions. Faculty and administrators have been able to work closely together to on the forms. For the past several years, the administrators have been going to trainings on evaluations. The key is that this is about being evidence-based and about understanding what is evidence-based, based upon one's observation of what is occurring in the classroom. The conversation will continue and data pieces will relate strongly to student growth. The administration is looking for feedback from the faculty and the division heads, as the users of the documents, to find out what is not working and what needs strengthening. This is set for this year.

Dr. Moore did appreciate this work and thought that having an evaluation tool was a great step forward.

A future discussion item will be the student growth model.

**New Business**

None.

**Adjournment**

At 7:21 p.m., Dr. Gevinson adjourned the meeting.

Submitted by Gail Kalmerton  
Clerk of the Board