

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

INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE MEETING
January 19, 2016

An Instruction Committee meeting was held on January 19, 2016. Dr. Gevinson called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m. in the Board Room. Committee members present were Fred Arkin, Dr. Steve Gevinson, and Dr. Jackie Moore. Also present were Dr. Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Amy Hill, Director of Research and Assessment; Nathaniel L. Rouse, Principal; Sheila Hardin, Faculty Senate Executive Committee Chair; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors: OPRFHS Faculty and Staff Chris Thieme, Jason Dennis, Jonathan Silver, and Joshua Weintraub; Consultant Lincoln Chandler; community members John Duffy, Mary Bird, Burcy Hines, Wyanetta Johnson; and filmmaker Steven James and film crew.

Public Comments

John Duffy, a former member of the OPRFHS's Strategic Plan (P) Committee, noted that his lifetime expertise was working with equity in schools, and that was his reason for joining the committee and being on the Transformational Teaching and Learning Task Force. He remarked on the success that Evanston Township High School has had with the de-tracking of students. He asked the Board of Education to consider the research concerning the organization of curriculum and the issue of tracking. The perception is that OPRFHS is actually made up of two schools and that concerns have been raised about uneven experiences in the honors classes, when compared with regular track classes. While the purpose of tracking students was to provide students with the appropriate instruction and challenge, it does not happen. He asked "How does tracking impact racial equity and student growth? The reason given for tracking students is to get them the appropriate instruction and challenge, but that does not happen. He asked the Board of Education to look at the evidence.

Burcy Hines spoke about the high number of African-American students and Special Education students in the discipline system, noting that the cultural component regarding academics, social workers, and other relevant factors needed to change. She asked that the school investigate what impact the cultural component has on a student's learning, i.e., English as a second language and tracking. She suggested contacting Dr. Carl Bell, a noted doctor at Jackson Hospital on the south side of Chicago to learn what can be done about the numbers.

Wyanetta Johnson stated that students needed to be treated fairly and that she was speaking for the African-American teachers and principal who were afraid for their jobs. Teachers need to be trained how to teach students equally. Both white and black students suffer. She asked for a plan that would make students want to come to the school.

Minutes

Dr. Gevinson moved to approve the minutes of the December 8, 2015, Instruction Committee meeting, as presented; seconded by Dr. Moore. A voice vote resulted in motion carried.

Articulation

The Instruction Committee unanimously recommended forwarding the Articulation Report to the full Board of Education at its regular January meeting as information only. The report included the articulation efforts that occur with families of incoming ninth grade students and the recommendation

information for the course election process. Mr. Prale highlighted that Districts 200, 97, and 90 had agreed to work in collaborative teams with the Institute for Learning Sciences at the University of Illinois Chicago on math alignment. Also, members of the English division attend the School College Alliance English/Language Arts Committee organized by Triton College.

Mr. Prale reported that OPRFHS articulates with the community via Citizens' Council, calendar conversations with the feeder districts, the math initiative, and work with Triton, technology conversations with the feeder districts, special education staffings, and open conversations about what is best for students.

Leading Achievement Indicators Update

The Instruction Committee unanimously recommended forwarding the Leading Achievement Update report to the full Board of Education at its regular January as a discussion item. In October, a report was shared that noted the ACT and SAT were among the leading indicators of academic success and other identified areas, i.e., course enrollments and the connection between race and post-secondary outcomes. Racial disparities have existed for as long as the District has been tracking significant outcomes. The premise is that it starts at the students' point of entry. One element that drives inquiry is whether systemic barriers exist that promote or perpetuate disparities. A wide disparity in terms of racial statistics did not exist in the process of recommendations and overrides. However, when looking at the technical application as to how courses are recommended at the beginning of a student's high school career, i.e., test scores, existence of level courses, EXPLORE scores, etc., it was posed that race may play a role, and those connections could be worthy of further study. A correlation exists between each of the 4 core subject areas and the ACT and the unweighted GPA with regard to postsecondary readiness. Other factors to investigate would be the GPA system, encouragement/ disenfranchisement, grading policies, etc. While the common narrative has been that when an override was requested, it was requested by a white parent who had unequal information, the data does not support that premise. The requests also come from all different levels of study.

Discussion ensued. A "stereotype threat" was defined as environmental cues that affect achievement. An example of that would be of being the only African-American in a class, which could have the effect of saying "you don't belong here." If those "threats" can be reduced, it might affect achievement. The District explored that premise when it administered the EXPLORE tests. Students of color participated in groups where at least 50% of the students were of the same ethnicity, and the test proctors were people of color. Afterward, the students were surveyed; nothing was obvious in terms of their performance. Even so, research shows that it does have a tremendous difference. Research shows that students who have written brief statements about their values prior to a test have surprising impacts on their overall results. The challenge is trying to reframe for students their racial identity in the academic and/or testing setting. It is about affirming identities. Mentoring programs do have an impact. Relationships also have positive results on testing taking. Making adults aware of the "threats" and stigmas that impact students of color is important to students' success.

Questions arose about whether counselors would tell their students who were on the edge of a test that it was easier to drop down than to catch up. Would impact would that have on students? The administration responded that recommendations were influenced by the EXPLORE test, MAP, courses taken, grades, and the additional math score, determined by a locally written math exam. One member was cautious about looking at anything to do with the freshman ACT scores and whether information on sophomores existed. How can the school answer questions with regard to the correlation between ACT scores and college readiness? The earlier the high school can identify students, the better it is for them, so all of the information is helpful. The District is now capable of analyzing greater data points due to its new software to get a better sense of students' "stories", including 4-year course correlation, attendance,

student discipline, tardies, dropping down from one course level to another because of issues of attendance, disengagement with teachers, stereotype threats, etc.

Another member asked it were possible to track the achievement of 90% of the students who achieved and the 10% who were misinterpreted, either achieving at a higher level or at a level where they did not succeed. What was the process for the freshman students in transition through their senior year? What, when, and how were these students raised/supported? It was clarified that individual students did not stay in transition level in all of the 4 core subjects. Some students had tremendous growth because of the support they had received. Can the District look at students in transition classes and predict where they will end from these data points?

Dr. Gevinson reflected on his own experience as a division head in 2010 and had 30 overrides per year. His impression was that almost exclusively white parents requested override ups. He was glad that there was presently no discrepancy. A program was also in place to put minority students into honors classes, and it was possible that they were the students whose parents were calling in today and overriding. He did not know what role the counselors played since those times. In response to questions he had asked prior to the meeting, Ms. Hill noted that she had cleaned up the language in some areas, having labeled a column wrong. She continued that the connection is about how well the student is prepared to come in, and the EXPLORE test would naturally project ACT scores.

Questions were raised about college readiness. What will better prepare students to be college ready? What does the term “college prep” mean? Are transitional classes, transitional? Do overrides typically occur at the college prep level? What are the numbers of overrides from transitions to college prep classes and from college prep to honors? What do the recommendations by race say about the students’ test-taking ability, preparedness or comfort level, landing with the right teacher, etc.? To what extent does the transition program accelerate student growth? The tracking of overrides was outside of the normal tracking system, and that made it difficult to analyze Figure 1 and how that information was connected overall.

Semester I Discipline Report

The Instruction Committee unanimously recommended forwarding both the Semester I Discipline Report without Failure to Serve Detentions and the Semester I Discipline Report with Failure to Serve Detentions to the full Board of Education at its regular January meeting as a discussion item. The Committee reviewed the report. Highlights included:

- Disciplinary infractions 2015-2016 down 15% from 2014-2015 for the first semester
- 1873 total infractions, but only 373 when the 1500 Failure to Serve and FTS Hero infractions were removed
- Only 1 Type V infraction the entire semester
- ISS accounted for 53% of outcomes 1st semester 2014-2015, only 42% this past semester
- 550 days of OSS assigned, but 280 days saved through SRP at MENTA

One member felt that the Instruction committee, PTAC, and the administrators should consider how to take this information and use it to serve better the students. Some of the definitions were fairly subjective, and one person could define an infraction as being a gross misconduct while another person would give that student a break. A Student Intervention Director (SID), knowing a student’s story, had wiped out the student’s history/obligations after the student acquiesced to do something. Tardies are endemic of the majority of discipline issues having to do with Failure-to-Serve detentions, which roll into half-day or Saturday suspensions. What causes tardies? Do they occur for a certain class, time of day, teacher, etc.? Students need to be asked these questions in order to be able to articulate their experiences and why some things are happening. Are Saturday detentions meaningful? Are students expected to do

school work? The administration felt students having to serve their detentions on a Saturday was more meaningful than being pulled out of class to serve their detentions. It was suggested the District try some other consequences, as detentions were not being effective in changing behaviors. The administration noted that only 5% of the students have experiences with ISS due to the HERO system, as they were not fulfilling their detentions. However, 95% of the students do not have that problem. Plasco/HERO has helped alleviate crowded hallways. A dramatic, positive change has occurred. As the District talks about Restorative Justice and community service, detentions will have more educational and emotional value for students, i.e., an opportunity to build connections and relationships and to learn something. The majority of detentions are served in the Tutoring Center. PTAC will address the question as to whether the system was creating the problem. The reason for fewer detentions was because of the things the District has done to support students, i.e., caseloads for counselors and ISS interactions and this trend should continue.

Motivational Mentorship Position

The Instruction Committee unanimously recommended forwarding the proposal for this position to the full Board of Education for approval at its regular January meeting, outlining the time per day, financial package, etc.

It was explained that Mr. Jackson, the previous manager of Motivational Mentorship, saw 70 to 95 students on Fridays. He was in the building 20 hours per week and circulated through the lunchrooms. Mr. Jackson was replaced with one six-hour employee who fills in on Wednesday and Friday lunch periods as well as a volunteer who graduated from OPRFHS and who had participated in the program.

Since Mr. Jackson's departure, participation in the motivational mentorship program has dropped in half. The District also recognizes that 25 to 50 students of color use the Student Balcony after school. As such this, having this person on a full-time basis would allow him/her to make contact with students and help them process their school experiences, and turn them into positives.

One member noted that mentoring was one of the most important things the school and the community can do and asked how this would fit into a broader comprehensive program in the community. At a town hall meeting, many people expressed concerns about the departure of Mr. Jackson to the village president, the chief of police, and the head of the Oak Park Township, as he had been also instrumental in getting interns for others in the community. There was great community support for an overall community program, and it was suggested that this is explored, including the District's Leadership and Launch pilot.

The position would be for 8 hours with a half hour lunch and 2 15-minute breaks, and include benefits. Students would be identified via word of mouth, students who go to common areas, the PSS Teams, etc. A question was asked about how this program's success would be measured. A suggestion was made to speak with Peter Kahn as he had started the position 7 or 8 years ago.

Adjournment

At 6:09 p.m., on January 19, 2016, Dr. Gevinson moved to adjourn the Instruction Committee meeting; seconded by Dr. Moore. A voice vote resulted in motion carried.

Submitted by
Gail Kalmerton
Clerk of the Board