

October 22, 2015

The regular Board meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Thursday, October 22, 2015 in the Staff Café and in the Board Room of the OPRFHS.

Call to Order

President Weissglass called the meeting to order at 7:38 p.m. A roll call indicated the following Board of Education members were present: Fred Arkin, Jennifer Cassell (attended telephonically), Thomas F. Cofsky, Dr. Steven Gevinson, Dr. Jackie Moore, Sara Spivy, and Jeff Weissglass. Also present were Dr. Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent; Tod Altenburg, Chief School Business Official; David Ruhland, Director of Human Resources; Michael Carioscio, Chief Information Officer; Amy Hill, Director of Assessment and Research; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Nathaniel L. Rouse, Principal; Dr. Gwen Walker-Qualls, Director of Pupil Personnel Services; David Ruhland, Director of Human Resources; Karin Sullivan, Director of Communications and Community Relations; Sheila Hardin, Faculty Senate Executive Committee Chair; Hattie Grimm, Student Council Liaison; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors

Bobbie Raymond of the Alumni Association; Jason Dennis, Assistant Principal of Instruction; Anthony Clark and Matt Maloney, OPRFHS faculty member; Mary Haley of the League of Women Voters; John Bokum, Mary Bird, and Peter Ryan community members; Michael Romain of the *Wednesday Journal*; Linda Francis of the Community Foundation, Steven James, Zale Piper, Stephanie Smith, Terrance Green, film documentarians; Samari Williams, Tabielle Matthews, Jonathan Beech, Jamir Melvin, Ozzie Delgado, Steven Bridges, Iyan Abie, Ahmari Buccharon, and Ravon Woods, students; and Victoria Scaman of the Oak Park Township,

Mr. Weissglass noted that the meeting was meeting filmed.

**Public
Comments**

Tabielle Matthews spoke in support of the Motivational Mentorship program. She spoke of the trouble she had in being able to find places to connect, a space that allowed her not to be apologetic for being a black, confident woman. This program allowed her to do all that and more. It was her home in the high school. She thanked the Board of Education for its support.

Jonathan Beech, a former member of Motivational Mentoring, also spoke in support of the program as Mr. Jackson had made them realize they had a voice and it should not be taken away.

Anthony Clark, current faculty member, 2001 graduate, spoke in support of Mr. Jackson and of the instability of the Motivational Mentoring Program at the high school. The Motivational Mentorship program is a lunchtime mentoring program intended to help students navigate the demands of life, both inside and outside of school, to foster positive choices and outcomes. As such, it directly fits the paradigm envisioned by OPRFHS's stated vision of becoming an ever-improving model of equity and excellence that will enable all students to achieve their full potential. In order for students to make positive life choices and outcomes, all students must operate as equitable stakeholders. Students must be given a reason

to care about what they are learning by connecting it to situations and concepts that are relevant to their lives. Building relationships and making connections with students is a skill that not every professional has. He felt Mr. Jackson had a lifetime of knowledge and experience that could not be recreated or duplicated through the readings of books. Mr. Clark hoped a resolution could be found which would allow Mr. Jackson and individuals like him to continue to have an impact on this community.

Ozzi Delgado, a sophomore, spoke in support of Mr. Jackson. He noted that Mr. Jackson was able to get the best out of people and was able to show love, give protection and motivate people. He makes people feel better about themselves. Mr. Jackson is needed.

Steve Bridges, spoke in support of Mr. Jackson and the Motivational Mentoring Program because Mr. Jackson has a connection with people, and this was a very positive force in changing his life.

Iyan Abie, junior, spoke in support of Mr. Jackson, because he connects with students. It is unfair for students not to have a connection with someone. Mr. Jackson had made a difference in his life.

Ahmari Buchanan, senior, spoke of how Mr. Jackson had helped him feel like he had a voice. The Motivational Mentoring program helped students share their feelings.

Germeer Banks, spoke in support of Steven Jackson, who he had met during the summer of 2015 in a YES Program. Mr. Jackson helped him get through school. If he were not here, he would feel empty and filled with despair.

Matt Maloney, teacher, coach, Oak Park resident, and 1993 graduate, spoke in support of Mr. Jackson. In his 23 years of being at OPRFHS, he could count on one hand the number of people who have been as effective as Mr. Jackson has been. While Mr. Maloney understands the issues, he asked if there were anything the institution could do to return him, as it is about equality and excellence.

Ravon Woods, senior, spoke of his experience at the high school and how Mr. Jackson had introduced himself to him. Mr. Jackson understood his feelings and gave him good connections. Students looked forward to going to Motivational Mentoring.

Samari Williams, sophomore, spoke in support of Mr. Jackson. He provided a foundation for her and the school. He helped students cope and process treatment by some teachers. He helped explain it. He brightened everyone's day.

John Bokum, resident of 629 S. Home, Oak Park, felt the comments made by the students showed that they trusted Steven Jackson. Mr. Bokum asked the Board of Education to reconsider reemploying Steven Jackson.

Mr. Weissglass thanked all for their comments, noting that they were valuable, moving and inspiring.

Status of FOIA Requests

Ms. Kalmerton reported that 3 FOIA requests were received and resolved.

Faculty Senate Report

Ms. Hardin reported that Faculty Senate had completed two days of hundreds of conferences with parents. Because the faculty works on hundreds of positive things, it is difficult to highlight just one thing for this report. While OPRFHS is a good school, the faculty continues to grow.

Superintendent Report

Dr. Isoye reported that Japanese teacher Yoko Schmadeke and the Japanese Japanese program won a \$3,000 grant from the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Chicago for the annual Japanese Fest, scheduled for January 30, 2016.

Dr. Isoye reported that Art Teacher Mark Collins was selected as one of only 51 participants in the 2015 National Gallery of Art Teacher Institute on Art of the Renaissance held in Washington, D.C., in July and August of 2015. The six-day seminar brought together teachers of art, English, history, math, and related subjects from 25 states.

Dr. Isoye reported that the following students won the 2015-16 Concerto Competition: Evelyn Cappelli for piano, Sage Degand for soprano saxophone, and Ben Ellenbogen, Meghna Kuriakos, Elise Swibel, and Maya Williams for violin quartet.

Dr. Isoye reported that at the Special Olympics District Floor Hockey Skills Tournament last weekend, Jack Butler, Erick Cox, Katrina Jeffries, Jenna Ricks and Richard Rogers all won first place awards and will advance to the state tournament on Saturday, November 14, 2015, at Northeastern University.

Dr. Isoye reported the following athletic updates:

- Girls' tennis doubles team Maya Trinkka and Audrey Angelos qualified for state last weekend began the state tournament October 22, 2015.
- Girls swimming and diving went undefeated in dual meets in the West Suburban Conference (WSC) Silver Division. All three relay teams are ranked number one in the state. The 400-free relay team of Hanna Blankemeier, Genevieve Curry, Samantha M. Neilson, and Natalie Ungaretti recently broke a 26-year-old school record while smashing the pool record by nearly six seconds.
- In field hockey, the Huskies are seeded fourth in state and will played their first-round playoff game at home vs. St Ignatius.
- Girls' golf placed second in the regional match. The team shot its lowest ever at a regional, putting up a 354. Katie Latham medaled in third place with a record low 80. Amanda Youman went on to finish 13th in the state this past weekend.
- Boys' golf placed third at the regional tournament.
- Boys cross country took second place at the conference meet. Erwin Loud won the meet and set a course record. The team will run in the regional meet at Proviso West on October 24, 2015.

- Girls cross country took fifth at the conference meet. They will run in the regional at Proviso West October 24, 2015.

The parent teacher conference went well and the parents understood who their students were in the classroom.

Alumni Association

Ms. Bobbie Raymond reported that her 60th high school reunion was a great success. It was a terrific class and it was fascinating to see of the accomplishments of her fellow students.

Ms. Raymond reported that the Alumni Association would again be offering Summer Enrichment Grants in 2016 and it will be the biggest year ever. A \$100,000 grant was received from an out-of-state donor and \$50,000 will be used for summer grants and the other \$50,000 will be used for endowment funds. She is interested in funding students who would not otherwise be able to participate in these programs without assistance. Since the program began, the Alumni Association has given \$250,000, the single largest donor. These experiences are life changing for these students and she wanted to see more participation by students, teachers and division heads. This year the Alumni Association may donate \$60,000. The Alumni Association depends on the teachers and staff to identify students who can benefit from the experience of being with a positive group of students, as this in itself can be motivational. A brochure was distributed which explained what the Alumni Association does and what the Scholarship Foundation does. The same application process used last year will continue. Changes in the application were made to make it in synch with the school.

The Alumni Association was holding a student reception on Monday, October 26 Monday night student reception, good turnout of teachers, students, heartwarming experience.

Consent

Mr. Weissglass moved to approve the following consent items:

- Check Disbursements and Financial Resolutions dated October 22, 2015
- Treasurer’s Report
- ACT District Testing Agreement
- Course Proposals for the 2016-17 School Year
- Policies for First Reading
 - Policy 2:160, Board Attorney
 - Policy 5:170, Copyright
 - Policy 7:10, Equal Educational Opportunities
 - Policy 7:40, Nonpublic School Students, Including Parochial and Home-Schooled Students
 - Policy 8:80, Gifts to the District
- Policies for Amendment
 - 2:260, Uniform Grievance Procedure
 - 5:50, Drug- and Alcohol-Free Workplace
 - 5:270, Employment At-Will, Compensation, and Assignment
 - 5:290, Employment Termination and Suspensions
- Open and Closed Session Minutes of September 24 and October 13, 2015 and a declaration that the closed session audiotapes of March 2014 be destroyed.

Policy 4:20

Mr. Cofsky moved to approve Policy 4:20, Fund Balance, for First Reading, as presented; seconded by Ms. Spivy.

This policy has been considered since the FAC disbanded in 2014. The implementation of this policy was assigned to the Finance Committee along with best practices to consider as follows:

- 1) Discipline use for 5-year projection model for long-term planning
- 2) Development of key standards/metrics to compare OPRFHS's financial health to its peers.
- 3) Requiring disciplined variance analysis, a missing piece that allowed fund balances to grow excessively.
4. Tracking of major capital and program investments.

Also included are standards for maintaining and managing fund balance, the ultimate action of the Finance Advisory Committee and action of the Board of Education falls within the guidelines.

Sound financial management of the District's resources requires good policy as well as a disciplined execution of procedures that support that policy. This revision and supportive metrics is a good step. The District also needs to be more discipline in its execution and a comprehensive approach to programs and investments. Mr. Cofsky's review of the data showed that the fund balance has dropped \$8 million more than in the FAC model in recent years. Some strategic commitments were made, such as counselors, but other changes such as class size were below its radar. He wanted to 1) outline overall financial commitments to the Strategic Plan and 2) commit to practices outlined in this policy around the 5-year projection model, the budget variance analysis, and the use of metrics. Mr. Weissglass noted that there had been a \$5 million variance and thus it actually makes the fund balance \$3 million lower than the FAC's starting point. The Board of Education must be aware of this fact, even though this does not change the trajectory of going for an operating referendum in 2022-23.

This policy emphasizes what is currently in place and include best practices and have the Board of Education's expectations on key disciplines embedded in the policy to insure how to reconcile on a one-year basis and a 5-year projection model.

The 25% lower boundary is best practice, as anything lower would not allow a district to go for a referendum in a timely matter. No district in the state had an upper boundary, but because of the District's history with the phase-in during the 2000's, the fund balance was at an unusually high level, and the FAC felt that something should be in place to prevent that from happening again. During the FAC process, District 97 did include an upper boundary in its policy.

On page 4, B1 a balanced annual operating budget means that there is no deficit spending or if the school goes into deficit spending, the District needs to adjust its expenses or go for a referendum within 3 years. It also incorporates state language/school law that if the District does not have a balanced budget, the state requires a plan to be submitted that says within 3 fiscal years the District will balance a budget.

The first sentence of Item B4 says the District will monitor annual expenses and tax levy per pupil, which is a metric that is built into the policy. However, no

reference is made to the District maintaining its metrics in ranges consistent with the appropriately adjusted medium of other comparable districts. How would a policy be enforced that says “consistent with the appropriately adjusted medium” and is “targeting medium” the right answer at any time of history? It was agreed that until the data is received, it could be premature to include this sentence. Consideration will be giving to removing it. The next steps for this policy will be to send it out for First Reading to the public and any comments can be considered at the next Finance Committee. It will come forward to the Board of Education at its November meeting.

A voice vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Policy 7:325

Mr. Weissglass moved to approve Policy 7:325, Student Fund-raising Activities for, First Reading, as presented; seconded by Ms. Spivy.

The Policy Evaluation and Goals Committee (PEG) brought forward to the full committee under the action portion of the agenda because there were comments/concerns about allowing door-to-door fundraising and the safety of students. If so, should parameters be built into the policy such as only allowing it between certain hours, etc.?

The Director of Student Activities and Athletic Director noted that door-to-door solicitation is prohibited, yet students can solicit from family, friends and close neighbors. Sponsors provide students with letters attesting to the fact that this is an OPRFHS-approved fundraising activity. No team/activity is doing more than one solicitation fundraiser each year. No one was aware of incidents or safety issues. The Board of Education can choose the options of either prohibiting door to door solicitation or discouraging it. The administration believes that door-to-door solicitation should be discouraged and not prohibited.

Boosters raise their own dollars and allocate them as they see fit. Athletic teams use fundraising activities to pay for seasonal celebrations, new awards, plaques, food, T-shirts, unique experiences, etc. The school covers uniforms, IHSA competitions, etc. Track, football and soccer teams do solicitations.

Questions/comments to be considered:

- 1) Will students needing to fundraise in order to defray the cost of participating in such things as band trips, etc. be disadvantaged if door-to-door solicitation is prohibited? What would replace their ability to earn money and participate in these types of activities?
- 2) What degree of process in terms of fundraising is allowed?
- 3) Life skills can be learned from door-to-door solicitation. Students should be provided guidelines such as how to dress, how to identify oneself and his/her group, go with an adult, have a rehearsed script, be happy, positive, respectful of property, etc.
- 4) If allowed, should parameters be included in the policy in order to address safety.
- 5) Other communities will continue to solicit in this community.

A voice vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Student Discipline

None

ACT Composite and GPA

The Instruction Committee unanimously recommended that the ACT Composite report be presented to the full Board of Education.

Ms. Hill noted that a very different report was presented this year regarding test scores to the Instruction Committee from previous years. Previously it focused on ACT, SAT, and PSAT standardized test scores and more recently included growth analyses, graduation numbers, AP scores and GPA data in response to Board of Education inquiries. As such while the report was comprehensive it was less focused. This year the District Leadership Team looked at the ACT Composite and the GPA as the key indicators. In 2003 the District provided a report entitled *The Learning Community Performance Gap: An Analysis of African-American Achievement at OPRFHS* which included test scores, interviews, and an analysis of the research team. She compared this year's ACT Composite Scores and post-secondary outcomes to those in 2003. The ACT data summarized that increases across the state and locally for White and Black students have occurred, but the pace of the increases for White students outpaces those of the Black students. In 2008, the ACT score discrepancy was wider than in 2003 when the report was released. That change cannot be explained by student starting points. The implication is then that the ACT score which stands for skills and knowledge, correlates to success in post-secondary pursuits. A composite score of 21 is considered a predictor of success. In 2009-2015, 50% of White students earned that, but Black students were less likely to do so.

Students who earned a weighted GPA above 3.0 had a 50% likelihood of earning a post-secondary degree, and that likelihood increases as the weighted GPA increased. There is a similar pattern that Black students graduating with a GPA lower than 3.0 puts them at risk of attaining a post-secondary degree. The end result is a GPA racial differential at the sophomore, junior, and senior years is wider in 2015 than it was in 2002.

The District struggles with the reality that despite the effort, careful thinking, and care for the students, the disparities have widened. This is not the fault of any program or intervention but that the approach taken has been inadequate. The District needs to rethink this so the same patterns will not exist. Ms. Hill noted she would correct the report in that 2 courses in math and 1 course in science were mislabeled.

Discussion ensued. One member worried about the students completing college applications with similar GPAs did not know of the possibilities and/or have access, economics, or someone to fill out financial aid forms, etc. The District should do more. Comparing national and state standards does not tell the whole story of experience and relationships and what things happened that encouraged students to stay in school, go to class, be engaged, etc. Why did the Black students who had ACT scores of 26 or 27 decide to attend college? Why did the Black students who had the same scores decide not to attend college? In comparing these groups within race in terms of intellect and ability, they are making different choices. Why?

One member liked looking at the WGPA. A request was made to have a breakdown of the racial demographics of the Honors Program so that one could determine if the District was being successful in getting more students into the program. Note: by senior year, the number of black students had increased, while the other groups had not.

The administration suggested that increasing the number of students applying to colleges could be a goal. Presently the District knows that 74% of the students applied to a 4-year college because of the transcripts that were provided. However, 12% of the graduating class did not make applications to colleges.

Another member suggested obtaining the following:

- 1) ACT scores in relation to the academic tracks students are in the core courses (math, science, and English)
- 2) What is the racial breakdown of participants of the ACT prep classes offered through OPRF; breakdown of students receiving fee waivers for those ACT prep classes.
- 3) Poll students asking for racial identity, what steps the students took to prepare for test (prep class through OPRF, private tutoring, practice tests, etc.)
- 4) What are the expectations for honors and college-prep level students?
- 5) What are the course placement tools?

Approximately 200 to 300 students take the ACT prep class associated with the high school, and there are a variety of ways for students to prep for this test. This data can be broken down by race. Fee waivers are available.

In response to a question, Ms. Hill reported that the numbers in transition classes are small, less than 15% and are mainly Black students. The overall distribution of the student body would show the demographic disparity. In the college prep program, 46% are White and 30% are African-American. In the Honors program, 66% are White. Black students are underrepresented.

One member felt that the information raised many questions in terms of the Honors track and going to college. Senior year is too late to take Honors courses as it would eliminate some colleges. A suggestion was to look at overrides. If students are being recommended for Honors classes, that speaks to different aspects of the EXPLORE Test, to the District's placement system, parents' understanding as to how to navigate the system and advocating for their students.

Dr. Isoye explained that the administration will continue to drill down on the achievement data and report back to the Board of Education regularly and have conversations about student achievement throughout the year. The information may raise other data points and the District may look achievement in other areas. In conversations about student discipline, the District wants to move infractions into different categories, but what we want is a broader picture that is a bigger change than the categories. The Board of Education has a goal of equity. How is that different from moving student discipline? As the administration analyzes this information, it will be challenged to think differently and talk about achievement in a bold way.

Other questions asked relative to equity were: 1) How students are selected for Honors? 2) How are students using overrides? 3) What is the percentage of racial demographics? 4) How are students performing? Students need to have a learning perspective. They need a voice. The District has college prep, Honors and yet is another track needed for those students who are not performing as highly. What is the breakdown of students who able to make the conversion of moving from one track to another. Another observation was that the District has a system of tracking and students know they are tracked. Goals could be set around that fact.

The Board of Education can continue to think about the question as to what it would mean to be more bold to address these questions.

**Board Members’
Reading
Recommendations**

It was the consensus of the Board of Education members for the administration to seek legal advice about the sharing of reading recommendations with each other. Their concerns were:

- 1) Can individual Board of Education members share articles/books/publications with the entire Board of Education, just as an FYI-type of thing, as the Board of Education is a body that continues to grow? A phrase such as “I can across something interesting, here it is”, etc. could be included in the email.

If individual Board of Education members shared competing articles, would that be seen as a conversation and a violation of the OMA?

- 2) If the Board of Education were to use a portal on the website, would there be copyright issues?

**School Report
Card & School
Profile**

The School Report Card has not yet been received from the state. It will be posted when available. All schools in Illinois put together a school profile and it is included in college transcripts. Student demographics are self-reported and multiethnic students can identify more than one category.

**October 1 Housing
Report**

The Instruction Committee meeting recommended bringing forward the October 1 Housing Report to the full Board of Education as an informational item.

Questions were raised about 1) the gap in enrollment projected by Ehlers and the actual number of students who enrolled because over the last two years, 14.9 FTE were hired for only 59 more students; 2) trend in class size as a big drop occurred near the end, 3) why the primary writing division (English) had the highest class size of any academic division; 4) why enrollment from parochial sender schools was uneven; and 5) why had the average student registrations increased.

Dr. Isoye and Mr. Weissglass will discuss how to and when to have further discussion on these topics. Ehlers will be providing updated enrollment projections in the near future.

5Essentials Report

The Instruction Committee unanimously recommended bringing the results of the

5Essentials Report, a climate survey, created by the University of Chicago, required by the state of Illinois. The first survey was administered in 2013 and again in the spring of 2015. All of the information will be public. Only those faculty members who were teaching a class were allowed to take the survey, prohibiting some certified FTE, staff, and administrators from participating. The administration reviewed the results, noting that the district's score in Effective Leadership was down somewhat. A request was made for a future meeting about the data and a discussion about who should drill down on the information received from this report, what was being measured, etc. A Board of Education member noted that a board goal was leadership and one that had not been given adequate attention to as yet and the process to do so is still yet unknown.

Sabbatical Reports

The Instruction Committee unanimously recommended bringing forward the sabbatical reports from Brandi Ambrose and Jessica Stovall. Both reports demonstrate that sabbaticals can be really valuable and productive.

The same procedure that was used in the selection and approval of sabbaticals will be the same for next year. Notice will be published in December, applications will be collected in January, and forwarded to the Board of Education in February. The administration is projecting bringing forth 2 or 3 for Board of Education approval.

2015 Summer School Report

The Instruction Committee unanimously recommended that the report on the 2015 Summer School be forwarded to the full Board of Education. Of note, the musical revenue may have been down due to construction costs, fewer students took the course because they no longer receive a graduation credit for it, etc. The musical may be scaled back next year. The most desired courses are the 14-day courses. Registration continues to be difficult.

Levy Timeline

The Finance Committee unanimously recommended bringing forth the Levy Timeline. A separate discussion on the levy will be held at the November 3, 2015 Finance Committee meeting.

Mr. Weissglass summarized that the FAC recommended a temporary tax cut which has been in place for 2 years; this year the levy will go back to the 2012 level. If it does not, it cannot be recaptured. The administration will recommend setting the levy \$10,250 higher than last year's levy at the Special Board Meeting on November 10, 2015 and the Board of Education must adopt it that night. If any Board of Education members had concerns, they were encouraged to share them with Mr. Weissglass. The PMA projections are included and the CPI increase is not included. This year the CPI is .08%.

Student Discipline

The Strategic Plan Operations Committee had been informed that a written report from Chicago VOYCE on the Raise Your Voice meeting would be forthcoming after they debriefed with the students. Mr. Arkin, having attended that meeting, spoke of enthusiasm and disappointment that it was not a larger venue. Dr. Moore noted that the students may recommend students be allowed to have an opportunity to discuss this during the school day.

Adjournment

At 10:33 p.m., Dr. Gevinson moved to adjourn the regular Board of Education meeting; seconded by Dr. Moore. A voice vote resulted in motion carried.

Jeff Weissglass
President

Sara Dixon Spivy
Secretary

Submitted by Gail Kalmerton
Clerk of the Board