

January 14, 2014

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Tuesday, January 14, 2014 in the Board Room of the high school.

Call to Order

President Phelan called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: Thomas F. Cofsky (attended electronically), Dr. Steven Gevinson, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Dr. Jackie Moore, Sharon Patchak Layman, John Phelan, and Jeff Weissglass. Also in attendance was Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent; Nathaniel L. Rouse, Principal; Tod Altenburg, Chief Financial Officer; Amy Hill, Director of Assessment and Learning; Karin Sullivan, Director of Communications and Community Relations; Dr. Tina Halliman, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Support Services; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors

Dr. Allan Alson and Pat Maunsell, Educational consultants; Naomi Hildner, OPRFHS faculty member; and Anna Schaidler, community member.

Public Comments

None

**Review of Values,
Vision and Mission**

The Board of Education members reviewed a draft of Values, Vision, and Mission statements that were created as a result of the input from the Board of Education during meetings and individual phone conferences, the core from the task forces, and the 10-months of hard work by all stakeholders in Oak Park and River Forest. Dr. Alson clarified for some Board of Education members that the critical values of accountability, continued improvement, and transparency were reflected in the goals and action steps related to the goals and that statements in the Holistic Community Education Goal referred to OPRFHS as being inclusive of community, meaning it was community supported through tax dollars.

As the Board of Education reviewed the documents, it made the following changes:

Goal 1, No. 3, line 2: Add “and families as well” after the word “staff to reflect the conscious effort to elevate the parent relationship which is a part of the current board goal.

Goal 1, No. 3, line 4: Delete the words “that promote change for the benefit of students” and add “.”

Goal 2, Line 1: The word “continuous” was included before the word “strive” to remind those who worked on the Strategic Plan that this was dynamic rather than being static. OPRFHS cannot create an environment that fosters the academic/social emotional growth of each student by itself. The community, families, and partnerships, etc., are necessary in order for this growth to occur. One member questioned the amount of ownership in this version of the action, as the feeling was that it diminishes the emphasis from both the adults and the students in moving forward and creating the environment desired. Ms. Patchak-Layman felt that by not including Restorative Justice specifically, the interpretation would be that it was not approved and thus omitted. Dr. Alson noted that the task force wanted strategies used that were not punitive to students. Restorative Justice is just one of the strategies used, but it is not the only strategies, and, therefore, just the word “strategies” was used. It gives the administrators and staff the opportunity to explore a variety of options or a combination of options. Note: the implementation committees will receive all the information from the task forces, the steering committees as resources.

Goal 2, line 3: Replace “social class” with social-economic”

Two members felt that equity did not specifically talk about race. If the idea is to talk about race, then the goal should be racial equity. Two members asked why only race, why not gender, sexual preferences, etc. One member noted that the Board of Education had not wanted the goal to be about race, but because there were a number of drawbacks to that, it was agreed that the vision and value statements should reflect that thought.

Goal 3, No. 1, line 1: A suggestion was made to add “and family” after the word “student” and it was supported by Mr. Weissglass, Dr. Moore, and Mr. Cofsky.

Discussion ensued about how to support the neediest students and to be more understanding or aware of their cultures, behaviors, and personalities, and not just students with behavioral issues, as discipline was being directed toward misunderstood behavior. It was important to protect the committing offender and the victim of the offence. Some discipline is out of alignment and not all students feel supported or trusted. As such, the administration was directed to create a fourth item. One suggestion was “Using exiting school data, develop equitable behavioral response system that reflected self-reflection and positive and social emotional development of students.” One member one it was missing the concept of safety and one member suggested adding the words “fair and just”.

Goal 4: Dr. Gevinson noted that class size and the desire to maximize instruction, i.e., student to teacher interface, etc., were missing. Dr. Alson felt that class size fit under the implementation committee's charge. Dr. Gevinson noted that No. 3 was specific to technology, but it could enhance teaching and learning which would include access to technology. Dr. Alson noted that students felt technology was a bigger issue than did adults. Mr. Phelan felt the conversation should be about digital information systems versus technology. Dr. Moore stated that while students were the predominate speakers on the issue of technology, the school has much to learn about effective uses of technology and how it promotes instruction. High schools have tried IPADs but they found them too distracting. Smart phones too were disruptive when they rang at an inappropriate time. The student's voice is driven by the fact that they only know the Internet. The high school has to define what it means and determine how to use it. AA: Technology will affect learning in the future.

Goal 4, #3, line 1: Replace the word "enhance" with the word "leverage"

Goal 5: A report/research on class size had not yet been put forward. How does class size affect student outcomes? How does class size affect the teacher's experience? One member noted that it was about the teaching and learning conditions. Research did not exist on class size nor did it exist as to the use of technology, but technology was mentioned specifically in the plan. One member had been concerned that a specific agenda had been injected into the strategic plan discussions that were also collective bargaining discussions. A broader statement would allow the action groups to bring recommendations and costing forward to the Board of Education. A concern was raised about including it in the first draft of the strategic plan. Dr. Gevinson noted that the broad principle was to create the best conditions for teaching and learning and it was fine for an implementation team to go to class size; but it is an important principal that is missing from the Transformational Teaching and Learning goal. Technology is only one condition.

The State of Illinois mandates of all schools school improvement, including deadlines, forms, etc.

Goal 5, Action 2, Line 3: Add the word "continuous" before the word "school".

A suggestion was made to add "collaborative decision-making" at the end of sentence of No. 3, because it is a phrase that describes the District aspiring to and the term "shared leadership" does not mean the same. Shared leadership also means distributive leadership, which has expectations that those at the top will not hoard leadership and that they

will invest, and share leadership with other stakeholders in the way the organization is run. It is not just about delegating but about investing stakeholders in decision-making. One member suggested using “delegating authority” instead of shared leadership. However, shared leadership also means empowerment and has an element of accountability with regard to completing tasks or responding to a charge. One expectation is that once the Board of Education approves the plan, Dr. Isoye will give a charge to implementation committees to return with plans and there should be clear accountability as to who will champion those plans, the resources, timelines, and target goals. Collaborative leadership defeats accountability because if everyone makes a decision, then no one is accountable. The Board of Education can only hold one person accountable, the Superintendent. DLT is an example of shared leadership as each member is empowered to bring ideas and influence the work. It is a team effort that comes from the group and Dr. Isoye then brings it to the board. It is shared leadership in that not just one person is responsible. Number 17 references shared leadership as being the administrators.

One member suggested adding a fourth action. “Establish an administrative structure and ethics that enhances communication and collaboration among all professionals/staff in the school.” Mr. Phelan felt that communication can be limited and short-circuited depending on how wide the doors are open and the rigidity of the chain of command. How staff and professionals see communication needs to be assessed. He did not feel the culture of trust that the Board of Education is trying to build yet exists inside the building and he hears about an “us” and “them.” He wanted the Strategic Plan to address that and the feeling of fear eradicated.

Goal 5, No. 3, Line 2: Add the words “and open communication” after the word “leadership”. This would imply top/down and bottom/up communication.

Goal 5, Action 1: Delete “and reward systems” as a reward system is too specific. Dr. Lee wanted the Board of Education to discuss compensation, not bargaining in open session, as the Board of Education needs to understand the boundaries.

Goal 5, Action 1, line 1, Add “and optimize conditions” after the word “learning”. This then could address class size.

Discussion ensued regarding the meaning of Action 2 with regard to professional development. It includes maintaining, adding, and changing in order to support the achievement of this plan and improvement for students. Continuous assessment of current professional development

needs to occur as to whether it is being effective in improving instruction in the school, whether targeted or differentiated.

Summary

Dr. Isoye noted that these goals would come as a first read and then for a vote for approval. The next steps would include implementation teams would be commenced and their reports would be provided in the May to June timeline. They will begin to demonstrate accountability, the goal, and the measurement for the goals. Some goal may need scaffolding. Dr. Alson noted that the Board of Education should receive periodic reports, quarterly at first, and make adjustments due to any environment changes that would cause those adjustments. When the goals come forward or the fiscal plan, the question to ask will be how that fits into the Strategic Plan.

Dr. Isoye would confab with Ms. Maunsell and Dr. Alson about implementation teams. Mr. Phelan thanked Ms. Maunsell and Dr. Alson for their professionalism and professional commitment to this task.

Adjournment

Dr. Lee moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:05 p.m.; seconded by Dr. Moore. A voice vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

John Phelan
President

Dr. Jackie Moore
Secretary