



## OAK PARK & RIVER FOREST HIGH SCHOOL 2023-24 DISCIPLINE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Oak Park and River Forest High School provides a dynamic, supportive learning environment that cultivates knowledge, skills, and character and strives for equity and excellence for all students. Oak Park and River Forest High School is widely considered an outstanding high school, known for its high level of student achievement; excellent instruction; exceptional performing arts, athletics, clubs, and activities; and innovative academic programs. But even the strength of our programs and the top awards our students and staff consistently earn are not enough to satisfy the central mission of the school: to provide the knowledge, skills, and character necessary for success and leadership in a global society. We must see achievement rise for all students, not only those who struggle in our classrooms but also those already achieving at high levels. We also must narrow disparities that appear in teaching and learning outcomes when we disaggregate our data by race. Both goals—excellence and equity—are at the center of this plan. Achieving these goals requires that we be deliberate in the priorities we set and the choices we make over the next few years.

#### Values

1. We believe all students are capable of high levels of academic and social success.
2. We embrace our diversity and believe factors including but not limited to race, income, gender identity and gender expression, sexual orientation, and learning differences should not predict success.
3. We believe trusting, collaborative relationships and strong communication establish a safe and respectful school community.
4. We believe an excellent educational environment cultivates curiosity, imagination, character, leadership, critical thinking, and communication skills.
5. We believe in allocating resources in equitable, transparent, and purposeful ways.
6. We believe in adult learning and leadership that supports equity and excellence for all students.
7. We believe in providing academic and social support for all students. Vision Oak Park and River Forest High School will become an ever-improving model of equity and excellence that will enable all students to achieve their full potential.

#### Mission

Oak Park and River Forest High School provides a dynamic, supportive learning environment that cultivates knowledge, skills, and character and strives for equity and excellence for all students.

Strategic Plan Goal 2—Equity: OPRF High School will continuously strive to create an environment where the academic achievement and social and emotional growth of students will no longer be predictable by race, socioeconomic status, or other social factors.

Strategy 3. Annually assess school culture and climate and set targets for creating an environment in which all students feel welcome, including but not limited to students of color and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and gender-expansive students.



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The state disciplinary exclusion data shows that African American students at Oak Park & River Forest High School (OPRF) are being suspended out of school at a higher rate than their peers. The work of addressing this has been a multi-year process for this district. First, let us acknowledge the unique circumstances contributing to this data:

- OPRF is a one school district, meaning our high school and district data are one and the same. This can be viewed as both a gift and a curse – while it makes data analysis much simpler, we also have few peers with whom to compare ourselves in terms of analyzing the implementation of district policies, and consequently an impaired ability to analyze our policies for bias.
- Our proximity to the city of Chicago (specifically the west side of the city, which borders the east side of our district) means some of our population – those whose families originate from Chicago and move to Oak Park from Chicago for better opportunities and/or safety reasons – still carry the trauma that studies indicate lead directly to higher rates of school misconduct violations. These students tend to be of African American heritage.
- At the same time, OPRF has a high rate of enrollment fraud due to its proximity to Chicago. In the 2022-23 school year, out of our 3307 enrollment applications, 66 families attempted to enroll but were denied outright due to residing outside of our attendance area. 36 (39%) of these cases were actually families from Chicago. An additional 105 families were investigated for suspicion of enrollment fraud, and of these 12 were successfully substantiated. It should be noted that more cases of enrollment fraud exist, but a lack of evidence allows those students to continue to attend OPRF. Families attempting to escape the high crime and violence rates of the city and the perception that the Chicago Public Schools system is unsafe will often attempt to enroll at OPRF, sometimes by falsifying address documentation or even by transferring guardianship to a relative that does reside within our attendance area (which is still a violation of the law). These students should rightfully be attending a school within Chicago and (due to the well-documented racially segregated nature of Chicago's neighborhoods), tend to be of African American heritage.

### **PRIOR & ONGOING WORK**

Given the above history and the worsening violence in the City of Chicago, OPRF's struggles with managing the needs of our traumatized students have only become more evident over time. As such, we began working on this issue in the 2020-21 school year. We started by addressing the immediate concern – that punitive disciplinary policy at OPRF was being disproportionately applied to students of African American descent. To address, this we implemented the following:

- Eliminated zero tolerance policies
- Removed disparaging discipline categories/language that paralleled police terms which subsequently affected African American students at disproportionate rates
- Studied restorative justice practices and adopted them as a district policy for all disciplinary incidents
- Adopted the work of racial equity and used it as a basis for all work in our school, across all disciplines and departments
- Continually developed staff on equitable practices and created a culture where equity conversations are the norm



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- Created an Office of Equity and an Executive Director of Equity and Success to lead the work
- Created a position for Trauma Interventionist to directly intervene in situations where trauma is identified as the root cause of a behavior incident
- Created and standardized Behavior Response Grid that identifies all possible student misconducts and emphasizes the use of restorative justice practices (rather than suspension)
- Adopted an In-School Reflection (ISR) model that implements a curriculum for teaching of skills specific to the disciplinary infraction that was violated
- Created community partnerships with APPLE (African American Parents for Purposeful Leadership and Education) and West40 (our partner for mentoring interventions, parent partnerships and student advocacy)
- Implemented monthly Wellness Workshops where all students participate in socio-emotional learning activities

### **PLAN STATEMENT**

Even with all of the above in place, our data indicates that African American students are still being excluded from school for disciplinary reasons at a disproportionate rate at OPRF. Because we have standardized the implementation of our Behavior Response Grid, we are able to definitively say that *this is not because of implicit bias*. Students who commit specific offenses are disciplined in the same manner regardless of their race. Stated another way, students are not being suspended or excluded from school due to their race or the decisions of those that implement disciplinary policy. Our policy is being implemented uniformly. Rather, our root cause analysis leads us to a more alarming conclusion: the students that are engaging in behavior that warrants out-of-school suspension tend to be of African American descent, and this is because these students are likely to have been impacted by trauma in their formative years, even before they become OPRF students. This trauma may have been in their homes, in their communities, or even in virtual spaces such as social media. With this conclusion in mind, we at OPRF are committed to deepening our practices in the following ways.

- I. Continue to keep equity at the core of our decision-making processes in all areas of the school.
- II. Strengthen our professional development in the area of trauma-informed practices.
- III. Center our responses to behavior infractions using a trauma-informed approach.
- IV. Systematize the work of our Office of Equity and Success in the following ways:
  - a. Connect the work of this department to our existing MTSS structures by using the staff as an intervention.
  - b. Create a referral process for Motivation Mentorship and a metric to measure outcomes of this program (discipline and attendance).
  - c. Create a referral process for Community Outreach Coordinator and a metric to measure outcomes for this support (attendance)
  - d. Create a referral process for Mentor Studies and a metric to measure outcomes for this support (discipline and grades)
  - e. Create a referral process for Trauma Interventionist and a metric to measure outcomes for this support (discipline)



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- V. Systematize the work of Behavior Response Leads to ensure that classroom disciplinary incidents that have childhood trauma as a root cause are being separated out and referred to the Trauma Interventionist.
- VI. Strengthen the partnership with APPLE by creating a metric to measure outcomes for this support (attendance, behavior and grades).
- VII. Strengthen the partnership with West40 by creating a metric to measure outcomes for this intervention (attendance, behavior and grades).

### **METRICS/GOALS**

Understanding that disciplinary metrics are interconnected with attendance and student performance metrics, many of our strategies are built to impact more than one of these at a time, with the understanding that improving one will have the secondary impact of improving the other two. For the purpose of this plan, however, we will focus on the strategies listed above that are tagged with specifically improving the discipline metric.

For all of the strategies listed, our goal will NOT be to reduce the use of out-of-school suspension (OSS) or expulsion, as our analysis demonstrates that these measures are already being utilized sparingly in our school. Rather, our strategy will be to reduce the number of occurrences of behaviors that call for out-of-school suspension or expulsion, specifically for our African American student population.

In the 2022-23 school year, the total number of disciplinary incidents that led OSS to was 51. Our goal for the 2023-24 school year is to reduce that number by 10%, or 5 incidents. With a small data set to begin with, it stands to reason that we will not be able to maintain that pace indefinitely. In the 2024-25 school year, the goal will be to improve on that metric by 7%, followed by an additional 5% in the 2025-26 school year. This will mean a 3-year reduction in “suspend-able” disciplinary incidents of 21.5%. In each school year, progress toward the goal will be measured quarterly to determine if we are on track for our annual goal. The following table summarizes our goals by year:

School Year	% Reduction over previous year	Target # OSS Incidents	Quarterly Target	% Reduction from Baseline (2022-23)
2023-24	10%	45 or fewer	12 or fewer	10%
2024-25	7%	43 or fewer	11 or fewer	16%
2025-26	5%	40 or fewer	10 or fewer	21.5%



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### RESPONSIBLE PARTIES/OWNERS

- School Administration (I)
  - Superintendent
  - Principal & Assistant Principal
  - Associate Superintendent for Student Learning
- Office of Student Supports (III, VI, VII)
  - Director
  - Deans
  - Counselors
  - Psychologists
  - Wellness Coordinator
- Office of Special Education (III)
  - Executive Director & Assistant Director
  - Case Managers
- Office of Equity & Student Success (II, III, IV)
  - Executive Director
  - Motivation Mentorship Program Coordinator
  - Trauma-Informed School Interventionist
  - Community Outreach Coordinator
  - Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Coordinator
  - Coordinator of Learning Analytics & Supports
  - Racial Equity Coaches
  - Collaborative Action Research for Racial Equity Professional Development (C.A.R.E.)
- Campus Safety & Support (V)
  - Director and Assistant Director
  - Behavior Response Leads
- Data Management (III, IV, VI, VII)
  - Coordinator of Learning Analytics & Supports
  - MTSS Coordinator
- Community Partners (VI, VII)
  - APPLE Leadership
  - West40 Program Coordinator
  - West40 Mentors