

**Oak Park River Forest High School
201 N. Scoville
Oak Park, IL 60302**

**Strategic Plan Steering Committee Minutes
February 4, 2013**

Dr. Isoye opened the Strategic Plan Steering Committee meeting at 7:02 p.m., February 4, 2013 in the Staff Cafe of the OPRFHS, 201 N. Scoville, Oak Park, Illinois.

Members:

Nina Allen, Thrive Counseling Center	Dana Limberg, OPRFHS
Dr. Allan Alson, Facilitator	Sophia Lloyd, OPRF Community Foundation
Jan Arnold, Park District of Oak Park	Jim Madigan, Oak Park Public Library
Marge Balchunas, OPRFHS	Pat Maunsell, Facilitator
Mary Jo Burns, Ascension School	Melanie McQueen, Parent
Leah Carlin, OPRFHS	John Messina, APPLAUSE
Dick Chappell, River Forest Community Center	Kerry Nelson, PTO/P4SS
Aleta Clardy, Community Member	Carolyn Newberry-Schwartz, Collaboration for Early Childhood
Anthony Clark, Community Member	Sharon Patchak-Layman, OPRFHS
Randall Clark, Community Member	Regina Peterson, OPRF Scholarship Foundation.
Dr. Edward Condon, River Forest Elementary Schools	Phil Prale, OPRFHS
JP Coughlin, OPRFHS	Janice Pyrcce, Citizens' Council
John Duffy, Community Member	Bobbie Raymond, Alumni Association
Craig Failor, Village of Oak Park	Brian Reilly, OPRFHS
Valerie Fisher, OPRFHS	Latroy Robinson, Student
Joyce Gajda, OPRFHS	Nathaniel Rouse, OPRFHS
Kathryn Gargiulo, OPRFHS	Anna Schaidler, Roosevelt PTO
Nancy Guarino, Community Member	Joanne Schochat, District 97
Dr. Tina Halliman, OPRFHS	Steve Schwartz, OPRFHS
Sheila Hardin, OPRFHS	Carollina Song, Gwendolyn Brooks PTO
Nancy Heezen, OPRFHS	John Stelzer, OPRFHS
Burcy Hines, APPLE	Jessica Stovall, OPRFHS
Maria Hoyer, Community Member	Karin Sullivan, OPRFHS
James Paul Hunter, OPRFHS	Drew Swope, Student
Dr. Steve Isoye, OPRFHS	Rick Tanksley, Oak Park Police Department
Stephanie Jackson, Community Member	Jane Townsley, Parent
Mary Johnson, Student	Mark Trinkka, Hephzibah
Kris Johnson, OPRFHS	Jason Tyszko, Community Member
Ambria Jones, OPRFHS Student	Alysia Wallace, OPRFHS
Grace Kavinsky, Student	Brenda Jones Watkins, Triton College
Ray Kennelly, Dominican University	Kimberly Werner, Supported Education Association
Kathy Kern, Parenthesis	Cathy Yen, BOOSTERS
Larry Landfair, Community Member	

Members not present: Maria Hoyer, Burcy Hines, Nancy Guarino, Larry Landfair, Jason Tyszko, Stephanie Jackson Rowe community members; Ray Kennelly of Dominican, Nathaniel L. Rouse, Dr. Tina Halliman, John Stelzer, Dana Lindberg, Steve Schwartz, Brian Reilly, OPRFHS Staff; Wyanetta Johnson of APPLE; Jim Madigan, Oak Park Public Library; Kathy Kern of Parenthesis; Sophia Lloyd of the Community

Foundation; Brenda Jones Watkins of Triton College; Rick Tanksley, Chief of Police; Craig Failor of the Village of Oak Park, and Mary Johnson, Student.

Visitors: Rebecca Bibbs of the Oak Leaves

Ms. Maunsell reviewed the material in the packet and complimented the Committee members on the thoroughness and thoughtfulness that they had given to the Strategic Plan process thus far. The statements being reviewed that evening were not the only things that would be part of the overall plan. The same is true of the goal statements. While not all things discussed will be reflected in the goals, they will be in the overall plan.

The committee reviewed the value statements and then the mission and vision statements provided to them. The tablemates then reflected on the statements. Each member was asked to express a degree of support for the statements by placing one dot under each of the statements (gallery walk). These statements were created as a result of all of the input

- A green dot meant the statement was good to go;
- A yellow dot meant that there was a question; and
- A red dot meant that the statement did not reflect the conversation or that it was missing something significant.

Committee members were also asked to provide a fuller explanation or definition on green cards distributed at their table. They were to give them to Ms. Kalmerton. Ms. Maunsell stated that the statements would be revisited next week; they are still working drafts. Task forces may influence these statements, as well.

Holistic Community Education – “We believe in an education that is deeply rooted in and supported by strong collaboration among all stakeholders in an active and involved community that includes a highly articulated, seamless education from cradle through college and prepares students for engaged citizenship, social responsibility, and lifelong learning.” The committee’s reaction to this statement was 15 green; 13 yellow; and 7 red. Comments included:

1. Overall, the statement was good, but the red flag was the seamless education from cradle to college. Was that obtainable, as this is only the high school? How can the high school insure that statement both financially, college, etc.? Are all aspirations included in this statement, i.e., military, trade schools, etc.
2. What does “highly articulated, seamless education” mean? Ms. Maunsell responded that it was clarity and expectations, and a shared understanding.
3. The wording is confusing.
4. “Highly articulated” could mean between districts. The statement needs strengthening. Ms. Maunsell stated that it was having a shared understanding from the work.
5. The values should respond to every goal as opposed to being divided into 5 categories, as that makes it difficult to say it is a value that was considered. There is value in education that crosses all of the goals. Ms. Maunsell stated that these were threads that ran through everything, but within those threads, there were some specifics to which people were coalescing. It would be interesting if it were so high a level that it cannot connect. People had specifics that they valued.
6. Concurred with the #5 with regard to equity and communication. Is the Committee trying to define what it means or is it creating values within that.
7. With subcommittees on equity and communication, the use of the word “rigorous” does not say what students need. Some feel that everyone should have the same rigorous curriculum. To

eliminate the predictability of outcomes can be a goal, but not by itself, it does define equity. There is a problem with the statement and it needs to be made universal. The January 12 work dug deeply into this and he could not recover that work at this meeting. Ms. Maunsell stated that it would be shared after this evening.

8. Would the group be more comfortable with just belief statements without labeling and not being divided into 5 categories? Some agreed because they felt this statement was too robust and too long. There should be list of values that applied to all of these. Suggested terminology was: "Have every student walking into the high school immediately feel this was his/her place." Not make this statement so technical. This is not the bucket in which to put something.

Equity: "We believe every student is capable of success. We believe all students deserve opportunity and access to a rigorous education that provides all that is needed for each student to achieve success and that celebrates diversity while ensuring that race, income, gender, and special education status is not predictors of achievement." The committee's reaction to this statement was 23 green; 5 yellow; and 8 red. Comments included:

1. Important to have a common understanding of the definition of the whole statement that it is a value term.
2. Do students feel good about attending or going to college or graduating from college. All students should feel that if they wanted to go to college they could upon leaving OPRFHS and not have a door closed/locked. Ms. Maunsell noted that the research showed there was a similar core set of readiness measures for being college-ready and career ready.
3. Difficult to understand the second sentence. Is it the rigorous education that celebrates diversity? Perhaps this should be three thoughts.
4. The term "all" was overreaching and a big burden. Families/parents are involved in the process as well.
5. Equity and diversity were two different things.
6. Diversity – achievement gap – was too limiting.

Supportive Learning Environment: "We believe that every student should have the academic and social supports they need to achieve success. We further believe that the entire school community deserves a safe and respectful learning environment rooted in strong, trusting relationships that address the individual and collective needs of students and adults." The committee's reaction to this statement was 22 green; 10 yellow; and 5 red. Comments included:

1. Missing is the role the high school had in providing it. While it could be implied, the Saturday conversation articulated that the school needed to step up to the plate regarding resources.
2. The school should provide goal setting and a supportive environment beginning the first day. Each student should have his/her own goals defined for both the short-term and the long-term, and there should be a way to ignite their passion toward achievement of those goals.
3. Consider a discussion of the holistic view of the student, e.g., workload, etc. What is an appropriate balance in a student's life?
4. Include the physical and mental health of the student. If adults had their physical and mental health addressed early on in life, they would not have future problems, possibly. Goal setting and interventionist attitudes must include the whole person. Some students come from a household where there is no one to help them set realistic goals. It is important to review their goals constantly from 9th grade.
5. Does "trusting relationships" imply with adults or students? Where do the adults fit into this picture? The Committee is reading many things into this statement but that does not mean it means what is being talked about. Who is involved? The word "deserve" could be "judgmental." Do some people not deserve it? Is it a privilege or a right? Does this mean that this collective

group means this a definition? “Celebrating diversity” conjures up things that are superficial. Ms. Maunsell stated that the input had a particular emphasis on adults. These value statements and we have to say we value certain things. Language is language and sometimes people read things differently. Need to be as clear, but if they are shortened, how will the core values be conveyed. Each of these is a component of a plan. The value statements will be part of more clarity. While now talking about values, high level, later the goals will be discussed.

6. The word “risk-taking” needs to be added.

Transformational Teaching, Learning, and Leadership—“We believe all students should be prepared to contribute to society and its evolving needs. All students should have engaging, connected learning experiences that provide many pathways to success that foster creativity, critical thinking, leadership, problem solving, social responsibility, an appreciation for diversity and a sense of self-worth for each student. All students should receive high quality instruction that is differentiated to engage, support and stretch student learning to the greatest extent possible. Teaching and learning must rest on a framework of distributed leadership that encourages and supports excellence in adult performance in the service of student learning and development.” The committee’s reaction to this statement was 12 green; 19 yellow; and 5 red. Comments included:

1. Questions about the use and the definition of the words “distributed leadership.” It is jargon. What will it mean five years from now? It was noted that it meant that everyone was a leader—the superintendent, the administrators, the teachers, as well as the students.
2. The term “differentiated to engage...,” is not current. Now each classroom has a range of unique individuals, strengths, and challenges and the teacher needs to respond to them. The values must be sensitive to this.
3. While transformational teaching, etc., it felt like it was a student-centered value, a suggestion was made to add something about leadership, i.e., leader in the community, voice of education, etc.
4. Accountability must be included.
5. No matter how long or short or if there were categories or not, each person will interpret them differently. One member had supported all of the statements and did not feel the committee needed to parse words.
6. Concurred with #5. This gives the framework to get the work done in the task force. It will not be perfect, but it was a start.
7. The words “distributed leadership” is about getting at the professional culture that is presently being recreated at the high school. It is not just about hiring great people, as that is how professions work. This about getting to the goals that change a culture. The work of teachers and leadership needs to change and that means putting more weight on teachers. The school will only get better by making it more collaborative.
8. The statement “All students should receive high quality instruction that is differentiated to engage, support and stretch student learning to the greatest extent possible.” was wonderful, but is it realistic. Will there be the manpower, the strategy, and the teaching staff to attain that? Ms. Maunsell stated that would be another piece of the strategic plan, the making of a high-level plan as to how the school will attain the goals, e.g., professional development, etc.
9. Perhaps being able to spend a full day at the high school attending classes, etc., would be insightful for the Committee. What is missing is the reality of day-to-day business in the different level of classes. Education is somewhat secretive.
10. Concurred with No. 9.
11. The high school seems to be the catch all, but it must also consider the family when trying to reach a child. The school needs the parental help for the students’ emotional/social well-beings. She encourages people to visit the school. Nothing in the statements addresses the parents. The first teacher is the parent and parents should be added to every statement.
12. The statement contained too much jargon; it was too broad and too vague.

13. Additional comment about the benefits of having parental visitations, it was a good opportunity and it was beneficial to both the parents and the school to see the interaction. This committee is not the interpreter; it is creating the aspirational part. The vision and mission statements should be lofty, but not a perspective as to what the faculty and the administration will do.

Facilities and Finance—“We believe all resources should be aligned to achieve our mission. We believe the physical environment and adequate resources must fully support the individual and collective needs of the entire school community, provide state-of-the-art technology, and support adult capacity and talent to maximize learning opportunities for all students.” The committee’s reaction to this statement was 19 green; 12 yellow; and 6 red. Comments included:

1. Supported going big. A personal value of one member to read all of the good books. That drove how this person spent time after work. People were surprised at equity and the achievement gap. Thus the values need to say specifically where the school will put its money. It should value that monies should go toward making an equitable institution and to make sure it funds every program so that the prediction of race and achievement no longer exists.
2. The words “achievement gaps will be significantly diminished” was bothersome.

Vision statement: “OPRFHS will be a national model for educational equity. Achievement gaps will be significantly diminished in a learning environment characterized by integrity, trust, compassion and understanding that nurtures the human spirit.” The committee’s reaction to this statement was 12 green; 10 yellow; and 16 red. Comments included:

1. The statement “OPRFHS will be a leader in educational equity” was “pompous, too hard, and too competitive.
2. Incomplete. As an advocate, did not agree that if the achievement gap were gone, there would be no further work to be done. If the achievement gap were the entirety of the Strategic Plan, there would be those in the community who would say this was not my problem because my students do not have that problem. This needs to be seen as the community’s vision and the community’s work.
3. Concurred with No. 2. The school has had big debates on the language of addressing achievement issues. The achievement gap has been narrowly defined in this community. The value of test scores is getting to next step, but test scores narrows the definition of learning. Almost wholly focused on academic measures. How can the vision be defined so that it does not absolve the school from something much bigger? This is not just about higher test scores.
4. Missing is the identification of an excellent education. Achievement gap is to provide excellent education and the other is to make sure there are not too many high achievers. Affirm commitment to providing best educational services possible.
5. Excited about the Berkley statement. What was hoped for educators, families, etc.? This should be more expansive. Think of this more holistically. What is happening for students, faculty, etc.?
6. When the words “achievement gap can be diminished” are used, sometimes they mean higher test scores. However, that does not make student learning more equitable. Using the words “achievement gap” cannot always be used to compensate for the real goal, which is equity and student learning.
7. Many components of vision at the high school, i.e., climate, learning experience, and the achievement gap are too narrow and out of place if it is supposed to capture the vision, etc.
8. Agreed that Berkley article good one. Vision statement should be about beliefs and not bumper statements. Numbers 1-5 were too wordy. The January 12 Committee work was missing. Where did this come from and did people agree with the thoughts?

9. This school has potential to be national model. If everyone listed one way to be a national model, what would that mean? Measurables? Vision? Creativity? While the first six words are fine, everything after that needs work. What would make a national model?
10. One parent wanted 100% of the students to be in love with their school and brag about it when they leave.

Mission Statement—Oak Park River Forest High School embraces its diversity and provides a rich, dynamic, supportive learning environment for all students. By providing an equitable, holistic education, we cultivate the knowledge, skills, and character necessary for success and leadership in our ever-changing global society. The committee’s reaction to this statement was 21 green; 12 yellow; and 4 red. Comments included:

1. It covers everything the high school needs to address. It is important when using this mission statement and going forward that it is referred back to make sure that each topic is fully explained in detail with content, evidence, etc.
2. It seems doable. Like the words “...in our ever-changing global society,” as that acknowledges that the world is changing and it is adapted to the students’ needs.
3. Disagreement with the statement as it was no more of a plan than the vision statement. Appreciated succinctness of providing a superior education. The adjectives “rich, dynamic, supportive” were not enough to take action on. It needs to be more comprehensive and understandable. Something that was accessible to all. Preference was for the first statement.
4. Original mission statement was too vague/broad. The second had a competitive edge, and the school should just try to do the best for itself.
5. A little wordy, but parts are necessary. Evidence is needed to show that the school has provided the best education possible. Vision and mission statement says how and shows what evidence; that is how OPRFHS become national model.
6. Statements should evoke parental power. With such ambitious goals, everyone should be a potential ally, the family, the community, the parents, etc. The school cannot do it by itself.
7. Include a sentence as to what the high school embraces as to what it means to be successful, i.e., going to college or furthering a career.
8. Is the intent of holistic education in the second sentence referring back to holistic community education used in other discussion? Where does graduating from this high school fit in with this statement?
9. Add more students to this committee to get different input.

The next meeting will be February 11, 2013.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:01 p.m.