

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

**Strategic Plan Steering Committee Minutes  
March 18, 2013**

Dr. Isoye opened the Strategic Plan Steering Committee meeting at 7:02 p.m., March 18, 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	

Task Force Members: Kristen McKee, Jonathan Silver, Jonathan Adelman, Alejandra Ibanez, Randy Braverman, Ginger Brent, Fawn Donatucci, Julie Frey, Naomi Hildner, Amy Hill, Jennifer Hoffman, Chala Holland, Glynis Kinnan, Avi Lessing, Allison Myers, Andrea Neuman, Eleanor O'Keefe, Claudia Sahagun, Joshua Seldess, Jonathan Silver, Stephanie Jackson-Rowe.

Visitors: Jeff Weissglass, Tom Cofsky, and Rebecca Bibbs of the Oak Leaves

Dr. Alson acknowledged that the Steering Committee was at a transitional point and at a time of celebration. . Since October, the Committee had undertaken a deep study of the District's data, information from focus groups (community, student, faculty, and staff), as well as survey results. It then created a set of core values, a mission statement, a vision statement, and goals that will be used to shape the work of the task force. The purpose of this meeting was to provide an overview of the work of the task forces. After the presentation on equity, the committee celebrated this point in its evolution with a cake.

Because the equity discussion overview is that more than a discussion, committee members were asked to write down ideas for future statements, questions, etc. on post-it notes.

Dr. Isoye too welcomed both the Steering Committee and the Task Force members and remarked on the committee's journey. The Steering Committee members had attended 28 hours of committee meetings, reviewed the Board of Education goals, the School Profile, student achievement data disaggregated by race, developed focus groups of all constituents, reviewed Senate Bill 7, the survey data, developed the value, mission and vision statements, and created goals. This work was important in the development of the mission, vision, and value statements based on current information and goals. One area of the discussions was about race, which is a lens for equity. Equity defines the culture of the District and movement within the building. Ms. Hardin and Chala Holland then made a presentation on equity.

#### Strategic Planning and Equity

Ms. Hardin provided an overview of some of the equity work in the Steering Committee and at OPRFHS. While equity discussions may take people different places, i.e., special education, equity in gender, etc., this focus is on racial equity. The Equity Task Force has as its goal statement: "The adults and students at OPRFHS will create an environment where the academic achievement and social and emotional growth of students will no longer be predictable by race." This statement will allow the task force to move deeper into this discussion.

#### Isolating Race at OPRFHS

- OPRFHS is a founding member of the Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN) and it provides collaboration with different schools with similar achievement data and ideas on how to move forward. Students also participate in this organization and bring ideas back to the school.
- Five years ago, a small group of teachers began a deliberate discussion about race using the curriculum outlined in *Courageous Conversations About Race*. Since that time, the number who now participate has doubled. New administrators were added and they eventually went through Pacific Education Group's LEADS training, participated in the two-day Beyond Diversity workshop, and assisted in specific conversations about race and how that translated to students.
- OPRFHS continues to be part of MSAN; those who were trained continue to talk about it, and now more specific conversations about equity, including professional development opportunities such as a racial equity-learning strand, teacher collaboration teams (TCTs) and divisional work are occurring. The racial equity learning TCT allows faculty and staff go through the training on a rotational basis for the next five years. All teachers participate in the TCTs and they work on curriculum courses, literacy, and race. Divisional work keeps race as its focus. What does race have to do with it is being asked at every level. The Board of Education goals include racial equity.

#### Working Definition of Race

Ms. Holland noted that all are racialized human beings and bring what they have constructed over time into the conversation, i.e., people of color rather than everyone, etc. This affects how people interact with

each other. This is about everyone and the intersection of lived experiences. The working definition of race includes:

- 1) Nationality- Location of citizenship or birthplace (Typically, this is on the birth certificate or passport)
- 2) Ethnicity- culture or ethos—the values and beliefs that inform daily practices, Values, Beliefs, (Language, Food, Literature, Religious Beliefs/Practices, Recreation, Music, Family Traditions/Celebrations, etc.)
- 3) Race- Color- What one perceives themselves to be. (Melanin Content in Hair, Eyes, Skin/How I see you and How You see yourself!)

The purpose of this conversation is to heighten the level of consciousness and how it relates to faculty, staff, and students. Student achievement is the focus of professional development, specifically through the CTCs and divisional work. Everything in the classroom is being disaggregated by race. A leadership group, DELT, provides oversight, support, and guidance for the district as it engages in transformation change focused on racial equity. Addressing the racial equity issue has no magic bullet, no quick fixes. DELT works as a leadership group to keep the school engaged. It includes the Building Leadership Team (BLT), the District Leadership Team (DLT), and faculty members representing a diversity of personal and professional experiences, expertise, and perspectives. Its responsibilities are: 1) engaging in strategic and intentional planning for systemic transformation; 2) soliciting and utilizing the multiple perspectives of stakeholders to inform the transformational process; and 3) communicating the plan for systemic transformation and ensuring that all of the work of the district is examined through a racial equity lens, as the District works to eliminate the racial disparities in achievement and provide a meaningful and valuable educational experience for ALL of its students.

DELT believes the following.

- 1) It is the collective responsibility to provide an excellent educational experience for all of our students.
- 2) The District cannot consider itself truly excellent as long as there are race-based disparities that prevent all students from achieving their full potential.
- 3) Race influences the ways that all of students experience school.
- 4) Race is having the most devastating impact on the Black students.
- 5) Race warrants an isolated conversation because it is often not explored in depth (struggled, grappled, wrestled) and is often replaced in conversations by other factors.
- 6) Race is not the only factor that influences the experiences of students but it is often the missing factor when working to examine further the educational outcomes for students.

OPRFHS must be willing to try things, apologize, and celebrate successes as well as recognizing how one's own racial being is playing into this. It is a messy process. The District recognizes through achievement data that there are racial disparities.

Race is 1) both positive and negative experiences; 2) both person and professional experiences; 3) white and non-white people, and 4) affects everyone 100%. Ms. Holland stated that her experience as a black woman is not the same as would be for a white woman.

The Task Forces are charged to keep racial equity at the forefront of its work and to consider the impact of race as various action steps are developed.

#### Board Goal Evolution

Dr. Isoye noted that Dr. Alson was a founding superintendent of MSAN. He continued that it was exciting to envision the future with a strategic plan with action steps, changing the mission, statement, etc. This process will help the District stay on target with a five-year road map instead of having annual goals.

It is also important to remember that prior to this plan; the District had accomplished many great things. Teachers have been supporting students, e.g., FREE and MURREE programs, the reading program, etc. He expounded on the reading program noting that it originally focused on only freshmen, but because of the success it had in increasing achievement, a sophomore version was added. Next year a junior version will be developed. These things happened without a strategic plan. The idea of focus, articulated over time, is a good model to think about as the Task Forces move forward. There is no expectation that the reading program will stop next year if the Strategic Plan does not address it.

Dr. Isoye then reviewed the evolution of Board Goals

2006-2007:	Goal 1: Letter b:	We will continue to make “Courageous Conversations About Race,” a commitment by all member schools in the Minority Student Achievement Network, an ongoing reality across our school community...
2007-2008:	Goal 1:	Improve academic achievement for all students with an emphasis on minority and special education students.
2008-2009:	Goal 1.	Student Achievement: The District will develop a multi-year plan to raise student academic achievement for all students, with special emphasis/focus on underachieving African American students, utilizing indices of achievement; identifying and implementing effective instructional strategies by teachers through professional development; incorporating the Board approved six (6) Fall 2008 initiatives; increasing and tracking student co-curricular participation; and conducting separate Board, Administration, and Faculty professional development strands on race and student achievement.
2009-2010:		OPRFHS will provide an inclusive education for all students by reducing racial predictability and disproportionality in student achievement and reducing systemic inhibitors to success for students and staff of color.
2010-2011:	Goal 1:	Racial Equity. The Board of Education will provide an inclusive education for all students and take action to eliminate predictability and disproportionality in student achievement and reducing systemic inhibitors to success for students and staff of color. (the same as last year). Action: The Superintendent will provide leadership in review of current programs and recommend appropriate measures and courses of action to accomplish this goal
2011-2012:	Statement 1:	<p>Racial Equity</p> <p>The Board of Education will provide an inclusive education for all students and take action to eliminate racial predictability, disproportionality in student achievement, and systemic inhibitors to success for students and staff of color. (The same as last year’s goal with an internal focus.)</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CCAR and PEG leadership training for systemic wide discussions about race—multiple stakeholders;</li> </ul>

- Review of Policy Manual with CCAR participants for racial equity; and
- Drill deep into the data to determine patterns of experience for students starting with course placements and E-PAS data, based on race.

2012-13 Statement 1:

Racial Equity

- Eliminate systemic inhibitors to academic success for students of color, including but not limited to those, which discourage students from attempting higher-level courses or penalize students for pursuing high levels of academic achievement.
- Show evidence of any change in racial predictability in recent years.

Dr. Isoye asked the Task Forces to be deliberate in terms of actions and to consider how the District was evolving individually, as a group, as an organization. OPRFHS is a participant in the MSAN Conference this week, as well as districts from across the United States, some that are founding districts and some that are new members. Some districts found the challenge of talking about racial equity too difficult for the community and it was shut down. The creation of the Strategic Plan is an awesome responsibility in terms of what OPRFHS is doing for the students. He asked them to acknowledge the District's past work and not to expect that discussion to stop because of the plan. Certain things will need to continue. Dr. Isoye believed in the importance of this work and he hoped they did also.

Task Force Orientation

After a brief recess where the committee celebrated its accomplishment with cake, Dr. Alson noted that when he was the superintendent of Evanston Township High School and the leader of MSAN in 1999, there was not a sense of urgency or direction, yet he would hear from various sources that districts all around the country had achievement gaps, including OPRFHS. At that time, District 97, OPRFHS, District 65, and Evanston met about the achievement gap. MSAN was launched at a national superintendent conference. Much needed to be learned. Smart people were brought together to talk over an extended period. He was excited to know that the conversation was still occurring and that it was making a difference in student lives.

Dr. Alson noted that this was the conclusion of some of the Steering Committee's work. Since October, the committee had met two times per month with good attendance. People volunteered to be on writing committees, coalesced the emerging ideas, and contributed their time, including 6 hours on a Saturday, to work through the issues. The five task forces that have emerged from the themes are: Equity, Holistic Community Education, Transformational Teaching, Learning, and Leadership, Supportive Education, and Finance and Facilities.

He reviewed the work of the task forces, the process for the work, and the interplay going forward. He distributed a list of members of the task forces, the co-facilitators were introduced, and the task forces then broke into groups. Dr. Alson noted that an all Task Force meeting was scheduled for Thursday, April 4 to talk about the equity lens. Task forces are expected to create action plans based on the goals of the Steering Committee. The co-facilitators will provide progress reports at the following Steering Committee meetings: April 15, April 29, May 6, and May 20, using the reporting tool provided. The Steering Committee's responsibility will be to listen carefully, offer clarifying questions, challenge assumptions, push back if there is disagreement, etc. In between those dates, task forces will meet once or twice as they so determine. They can request school resources to assist them. Hopefully, by May 24, enough information will have been gathered to begin drafting the final report, which everyone will review. In June, a meeting will be called to gather consensus on the report. The goal is to provide the Board of Education a copy of the report at its June Policy Meeting with approval at its regular June Board

of Education meeting. An alternative schedule would be to provide a first read at the end of June and request for approval at the Board of Education's July meeting.

Ms. Maunsell provided logistical information:

- 1) Task forces will develop the action steps to support the attainment of the goals, as framed by the Strategic Plan Steering Committee.
- 2) The work of the Task Forces work will not be the finished product.
- 3) To-do types of lists should not be recommended, as it will be the responsibility of the implementation committees in the fall to determine when, how, and where the recommendations will be implemented.
- 4) Task Forces should think strategically and be conscious of the number of action steps that the implementation committees will have to address.
- 5) Task Forces should use the template provided that shows a timeline of action steps and the objectives in order to achieve the goal.
- 6) The Task Forces should consider what was already occurring at the school, the initiatives, and the resources in the context of their recommendations to support that work or additional work.
- 7) Task forces will provide their notes to Ms. Kalmerton by April 11 so that they may be shared with the Steering Committee members prior to its April 15 meeting.
- 8) Each action step should be fleshed out thoroughly.
- 9) Task Forces should become familiar with the work of the Steering Committee so that their recommendations align with the values developed.
- 10) It will be the administration's role to determine 1) the cost and 2) how to pay for the recommendations.
- 11) Strategic Plan Steering Committee members are important to this process even if they do not participate on a task force. They will be "critical friends," to the task forces, by asking questions and providing feedback.

Dr. Alson thanked Ms. Holland, Ms. Hardin, and Dr. Isoye for their presentations and the committee members for their work.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:01 p.m.