

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

**Strategic Plan Steering Committee Minutes  
April 15, 2013**

Dr. Alson opened the Strategic Plan Steering Committee meeting at 7:02 p.m., April 15, 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
Robert Cole, 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	

**Welcome and Meeting Overview Discussion Protocols**

Dr. Alson welcomed all and reviewed the agenda. Each task force would report and he encouraged the committee members to challenge the assumptions and ask questions. Time was set aside for their work.

Steering Committee meetings are scheduled for June 10 and 17 to vet the full report.

The members of the task force members as follows:

**SLE**

Melanie McQueen, Parent  
Jane Townsley, Parent  
Avi Lessing, Faculty  
Kristen McKee, Faculty  
Jonathan Silver, Admin  
Jen Hoffmann, Admin  
Randy Braverman, Admin

Alejandra Ibanez, OPRF Community Foundation  
Andrea Neuman, Faculty  
Alison Myers, Faculty  
Fawn Donatucci, Faculty  
Nate Rouse, DLT  
Tina Halliman, DLT

**Equity Task Force**

Nina Allen, Thrive  
Ambria Jones, Student  
Kerry Nelson, P4SS  
Kimberly Werner, SEA  
Sharon Patchak-Layman, BoE  
Sheila Hardin, Faculty  
Jessica Stovall, Faculty

Sophia Lloyd, Community Foundation  
John Messina, Applause  
Josh Seldess, Admin.  
Katie O'Keefe, Faculty  
Amy Hill, DLT  
Anthony Clark, Community

**Transformational Teaching Learning and Leadership**

Bobbie Raymond, Alumni Assn.  
Aleta Clardy, Parent  
Anna Schaidler PTO - Roosevelt  
Jan Pyrcce, Citizens' Council  
John Duffy, Community  
Ginger Brent, Faculty

Claudia Sahagun, Admin  
Chala Holland, Admin  
Jon Adelman, Staff/TA  
Naomi Hildner, Faculty  
Glynis Kinnan, Faculty  
Phil Prale, DLT

**Holistic Community Education**

Nancy Guarino, Parent  
Carolyn Newberry-Schwartz, CEC  
Kathy Kern, Parenthesis  
Drew Swope, Student  
Kris Johnson, Faculty  
Deborah Baness-King, Triton  
Felicia Starks-Turner, District 97

Tina Steketee, District 90  
MJ Burns, Ascension  
Julie Frey, Admin  
Joyce Gajda, Faculty  
JP Coughlin, Faculty  
Karin Sullivan, DLT  
Carolina Song, PTO - Brooks

**Finance & Facilities**

Dick Chappell, RFCC  
Eric Davis, Parent  
Stephanie Jackson-Rowe, Community  
James Hunter, Faculty

Linda Carlson, Faculty  
Lindy Novotny, Faculty  
Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent

Dr. Alson asked the task forces to respond to three questions:

- 1) What has been discussed?
  - a. What topics are fueling the work?
  - b. What agreements have been reached?
  - c. What is taking time?
- 2) What are the challenges? What are the tough things that must be dealt with in this work?
- 3) What questions need answering?

### **Holistic Community Education (HCE)**

Facilitator Kris Johnson reported that while the HCE Task Force had met three times, it was not as far along in the process as it wanted to be. She referenced the minutes of the meetings that had been shared with the Committee prior to the meeting. The Task Force identified five areas of concern.

- 1) Middle school to high school transition or 8<sup>th</sup> grade to 9<sup>th</sup> grade transition
- 2) High school to post-secondary training or career
- 3) Continuum of coordinated effort and solid transition from early childhood to secondary education
- 4) Fostering partnerships with social agencies, public jurisdiction, service providers, and the high school
- 5) Seize opportunities to leverage resources to best meet the needs of students and where it makes sense—the broader community.

A question was raised about whether number five should be separate and an overarching theme to the other areas. Communication about equity is important both internally and externally with parents, committee organizations, etc. The Task Force desired a parent component for each of the subareas. The Task Force created subcommittees to work on the above items. Their work will be shared with the entire Task Force. Ms. Johnson noted the members of the Task Force were very committed.

The challenges include time, keeping the tasks manageable, and not duplicating the work of other groups. Ms. Johnson suggested combining efforts and insuring diverse perspectives. Input from outside agencies was also desired. The question was asked as to what the implementation process would look like.

Dr. Alson acknowledged that time was a legitimate concern. Given the huge amounts of time that everyone had expended, he wanted to dispel the belief that this report would not go anywhere, a legitimate issue in any public bureaucracy. His recommendation to the Board of Education will be to have public, quarterly reviews on the implementation of the plan. He hoped for a reflection of the plan in the Board of Education's goals and for resources to be allocated in the budget. The strategies and structures presented to the Board of Education will keep this public and the discussion alive. It will be important for the parents and the community to ask the Board of Education continually for input. Ms. Schneider reflected that the board of education at Roosevelt Middle School had not approved recommendations made by a committee composed of internal and external members, even though the committee had worked on the recommendations for over a year. She learned that everyone needs to be kept informed as the process moves forward. Dr. Alson felt that there would be a larger sense of carry-through when there was the consensus of 60 to 80 people on this endeavor.

Dr. Alson continued that Dr. Ron Ferguson, Harvard professor, makes the point that it takes a community's ongoing vigilance to the ideas of institutional equity around race to make it work. Thus, this work must continue beyond the strategic planning stage. Dr. Alson recommended that administration connect with outside partners in order to learn what initiatives and partnerships already exist and then strengthen those models and determine what other kinds of models would be valuable. Dr. Alson suggested that the co-facilitators meet to divide the work regarding core curriculum, assessment, parent engagement, working with incoming ninth graders around academic goal setting, etc.

### **Equity**

Mr. Nelson and Ms. Hardin spoke about the work of the Equity Task Force, which had met two times. They agreed on the following group norms: 1) staying engaged, 2) active listening, 3) no interrupting, 4) use the "I" statements rather than "they", "we", 5) agree to disagree but not to be disagreeable, and 6) speak "your" truth. The discussion started about what the phrase "eliminate academic achievement by race" meant. The task force then discussed the following topics and action items:

1. The number of minority students in the honors and AP level classes does not reflect the percentage of students in the student body.
2. What is the current process for a student to move up a level?
3. Is there data about why students drop down a level?
4. Should an investigation be commenced as to the way placements are made at OPRFHS?
5. Staff members should make an effort to know students well at OPRFHS.
6. Community involvement is critical when discussing equity at the high school
7. Social Emotion Learning could be key for building trust.
8. Adaptive change is necessary to provide a nurturing system – otherwise all of this will be a technical fix
9. Hiring of teachers.

Also considered was whether action steps could be created before having a community-wide discussion on race.

Task Force members were given index cards, which allowed them to write ideas down as they thought of them. The biggest challenge is that a systemic, adaptive change is needed, rather a technical one. Some things will require an adaptive change or a technical change, and some things will require both. Communication is an issue for all groups in order to identify problems and understand solutions.

The Equity Task Force welcomed resources from other task forces. Discussion ensued about the definition of the achievement gap as people may have different definitions. Two references were suggested: 1) “Learning Community Performance Gap,” written in 2003 and 2) the book “*Leadership on the Line*” by Ron Heifetz. The first one will be posted on the website. Each gives insight into the definition of the achievement gap.

#### Transformational Teaching, Learning, and Leadership (TTLL)

The TTLL Task Force members were enthusiastic about this work. They explored the four sub-goals:

- 1) Curricular development
- 2) Student monitoring for progress
- 3) Supportive teachers
- 4) Setting high expectations

These conversations led to discussions about resources, small classes, best practices, highly successful schools, changes for low-performing students, current programs addressing achievement gap, what is the baseline of the students enrolled, how appropriate is the curriculum, what about tracking, what does an honors class and college prep class look like, post high school life, what are cognitive and meta cognitive skills, what should teaching and learning be about, and academic goal setting for 9<sup>th</sup> graders based on strengths and challenges. The challenge is understanding the Board of Education’s commitment and role and then making a recommendation. The Task Force felt there was a huge gap between knowing and doing and it that needed to be closed.

When asked if schools that have closed the achievement gap had been identified, the response was that some smaller schools have been successful because of selective enrollments and some states have low-income selective enrollments. Some schools with the same demographics as OPRFHS have closed the achievement gap at a cost of \$40,000 to \$50,000 per student.

#### **Supportive Learning Environments**

Mr. Silver reviewed the notes provided to the Committee. The agenda for the SEL Task Force included discussing task force meeting protocols, review of the calendar, revisiting guide to thinking about SLEs

and exploring task, i.e., what does it mean to create an action plan. The Committee considered the following questions:

- 1) What is a supportive learning environment?
- 2) What are our current strengths and weaknesses in this area?
- 3) What resources currently enable a supportive learning environment?
- 4) What obstacles prevent a supportive learning environment?
- 5) What obstacles prevent a supportive learning environment?

Mr. Silver reviewed the responses to these questions that were included in the meeting notes.

Discussion ensued about new brain research that indicates that students' brains are not fully developed until the age of 26 and that brains do not stop growing until the age of 40, meaning students are changing/growing constantly. Therefore, the school must anticipate and be prepared for every child entering the high school as they will be different from each other.

There was agreement that the goal statement was broad and nebulous. What is the purpose of the school besides getting the students to graduation, and what does that mean and how will it look actionably. More discussion is needed about physical and personal space in order to talk about whether students feel like they want to be in the building—the hallways, the classrooms, etc. Would it be better to have small pods versus large classrooms? How can the school create a more inclusive environment?

Discussion ensued about getting feedback from a different student demographic, i.e., those that are not in an optimal environment, because they do not know what they want and they cannot verbalize what they are missing. One student commented that it was the students who participated in the Steering Committee who were the ones interested in providing feedback. Others do not feel it is their problem and just come to the high school for their four years. Another student said that some students took the survey seriously and added that the high school must make sure the facilities are being used and the students feel welcome. A suggestion was made that members of the task forces deepen their knowledge by talking with faculty and other students about this issue. A suggestion was also made that the group should determine what would be a positive community for both students and adults and what would be the ideal interaction between students and adults.

### **Facilities and Finance**

Dr. Isoye reported that the Board of Education had embarked on strategic planning for finances for several years through the Finance Advisory Committee and the Advisory Leadership Team. It takes several years to understand school finance so it was unreasonable to expect members of the Facilities and Finance Task Force to absorb that information in a short time period. However, it did make sense for them to be a conduit for the Long-term Facilities Committee, and, as such, the task force members joined this group and learned what it was doing to determine the financial and facility implications. That is where its work will occur in the deliverables. The work of this Task Force is to listen to the other task forces in order to act as a conduit.

Discussion ensued about what would get priority and how resources will be allocated in order to accomplish the goals. From a process point of view, recommendations that do not require money are easier to accomplish. Whatever is approved should go forward to the implementation committees without alternation. For those recommendations that require money, prioritizing will be more difficult. If there is a finite amount of money, people will give input as to what will have the greatest affect and it will be the Board of Education and the administration that will make those decisions as to where and when those dollars will be spent and that may include a scaling of the recommendations over the next five years. More students are projected to enroll at the high school and that cost will not be offset with more revenue.

Dr. Alson noted that the task forces should clearly identify why the recommendations are being made so that when it is time for the administration to recommend to the Board of Education how the money should be spent, the members of the community will understand the reasons for the recommendations.

It was noted that there is a movement around the country that students should have non-cognitive skills—grit and persistence. It is equally important for students to have the social and emotional skills as well as academic skills. The other issue discussed at this meeting was that when there is tension, people tend to think about programs to fix the problems. This is about how to change the culture of an organization. A program may help certain students and boost achievement, but the instructional practice or how people use data takes a systemic change/solution.

Dr. Alson noted that consideration was given to having the co-facilitators talk among themselves about overlaps, missing gaps, and coordinating next steps. This would include discussing where does equity get imbedded? Where is holistic community education, etc.?

Dr. Also reminded everyone to send the minutes to Ms. Kalmerton for distribution. He will be contacting the Equity and TTLL task forces and Ms. Maunsell will be contacting the SEL and Holistic Task Forces about their next meeting times.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.