

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

**Strategic Plan Steering Committee Minutes  
October 29, 2012**

Dr. Isoye opened the Strategic Plan Steering Committee meeting at 7:00 p.m., on October 29, 2012 in the Staff Café of the OPRFHS, 201 N. Scoville, Oak Park, Illinois.

Members:

Nina Allen, Thrive Counseling Center	Larry Landfair, Community Member
Dr. Allan Alson, Facilitator	Dana Limberg, OPRFHS
Jan Arnold, Park District of Oak Park	Sophia Lloyd, OPRF Community Foundation
Marge Balchunas, OPRFHS	Pat Maunsell, Facilitator
Dee Brennan, Oak Park Public Library	Melanie McQueen, Parent
Mary Jo Burns, Ascension School	John Messina, APPLAUSE
Leah Carlin, OPRFHS	Kerry Nelson, PTO/P4SS
Dick Chappell, River Forest Community Center	Carolyn Newberry-Schwartz, Collaboration for Early Childhood
Aleta Clardy, Community Member	Sharon Patchak-Layman, OPRFHS
Anthony Clark, Community Member	Jan Pate, YMCA
Randall Clark, Community Member	Regina Peterson, OPRF Scholarship Foundation.
Robert Cole, Assistant Manager of the Village of Oak Park	Phil Prale, OPRFHS
Dr. Edward Condon, River Forest Elementary Schools	Janice Pyrcce, Citizens' Council
JP Coughlin, OPRFHS	Bobbie Raymond, Alumni Association
John Duffy, Community Member	Dr. Albert Roberts, OP Elementary Schools
Valerie Fisher, OPRFHS	Latroy Robinson, Student
Joyce Gajda, OPRFHS	Nathaniel Rouse, OPRFHS
Kathryn Gargiulo, OPRFHS	Anna Schaidler, Roosevelt PTO
Nancy Guarino, Community Member	Steve Schwartz, OPRFHS
Dr. Tina Halliman, OPRFHS	Carollina Song, Gwendolyn Brooks PTO
Sheila Hardin, OPRFHS	John Stelzer, OPRFHS
Nancy Heezen, OPRFHS	Jessica Stovall, OPRFHS
Burcy Hines, APPLE	Karin Sullivan, OPRFHS
Maria Hoye, Community Member	Drew Swope, Student
James Paul Hunter, OPRFHS	Rick Tanksley, Oak Park Police Department
Dr. Steve Isoye, OPRFHS	Jane Townsley, Parent
Stephanie Jackson, Community Member	Mark Trinkka, Hephzibah
Mary Johnson, Student	Jason Tyszko, Community Member
Kris Johnson, OPRFHS	Alysa 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

Members not present: Aleta Clardy, Burcy Hines, Maria Hoye, Stephanie Rowe Jackson, Wyanetta Johnson, community members; Jan Arnold, Park District of Oak Park; Dee Brennan of the Oak Park Library; Joyce Gajda and Brian Reilly of OPRFHS; Kathy Kern of the Parenthesis; Regina Peterson of the Scholarship Foundation; Dr. Roberts of District 97; and Anna Schaidler of Roosevelt PTO.

Visitors included George Vukotich of the River Forest Community Center; Joanne Schochat, District 97 Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and General Counsel; and Jeff Weissglass, community member.

### **Ideas, Questions, and Concerns**

Dr. Alson asked the Committee members to share their random questions, concerns, and ideas with Gail Kalmerton, who will forward them to the appropriate people.

Committee members responded to whether they had questions/comments on the process, on the data already presented, etc.

- Q: Should the committee assume that the underlying assumption or goal be that students go to college? Do similar high schools have this expectation?
- A: The only other post-secondary data source outside of the National Student Clearinghouse is the high school's internal data. Much of the ACT College Board research is pointing to a conclusion that indicates that college and career readiness are similar. Preparing students for college and career readiness helps them to have as many post-secondary doors open as possible.
- Q: Could students be offered a reward to participate in the focus groups, i.e., extra credit, etc.? Voiced was a concern that only the students who are already involved with the school would participate.
- A: This suggestion will be considered.
- Q: Will the committee members have an opportunity to study the data distributed at the table? Could they have specific numbers, rather than percentages? What role does that the administrative structure play as a factor with the issues the school has been struggling with for years? To what degree is the school working to be inclusive? Are best practices with regard to inclusive being used at the high school?
- A: Strategic planning is to dream about the future. Everything is on the table, i.e., does the Committee have the right assumptions for the way teaching and learning occurs, the right administrative structure, the right interface between the school and community. The strategic planning process is a hard, messy, unwieldy journey until it comes together.

Dr. Alson asked all to continue to write down their ideas and concerns. Dr. Alson outlined what would be intended to occur at this meeting and upcoming meetings. This meeting would focus on academic data. On November 5, the agenda would include additional data as well as financial and facility data. On November 19, the committee will look at climate data that includes extracurricular participation, behavior, etc. Dr. Isoye thanked Ms. Hill for putting together the data. The data presented at the table were a result of a committee member's request. While the District will try to honor requests for data, it may not be able to do if the data has not already been compiled.

Dr. Alson then addressed concerns that had been raised at the October 17 meeting with regard to community and parent focus groups. He reminded the committee members that they were selected to help with sharing the voices in the community as they were all part of another group—student, faculty, parent, community organization, etc. Three designated time slots have been for slated for community input and any resident participation is welcome. In addition to hearing as many voices as possible, diversity relative to geographies, race, gender, etc., is imperative. Dr. Alson requested that committee members invite two or three residents to participate in the focus groups. To the request that the committee members help staff the workshops, two responses were received. The OPRF Community Foundation volunteered people that had been trained in facilitation of its groups. Pat Maunsell and he are able to handle a group of up to 40 people. It is important that people RSVP as to whether they plan to attend. The school will make the effort to go to as many different parent groups to encourage people to

RSVP and participate. Other opportunities to market the focus groups include the Parent/Teacher Conferences on November 7 and 8 and the Eighth Grade Parent Night. If more people want to attend than anticipated, a way will be determined to capture the voices at another time. Note: it is important to have community members who do not have students to know of this opportunity.

Ms. Hill then reviewed the remaining data sets presented at the last meeting. Graduation rates were further disaggregated by free and reduced lunch status and special education status for 2007-2011. The National Student Clearinghouse data from 2004-2011 was disaggregated by race but in a different format. The raw numbers were included on the first page, followed by a distribution for the class of 2004 and 2005, as well as whether students go to 2- or 4-year colleges and the rates at which they obtain degrees. The Committee was asked to consider the following questions: What did we learn? What questions do we have? What more do we want to learn? The Committee studied the data and then responded to the request that each table share one critical idea on the post-it notes at the table. Comments included:

- 1) There is a dramatic drop in African American high school graduates to post-secondary graduates. In terms of White students, the percentage increases from high school to post secondary. Is the College Prep track actually preparing students for college?
- 2) What is the high school's collaboration with other taxing bodies and organizations in the community?
- 3) How can the District get more students, no matter what demographic, ready for success at 4-year colleges? What accounts for disparity in growth between White and black students who come to OPRFHS with similar test scores? The data suggests that white students grow more. Why is that?
- 4) What additional information is available on matriculation and graduation rates of the different instructional levels, i.e., Basic, College Prep, and Honors?
- 5) To what degree can high school employees affect college retention? What are the other variables? In looking at the data of why, can the high school influence culture at the college level?
- 6) Graduation should be tied to a credentialing process that reflects personalized learning outcomes.
- 7) A lack of data exists with regard to social/emotional backgrounds, other influences, etc.
- 8) What is the breakdown, by race, of the Basic, College Prep, and Honors? Should the pie chart and the racial distribution be the same distribution at each of the three levels? Should this be a goal of strategic planning?
- 9) To what degree can collaboration between associate schools work on the same principles and ideas?

The Committee next considered how freshman students were represented racially across the different levels of classes offered as well as the racial makeup of AP classes. Additional data charts reflected weighted and unweighted GPA by race and gender. Ms. Hill briefly explained the high school's complicated GPA weighting system. A multiplier of .01 is assigned to every A or B grade received in an AP or honors class. A maximum of 24 semesters of honors/AP courses can be accumulated over four years. Again, the committee considered the same questions: What did we learn? What questions do we have? What more do we want to learn? What are the questions or implications for the future?

- 1) What percentage of students enrolled in the AP classes take the AP test? How many receive scores of 3, 4, and 5?
- 2) Can transition level classes be eliminated in the senior year?
- 3) What does race have to do with it?
- 4) How can the District progress on real merit and how does the data about the racial population in special education self-contained classes becomes much less homogeneous in its makeup 10 years from now?

- 5) What are the numbers for other groups? What are the raw numbers for Basic, College Prep, Honors?
- 6) What if the weighted GPA system actually aggravates the gap, as opposed to looking at the unweighted?
- 7) Disaggregate the data on the pie chart further to understand better the progress individual students make from their point of entry to their senior year. Does the individual student improve from where he/she started to where he/she ended?
- 8) How does ethnicity with regard to courses relate to student growth measures?
- 9) When will the high school stop hiding behind the data and deal with the issue head-on?
- 10) Without heavy collaboration at the elementary district, is it realistic for the high school to close the achievement gap?

Dr. Alson stated that a bias exists that any kind of school exists to serve students and create better life opportunities for them in order to help them grow academically as well as on the social/emotional level. He talked about the purpose of Strive Partnership, located in Cincinnati, whose purpose is to “bring people together to improve results for every child, every step of the way, from cradle to career.” Its work is in Cincinnati, Seattle, Portland, and other Midwestern cities. It focuses on mile markers such as kindergarten readiness, 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading proficiency, 8th grade math proficiency, high school graduation rates and ACT scores, and postsecondary enrollment, retention and completion. He reflected on the conversation at the tables about data existing in a variety of forms and ways at OPRFHS, and he felt everyone would agree that there is a racially identifiable achievement gap. He then asked if anyone was comfortable that the gap existed.

Dr. Alson continued that the committee’s purpose is to build a strategic plan for the next 5 years. What will OPRFHS look like in five years starting July 2013? What will the data look like if everything went well for this school, for this community, and for those students? If the committee members later believed that addressing that gap is important and it should be framed under equity or another goal, then it might collectively suggest that. He believed that there were beliefs, not proof, about what might be the causes for the gap. Part of the Strategic Plan is to say this is the goal, but strategies and plans are necessary to obtain that goal. Strategies and plans will require learning and direct actions to address the problems to try to reach the goal. It is important to have measurable 5-year goals and then work backwards as to what can be accomplished in 1 year, 3 years, etc., and determine who will do the hard work. He reiterated his comments from the first meeting that it will be important to ask for regular Board of Education reviews. All districts have tweaked or revised their strategic plans as they have lived them, but they have committed to the big picture goals.

From all of the data, along with personal and collective feelings, the Committee will do a deeper examination of what it believes are the strengths, the challenges, and the threats. From that, it will build the value, mission, vision, and goal statements.

Ms. Werner, after living in the community for 20 years and hearing how “we” all want to be successful and that everyone does great, asked why as a black and white community a racial and achievement gap was tolerated. Dr. Alson reported that if the committee had a sense around that goal and that there is not enough deep action and passive acceptance, action become important as a concept of change around expectations.

Anthony Clark felt that race had to do with almost everything concerning the gap. If stakeholders are not created in the lower performing difference, they will not make a difference. Dr. Alson agreed that stakeholder ownership is critical.

Ms. Raymond had received excellent information relative to the reading program, and she wanted it shared. Many more things are occurring at the high school than the committee is aware of and the committee should be aware of everything substantive that is being done to lessen achievement gap. She viewed this as a “golden” opportunity to be the leader in the United States; the high school that creates programs to disseminate the achievement gap. This is a fabulous opportunity to do what no one else has done. Dr. Alson concurred that a variety of initiatives does exist both at the high school and in the community. They are worth learning about because some may be more effective than others may and perhaps can be better aligned in the community. Ms. Lloyd cautioned the committee not to make decisions on assumptions or stereotypes, such as African American parents are not engaged, etc. She thanked Dr. Isoye, Dr. Alson and the Board of Education for taking on this subject.

Ms. Pyrce noted that the described process was about creating goals and strategies through 2018. She is comfortable with this committee. However, when discussion begins about steps and strategies, it will be a much heavier load to imagine strategies. In order to do that well, will research-based information be available? Dr. Alson referred to the benchmarks that Strive Partnership uses. There is a trajectory in a person’s life for achievement. The goal is to have by the end of January loosely identified goal statements. Committee members and others in the school community will be asked to join task forces, subcommittees for each of those goals. The Board of Education will be asked to embrace the Committee’s recommendation for the mission, vision, and values. Action steps will be developed for each of the goal statements. If everything is complete by the end of May, the Board of Education will be asked to approve. Actions plans would be ready to be transformed into implementation plans that would begin in July.

Ms. McQueen commented that all students have different issues at home and if they are not connecting with someone or they do not feel anyone cares or has empathy for them or they question what the point in succeeding in anything is. Teenagers are emotional beings; they need to have attention paid to them about how they feel about themselves. She felt looking at that aspect would make a huge difference. Dr. Alson quoted Dr. Ferguson about a student’s voice, “I don’t care about what you know, until I know that you care.” Not all groups are monolithic, as many students succeed and how they succeed is something to be explored. Mr. Duffy noted that 20% of the families come from poverty and the school has to be aware and advocate for their issues. While the school cannot change the world, it cannot be forgotten. Dr. Alson works as a consultant for the Panasonic Foundation, which is attempting to break the links between race, poverty, and achievement. Every time the consultants meeting, they have a collective conversation about race. The last discussion included the question of what is the relationship between equity and implementation between the common core standards. Forty-six states in the country have signed on to the common core state standards and two major testing groups are designing tests for all students which will be more rigorous thinking, deeper content knowledge, critical thinking, etc. The ISAT and PSAT tests will be defunct. Are all students equally prepared and if not what are we doing to get them there.

Dr. Alson noted his appreciation of everyone’s participation.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:48 pm.