

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Thursday, June 16, 2011, in the Board Room of the high school.

**Call to Order**

President Millard called the meeting to order at 5:13 p.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: Terry Finnegan, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Amy Leafe McCormack, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Sharon Patchak-Layman, and John Phelan. Also present was Dr. Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board of Education and FOIA Officer.

**Visitors**

Dr. Allan Alson, educational consultant and Cheryl Witham, Chief Financial Officer.

**Board Retreat**

Dr. Alson received consensus of the meeting's objectives:

- 1) Determine Board goals for 2012
- 2) Reach agreement on format and schedule of Board meetings, work-study sessions, and committee meetings
- 3) Develop preliminary plan for substance & timing of next retreat
- 4) Develop the framework for the next retreat and perhaps address the achievement gap.

Dr. Isoye presented the Board of Education with a list of items that DLT had accomplished this year relative to the Board of Education's goals. Dr. Isoye provided this list to inform the Board of Education of all the behind-the-scenes activities that had taken place. The administration has responsibilities to the public, to the State of Illinois, and to the Board of Education. Ms. Patchak-Layman saw these items as being programs that were being improved or new programs and their evaluation models would differ. If it one were part of the District's goals, measurables should be in place to determine whether it met the goal. Mr. Finnegan appreciated the list and was excited to see the buy-in on some of the things listed. He was impressed that Dr. Isoye had been able to bring so many parts of the school community together. Dr. Lee cautioned that the Board of Education would have to determine which things require attention and which things will have to be discontinued because of time and costs.

Dr. Alson appreciated everyone's comments and noted that the Board of Education has an obligation over time to create sharper, more focused goals about what it is trying to achieve with expectations for the administration to build the strategies to accomplish the goals. Having a list of items that contributed or was intended to contribute to the goals is helpful. The Board of Education has to determine 1) what is effective in achieving a goal, 2) the direction in advance for the administration, and 3) the strategies to try. He

concurred with the sentiment about the list and noted that it did not indicate what items were more valuable than others are.

Dr. Alson asked the Board of Education to review the focus of goals developed at the February retreat as noted below and asked for additional comments.

- Policy Manual
- Strategic planning
- Equity achievement goal
- Discipline & Relation to Academics
- Scorecard/Dashboard
- Teacher/Administrator Evaluation Instruments (Accountability)

Ms. Patchak-Layman was concerned that discipline was handled in one area and academics in another. Thus, academic instruction is not at the forefront when a student receives a discipline consequence. She was also concerned about how students learn behaviors, a part of the critical thinking on social emotional issues mandated by the state. Mr. Finnegan asked if the District knew who received referrals or suspensions, e.g., boys, girls, grades, race, teachers, etc.? What data needs to be collected to gain a deeper understanding? Ms. McCormack was concerned about the equity in the discipline system as she felt there was a belief that a student was guilty until proven innocent. Ms. Patchak-Layman remembered that Mr. Conway had recommended that feedback from students be obtained about teachers with regard to their evaluations.

The Board of Education then reviewed its goals for the 2010-11 school year. Dr. Alson asked if the categories of equity, finance, achievement, and environment were still viable. Discussion ensued. Suggestions for additional categories included:

- Safety/Climate/Engagement/Culture
- Communication to all
- Scorecard/dashboard
- HR—Staff related, communication
- Governance
- Strategic plan is a one-year activity.
- Accountability

Dr. Lee felt the need to develop a common understanding of the difference between what the Board of Education wants to see for the District and what it wants the Superintendent to do. Discussion ensued and Board of Education concurred that more specifics should be included with the goals. Dr. Allson suggested that whatever categories were chosen, the goals to accompany the categories be supportive. Equity had been chosen as a goal rather than achievement, because equity is bigger than achievement and

includes discipline, cultural pieces, hiring, the comfort level of minority teachers, etc. Dr. Allson suggested supported goals under racial equity might be something such as 1) based on survey results of teachers, students, and administrators, staff will have successful conversations about race and achievement that will have deepened their understanding of race to achievement and/or 2) through the use of the framework developed at the Board of Education's retreat, the District will address the achievement gap this year. Under culture and the learning environment the supportive goal might be that with the implementation of the new closed campus policy, there will be fewer student infractions related to drugs and unexcused absences. Under Finance, it could be the successful completion of the CBA that would promote the wellbeing of the adult work force and protect the resources of the community. He suggested the District might want to use SMART goals. These were just suggestions. He continued that having the same categories for several years would not stop the Board of Education from discussion in subsequent years about whether the categories still fit OPRFHS.

After further conversation, the Board of Education decided that the goal categories for next year would be:

- Racial Equity
- Student Achievement
- Culture and Learning Environment (all components)
- Finance and Operations and/or Human Resources
- Governance (accountability, and strategic planning)

In determining the actions/statements to go with these categories, Dr. Allan asked the Board of Education to consider what would support these goal categories. He suggested assigning a subcommittee of the Board to work with Dr. Isoye to determine the supporting statements. Board of Education members were asked to send their suggestions for supporting statements or stepping goals under each category to Dr. Isoye and/or Ms. Kalmerton by the end of June. Dr. Millard, Ms. Patchak-Layman, and Dr. Isoye, as well as Dr. Alson, will then review them and work on a plan to have goals with accountability measures built in for the Board of Education's discussion at its Special Board meeting on July 12, 2011.

### **Meeting Schedule**

The Board members were surveyed about its current meeting schedule. Committee meetings are generally currently held on Tuesday and Thursday mornings in the third week of the month except in July, November, and December. The drawbacks to this schedule may include prohibit some people to run for the Board of Education because of the amount of time it would take away from their regular work. In addition, more public might be available for evening meetings. It was suggested that instead of having committee meetings, the Board of Education hold two regular board meeting per month along with scheduling three or four periodic work-study sessions

where the committee chairs and the administrators would lead the discussion and/or retreats, during the year. Requests were made to schedule evening meetings on different days of the week on alternating weeks and not to have meetings on Wednesdays. One member felt that two regular board meetings per month would give the Board of Education more options on how things are placed on the agenda and committee chairs more time to consider the sequence of things.

It was the consensus of the majority of the Board of Education members to receive only electronic Board packets.

The following suggestions were made with regard to time management:

- 1) hold closed sessions prior to the open session;
- 2) send questions to administrators ahead of time
- 3) remove oral liaison reports and send written comments to be incorporated in the minutes;
- 4) remove open Board of Education comments from the agenda;
- 5) include the categories of “new business” and “old business”;
- 6) call for a motion before discussion occurs to focus the discussion;
- 7) review what the Board of Education wanted in regard to reports;
- 8) allow all members the opportunity to talk; and
- 9) End the meeting at a designated time.

Dr. Millard and Dr. Isoye will create a calendar of meetings. The Board of Education will schedule a retreat in August or September to identify the framework as to what actions to be addressed in the achievement gaps using real numbers, circumstances in the district and to observe where the gaps are. Dr. Alson stated that this would be a difficult, but important debate, about what they feel can be done to address the achievement gaps and where they should direct the efforts.

There was consensus for the retreat in August to develop a framework to address achievement as a goal. Dr. Isoye asked to invite the administrators to this discussion so that their thoughts could be considered. Dr. Lee felt the administrators would be more prepared to make meaningful suggestions.

## **Adjournment**

At 10:15 p.m. on Thursday, June 16, 2011, Dr. Lee moved to adjourn the Special Board Meeting; seconded by Dr. Millard. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Dr. Dietra D. Millard  
President

Amy McCormack  
Secretary