

February 17, 2009

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Tuesday, February 17, 2009, in the Board Room of the high school.

- Call to Order** President Conway called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: John C. Allen, IV; Jacques A. Conway, Valerie J. Fisher, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Sharon Patchak-Layman, and John P. Rigas. Also present were Dr. Attila J. Weninger, Superintendent; Jason Edgecombe, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Cheryl Witham, Chief Financial Officer; Jack Lanenga and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/ Clerk of the Board of Education.
- Visitors** Kay Foran, Communications and Community Relations Coordinator; James P. Hunter, Faculty Senate Executive Committee Chair; Debbie Neuman, Math Division Chair; Linda Cada, Special Education Director; and Todd Bloom of Managing Partner of Blueprint Education Group LLC.
- Visitor Comments** None
- Approval of Vendor Distribution List** Dr. Millard moved to approve the Vendor Distribution List dated February 17, 2009, as presented (attached to and made a part of the minutes of the meeting); seconded by Mr. Rigas. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.
- Presentation and Discussion of the Baldrige Process** Dr. Weninger reported that the District has investigated and researched the Baldrige Organizational Assessment process over the past several months with the purpose of identifying a model that OPRFHS could use for systemic continuous improvement. Todd Bloom of Blueprint Education Group has extensive, national experience with school districts in utilizing the Baldrige assessment process and in implementing improvement services. Dr. Weninger explained that he first met Dr. Bloom of Blueprint Education Group LLC at a leadership session at the national conference of the American Association of School Personnel Administrators (AASPA).
- Typically, the Baldrige process involves the Board of Education and district school administration; however, in this proposal two features were added that are not used in other Baldrige school processes. They were: 1) broad stakeholder representation on the steering committee, and 2) broad stakeholder involvement on each criterion team. These levels of involvement include Board members, administration, faculty, staff, students, and parents; in particular, student involvement is unique to this process. The goal is to involve stakeholders who will develop buy-in and ownership of the process and improvement services.

The following documents were provided:

1. two, brief articles from American Association of School Administrators (AASA) about the Baldrige process and awards;
2. *A Systems Perspective* – a graphical display of the assessment categories;
3. Education Criteria for Performance Excellence Framework;
4. Six pertinent sections from the 2009-2010 Baldrige National Quality Program – Education Criteria for Performance Excellence, which are the basis of the process and comprise the substantive criteria in identifying where OPRFHS is performing well, in what areas improvements are necessary, and how they might be address; and
5. The Blueprint Proposal.

Dr. Bloom distributed copies of his PowerPoint presentation. He also informed the Board of Education that his life has been devoted to education, and that his experience included being a teacher, a researcher, and working with educational organizations, both non-profit and for-profit, and with school districts. The Blueprint Education Group is the organization under which he works and he holds an appointment at Student Paths. His clients include the following school districts and educational organizations:

- Deer Valley Unified School District in Arizona on a Baldrige-based improvement project;
- Anoka Hennepin School District in Minnesota on the Superintendent Transition Success Project
- APQC, which deals with processes in school districts, has benchmarked good practice;
- New York City Board of Education on a Teacher Attendance Management Project
- Volusia County Schools in Florida on a HR Performance Management Project
- Lake County Schools in Florida on Professional Development Needs Assessment
- Ysleta Independent School District in Texas about a Best Practices Continuity Project.

In his presentation, he gave 1) an overview of the Baldrige process, 2) the reasons why a school would choose Baldrige, 3) some sample Baldrige projects, and 4) how Baldrige would work at OPRFHS.

He informed the Board of Education that most schools use Baldrige as a framework and while Baldrige is not the only framework to use, it is important that the school have a framework. Organizations implement the Baldrige process for a variety of reasons:

1. Customers (students), competitors (schools), or the budget drive a need for change.
2. Environment is changing
3. An organizational is among the best, and its staff want to makes sure it stays that value (valuing the staff)

4. Develop a structure on which to base improvement efforts.

He recommended focusing on a maximum of five of the following interrelated core values and concepts with a central focus on the students as the customers.

1. Visionary leadership
2. Learning-centered education
3. Organizational and personal learning
4. Valuing faculty, staff, and partners
5. Agility
6. Managing for innovation
7. Management by fact
8. Social responsibility
9. Results and value creation
10. Systems perspective
11. Focus on the future

The following core values are pervasive throughout the seven Baldrige Criteria that provide a structure/frame work for school districts to their performance.

- Leadership: How do leaders lead? Governance and social responsibility?
- Strategic Planning: How is strategy developed and deployed?
Student, Stakeholder and Market Focus- How are these data obtained and used? How are the stakeholder relationships built and grown?
- Measurement, Analysis and Knowledge Management: How do you measure, analyze, and improve organizational performance? How do you manage information, IT, and organizational knowledge?
- Workforce Focus: How do you engage in the workforce for personal and organizational performance? How do you build a supportive work environment?
- Process Management: How do you design work systems? How do you manage and improve key work processes
- Results: Student Learning Leadership? Stakeholder satisfaction? Financial and market? Workforce? Process effectiveness?

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked about where the shaping and deciding took place in this process. Did leadership shape the questions before the results part? Dr. Bloom stated that leadership, strategic planning, and meeting the needs of the students and the parents make sense together, but his personal belief is that leadership does not work in isolation. Baldrige advocates a shared leadership model. Each criterion has two guiding questions, but leadership includes government, as noted above. The linkage is between the school district, as the public entity, and the public in terms of providing overall fiscal management, as well as guidance. Research shows now that there is a linkage between superintendent performance and student performance and that can be found in the results section. Those school districts with which he has worked struggled most with process effectiveness.

He provided information about one school district who won the Baldrige Award, Iredell-Statesville Schools, a school district that has 20,000 students and that now has the top SAT scores in the state. He quoted the following, “In five short years Iredell-Statesville schools has moved from a rank in the lower quartile of school systems to the current rank in the top quartile and in some cases the top 10 in North Carolina. Attendance rates are high, teacher quality is high, and expenditures for operations are among the lowest in the state.” He presented the model that it used for effective and efficient support processes, although he stated that this might not be the model used at OPRFHS.

Deer Valley Unified School District is not a small district and is now a highly performing district in Arizona, although Arizona rates at the bottom of the United States. He began working with that district right after it had been presented a three-year strategic plan. It was very difficult for him and the others on the balanced scorecard team to present a balanced scorecard, as the district did not have measurable benchmarks. It is now putting together “smart goals”; it is making mid-course corrections to its strategic plan.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the District’s mission, value, and goals were to be in place prior to the commencement of this process. Dr. Bloom stated that within the seven Baldrige criteria, two questions are asked. By reflecting on the answers to the questions, one can see what is missing. This process will not build a strategic plan but it will determine if a school has a strategic plan. The Deer Valley Unified School District superintendent has been named the state’s superintendent of the year by AASA. The district did a full assessment and profile and asked where the highest leveraged improvement opportunities were in process management and measurement. Rapid Process Mapping (RPM) was implemented so that all know their performance combines with what the District is trying to achieve, i.e., vertical involvement. It did not involve as many teachers nor community members, as would OPRFHS.

Dr. Bloom reviewed the phases of the work outlined in the proposal with the Board of Education members (attached to and made a part of the minutes of this meeting).

Dr. Bloom stated that he would facilitate the Steering and Criterion Team meetings and would take full responsibility for each of these meetings.

The most advantageous time to start this work would be in August.

Q: When will these meetings take place?

A: They could occur during the day or in the evenings.

Q: Would Mr. Bloom train the person who is here to facilitate that action?

A: Yes. He will take full responsibility for the on-the-job training of the facilitators of these meetings.

Q: How many other meetings would take place between the facilitated meetings for each of the groups?

A: He referred to Phase II of the Proposal, Assess Organizational Performance. The steering committee meetings occur once per month and he facilitates. The Criterion meetings will occur two times per month and he will facilitate the first and the sixth meeting. Should additional meetings be required, Mr. Bloom would make those accommodations.

Ms. Patchak-Layman saw this as a Board of Education project and it was the owner of it, rather than it being an administrative project. Mr. Allen as unconcerned about ownership, just the composition of the groups to make sure parents, students, and staff were involved. While the Board of Education approves the financing, processing, and the recommendation, the ownership belongs to the institution. Dr. Weninger concurred. Mr. Bloom said that although he has not done a survey on what is “typical,” the thing that he likes is when there is no shift between what leadership thinks and does and what the other staff is doing. There is alignment of moving together in a uniform set of steps. He applauded that as the right direction to take.

Ms. Patchak-Layman felt this should be a public process and part of her questioning of this is that OPRFHS does not have a strategic plan. The conversation about value, mission, and goals has not taken place within the community or had the Board of Education had this conversation or affirmed its policies. She had difficulty determining if this conversation would occur in the other committee meetings, as the mission, vision, and goals would influence some of the conversation. Will the “bottom-up” influence the setting? When it is a public process, one makes sure that everyone has agreement on the same starting point. To have community involvement does not answer the question. If this were a Board of Education process, her desire would be to have the diversity of the Steering Committee actually represent all of the voices in order to have the discussion. Dr. Bloom would not hesitate to open the steering committee up to more members, but he cautioned that too many members would make the committee less agile. He recognized the issue and noted it was a balancing act. One school district had a strategic planning for seven years and the Superintendent had not made it a priority. The qualitative analysis of the Baldrige Process said that the District did not have a strategic plan. A group of people, staff, parents, students, and Board of Education members, decided unanimously that one was needed. Dr. Bloom would never say that a district needed a strategic plan before starting the Baldrige Process.

Q: Would Dr. Bloom do an analysis of the information provided by the committee, as opposed to the information provided by the administration?

A: There are a number of models from which to choose.

Q: Because he has worked in many areas, how would Dr. Bloom guard against the ways he sees things happening in this District? How would he filter his specialty?

A: Dr. Bloom stated that every researcher has bias and one must be transparent about what those biases are. Just because he is facilitating the meeting does not mean he cannot be questioned or corrected. That sets good meeting standards and he invites that kind of information.

Q: What kinds of exposures has his firm had about race?

A: Dr. Bloom could document his experience in South Carolina and New York and he has the experience to deal with sensitive issues. His minor is in Policy Studies at the University of Madison. He also engages a number of other consultants on occasion. The diversity of the districts with which he has worked has been great. While happy to provide exact numbers, Dr. Bloom estimated that in El Paso, 70 percent were Hispanic and in Charleston County, there was over 50 percent diversity, etc. He clarified that OPRFHS was not unique in how he has engaged community members in past projects, e.g., from an organizational management perspective of the projects, from surveying all community members or facilitating meetings at the high school to understand organizational management, etc. He offered to delineate his experience in the other projects. There is no template for this work.

Q: How important would it be for the new Board of Education to have agreement with this proposal?

A: Dr. Millard stated that would cause another informational session to be held in May and the proposal would not be finalized before June. She continued that the process of the school is one that rolls continually. If all decisions were made based on the election time it would make it a difficult process for any leadership organization. The Board of Education members are elected to do what is best. She felt this Board of Education was able to make this decision. Dr. Bloom noted that after the new Board of Education members were seated, he would be happy to make the presentation again. His other projects had survived Board of Education member turnaround and that was a testament to the Baldrige process.

It was the consensus of the majority of the Board of Education members to accept the administration's recommendation to approve the Blueprint Education Proposal at its regular Board of Education meeting scheduled for February 26, 2009.

Closed Session No closed session was held.

Consideration of Grievance This was tabled until the Thursday, February 26, 2009, Board of Education meeting.

Adjournment At 11:35 a.m. on Tuesday, February 17, 2009, Dr. Lee moved to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Allen. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Dr. Ralph H. Lee
Secretary

By Gail Kalmerton
Clerk of the Board