

Oak Park River Forest High School Board
January 28, 2016
Mary Haley, Observer

Present: Jeff Weissglass-President, Jackie Moore-Vice President, Tom Cofsky, Steve Gevinson, Sara Dixon Spivy, Fred Arkin and Jennifer Cassell

Mr. Weissglass called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

Public Comment: John Duffy commented on the district's ongoing work to close the achievement gap. He presented a copy of **On the Same Track** by Carol Corbett Burris and a series of articles about Evanston Township High School District's work on its achievement gap as resources for the board in dealing with this issue.

Five seniors requested that the board amend the graduation dress code. The current dress code, the students maintain, is based on a binary gender code, presents an economic hardship for some students and emphasizes fashion over academic achievement. Their recommendation is to allow girls to wear dresses or business attire.

Introductory Reports: Jamelyn Lederhouse of Global Glimpse thanked the board for letting the organization work with the district. It provides an afterschool program that brings diverse students together to develop leadership skills and to broaden their knowledge of the world. 114 OPRFHS students have signed up for the program. This summer the students will travel to Latin America to participate in service projects.

A presentation was made by students working with Chicago VOYCE, a Chicago organization founded to address the problem of high school dropout. The students have developed Students Against Punitive Practices (SAPP). Its aim is to make OPRFHS discipline system more beneficial to the students by emphasizing students' needs rather than penalties.

Consent Items: All items were passed unanimously.

Action Items: All items were passed. The Authorization to Prepare Amended FY 2015-2016 Budget passed by a vote of 4-3. Mr. Cofsky objected to the item, stressing that it is a time consuming process that can be better handled through the use of variances.

Discussion: Amy Hill, Director of Assessment and Research, responded to questions deriving from her report on achievement. The Explore test as a means of determining course placement will be replaced by other means of evaluating a student's literacy and numeracy. The use of overrides (parents choosing course placements other than those recommended) did not vary significantly by race. Further information from the report can be found at https://intranet.oprfhs.org/board-of-education/board_meetings/Regular_Meetings/Packets/2015-16/20160128%20Reg%20Packet/Information/Achievement%20Indicators%20Update%20January%2028%202016.pdf

Dr. Isoye introduced the discussion of fees for 2016-2017. He asked the board to consider its philosophy on who should bear the cost of students' fees: the students/families or the taxpayers. The current IMF covers the cost of books and materials. Next year each student will receive a Chrome tablet at a cost of \$141,500 to the district. Jacqui Charette-BassiriRad, the bookstore manager, explained that since the bookstore is

required to be self-sustaining, some markup of books and materials is required. Waivers are available to families that meet certain requirements. A number of questions were asked as the board considered Dr. Isoye's initial question. Mr. Weissglass asked the board to consider who should pay for the cost of waivers. If public education is free, asked Mr. Arkin, should the district charge any fees? Mr. Cofsky suggested that there be no additional technology fee as computers are simply another part of delivering education. He also asked if the waiver system could be consistent with every Oak Park/River Forest public entity so families do not have to duplicate the application process. Dr. Gevinson asked what would be the impact on the fund balance if the district did not charge a technology fee. He recommended that the administration see how other districts are handling the issue. Mr. Weissglass stated that the district collects about 1.4 million dollars in fees. While courts have upheld the right of school districts to charge fees, he asked the board to consider the idea that if education is for the social good, should the community bear the entire cost of it.

Informational Items: An evaluation of the Board of Education Goals indicates that the board is on track to meet its goals.

Mr. Weissglass provide a pool update. The schematics for the pool as previously approved are complete. The committee, however, is reconsidering other options including a joint project with the park district.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 p.m.