

**Official Minutes of the  
Oak Park Board of Education District 97,  
260 Madison Street, Oak Park, Cook County, Illinois  
Special Tri-Board Meeting May 1, 2017**

This meeting was held at Roosevelt Middle School located at 7650 Oak Avenue in River Forest, IL in partnership with River Forest School District 90 and Oak Park River Forest High School District 200.

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.

Present: Spurlock, Liebl and O'Connor, Broy and Datta (arrived late)  
Absent: Spatz and Breymaier  
Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Carol Kelley, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations Alicia Evans, Senior Director of Special Services Mike Padavic, Senior Director of Policy, Procedures and Communication Chris Jасulca, and Board Secretary Sheryl Marinier

ROLL CALL

Also Present: Members of the Board of Education for District 90 and District 200, Superintendent of District 90 Dr. Ed Condon, and Superintendent of District 200 Dr. Joylynn Pruitt-Adams

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Spurlock moved, seconded by O'Connor that the Board approve the agenda as printed.

Aye: Spurlock, O'Connor, Broy and Liebl  
Nay: None  
Absent: Datta, Spatz and Breymaier

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Everyone was asked to participate in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

All board members introduced themselves and shared the length of service on their boards.

**GUEST AND SCHOOL DISTRICT PRESENTATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL EQUITY**

River Forest board member Ralph Martire was introduced. He shared a letter written by Senator Lightford who wanted to thank the districts for setting an example for the entire state. In her letter, she suggested that the "time for change is now".

Martire explained that the three districts are focused on equity partially because Illinois has the lowest funding gap out of all 50 states, and we have a group of boards that want to ensure that local resources are spent equitably. He noted that all children need to succeed academically and shared data that indicates that the salaries of people with advanced college degrees double. He suggested that everyone benefits if all the children are successful. He reported that the median hourly wage for Whites increased modestly between 1980 and 2014, but the White-Hispanic wage gap is larger in amount, growing from \$4.36 per hour in 1980 to \$5.98 in 2014, an increase of 37 percent over 1980. Median wages for African-Americans declined, in real terms. The hourly wage gap between Whites and African-Americans grew from \$1.74 in 1980 to \$5.18 in 2014, an increase of 197 percent over 1980. Martire noted that by getting a 90 percent high school graduation rate for students of color, it would mean about \$246,000,000 more annually to the Illinois state GDP.

Martire noted that the federal Equity and Excellence Commission found that eliminating the achievement gap between white students on the one hand, and African-American and Hispanic students on the other would add "some \$50 trillion (in present value terms) to our economy" over the next 80 years. Simply achieving a 90 percent graduation rate for students of color would add as much as \$6,600,000,000 in annual earnings to the U. S. economy. Given that Illinois accounts for around 4.4 percent of the nation's GDP, a similar improvement in graduation rates for students of color in Illinois could be expected to add \$264,000,000 more annually to our state's economy.

Martire explained that from 1970 – 2010, there was a strong relationship between the academic achievement of a state's adult workers and economic growth in that state, with states like Massachusetts, Minnesota, Texas, and

North Dakota having both significantly greater levels of achievement and rates of economic growth, while states like Alabama, Mississippi, Utah, and Nevada lagged the nation in both achievement and rate of economic expansion. He suggested that investing in those educational practices which have statistically meaningful correlations to enhancing student achievement is particularly important from an economic standpoint.

Martire concluded by reminding the boards that our communities have the local resources to make a difference; we just need to apply them differently.

Dr. Joylynn Pruitt-Adams, Superintendent of Oak Park River Forest High School District 200, explained that her district wants to be intentional about what they mean when they refer to equity. They are talking about racial equity. She noted that race intersects with other factors, such as the disproportionate number of students in special education who are African-American boys and the disproportionate number of low-income students who are black and Hispanic. She noted that by focusing on racial equity, we are able to address equity for other marginalized populations as well. She shared that in the context of the school, we define racial equity as the condition that would be achieved if our students' racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how they will fare. We also think about racial equity as one part of racial justice. So we work to address the root causes of inequities, not just the symptoms.

Dr. Pruitt reported that one of the six major goals in the district's strategic plan is equity: Oak Park River Forest High School will continuously strive to create an environment where the academic achievement and social and emotional growth of students will no longer be predictable by race, socioeconomic status, or other social factors. She shared that the district is currently working on bringing the plan into full implementation.

She reported that a Culture, Climate, and Behavior Committee has been created made up of board members, administrators, staff, parents and representatives from Districts 90 and 97. Its charge was to create a three-year plan that addresses the Strategic Plan's Equity Goal in creating a school where all students feel welcome and safe. She noted that the committee recently issued its recommendations, which focus on three areas; assuring our current culture and climate, engaging multiple voices and perspectives, and holding participants accountable for meeting the goals we say we are going to meet.

Dr. Pruitt introduced the District Equity Leadership Team (DELT) as part of the work completed over the years with Pacific Educational Group, a consultant group founded to create racial equity in K-12 schools. DELT includes all district-level administrators and several faculty members. The main purpose of DELT is to lead, oversee, and manage the process of transformation, and systemic change. She noted that achieving equity for students' means going beyond just putting programs in place, therefore, the district is completing a five-year cycle of professional development. During the past five years, every faculty and staff member has participated in the Racial Equity Learning Strand, with a purpose of defining race and racism, and then discover how they negatively affect low-performing student populations through school policies, programs and practices.

Dr. Pruitt explained that CARE was developed just this year. CARE is designed to support teachers in discovering the challenges that exist in their racial relationships with students. Roughly 45 administrators, teachers, counselors, and social workers are going through twice-monthly training to become CARE leaders. The four cornerstones of CARE work are; participating in authentic racial self-reflection, developing critical racial consciousness, engaging in healthy racial discourse, and conducting racial investigation of educator practice. Essentially, through the work of CARE, teachers study their professional practices in order to eliminate the systemic racial educational disparities within their control.

Lastly, Dr. Pruitt introduced Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS), a national organization focused on closing the gap for underrepresented students. She explained that 30 Illinois high schools and 240 schools in 18 states are working with EOS. She noted that they looked at 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade advanced placement data, disaggregated by race and income. When compared to the demographics of the school, students of color and/or low income were underrepresented by 311 students. Teachers were surveyed and students who have the potential to succeed in an AP course were identified and invited to enroll next year. Out of the 311 students, 223 enrolled in an upcoming course. A variety of support will be provided to ensure success of this program.

Dr. Kelley began by sharing the district 97 vision; "Creating a positive learning environment for all District 97 students that is equitable, inclusive and focused on the whole child." She explained that upon joining the district, she embarked on a "listen and learn" tour to better understand the issues, strengths and challenges of the district and its stakeholders. One of the key takeaways from those sessions was the need for the district to establish and implement a "clear, shared vision, with a sustained focus." To help accomplish that goal, she conducted 13 community conversations and heard from 255 parents/guardians, community members, district staff members,

teachers, administrators and students (current and alumni). During those community conversations, many stakeholders articulated that some students experience District 97 “differently.” This was described as the existence of unfair bias and negative assumptions that some adults in schools have around student behavior and academic performance. Using this information, the district developed a vision statement and a general map for integrating it into who we are and what we do for kids. Administration then worked with the National Equity Project and the district-level leadership team, CAB-VAAT, to create shared definitions of the four key terms that serve as the cornerstones for the vision – equity, inclusive, positive learning environment, and whole-child focused. She shared that the work draft definition that the district is using is, “the practice of beliefs and creation of systems that provide access and opportunities for all students in order to eliminate the predictability of outcomes associated with race, gender and socioeconomic status.” The district is using a tool called Let’s Talk to solicit feedback from/engage in a dialogue with the community about the working definition of all four terms. She reported that CAB-VAAT has met to review the feedback and anticipates having a completed definition of equity.

Dr. Kelley shared that to achieve the vision, the two major areas the district will focus on over the course of the next two years are: 1) Ensuring all systems, structures and processes within District 97 reflect an understanding of what it means to support the successful development of each and every student, 2) Establish a comprehensive system of support for District 97 teachers. She explained that the District will know that they have achieved its vision when every child it serves experiences or demonstrates the universal goals. She explained that the district is working toward achieving this vision for every student by using a process called targeted universalism which provides a framework for designing policy/programs/initiatives that acknowledges our common goals, while also addressing the sharp contrasts in access to opportunity between differently situated sub-groups; barriers to quality education, well-paying work, fair mortgages, etc.

Dr. Kelley explained that in November, 2016, the Board of Education approved the universal goals and the plans to measure the progress toward attaining the vision. Using the district metrics, administration reviewed the disaggregated student level of attainment data in comparison to our excellent targets with the leadership team and staff. At the January 27, 2017 Institute Day, the staff identified the opportunity structures, such as programs, resources and conditions that support or block attainment of the universal goal for all students. Students are all situated differently, but not evenly, within “opportunity structures”. These structures (physical, social and cultural) interact in ways that can lead to racialized outcomes.

Dr. Kelley noted that the district wants every student to have equitable access to cognitively demanding, culturally, socially relevant real world tasks that require students to question, explore, research, make decisions and communicate their findings. From the Pre-Kindergarten program to Full-day Kindergarten and from elementary school to our authorized IB programs at the middle schools, we are striving to organize instruction around standards and more clearly communicate expectations so our students have a defined path that is guiding them toward realizing their full potential. Dr. Kelley reported that equity is interwoven in everything we do.

Dr. Condon, Superintendent of River Forest District 90, introduced Peter Chien and Barbara Stoldt, members of the Superintendents Advisory Board and Equity Council. The district’s Vision for Equity was shared; “To ensure that every student feels empowered to achieve to his or her full potential, we commit to provide equitable opportunities for all learners, grow an inclusive school community, and demonstrate we value diversity.” They reported that the work that actually started several years ago needs to be community based. They reported that the Inclusiveness Advisory Board (IAB) focuses on staff development needs, with emphasis on areas of inclusivity and mindfulness about interactions with others, friendships and relationships and strategies to increase inclusiveness for families, and the Board of Education Equity Committee focuses on support of pedagogical “best practices”, targeted professional development and revised recruiting and hiring practices.

They shared that the National Equity Project (NEP) facilitated several events and the Board has approved an ongoing partnership with NEP for the 2017-2018 school year.

The team reported the following accomplishments and milestones:

- Formation of IAB
- Conducted inclusiveness surveys for students, staff, and families
- Ensured that equity issues were given primacy in Strategic Plan
- Provided Anti-Defamation League anti-bias training for staff and community members
- Developed the district Vision for Equity statement, adopted by the Board in August, 2016
- Initiated NEP training and coaching experiences for staff, Board members, administrators, and community participants

- Provided opportunities for staff and community to read and discuss four books
- Formed and established the Board Equity Committee
- Investigated and evaluated potential organizational partners selecting the National Equity Project from seven finalists
- Conducted a student academic achievement audit, with an emphasis on subgroup performance

Short-term goals include;

- The “One District, One Book” initiative – Mindset, by Carol Dweck
- Ongoing professional development for faculty and staff
- Refinement of recruiting/hiring practices and processes; partnership with Alma Advisory Group consultants
- D90 Inclusiveness Survey analysis (students, staff, and families)
- Development of minority sub-group achievement monitoring tool
- Systematic implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Long-term goals include;

- Recruiting and hiring practices aligned to increase staff diversity
- Superintendent’s Leadership Council (SLC) review of grading practices and student progress reporting
- Ongoing partnership with NEP to provide targeted staff training
- Establishment of inclusiveness protocols to better serve students and families
- Instructional P.D. for pedagogical practices that foster equitable achievement

**INTER-BOARD DIALOGUE/DISCOURSE**

Vice President O’Connor asked the other boards to share what their district is doing to ensure that the kids who are behind have access or equal access to the best teachers?

District 200 explained that their per pupil costs do not fluctuate as other districts, and the district offers extended programs for students who need help reaching grade level. It is not always years of experience or degrees that make a great teacher. Administration needs to consider classroom management and the ability to be fluent across disciplines. They are working diligently to ensure that teacher issues are not a detriment to their students. District 90 explained that they monitor funding and the FTEs from school to school. Martire suggested that all districts need to be vigilant to what the data is telling them, and shared that District 90 is getting ready to do an audit. He shared that the equity committee is looking at evidence based practices to eliminate achievement gaps. The audit will include looking at classrooms to making sure they are inviting. District 200 is working on improving the skill set of all teachers and then will reallocate resources, considering what is the “true need” versus the “want”.

**COMMUNITY FEEDBACK AND QUESTIONS / PUBLIC COMMENT**

Brian Timpona, a River Forest resident, shared that his children attend St. Luke’s. He asked if anyone has any level of skepticism about this, and he noted that few people raised their hands. He shared that he grew up in the south suburbs and studied equity, and he saw what it did to New Trier High School. He suggested that the Chicago area schools receiving the most funding are the black schools even though there is no evidence that more money increases learning. He asked the boards to consider the other side.

Martire responded explaining that he served on the commission with a gentleman who was the head of the Hoover Institute at Harvard, and another gentleman who filed a lawsuit on behalf of low income children. They came out with a unanimous recommendation on ways to reduce the gap. He suggested that the evidence based model is a great summary on how to eliminate the gap over time. Additionally, it was noted that the achievement gap by race is worse than the income in Illinois.

Jack Flynn, a River Forest resident, who’s children attended Oak Park River Forest High School, Fenwick High School and Trinity High School, shared that the opportunities are slim for children from a home that has a single parent with a high school education. If children have two parents with a college education, they have a better chance of succeeding. He suggested longer school days or extra afterschool work for students who are not at grade level. Additionally, he recommended tutors.

Libbey Paul, an Oak Park resident and District 200 parent, expressed interest and excitement about the equity committee and inclusion of parents on the District 97 committee. She asked if there could be more parent partnerships.

Dr. Kelley shared that District 97 currently has parents participating on the Superintendent's Advisory Panel and on the CLAIM committee. Both groups have done work related to equity.

Jeff Kraft, a River Forest resident, noted that everyone can agree that we can do better. He referenced the District 200 Website on college readiness, noting that only the White children are succeeding. He reminded the Boards that the children only get one chance at this. Kraft noted that the District 97 suspensions are rising, and questioned what the equity plan is over time. He suggested that the districts do not need committees and consultants, but need to set goals to end systemic failures. He suggested that it should only take about 90 – 100 days to come up with a plan, and he offered to help. He encouraged the boards to allow the community to partner with them. The districts shared ways that they are currently taking action.

Martire suggested more collaboration among the three boards.

Lisa Peliquin, an Oak Park resident with children in District 97, thanked all for their commitment and suggested that fixing the gap is incredibly hard. She suggested that the best way to ensure a child's success is to supply a high quality pre-Kindergarten. The Collaboration for Early Childhood was recognized for their efforts in this area. Dr. Kelley noted the Collaborations efforts with early development indicators. She explained how they are identifying pockets of families that do not have access to early childhood services. She explained that both Longfellow and Whittier schools have pre-Kindergarten programs. Additionally, District 97 is working with staff to expand resources in partnership with the collaboration.

Chuck Toppen, a River Forest resident, questioned if there are plans to interject to help kids who are half way through. Dr. Condon explained that there are multiple efforts in this area. He noted the blended preschool program which is providing a wonderful foundation for participants and the district is helping non-disabled student with their opinions of the disabled students. He noted that these are all adaptive changes and solutions have to be community based across the board and community values. Dr. Pruitt explained that the strategic plan reaches down to the preschool level and community education. She noted that the superintendents are committed to holding dialogues to ensure that the students' needs are being addressed on the forefront.

Steven Hemple, an Oak Park resident with three children, commended the boards and shared that he is encouraged by the dialogue. He suggested that additional resources are not an option and suggested that the taxes are sufficient to make the necessary changes. He shared that during the election, he looked for candidates who have new ideas and are motivated to take this on. He encouraged the boards, expressed support, and asked what the community is doing to get the perspective of students affected by the gap to see what they need? Dr. Kelley is attempting to do Let's Talk and community conversations, noting that the next one will be held on May 31, 2017 at Julian Middle School. She noted that the district is also listening to the students. The schools are engaging each other, and they are planning a town hall on May 18, 2017. All senior leaders have an advisory group in some form or fashion. Additionally, the district listens to the students and encourages an open door policy. They push out into the community and listen. District 200 is also doing a listening tour for faculty and staff. It was noted that the number one topic at these gatherings is equity. The District 200 Community Council is getting insight and framing some of the future work. Additionally, the board is reaching families that are not coming to the listening tours and trying to find ways to connect with them. A family outreach person was recommended to work on this effort. It was suggested that families need to be as connected as the students.

Carolyn Newberry Schwartz, an Oak Park resident, past president of the District 97 Board of Education and currently the Executive Director of the Collaboration for Early Childhood commended the districts for partnering with each other. She noted that the Collaboration has been doing a lot of screenings in River Forest and encouraged a partnership that includes the Collaboration. She recommended a holistic community education and a bridge from pre-kindergarten through high school. She noted that four years ago this month, the Collaboration entered into a partnership with Districts 97 and 200. She noted that most of the architecture in a child's brain is developed by the time they are three.

Everyone was reminded that this is Teacher Appreciation Week and were encouraged to visit the District 90 Website to view presentations on what students, teachers and administration are doing. It was suggested that the key is to articulate curriculum and learning.

Everyone was invited to a presentation by Ralph Martire on May 11, 2017 at Julian Middle School in Oak Park.

Martire thanked the boards and made a motion for each board to designate one Board member to serve on a Joint Board committee to work on collaborating and articulating our efforts. Jackie Moore seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and the motion was carried.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to conduct, President Spurlock declared the meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board Secretary