



**Oak Park River Forest District 200  
February 28, 2008**

*Angelika Kuehn, Observer*

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. All board members (Allen, Conway (Chair), Fisher, Lee, Millard, Patchak-Layman and Rigas) were present. Superintendent Weninger and senior administrators were present. Some ten local residents were present in the visitors' section.

*Public comments* was extensive and raised or addressed these issues: (1) thanks to Dr. Weninger for including "all ethnic groups" in the search for new principal; (2) the student under consideration for expulsion should not be or the achievement gap will not be closed; (3) that student himself apologized for his behavior; (4) the daycare center is becoming a more expensive benefit for teachers; (5) concerning the recommendations to improve student achievement, it is important to establish baselines and evaluate performance; the achievement gap for half of underperforming high school students does not develop until high school; (6) the word "black" should not be replaced with "minority" in the pending resolution to narrow the achievement gap; (7) unionized service personnel at the high school complain about existing racial problems there including nooses hanging in the basement and the administration does nothing about it; the high school should have diversity training; (8) union employees make phone calls daily to the union about numerous problems at the high school and sensitivity training is needed.

*Board member comments* were also extensive and included: (1) another board workshop will be held on the role of race in student achievement; (2) televising of board meetings is being explored; (3) Chair Conway looked forward to meeting with the union and staff about "what is happening in the building."

The report and action highlights of the five-hour meeting are:

1. The principal search is underway. Of 32 applicants, three remain. Interviews are being conducted by a committee that includes community members.
2. Policies raised for second reading were approved over the nay vote of member Patchak-Layman, who stated grounds for objection that had evidently been discussed at some length in prior committee meetings: bus conduct for special education students, tuition and residential status policy, philosophy of grading policy.
3. Approval 6-1 (member Patchak-Layman voting no) of the long-awaited plan for student achievement, with its mandated emphasis on the achievement of African-American students (which Chair Conway recommended be changed to "minority" students to track the language of the achievement gap resolution). The plan had evidently undergone many revisions. Lengthy discussion followed. The plan outline is available on the D 200 Board of Education website under "Packet" for the February 28, 2008 meeting, pdf pages 195-200. The version that had been available on the

OPRFHS home page had been outdated for months (although the updated version may have been posted).

4. Approval 6-1 (member Patchak-Layman voting no) of the "Board Resolution I", which had been proposed by member Lee, approved by the Board, sent back to Committee by member Millard, criticized as unlawful by legal counsel (whose advice was challenged by member Allen), and revised to read: "The Board of Education considers the continuous narrowing of the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students in this District to be its top priority." Threats of litigation from certain community members seemed to have dissipated.