



Board Meeting Recap

For Evanston Twp. High School District 202

ETHS Board of Education

Pat Savage-Williams, President
Monique Parsons, Vice President
Members: Jude Laude, Gretchen Livingston, Pat Maunsell, Liz Rolewicz, Stephanie Teterycz
Student Member: Echo Allen

Regular School Board Meeting

December 9, 2019

Oakton Community College Partnership Report

Oakton Community College (OCC) is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. It draws its enrollment from Evanston, which joined the OCC district in 1988, as well as these other districts: Glenbrook North and South; Maine East, South, and West; New Trier; and Niles North and West. Eight-percent of OCC's 2019 enrollment this year comes from ETHS. Over the years just over 2,500 ETHS students have earned credentials (associate degrees and program certificates) from OCC. Oakton has two campuses—Des Plaines and Skokie—and online enrollment is increasing in both locations.

However, overall community college enrollment across Illinois is declining. To help counteract that, Oakton has strengthened its partnership and outreach with ETHS to en-

courage ETHS students to consider attending OCC:

- Awarding full-tuition scholarships to seniors,
- Sending an OCC rep for weekly, all-day visits to advise ETHS students about going to college,
- Inviting ETHS students to Manufacturing Day events, campus tours, and presentations at OCC,
- Increasing communications with applicants,
- Increasing courses of study (pathways) for OCC students to seamlessly transfer to four-year colleges/universities.

In addition, a rapidly growing number of students take “dual credit” courses at ETHS and receive both ETHS and OCC credit in several courses in art and math; engineering, manufacturing, and other

technical education courses; and public-safety-related certification courses.

School board members were pleased with OCC's increased efforts at collaboration with ETHS. During board discussion, they asked about any OCC efforts to set up partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, how well ETHS students do academically, retention rate, and working with students who don't see college in their future. When board members noted that transportation to Des Plaines and Skokie is a barrier for many ETHS students to attend Oakton, they were told that OCC's board is considering opening a branch campus in Evanston and expanding academic programming.

Alternative School Report

ETHS opened its Alternative School program in January 2015 to help students that have left school before they graduate to reengage with their learning. The reasons they leave vary—for example, truancy, credit deficit, family concerns—but the Alt School helps give them a new pathway to earn an ETHS diploma.

The program offers two sessions during the day and an evening session twice a week. To date, 167

students have graduated through the program.

Alt School blends learning and social work services. Students are often identified before they drop out when they don't have enough credits to graduate on time. Students can earn a wide range of credits from core courses to electives to AP credit. They can take courses in Alt School itself or can integrate into the mainstream school, should they choose.

The staff has increased its student post-high school planning such as college, apprenticeship programs, and work by partnering with the school's College/Career Center and Youth Job Center. A restorative justice initiative began last year that allows students to amend any previous negative actions and provides them the opportunity to rejoin the school community.

Student Services, Student Well-Being Report

Research shows that a student's sense of belonging at school makes a difference not only academically but also for long-term health, well-being, and human productivity. For the last decade, ETHS staff at all levels has intentionally worked on building a culture of belonging among students, activity that focuses on celebrating students' successes, while also problem-solving around challenges and intervening when necessary to help them develop as positive, healthy individuals.

Recent statistics indicate that the efforts at strengthening students' sense of belonging are paying off.

- 94% of the students reported in 2018-19 they feel "safe and comfortable"
- 89.4% felt prepared regarding their post-high school plans
- 92% on average of the students came to school every day last year
- 92% of the Class of 2019 graduated in four years (vs. 86% for the state)
- 73% of the students last year participated in one or more extracurricular activities (clubs, fine arts, and/or sports)

Nonetheless, life is increasingly complicated for students. Academic GPAs don't tell the whole story about students' social-emotional well-being. Stress is not uncommon but needs addressing when it becomes overwhelming. More students are actively seeking mental-health supports within ETHS, their families, and our community.

- 55% of the students reported seeing a mental health professional within the last year
- 12% of students last year were referred for social work services, 3% more than the year before

In the past five years, ETHS has dramatically increased its preven-

tion and early intervention efforts through professional development for all staff; new and continuing outreach for students, especially families of color; new ways to report troubling and threatening behaviors; classroom curriculum focused on addressing well-being issues; among other approaches.

Board members discussed how to decrease the number of students in Special Education with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) who receive behavior referrals; the depth and expansion of the types of help that are available at ETHS; consistent, annual ways to report data, especially among student subgroups, for board members to better understand trends; and causes, if actual, for the increase in mental health referrals.

Superintendent's Report

Supt. Eric Witherspoon said that final exams will be held December 16-20, the first time that finals will be done before winter break takes place. Winter break will begin Monday, December 23; classes will resume on Monday, January 6.

Course selection for the coming year takes place in January. Planning sessions for incoming freshmen and their parents will be held January 8-9.

Budget Audit Report

Miller, Cooper & Co. recently completed the audit of the FY 2019 budget and gave ETHS a positive report. The budget is balanced for the 14th consecutive year. Long-term debt was reduced by almost \$1.8 million in debt service. While capital needs this year outpaced revenue, the overage was covered by a planned transfer of money from the Working Cash Fund.

While not noted in the audit, several factors, however, are looming that may affect future financial health: inconsistency in on-time payments from the state, potential property tax freeze and appeals, and a potential increase in what ETHS must contribute to teacher pensions.

Student Board Rep Report

Student board representative Echo Allen, a senior, reported on events she attended since the last school board meeting.

On Nov. 18, this year's seven Distinguished Alumni Awardees talked to the senior class members in a special assembly.

Echo attended a SOAR (Students Organized Against Racism) conference that focused on understanding the views of white students while not exploiting those of students of color.

Over 80 students per period attended the Witherbell Forum and met with administrators throughout the day to discuss issues important to students.

Last week, students attended a "Chalk Out" in downtown Evanston to discuss environmental concerns and post their views in chalk at Fountain Square.