

**DISTRICT 202 SCHOOL BOARD
OBSERVER REPORT**

March 12, 2007

Observer: Connie Goddard

Members/Aldermen Present/Absent: All members of board; no other city officials

Staff Present Supt. Witherspoon, Asst Supt Laura Cooper, Principal Marilyn Madden; secretary, assistant treasurer, public relations dir Kathy Miehl; various teachers and dept chairs (noted below)

Media Present: Jenny Berkson, Evanston RoundTable; woman from Evanston Review

Meeting Began 7:30 (on time) **Ended** 10:00 pm (on time)

Number of Citizens Attending None

Significant Discussion / Actions Taken

This was another District 202 meeting that provided insights into the complexities of running a large high school with a diverse student body in today's superheated and skeptical environment. Highlights of topics brought to board's attention by staff reports are as follows:

Siemens Award: ETHS was honored for being one of 10 "most improved" schools nationally; participation in math and science AP courses has increased 45% since 2001; percent of minority students in AP calculus has improved markedly.

Promotion and Reclassification Policy: ETHS has undertaken a policy change and a set of connected initiatives that together are encouraging students to regard passage from one grade to another as a privilege they must earn. The policy change requires the accumulation of six credits per semester in order to progress from one level (soph, junior, etc.) to the next. The initiatives include sticks (peer pressure, via IDs that reflect level attained, not age) and carrots (counseling, tutoring, luncheon honoring those who "recovered" credits). Policy has received enthusiastic endorsement from affected students: "once you give students a wake-up call, and provide support, they will respond," commented a staff member.

Standardized Test Performance: Class of 07 received composite score of 22.3 on ACT; which was highest since 2001 when number taking test was far smaller; this was higher than state (20.3) and national (21.1) averages. Black student composite scores rose almost a full point: 18.2 from 06, high than state (16.9) or national (17.1). Only bad news is that performance of some subgroups could mean the ETHS may not make "adequate yearly progress" in the next few years. There is substantial evidence that staff is putting scores and other research results to good use.

Health Center: ETHS is one of (400?) hs statewide that participate in a state-sponsored health service; a third of the students belong; half of these have no insurance. This includes an on-staff physician, RNs, and an LCSW – it is also separate from school nurse; very impressive program, only partly funded by board.

Illinois School/District Report Card: Graduation rates are as follows: overall, 90.2. For Black students, this is above state average (88.6 versus 78.3), for Hispanics below state average (70.8 vs. 77.1). AYP status shows steady growth for all subgroups in math; in reading, Hispanics showed substantial growth. Considerable discussion ensued: the president commented: the board is going to have to face the foolishness of NCLB; another board member wanted to know whether income level affected scores of black students; it may not be possible to separate out that information.

Discussion included an interesting revelation about the federally mandated (and \$\$ supported) tutoring program. ETHS has no way of knowing who comes in for tutoring nor can it monitor or measure how effective it is; by federal mandate, the tutoring firms report their results to the state only.