

## **Hinsdale South High School Science Department** **Response to the OCR Complaint - 10/01/18 Presentation**

*Arwen Pokorny Lyp, Principal Hinsdale South*

Good evening. In response to the OCR complaint, as the principal of Hinsdale South, I want to unequivocally state that this complaint is based on an incorrect interpretation of data and that this complaint hurts the Hinsdale South community. These public false accusations hurt our staff and they hurt our students. Those who are making the claims continue to state that they are supporting Hinsdale South, but they could not be more wrong. I am now going to introduce Hinsdale South's Science Department Chair, Dr. Julie Gaubatz, to explain why the claims presented in the OCR complaint are flat out wrong.

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*Dr. Julie Gaubatz, Hinsdale South Science Department Chair*

Thank you for inviting us to share more about Hinsdale South's science program with you tonight. I realize that our time on tonight's agenda is tight, so our goal is to review the key concerns brought forward in the now-dismissed Office of Civil Rights complaint. Although the OCR dismissed this complaint *in toto*, we'd like to briefly address a few items so the community and the board have more information about how the science program at Hinsdale South functions. A more thorough [point-by-point rebuttal](#) of the complaint also has been provided to the board to review at your convenience.

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**The first area from the dismissed complaint that we'd like to address focused on the motivation for implementing our Physics-Chemistry-Biology sequence. This was referenced in Item 34.**

When we reviewed our Science Program in 2004, members of the science department identified goals that would help us improve our students' success. Teachers formed working groups to research strategies that had the potential to move us and our students towards these goals. As we researched innovative course sequences and visited high-performing schools that were implementing them, including New Trier and Northside College Prep, we predicted, based on the evidence available, how well these sequences could address our goals. In the extended documentation, you can see how these and other top-ranking high schools implement the PCB sequence. Four of the most important goals we identified included:

- To provide meaningful courses for students at all academic levels
- To increase students' exposure to the core sciences
- To increase students' enrollment in upper level science courses
- To increase vertical alignment within department courses

One of the many things we learned through this process was that there was no one sequence had all the answers -- each sequence had its benefits and drawbacks, and part of our work was to determine which sequence would best meet our students needs. We chose to implement the PCB sequence, and as many of you know because we have reported it to the Board of Education, this sequence continues to provide our students with access to rigorous coursework and academic success.

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**The second topic we'd like to address focused on an erroneously founded concern about our AP Biology course. This was referenced in Items 35, 36, and 37 of the dismissed complaint.**

The dismissed complaint erroneously stated that Hinsdale Central does not allow students to enroll in AP Biology without having taken a first-year biology course. The most common pathway to AP Biology at Hinsdale Central does involve students taking a high school biology course prior to AP Biology; however, Hinsdale Central's program of studies also offers a pathway in which Hinsdale Central students take Chemistry their freshman year, followed by Physics their sophomore year, then AP Biology as a first year biology course their junior year. Last year, about 11 students chose this option and this year 17 have chosen this option. This is very similar to our sequence at Hinsdale South in which students take a physics-based course their freshman year, followed by Chemistry their sophomore year, then AP Biology their junior year. Like many other PCB schools such as New Trier and Northside Prep (ranked #2 in the state), and like the sequence described at Hinsdale Central, our freshman and sophomore science courses fully prepare students to succeed in the AP Biology curriculum.

Because the PCB sequence prepares students with a strong science foundation, we're able to provide our students with a biology course geared towards juniors. Since an honors option would essentially be no different from our AP Biology curriculum, our science department is able to match other departments at our school in offering AP courses instead of honors for junior and senior level courses for which AP course are available. This not only mirrors the course offerings of other departments, but it also mirrors the course offerings at Hinsdale Central - they too offer a regular-level science course for juniors (Physics) and they offer an AP version (AP Physics 1) with no honors option. So the same reason Hinsdale South does not have Honors Biology is the same reason Hinsdale Central does not offer Honors Physics.

The preparation our students receive prior to and in our biology courses has resulted in fantastic results on the Illinois Science Assessment. As you can see from this graph depicting the 2017 results, we are at that top of the pack - Hinsdale South is the gold dot, Hinsdale Central is the blue dot, and the district average is the red dot. You can see Hinsdale South beat Hinsdale Central in 2017, and I will tell you that in 2016, Hinsdale Central beat Hinsdale South by the same small difference. Our dots actually touch. When we talk about the differences between science performance at the two schools, this slide shows you how nuanced those differences are.

The dismissed complaint also expressed a concern about what is perceived as a putative difference in the number of Hinsdale Central versus Hinsdale South students passing the AP Biology Exam in 2016. When we look at these numbers, however, you'll see why they actually should be celebrated. Here are the previous three years of data comparing our two schools for how students fare on the AP Biology Exam:

- In 2016:
  - At Hinsdale Central, 60 students passed the AP Biology Exam, which was about 2% of their student population.
  - At Hinsdale South, 95 students passed the AP Biology Exam, which was about 6% of our student population.
- In 2017:
  - At Hinsdale Central, 56 students passed the AP Biology Exam, which was about 2% of their student population.
  - At Hinsdale South, 121 students passed the AP Biology Exam, which was about 8% of our student population.
- In 2018:
  - At Hinsdale Central, 72 students passed the AP Biology Exam, which was about 2.5% of their student population.

- At Hinsdale South, 75 students passed the AP Biology Exam, which was about 5% of our student population.
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**The third area we'd like to address is a misguided concern about our Physics program in Items 38, 39, and 40 of the dismissed complaint.**

One of the benefits of a PCB sequence is that ALL students see at least basic physics prior to graduation. Additionally, we have found that our PCB sequence has increased our students' involvement with the most rigorous physics course available, the AP Physics C course.

Starting at the beginning of our sequence, the Hinsdale South Physics Honors course mirrors the AP Physics 1 curriculum, so much so that in 2017, 11 Hinsdale South freshmen voluntarily took the AP Physics 1 Exam, and 91% of them passed the exam compared to the national pass rate of 41%.

Following our students who matriculate from our Physics Honors course, we find that their senior year they almost all take either the rigorous Calculus-based AP Physics C course or one of our other challenging Advanced Placement courses, and their course selection is determined *only* by the path they want to follow in college.

To give some perspective on the success of our students in the rigorous AP Physics C course, here are some stats from the last two years:

- In 2017:
  - At Hinsdale Central 31 students passed the AP Physics C Mechanics Exam, which was about 1% of their student population.
  - At Hinsdale South, 21 students passed the AP Physics C Mechanics Exam, which was about 1.5% of our student population.
- In 2018,
  - At Hinsdale Central, 27 students passed the AP Physics C Mechanics Exam, which is about 1% of their student population.
  - At Hinsdale South, 24 students passed the AP Physics C Mechanics Exam, which is about 1.5% of our student population.

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**The final area we'd like to address is an assertion embedded within Item 40 of the dismissed complaint that expressed concern that Hinsdale South students will find themselves at a disadvantage to their college peers.**

A large body of qualitative and quantitative data refute this concern. Hinsdale South students attend a variety of post-secondary schools, many of which also are attended by students from well-respected and prestigious schools, such as our sister school, Hinsdale Central. Since the implementation of our PCB sequence, we consistently have had a greater percentage of our students successfully experience AP science courses than in the years prior to PCB, and even more than our sister school. The aggregate AP Science course enrollment, adjusted for school size, shows that in the 2016-2017 school year Hinsdale Central's participation in AP Science Courses was 18% and Hinsdale South's participation in AP Science courses was 24%. In 2017-2018, the aggregate AP Science participation was 17% at Hinsdale Central and 22% at Hinsdale South. Contrary to

the concerns expressed in the dismissed complaint, you can see from the data that students at Hinsdale South are comparing favorably with students at Hinsdale Central, and are excelling relative to their national peers.

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Our Board, administration, school leaders, and teachers at both D86 schools have consistently worked together to create the best programs possible for our students, and we continue this work every day. We love sharing our successes with you. It's less fun, but just as important, to provide information that answers factually incorrect accusations by a small handful of community members. The complaint that was filed with the Office of Civil Rights was unfortunately based on false claims -- claims that hurt our D86 teachers and students, as well as our whole community. This complaint was dismissed, but the negative and false assertions in it were aired and circulated, and we felt that we needed to correct these publicly.

Both Hinsdale South and Hinsdale Central are amazing schools. Administrators and teachers at both Hinsdale South and Hinsdale Central love their students, and they love the work they do every day. We also love seeing our work manifest in the successes of our students.

If anyone has a question as to why we do what we do, or has a question about how our students are faring, they are welcome, sincerely, to ask *us*. Ask us instead of misrepresenting our data publicly without even asking us to weigh in. We are happy to share. We value new ideas.

By looking at the facts, it's clear that the students at both of our District 86 schools excel in our science programs. Our students are very successful and will continue to be successful as they move into their post-secondary lives.