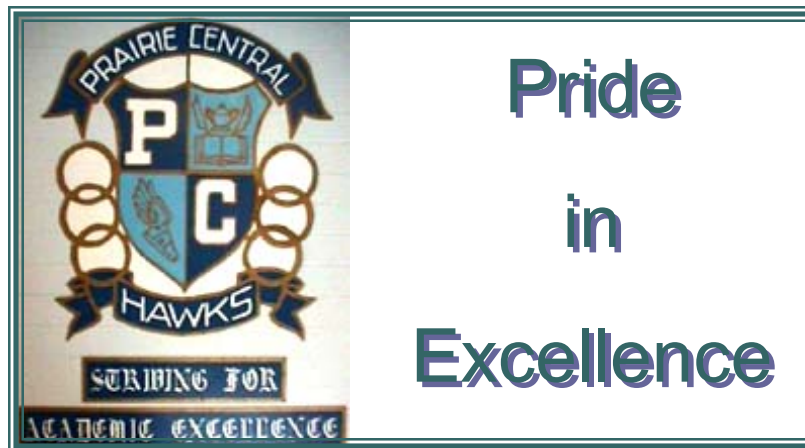




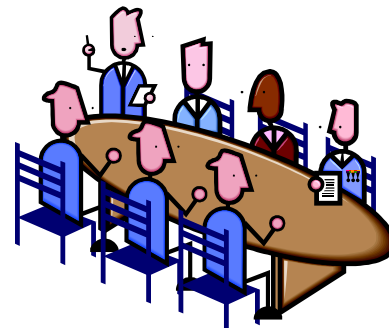
Student Ambition

A Report of the “Pride in Excellence”
Committee



Pride in Excellence Committee

- **John Capasso**, Superintendent
- **Barbara Schlatter**, Board of Education Member
- **Ann Nussbaum**, PCHS Language Arts Teacher
- **Joanne Costa**, PCHS Business Teacher
- **Rebecca Shafer**, PCHS Math Teacher
- **Christopher Neidigh**, former PCHS Dean of Students
- **Mike Quinn**, PCHS Guidance Counselor
- **Paula Crane**, PCUE Principal
- **Tonya Dieken**, PCJHS Administrative Assistant
- **Tom Kahle**, Parent and Executive Vice-President of Heartland Bank and Trust
- **Dan Groce**, Chenoa Elementary Principal





The Committee's Charge . . .

To examine the claim that Prairie Central students experience diminishing ambition as they approach, and then move beyond, high school graduation





Premises

The Committee believes that . . .

- A Prairie Central student should complete the course of study “with appropriate educational unpinning” and “an uncompromising desire to reach his/her full educational, career, and personal potential”
- Prairie Central commits substantial human and financial resources to the future success of its students, and that this investment ought to produce as substantial a return





The Problem



- **Test performance.** The desire to perform well on standardized testing appears to diminish as students advance through the school system
- **Course selection.** Capable students tend to avoid challenges in selecting high school coursework, particularly in the upper grades
- **Post graduate choices.** Capable graduates often choose junior or community colleges over four-year universities
- **Aspirations for college matriculation.** Students tend to have, then lose as they advance toward graduation, the ambition for a more challenging collegiate experience
- **Two-year vs. four-year college.** The committee does not decry the industry of two-year colleges and acknowledges the need for more information about paths of two-year students, but believes
 - Four-year schools offer a more appropriate challenge to the capable student, scholastically and socially, and that
 - A family often influences a graduate's decision toward a two-year program, based on a limited frame of reference and inadequate information



The Problem



- **Job opportunities.** Roughly $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ of Prairie Central students do not seek additional education or join the military following graduation and, thus, assume low-paying jobs or face unemployment
- **Instant gratification.** Students tend to gravitate toward the goal that requires the least investment of effort and/or time, whether it be in the classroom or on the field of play

**GUITAR
HERO**



The Problem

Summary

“ . . . Ambition is an enigma. . . . determining a solution to a perceived lack of ambition is difficult in the extreme. If a lack of ambition is viewed as a malady, then the committee offers the following suggestions to treat the symptoms of the malady, and does not presume to cure the malady itself.”





The Solution



- **Change in District philosophy.** New policy would have Prairie Central encouraging students “to engender and reach the highest educational, career, and personal aspirations possible”
- **Enhancement of curriculum.** Prairie Central should . . .
 - Provide more opportunities for teacher collaboration
 - Teach students to think (i.e. *Bloom’s Taxonomy* higher order thinking skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation)
 - Develop a K-12 gifted program



The Solution



- **Enhancement of curriculum (cont.).** Prairie Central should . . .
 - Praise diligence
 - Counsel students, beginning at an early age, in careers and provide school- or District-wide “career days”
 - Create career profiles of students, beginning in the third grade
 - Establish advisor-advisee for students in the middle grades
 - Create a grade-weighting program at PCHS as an incentive for students to enroll in more challenging classes



The Solution



- **Enhancement of curriculum (cont.).** Prairie Central should . . .
 - Align the PCHS curriculum to College Preparatory Standards
 - Expand the ICE program at PCHS to include experiences in a variety of professional occupations
 - Revisit the block schedule at PCHS, with special attention paid to time usage and the completion of course objectives
 - Reduce redundancy and expand essential skills in the instructional program





The Solution



- **College funding.** Prairie Central should . . .
 - Share college financing information such as *College Illinois* through available means, perhaps at elementary PTO meetings, at parent-teacher conferences, in the district's newsletter, and on the district's web site.
 - Continue to make scholarship opportunities known and applications easily accessible to students seeking higher education.
 - Expand the scholarship pool by encouraging businesses, foundations, and legacies to sponsor scholarship opportunities for continuing education.





The Solution



- **College funding (cont.).** Prairie Central should . . .
 - Encourage students to do their best academically, for the reason that monetary rewards await them in the form of scholarships. Scholarships can substantially reduce tuition costs and ease the financial burden.





The Solution



- **Promotion of ambition.** Prairie Central should . . .
 - Improve relations between the school system and the family through various means
 - Name an “Alum-of-the Month” in newsletters and keep a listing of AOTM on the webpage in the interest of placing before children the many Prairie Central success stories
 - Name no less than one PCHS “Hall of Fame” inductee per year and extol the inductees virtues before a student assemblage





The Solution



- **Promotion of ambition.** Prairie Central should . . .
 - Hold breakfast recognition sessions for honor-roll students, at which successful people will appear as guest speakers
 - Intensify efforts in the classrooms to connect subject matter to careers and ways of life
 - Create opportunities for students, from an early age, to visit college campuses
 - Invite Prairie Central graduates now in college to return and discuss experiences to all ages





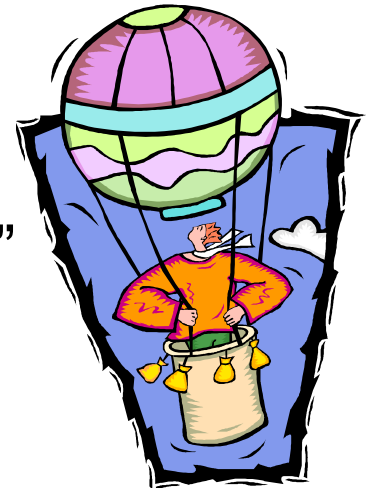
The Solution



- **Promotion of ambition.** Prairie Central should . . .
 - Continue the practice of offering extrinsic rewards for test performance

Summary

“ . . . Addressing symptoms or manifestations [of tapering ambition] with a number of approaches offers the most reasonable chance of encouraging kids to confront their potential or, in the very least, arresting their fall toward mediocrity.”



Final Thought

“ . . . The [Pride in Excellence] Committee makes no indictment of Prairie Central, but merely offers its own observations as part of the system, and recommendations to address those observations. It simply believes that Prairie Central students have great, and as yet untapped, potential to thrive in greater society.”

