

COMMUNITY RELATIONS: Community Involvement

[Citizen] Participation in the Local School BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS

1. [Representation]

Each school should have an organization, normally the PTA, which is the primary voice of the local community concerning educational matters. This organization should be the focus of the community participation with the school and is the organization with which the principal and other school personnel must work closely.

2. Channels of Communication

Examples of pupils' work, school newsletters, letters to parents or flyers are the most common channels of written communication between the school and parents. Many other kinds of interaction are possible within the community to communicate effectively and establish interaction, including meetings, study groups, periodic or special publications, surveys, telephone or person-to-person meetings and committees.

The best approach will vary from one community to another because many communities have already developed workable and satisfactory approaches to community participation and a community generally will best use those tools it has helped to fashion.

3. Participation in Decision-Making

The principal has the authority and responsibility to make decisions that affect the school within the limits of Board of Education policies and rules. Whenever feasible, the principal should seek the advice and counsel of those who will be affected by the decision. Since it is usually not possible to consult with each affected person individually, some mechanism should exist at each school for communicating information, receiving feedback, discussing proposals and alternatives and distilling consensus. These mechanisms should operate on a regular and continuous basis. The important thing is recognition of citizen, staff, and student interest in many school-related matters, and the desire of affected persons to have meaningful input prior to decision-making by the principal.

RULE 1250

The community leadership and principal should make every effort to insure that all communication and involvement is as efficient as possible. Meetings should be held when needed, should be well-organized and should deal with substantive issues. This will maintain continuing interest and enable the principal to devote as much of his/her time as possible to the supervision and operation of the school programs. Effective coordination of involvement and planned and regular consultation with knowledgeable and vigorous community leadership will be helpful in this effort.

4. Examples

Questions on general school operation are appropriate matters for community involvement: e.g., new programs, extracurricular activities, safety rules and regulations, human relations activities, knowledge of new materials to be used before they are implemented. In most cases, the principal and other staff will initiate planning on these matters, then seek citizen input and involvement. On the basis of this process, the principal will make final decisions within the parameter of Board of Education policies and rules.

Some decisions will be made based upon the principal's perception of problems that involve particular needs of students and/or staff. It would not be permissible for the principal to reveal specific, personal information about individual students or staff involved as individuals, but whenever possible he/she should generalize problems sufficiently so that interested citizens will be able to understand the frame of reference within which a decision must be made.

Decisions such as the assignment of staff and pupils, methods of instruction and scope and sequence of curriculum are professional judgments. The principal and staff must take responsibility for these decisions and make them based upon their best professional judgment. The principal should, however, make explanations to and discuss these matters with the community.

The principal will be held accountable by the Superintendent—and should be held accountable by parents—for education decision-making at the school level. It is essential, therefore, that the principal, staff, parents, and students understand this responsibility and that, as a result, the principal must make or approve any final decisions on matters affecting the operation of the school.]

RULE 1250

THE PROGRAM OF EDUCATION IN THE LOCAL SCHOOL IS AN APPROPRIATE MATTER FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT. EACH SCHOOL HAS A SCHOOL

IMPROVEMENT TEAM ON WHICH THERE IS PARENT/COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION. IN ADDITION, EACH SCHOOL SHOULD HAVE ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE PTA/PTSA AND STUDENT GOVERNMENT. IT IS THROUGH THESE REPRESENTATIVES THAT THE PRINCIPAL AND OTHER SCHOOL PERSONNEL ARE ABLE TO CHANNEL COMMUNICATIONS AND ALLOW FOR PARTICIPATION IN ISSUES RELATED TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF SCHOOLS.

Rule

Approved: 2/10/77

REVISED:

Superintendent of Schools

ALL CAPS indicate new material

[] brackets indicate deleted material