

PARENT INVOLVEMENT POLICY

Sir: (E-mail to Superintendent Brizard)

I have been sending you e-mails, on shared decision making activities, since January, 2008.

A Quick Review

Dr. Cala quotes:

District policy: (below is a quote from the current district's Parent Involvement Policy)

“The Board of Education believes that positive parental involvement is essential to student achievement and thus encourages such involvement in school educational planning and operations.

Although parents are the subject of this policy, the primary audience for this policy is RCSD employees, to ensure that they understand Parent Involvement rights under this policy.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

The Board of Education recognizes the requirements addressing parent involvement within the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), signed into law on January 8, 2002, and the significant changes that are being made in federal education. As a Local Education Agency (LEA) that receives funding, school wide, under Title I, the Rochester City School District must implement programs, activities, and procedures for implementing effective parent involvement to improve student achievement and school performance (NCLB §1118). It will do so by the following means:

- **Involve parents, annually, in the joint development of the District's plan and policy as it relates to NCLB.**
- **Coordinate and integrate parental involvement strategies under research-based education programs.**
- **Involve parents in the decisions regarding how funds provided to schools are allotted for parental involvement.**
- **Involve parents as decision-makers in the planning, review and improvement of programs through shared decision-making in conjunction with Board Policy #2265 regarding School-Based Planning Teams.**
- **Provide parents with a description and explanation of the curriculum and the forms of assessments used to measure student progress.**
- **Inform parents of their option to change schools if their children are enrolled in low performing schools.**
- **Provide parents with information and notification regarding supplemental services offered to students attending schools on a low-performing list for at least three years.**
- **Provide parents with information on school transfers for reasons of safety — criteria set by the State of New York.**
- **Provide parents with information regarding classroom teacher qualifications.**
- **Provide training and information sessions for parents on understanding their rights under NCLB.**
- **Conduct an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness and implementation of the parental involvement policy District wide and at the school level.**

Note: many parents, students, and other community leaders agree; the above means have not been carryout. And when we have asked district administrators to provide evident of completion, none was provided, therefore, we want all district stakeholders to participate in the development of the Rochester model of shared decision making and implement said model, by September, 2008.

Superintendent newspaper Quota:

Brizard assiduously stresses in public and private that he is committed to collaboration.

"We are going to have meaningful engagement before we pull triggers," Brizard said. "I don't mean us listening to you and going back and doing what we want to do anyway. We are going to be collaborative."

In a conversation with Superintendent Brizard:

You talked about a model of shared decision making that you used or seen in action, while you were in New York. We want to make the means in the policy, real, now, so I asked you for a reference. A reference to an article, book, or paper on the model you were talking about, which was the objective of my e-mail below.

The bottom line is the district needs, to keep its 2003 commitment, to implement the shared decision making process.

We have tried to minimize our demand on your time, so allow us to raise two other points on this occasion.

Administrator of Parent and Community Involvement

We appreciate your decision to re-structure parent involvement, to the point of hiring a new staff person, to represent parents' interests at the highest levels of decision making and to manage the carrying out of the policy's activities.

But, we believed, the new person's pronouncements wouldn't begin until she had completed a comprehensive review of the policy and its associated programming, with the parents/students/taxpayers' communities. But, she has made several public pronouncements, based only on her personal beliefs. We have work hard for many years to get the interests of the parent community to the district's decision making tables, not the interests of any single individual. We know that RTA, for example, would not allow just any old teacher in the district to speak for RTA.

Therefore, we need her to follow your example of collaborative planning with teachers and principals.

- 1. With the parent community, develop and carryout a formal review of parental involvement and its associated programming,**
- 2. With the parent community, build a status report, work plan, and evaluation component**
- 3. With the parent community, present the results to the superintendent, with the objective of improving his focus on engaging the parent community and to measurably increase parent/family participation, in their child's education.**

School/District Environment

Many have said; the district's discipline structures have failed. But, few have work together to build real solutions; instead many have played the blame game.

We heard that you had some new ideas, on the subject. Well, we are ready to participate in an effort to make real improvements. We want to know your view on using a restorative justice approach, in the Dream Schools, which you have been talking about, in some public meetings.

The parent and student communities believe, too often, school-level problem-solving procedures don't work. Years of concerns with these procedures cause us to ask for your ideas, on how to improve them, so we may develop a formal proposal to address this issue.

Finally, we know that you will be talking with us on April 26, but we know; more is likely to get done, if the parent community has considered your ideas, before preparing our final proposals.

Glenny A. Williams

- We glad to hear that superintendent Brizard's goal is to make operational all of the "means" in the policy. (i.e. establish a share decision making table for all stakeholder groups,**

- greatly improve the communication between home and school, etc.) **BY JANUARY 2009**

- Using a restorative justice approach, as the basis of a justice system for Dream Schools, is our proposal. We know; the Dream Schools would be much more likely to succeed, if the issues surrounding school environment are addressed. We believe restorative justice could make a major different. We were asking if you knew of the approach and what do you think of it?

- The issue is parent/guardian interactions with school staff: you have talked of “demand parents”; well too many staff members don’t know how to deal with them. What can you do to improve district’s staff ability to work with demand parents? Is a teacher’s ability to work with the parents of her or his students, evaluated? Can this evaluation component impact the teacher’s work status?

- Skipping,
- Books

- **Virtual Interactions: home visits**

PS: What was the district’s 2007-08 class sizes for elementary, middle, and high schools? What will be the class sizes in the district, in 2008-09?

SCHOOL-BASED PLANNING AND SHARED DECISION MAKING

- Involve parents as decision-makers in the planning, review and improvement of programs through shared decision-making in conjunction with Board Policy #2265 regarding School-Based Planning Teams.”

REGULATIONS OF THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

(a) *Purpose.* The purpose of school-based planning and shared decision making shall be to improve the educational performance of all students in the school, regardless of such factors as socio-economic status, race, sex, language background, or disability.

(b) By February 1, 1994, each public school district Board of Education and each board of cooperative educational services (BOCES) shall develop and adopt a district plan for the participation by teachers and parents with administrators and school board members in school-based planning and shared decision making. Such district plan shall be developed in collaboration with a committee composed of the superintendent of schools, administrators selected by the district’s administrative bargaining organization(s), teachers selected by the teachers’ collective bargaining organization(s), and parents (not employed by the district or a collective bargaining organization representing teachers or administrators in the district) selected by school-related parent organizations, provided that those portions of the district plan that provide for participation of teachers or administrators in school-based planning and shared decision making may be developed through collective negotiations between the Board of Education or BOCES and local collective bargaining organizations representing administrators and teachers. For the purpose of this subdivision, “school-related parent organization” means a nonprofit organization of parents of children attending the schools of the school district whose

New York, each Board of Education of each community school district and each high school superintendent shall develop a plan in the manner prescribed by this subdivision, and each such plan shall be incorporated into a plan by the central Board of Education, which plan shall comply with this section.

(c) The plan for participation in school-based planning and shared decision making shall specify:

1. the educational issues which will be subject to cooperative planning and shared decision making at the building level by teachers, parents, administrators, and at the discretion of the Board of Education or BOCES, other parties such as students, school district support staff, and community members;
2. the manner and extent of the expected involvement of all parties;
3. the means and standards by which all parties shall evaluate improvement in student achievement;
4. the means by which all parties will be held accountable for the decisions which they share in making;
5. the process whereby disputes presented by the participating parties about the educational issues being decided upon will be resolved at the local level; and
6. the manner in which all State and Federal requirements for the involvement of parents in planning and decision making will be coordinated with and met by the overall plan.

(d) The district's plan shall be adopted by the Board of Education or BOCES at a public meeting after consultation with and full participation by the designated representatives of the administrators, teachers, and parents, and after seeking endorsement of the plan by such designated representatives.

1. The plan shall be made available to the public. Each Board of Education or BOCES shall file such plan with the district Superintendent or, in the case of city school districts having a population of 125,000 inhabitants or more or a BOCES, with the commissioner within 30 days of adoption.
 2. Each Board of Education or BOCES shall submit its district plan to the commissioner for approval within 30 days of adoption of the plan. The commissioner shall approve such district plan upon a finding that it complies with the requirements of this section and makes provision for effective participation of parents, teachers, and administrators in school-based planning and decision making.
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What Is Shared Decision Making And School Based Planning?

School based planning and shared decision making complement one another. Shared decision making provides opportunities for parents, community residents, teachers, administrators, support staff, and students to participate in the decision making process. School based planning provides opportunities for this participation to be meaningful.

School Based Planning

School based planning empowers schools by providing the flexibility to create instructional environments that meet the needs of students and accomplish the district's Strategic Goals and

Objectives. School based planning is a process which decentralizes authority for decision making and school based accountability for student outcomes. By decentralizing authority, decision making can occur at the level in the organization where information concerning the decision is most available, where the decision is to be implemented, and where accountability for the results of the decision will be assumed.

Building or department level decisions shall however be consistent with the district's *Strategic Goals and Objectives* that serve to combine the expertise of staff with community involvement in partnership to yield continuous achievement by all students. School based planning does not preclude or supersede the responsibility of the superintendent or his/her designee to oversee instructional planning.

Shared Decision Making

The key to the district's success is the effective planning and monitoring of the gamut of programs and services. The district's organizational structure and corresponding roles and responsibilities ensure that the accountability for results is everyone's task. Rigorous and viable curriculum combined with high quality instruction stands at the core of the organizational structure.

Shared decision making is driven by the belief that the most effective choices are made when those affected by the decision are involved in the decision making process. It is a process by which members of an educational community cooperate in identifying and implementing activities to advance and improve student learning. This process is used to assist with the realization of programs and services, collaboratively deciding on issues, and resolving problems. The goal is to utilize the expertise and perspective of the representatives to guide and shape decisions that positively impact student outcomes.

The Requirements for Success

To be successful, school based planning and shared decision making requires commitment, time, and hard work. Success requires that trust be established and communication be maintained. The key to a successful shared decision making team is having all members committed to working together in a positive way to solve the issues of the school, lending to greater success for all students. School based planning is a process, not a "quick fix." See **APPENDIX B** for an overview of the characteristics of a successful and dynamic shared decision making team.

EXPECTATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Shared decision making is collaboration in decision making, shared responsibility, and shared accountability for student success. It is a partnership that includes administrators, teachers and other school staff, students, parents and community members. These stakeholders are involved in significant decisions about their school and they collaborate in decision making because each is affected to some degree.

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Parent Involvement Policy, associated programs/services, and shared decision making Presentation Outline

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- I. Board: persuade the superintendent to bring the means, described in the Parent Involvement Policy, current or operational, by January 1, 2008
- II. Board: support the superintendent's initiative to establish a school-based planning team / shared decision making model
- III. Board: persuade the superintendent to carry out, a full featured school / district level elections, for the parents and students communities
- IV. Board: persuade the superintendent to establish a formal district's continuous improvement model of accountability/transparency
- V. Board: persuade the superintendent to provide a comprehensive work plan; this includes goals, objectives, strategies, programs/services, performance indicators, and evaluation plan, for all major initiatives. If the initiative is a carry over, then the package will include a completed assessment.
- VI. Board: persuade the superintendent to establish a 2007-2008 district base line for his effort
- VII. Board: persuade the superintendent to fully update the five components of project SAVE