

4. Each day, give your secretary a list of the schools you'll be visiting and an estimate of the time you will spend at each one. You can then be reached quickly if an emergency arises. A paging beeper or a car phone can be helpful.

5. Give your school board, immediate supervisor, principals, teachers, and parents a monthly report from the schools you have visited. Let them know about the exciting things you see happening.

6. The school office is an excellent

indicator of the school climate, so spend some time there. Elementary school playgrounds and the hallways of junior high and high schools will also reveal a great deal about your schools. Schedule your lunch in one of the cafeterias so that you can break bread with those people closest to the kids and even with the kids themselves.

Central office "Ivory Tower" people need to monitor their schools and give them appropriate feedback. This forms the foundation for the best and

quickest improvements. To give meaningful feedback, however, they must go to the schools to see where their support is most needed. But if you try it, be prepared: once you start, the schools may never let you stop. □

¹J. Lewis, (1986), *Achieving Excellence in Our Schools* (Westbury, N.Y.: J.L. Wilkenson Publishing Company).

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— SALLY HENRY AND JEANNE VILZ —

School Improvement: Together We Can Make a Difference

Schools sometimes overlook nonteaching support staff in their discussions of goal setting and restructuring, but these employees are vital to school improvement.

For the past several years, the nation has placed great emphasis on the notion of school improvement. Although many programs and methods claim they will help us to achieve an "effective school," few of these programs, if any, discuss the importance of the nonteaching staff of a school district. So often we fail to recognize all that support staff does to make a school run smoothly. Why is this? Teachers are not the only ones who make a school effective or successful.

Our school district—the Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda School District in Buffalo, New York—created a school improvement program approximately

eight years ago that has been in effect ever since. Each of our 13 schools has a school planning team made up of administrators, teachers, parents, and community members—and in the case of high schools—students. Kenmore also has a District Support Staff Planning Team. Clerical, food service, transportation, and building and grounds employees serve as representatives from various schools and the central office. As team facilitators, we received the same I/D/E/A/ Phase I and II facilitator training as teachers and administrators. Our operation is identical to the school planning team's process. We communicate with the school planning teams and serve as a

liaison between school buildings. For example, we recently planned workshops for support staff on such topics as listening skills, self-esteem, and improving student behavior. Afterwards, we shared feedback information with principals and department supervisors. This kind of input helps to break down barriers between employee groups and buildings.

School planning teams work with nine principles of education which provide a base for discussion and help them to develop a long range plan or "vision." Similarly, our planning team developed its own set of six principles. We used these principles to develop initial as well as long-range goals by

brainstorming, consensus building, and skill prioritizing. Our vision statement, developed during a one-day retreat held in March 1988 reads:

During the next five years, the employees of the Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda School District will continue to develop a positive work climate which values communication skills, trust, self-esteem, self improvement, individual expertise, and productivity. A shared decision-making model will evolve in the work place: A feeling of cooperation and respect among the district employees, the students, and the community will be based on the understanding and appreciation of our common values and goals. We will be recognized as a school district with a well deserved national reputation—a great place to learn.

Three design teams or task forces are working on goals to help us "become the best we can imagine." These design teams have enabled us to further expand and involve representatives from the 13 schools and central office.

School improvement, by its nature, involves long-range, visionary planning. Results are often not visible or tangible for a relatively long period of time. However, we have recently succeeded in achieving some tangible results, including:

- An employee information handbook for the entire staff;
- "You Make the Difference" workshops for improving the communication skills and self-esteem of all district support staff;
- A social/effective behavior styles workshop;
- An information handbook for substitute employees;
- An orientation and recruitment video;
- Inservice meetings and a timeline for implementing shared decision-making;
- A learning styles workshop.

These design team goals and results are reflections of planning team input

and our "climate inventory" needs assessment. The planning teams are not for problem solving; rather, they are visionary teams working together to be the "very best we can be." We are currently assessing where we are in relation to our goals and what adjustments we may need to make for our future plans.

We feel that all employees of the Kenmore-Town School District should be involved in our "Building on Excellence" school improvement process. Only by working together as a team can we benefit and promote our final product—successful students. □

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KAY D. WOELFEL

The Job-Alike Workshop: Staff Development for Classified Personnel

When support personnel learn student management strategies, their daily tasks are easier, and the positive effects are noticeable throughout the entire school.

Mr. Bitz: Would you pick up that paper?

Jimmy: I didn't throw it on the floor.

Mr. Bitz: I know you didn't, but would you please pick it up.

Jimmy: But Michael threw it.

Mr. Bitz: Would you pick it up so our washroom stays clean?

Jimmy: Okay!

If this dialogue sounds a lot like the "broken record" technique used in assertive discipline, well, it is. What makes it special is that Mr. Bitz is a custodian using effective student management skills identified in a Job-Alike Workshop designed for custodians, secretaries, bus drivers, nurses, aides, lunchroom attendants,

hall monitors, and recess supervisors.

As an elementary principal working with 50 staff members, I conducted a half-day Job-Alike Workshop for the one-third of my staff who were classified rather than certified. To make it easy for them to attend, I notified their immediate supervisors and, in cases where the meeting was scheduled out-

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