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# Public Relations in the East Richland Junior High School

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PUBLIC RELATIONS  

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IN THE  
EAST RICHLAND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

A Substantial Paper  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of Education  
Eastern Illinois State College

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science in Education

by  
William T. Hatch  
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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM

Quite often school administrators and teachers feel that the conduct and program of the school is their business and no one else's. They fail to recognize that the public has an interest in the schools of the community and a right to help in planning and carrying out the school's program and policies. Faculty-members often hear criticism of various aspects of the school's program and yet fail to do anything about such criticism. Today educators generally feel that the public should have an important part in developing better schools. When the school and the public begin to work together at solving school problems and planning programs that will meet the needs of the community, a forward step will have been taken in building good public relations.

Whenever any part of the public criticizes the school, the persons or groups making the criticisms are really evaluating the school. School administrators and faculty should be aware of this constant evaluation by the public, and the best way this can be done is by building better public relations. Good public relations programs have for their purpose getting all concerned--lay people, pupils, teachers, administrators--working together to develop

and maintain school programs that will meet the needs of the community and state.

To find out if the school is meeting state requirements is relatively easy. The school program can be checked against the State laws and the regulations of the Office of Public Instruction. To ascertain the needs and concerns of a particular community is more difficult. Each city or school district has different wants depending on various factors such as its industries, its wealth, its size and location, and the customs and attitudes of its citizens. Administrators and faculty members should continuously seek and welcome the cooperation of the school patrons in evaluating their school program in the light of what they believe are their basic needs and wants. Urging citizens to be interested is not enough. They should be presented with definite facts about their school. These might be obtained by giving the students standardized tests so that their academic achievements can be compared with the achievements of children all over the nation. Various physical, eye, and hearing tests might be administered to see if the pupils' needs in these areas are properly provided for; aptitude, ability, and interest tests may be used in developing effective guidance and counseling services for all the pupils.

By constant use of these different tests and other available devices, the school staff and the public can know the facts about the school. They then have the basis for determining in what areas the school has succeeded and in what areas it has failed its patrons. In light of such information the school staff and the patrons of the school can effectively work together for the improvement of the school program. The purpose of this program should be to educate every child in such a way that he develops to the fullest his capacities for becoming a worthy member of society. The writings of educational leaders and the accounts of successful practices in other communities may be used as guides in planning the program, but, when finally developed, it will be a unique program in that it is planned for and carried out to meet the needs of a particular community.

In this paper the writer attempts to present what good public relations practices are and how to develop such practices in a particular school--the East Richland Junior High School. The need for developing an improved public relations program in this school grew out of criticisms of the school on the part of both lay people and teachers. An attempt was made to develop a new program for this

school, one which was planned by faculty, administrators, and patrons working together. The results of these efforts will be presented and evaluated in light of generally accepted public relations practices. Finally, tentative recommendations as to possible next steps to be taken in developing the public relations program of the East Richland Junior High School will be presented.



## CHAPTER II

### GOOD PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS

Schools have always had some sort of public relations. Only in recent years, however, has a great deal of attention been focussed on developing improved relations between schools and the communities they serve. Efforts have been made both by leading educational organizations and civic-minded groups to determine what constitutes good public relations programs and how to develop them. In this section of the paper will be presented what now seems to be the accepted characteristics and practices of good school-community relations.

One of the most comprehensive surveys made in recent years in the field of school public relations was that conducted under the sponsorship of Life Magazine in 1950. In connection with that survey Henry Steele Commager, the noted American historian, made these thought-provoking comments on the present-day situation confronting American education.

The American mind today seems deeply worried about its school system as it never has been before. In the vast literature on education there is more discontent than complacency, more blame than praise. There is an uneasy feeling that the schools have somehow failed to do their job. . .

We need to get our standards straight and clear. Many of the old purposes and criteria have disappeared, and the people have not defined new ones to take their place. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Commager goes on to say that the educators of today need to take the lead in getting the people to arrive at more definite standards and goals in education. Good public relations programs could carry us a long way toward arriving at these more definite standards and goals.

Present-day schools no longer have anything like the monopoly in education they had in the nineteenth century. The advent of the movies, radio, television, increased printing, and improved means of travel have all furnished educational forces that influence the individual.

Even though this is true, demands on schools are increasing rather than diminishing. Moreover, as Commager says:

In a day of specialization schools are called on more and more to prepare not so much for life, citizenship or democracy as for particular tasks and competences.

This means that we have placed our schools in a cross-fire of conflicting demands. . . . There is a further difficulty--the one that most of us are reluctant to recognize. Schools reflect the society they serve. Many of the failures we ascribe to contemporary education are in fact failures of our society as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Henry Steele Commager, "Our Schools Have Kept Us Free," Life, 29:47, October 16, 1950.

2. Loc. cit.

The poll conducted by Elmo Roper for Life Magazine confirms Commager's opinion of present-day popular evaluation of our schools by the American public. In this poll the question was asked, "Are you satisfied with the public school system in your own community?" The answers were as follows: Really satisfied, 33.4%; Only fairly satisfied, 38.2%; Not satisfied at all, 16.8%.<sup>3</sup> This survey further showed that Americans are complacent about the nation's educational system as a whole, but they are dissatisfied in particular with their own community's school system.

This dissatisfaction with the local school system should be a source of concern to all public school personnel. It clearly indicates the need for greatly improved public relations programs on the part of schools. Such public relations programs will make the school staff aware of the public's opinion of the schools and will seek to make the public co-workers with the school staff in the improvement of the schools. As lay people and school staffs work sympathetically and cooperatively to improve the schools, public dissatisfaction with schools will tend to decrease and in time tend to disappear.

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<sup>3</sup>. "What U. S. Thinks About Its Schools," Life, 29:11, October 16, 1950.

What then constitutes a good public relations program? A leading group of public educators has given us this encompassing and concise definition of public relations: "Public relations seeks to bring about a harmony of understanding between any group and the public it serves and upon whose good will it depends."<sup>4</sup>

They further emphasize the increased need for good public relations today by saying:

With civilization grown more complex, the transmission of ideas has been quickened. As competitive forces have multiplied and expanded, all groups have become increasingly aware that they must view and hold public favor in legitimate ways in order to survive.<sup>5</sup>

The foregoing definition and quotation implies that good public relations cannot be established simply by presenting facts or subjecting the community to a great deal of publicity about the school. The mere interpretation of the school program will not be sufficient in instituting better school-community relationships. However, genuine cooperation in planning and working for good schools, with the public giving as well as receiving ideas--a two-way process--seems to be in keeping with this definition.

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4. The American Association of School Administrators, Public Relations for American Schools (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1950), 28th yearbook, p. 12.

5. Loc. cit.

S. A. Hamrin gives the following three objectives for any public relations program: "(1) understanding, (2) sympathy, and (3) participation."<sup>6</sup> These objectives further emphasize that good public relations is a cooperative search for mutual understanding and an experience in teamwork.

Commager presented the over-all picture of why American schools need to develop good public relations practices. The Encyclopedia of Educational Research lists these specific needs to be met by a public relations program:

The needs for an effective public relations program could be listed as: (a) the need for understanding by the public that school patterns are changing; (b) the limited and often inaccurate information possessed by citizens as to the work of the schools, their functions, and purpose; (c) the lack of understanding of educational values, needs, and possibilities for improvement; (d) a tendency to look with suspicion on contemplated changes; (e) the frequent misunderstandings and criticisms of school policies and proposed improvements; (f) the unenlightened and antagonistic attitudes sometimes shown toward some aspects of the school program; (g) the need for developing the will to progress; (h) the low interest correlation between information provided through the press and that desired by the reader; (i) the failure to ascertain the interests, desires, and needs of the community and to interpret them to the school personnel in the terms of an educational program; and (j) the need for interpreting the many services the schools perform.<sup>7</sup>

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6. S. A. Hamrin, Initiating and Administering Guidance Service (Bloomington, Illinois: McKnight and McKnight Publishing Company, 1953), p. 64.

7. Encyclopedia of Educational Research, 1950, revised edition, p. 901.

How well effective public relations programs in the schools have met these needs is indicated by the experiences of some communities. Albert L. Furth<sup>8</sup> tells of some interesting community accomplishments in Chappaqua, New York. In 1948, this community of 3100 proposed a bond issue for a new elementary school building to replace three old sub-standard buildings. The community was made up of a segment of long-established residents who could see little need for the new building and a group of newcomers who were eager for educational improvements. Because the school board did not give the public all the facts about the needs for the new school building, the bonds were voted down.

Later in the same year a non-partisan citizens' committee was formed. This committee carried on a campaign to educate the public on the school's functions and needs. When all elements in the community were acquainted with the facts, the bond issue carried. The people had learned the necessity of putting away broad questions and working up to them by the specifics--the specifics in terms of their own school.

A community with a large colored population often has a more complicated school problem than an all-white community.

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<sup>8</sup>. Albert L. Furth, "The Parents Go to Work," Life, 29:165-66, October 16, 1950.

An example of such a community solving a critical school problem is West Memphis, Arkansas.<sup>9</sup>

This city was notorious for its neglect of the Negro pupils' school needs. In 1949, after much unfavorable publicity which made a big issue of the color question, the community attempted to gain approval for a \$65,000 bond issue for Negro school needs. The bond issue was defeated.

In a few months, under the sponsorship of community leaders and an aroused white population, the bond issue carried. This was only possible after practically the entire community's support had been gained through an educational program carried on by various community groups. The public had to be given full facts before acting favorably on the proposed plans.

Life Magazine continues its account of successful public relations programs by telling of the experience of the Maury School in Richmond, Virginia.<sup>10</sup> This school is considered by many educators to be one of the best public elementary schools in the nation. This rating is

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9. "West Memphis Ends a Disgrace," Life, 29:61-2, October 16, 1950.

10. "Top Elementary School," Life, 29:125-28, October 16, 1950.

given the school even though the building is old-fashioned, funds are limited, and equipment and space do not allow teaching above the fourth grade. The high rating is due to Maury's imaginative teaching methods plus the fact that the Maury parents play a big role in the school, and the school plays a big role in the home. By understanding the school's aims, parents are able to help carry on the job of education at home with the result that Maury becomes a round-the-clock institution. This school is an example of a highly developed, efficient, working public relations program.

Harold J. McNally refers to the change in the conception of school public relations as follows:

Public relations of the schools in years past was often 'The Hands Off Approach,' 'The Selling Approach,' or 'The Interpretation Approach.' Each of these proved inadequate. Today it is recognized that the whole-hearted co-operation of the public, the profession, and the children is needed.<sup>11</sup>

A common theme running through current literature on public relations is the necessity for using democratic procedures in all phases of the program. These writings emphasize that authoritarian procedures have no place in our educational system or in dealing with the public.

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11. Harold J. McNally, "The Principal--Opportunity for Leadership," National Elementary Principal, 29:9, September, 1949.



Only poor public relations can result when school administrators feel that they are the sole authorities on what goes on in the school and that the public should keep their hands off. Harold J. Rugg makes much of this point.

He says:

It is a truism that if the people generally are to understand their problems they must have the necessary facts. This presents a two-fold problem: (1) the physical task of getting the facts to them, for many of the indispensable ones are not within their face-to-face personal experiences; (2) the psychological task of getting the facts to the people organized in meaningful form--so that their significance can be understood.<sup>12</sup>

Further evidence of the need for democratic procedures in public relations is expressed by Smith and Lindeman. They say:

The modern democratic way of life can be realized only if its precepts and ways of living are incorporated in the educational systems.<sup>13</sup>

When educators urge and obtain community participation in school affairs, the realization of this goal can be accelerated.

Melvin L. Gruwell gives the following general principles as guides for developing effective lay participation in planning school programs:

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12. Harold J. Rugg, Foundations for American Education (New York: World Book Company, 1947), p. 372.

13. T. V. Smith and Edward C. Lindeman, The Democratic Way of Life (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1951), revised edition, p. 148.

1. Only as lay citizens and professional school people work together can public education become and remain what it ought to be.

2. Decision regarding what the school ought to be is an obligation which the lay citizen cannot sidestep.

3. The 'how' of school operation is essentially the obligation of the professional school worker.

4. Recommendations regarding schools should be channeled through the board of education, which has legal responsibility for school operation.

5. Public participation will be adequate only when many devices, arrangements, and organizations are utilized.

6. Public participation is needed at all levels: national, state, county, school district, the school building, and even the single schoolroom.

7. Only as lay citizens learn to clarify problems and seek evidence upon such problems can public participation be constructive.

8. To succeed, public participation should take into account the values, ways of working, and organizational patterns of each community.

9. Public participation is developmental in nature. As lay citizens and school workers succeed in small tasks, they gain confidence and skill to bring such interaction to full flower.

10. Effective citizen participation in public education requires superintendents, principals and other school leaders, who perceive the possibilities in such a program, who take steps to start it going, and who continue to give guidance.<sup>14</sup>

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14. Melvin L. Gruwell, "Meeting the Problems of School-Community Relationships," The Nation's Schools, May, 1955, p. 98.

A successful public relations program in a public school must necessarily be approached in stages. Study, analysis, and caution must be coupled with intelligence and effort. Any effort in school public relations should not take on the atmosphere of an extravaganza.

The foregoing presentation indicates what school administrators and school staffs should keep in mind as they work to develop good public relations programs for their schools.

A summary account of the effort made in one particular school to build better public relations will now be presented.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM OF THE EAST RICHLAND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

In this chapter will be presented a study of the school-community program of the East Richland Junior High School for 1954-55. The characteristics of this program will be evaluated in the light of accepted public relations practices, and an effort will be made to determine how well the program has accomplished the purposes it set out to achieve.

This Junior High School is located in Olney, Richland County, Illinois, a community of 8100, and is the only junior high in the East Richland Community Unit District No. 1. It consists of grades seven and eight, with an average enrollment of 280 students. These grades were placed in a separate building in 1950. With the exception of approximately fifty pupils who reside in areas adjacent to the city and are eligible to ride the school bus, all the pupils in this junior high school live within the city limits.

The faculty consists of eleven regular teachers and two visiting teachers. Some of these are beginning instructors while others have had many years of experience

ranging up to thirty-four years. Their college training varies from three years of work to a bachelor's degree with some graduate study.

The economic welfare of Olney is dependent on agriculture, oil production, and a few small factories. The wage scale is lower than that usually found in a more highly industrialized community.

There are no colored people and no foreign elements in the community, hence no racial or language problems are present.

A large portion of the community is of the Catholic faith, and an elementary school is maintained for all children of this faith. At the present time nearly all Catholic youngsters of grade school age attend this parochial school, which has an enrollment of approximately 250. About thirty of these pupils are at the junior high school level. There are also eighteen Protestant churches in Olney. No noticeable friction exists on religious matters.

The program of the Junior High School during the three years prior to 1954-55 had been severely criticized by the patrons and teachers. The type of discipline maintained by the school was a major source of dissatisfaction. Teachers were said to be spending time out of the building

during school hours, a practice frowned upon by the public. Pupils were continually entering and leaving the building during class time. Thievery had been reported and many parents became disturbed when such items as coats, hats, and overshoes were missing. Preceding morning and afternoon classes, the pupils had been allowed to play in the halls and the gymnasium. General bedlam usually prevailed in the school at these times, and frequently students would report to classes in a condition of high excitement or fatigue. Classrooms were sometimes far from orderly. Corporal punishment, administered with paddles, by practically all faculty members, was a common practice. A demerit system was in use throughout the school. Punishable offenses were tardiness, failure to bring books and materials to class, whispering, etc. An accumulation of these demerits resulted in the students' having to perform such menial tasks as dusting school furniture and washing windows. This practice was resented by both the students and their parents.

Apparently little study of existing disciplinary conditions and a minimum of planning to correct adverse conditions had been made. As a result, the teachers were generally dissatisfied with the help administrators had given them in dealing with these problems.

Criticisms voiced by the public led the school board, administrators, and faculty members to evaluate the program of the East Richland Junior High School. Finding that the school was not meeting the needs of the community, the members of the school staff realized that they must have public support and approval to build a better school program. They, therefore, set out to develop an improved public relations program.

The entire staff studied and discussed certain criteria which might be used as a guide for the year's program. The group felt that the view expressed in the report of the "Summer Conference of the Illinois Council on Community Schools" is one that affords a proper background for future action. According to this report,

. . . the schools belong to the people. Only as the people, with the help of the specialists, decide what the schools shall do and how, can we ever have a really functional educational program.<sup>15</sup>

By recognizing themselves as the specialists whose function it is to help in the planning and carrying out of such a program and not to dictate the program, the staff showed a realization for the need of full cooperation with the public.

In planning the program full consideration was given

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15. Mabel Carney and Hans C. Olsen, "Summer Conference of the Illinois Council on Community Schools," Educational Press Bulletin, 44:15, October, 1953.

to the welfare and interests of all persons concerned with the school. Improved public relations was also a definite goal. The proposed public relations program was intended to be ". . . both preventative and remedial"<sup>16</sup> as suggested by the Illinois Education Association bulletin, Let's Talk It Over.

An effort was made to get the Junior High School staff to realize that the teacher is the main point of contact between the citizen and the school. Carl C. Byers emphasizes this when he says, "Teachers are the foundation of the school to the people."<sup>17</sup> And the staff of this junior high is becoming more aware of the fact that a school program can be greatly strengthened when faculty members are mindful of this truth.

The setting of definite goals through the joint efforts of the community and the staff gave the Junior High School faculty more confidence in beginning the year's program. This feeling of confidence in themselves enabled them to do a much more efficient job of carrying out the aims decided upon.

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16. Claude Vick, "An Effective Public Relations Program," Let's Talk It Over, Illinois Education Association, September, 1953. P. 4.

17. Carl C. Byers, "Promotes Good Public Relations," School Board Journal, 125:44, October, 1952.



The first problem to be tackled by the staff was that of discipline. The teachers were assured that the principal would aid them in taking care of any discipline problems. Corporal punishment was dropped, and a counseling program was set up with the principal as leader. Extreme infractions of rules led to a withdrawal of certain school privileges. Pupils were no longer permitted to leave the building for trivial reasons. Permission to leave the school was granted only in the case of an emergency or to take private music lessons, but pupils could leave the building for music lessons only during their regular study hall periods.

The Student Council in previous years had been rather ineffective. By consulting this group on school problems and giving full consideration to its suggestions and criticisms, it was given and it accepted an important part in the operation of the school. Early in the year the Student Council complained about the time allowed to go to the lockers before the morning and afternoon sessions began. In order to avoid the confusion that had previously existed in the halls and to eliminate some chances for thievery, the rule had been established that the pupils might go to their lockers only five minutes before class periods.

The Student Council felt that this resulted in pupils' having to look after wraps and books too long after entering the building. They agreed to provide hall patrols from 8:15 a.m. to 8:40 a.m. and from 12:20 p.m. to 12:45 p.m. if pupils would be allowed to go to their lockers during this extended period of time. This plan was put into operation and it worked very well. As a result, practically all noise in the halls and thievery were eliminated.

An effort was made to equalize the responsibilities of teachers for extra-curricular duties and activities so that each teacher would assume only his fair share of the load. The entire faculty had a part in providing more comfortable furniture for the teachers' lounge. Facilities for preparing coffee were set up there. The lounge became a very enjoyable place for staff relaxation when they were out of the classroom or off regular duty. The teachers agreed that they should not leave the building during school hours except for very urgent reasons. These might be doctor or dental appointments, pressing personal business, or illness. Emergency school-time purchases for any department were practically eliminated.

Student gifts to teachers had created strained

feelings among faculty members and had evoked uncomplimentary remarks from students and patrons in past years. By majority vote at the opening of the new school year, the faculty members of the East Richland Junior High School agreed that no teacher would receive any type of gift from any member of the student body during the school year. The purpose of this decision was to develop and maintain a more democratic atmosphere in the school as a whole. Many patrons openly approved the decision.

Daily bulletins containing information for pupils and teachers were issued. These bulletins were placed in the teachers' mailboxes and the pupils' parts of the bulletins were read to them at the beginning of the afternoon classes. Classrooms were entered by outsiders only in cases of real necessity, although parents were invited to visit classes whenever they desired and when their visits would not interfere with class routine.

The four minutes which had previously been allowed between classes had proved insufficient so this period was extended to five minutes. This proved enough time for both teachers and pupils to get from one class to another without undue rushing. Each classroom contained extra pencils and paper to be furnished to the students arriving in class without them. Pupils left the classroom only in

cases of real necessity. The halls were quiet and clear during class hours, thus reducing the possibility of thievery.

The principal accepted the point of view as to his responsibility for public relations expressed as follows by Whitelaw: "The attitudes and ability of the principal will determine whether progress in functional school-community relations is achieved or wrecked. . . It is a simple matter of fact that the key person in promoting dynamic school-community relations in any community is the principal of the school."<sup>18</sup> In line with this idea, the principal requested suggestions and criticisms from the faculty, staff members, students, and patrons. These suggestions were discussed with all groups concerned and adjustments were made or changes inaugurated according to the decision of the majority of the group.

It is generally believed that teachers carry out a more successful classroom program when they have a part in formulating the policy of the entire school. This proved true at the East Richland Junior High School. The teachers were more punctual, and they renewed and increased their interest in the pupils and the school program as was

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18. John Bertram Whitelaw, The School and Its Community (New York: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), Second edition, p. 55.

evident in faculty meetings where they eagerly discussed the problems of the school. Teachers who had previously taken no active part in faculty meetings or school affairs now became active participants in both.

The school nurse was given full cooperation by the staff and administrators in her duties and she was allowed to contact pupils at her convenience. Staff members helped to keep her fully informed concerning the health conditions and attendance of the children. She proved a definite aid in helping to maintain regular attendance. The school nurse had the good will of the student body and the faculty.

The two maintenance men were concerned with maintaining a clean, safe, and sanitary building. They did their work well and they enlisted the aid of pupils and teachers in helping to keep the building clean and free from safety hazards. The teachers and pupils responded to this call for help and did their part by such actions as throwing waste paper in the proper containers, keeping restrooms neat, and walking, not running, in the halls. As a result of this joint effort, a high standard of building maintenance was achieved.

The school staff felt that the public was entitled

to know what was going on at the Junior High School. One way this was accomplished was through regular releases of school news to the local newspaper and radio station. Bulletins were distributed to the pupils to be taken home to their parents so that parents would know of approaching school events and other interesting facts about the school in which they might be interested.

In order to further inform the public about the school, National Education Week was observed with an evening program. This program, planned by the staff, began by having all visiting patrons meet in the auditorium. During this time the principal presented the goals of the educational program of the school and how the school was attempting to attain these goals. The educational objectives presented were these given by Arvid J. Burke:

- Mastery of essential skills
- Mastery of essential knowledge
- Ability to think
- Ability to get along with others
- Good health
- Good citizenship
- Good character
- Good home life
- Personal adjustment
- Development of individual abilities and talents.<sup>19</sup>

Each parent was placed in a group corresponding to

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<sup>19</sup>. Arvid J. Burke, "What Makes Good Schools?"  
N.E.A. Journal, 43:476, November, 1954.

his child's class group. A regular schedule of classes was held, announced by the usual bell system. Ten minutes were allowed in each classroom with five-minute intervals for passing. Six periods made up the evening and, in going through the schedule, each parent met all the teachers of his child. Each teacher presented a brief outline of the purposes of his particular class and called attention to the textbooks used. The teachers answered as many questions as time permitted. Following the completion of the schedule, light refreshments prepared by the Homemaking classes were served in the Homemaking Room.

The parents expressed approval of the visitation program and contrasted it with the more common practice of visitation in which patrons aimlessly wander from classroom to classroom. Teachers, too, were pleased because of the unusually large number of parents visiting the school and the great interest they showed in the work of the teachers.

Meeting the parents of the pupils was a great aid in furthering the guidance program. Each teacher took some part in the counseling of pupils during the entire school day. In addition, homeroom periods were scheduled for group guidance discussions. A room was available for individual

counseling during a teacher's free period.

Teachers feel that an extra-curricular program planned cooperatively by pupils and teachers provided real opportunities for pupils. This is especially true since these activities were organized primarily to educate and benefit the pupils rather than to publicize the school. Victory in sports was not overly emphasized.

Pupils had the opportunity to join any two of several clubs open for membership. There were no qualifications for membership other than the pupils' own desires. No child was excluded from membership for financial reasons, and club expenses were kept to a minimum. At no time was any pressure exerted to increase membership in any club. Parents were informed about the clubs, their organization, and aims. Only thirty children out of the total enrollment participated in no sport or club activity. Many of these lived in semi-rural areas and had no available transportation. Club meetings were held at night under the sponsorship of faculty members, and meetings started and dismissed promptly at the announced times. This punctuality was especially appreciated by the many parents who called for their children after meetings. No activity was emphasized except for its value to the pupils.



Dramatic and music groups presented performances free of charge for the students and the public. A Student Activity Fund derived from concessions at ball games supplemented money allowed by the administration for these performances. Admission prices to basketball games were kept nominal. Any student wishing to attend a game and unable to buy a ticket was admitted free.

All social activities of the student body were planned and regulated by the parents and faculty. Often parent volunteers were present at these functions.

Assemblies were used to interpret the school program to the children. Assemblies in which ministers of the community participated were held the day prior to special school holidays.

Bulletin boards maintained in the study hall by pupils and faculty provided pupils with information on current school activities and programs.

Large glass-covered wall cases on the main floor were used to exhibit the pupils' work in Industrial Arts. Room bulletin boards displayed work done by pupils in other departments.

The daily bulletins and homeroom periods were used in place of a handbook to acquaint the children with school

standards and regulations. Past experience with a handbook had not achieved the desired results.

A school newspaper, published at regular six-weeks intervals and distributed free to pupils, carried items of interest to both pupils and parents. The twenty boys and girls who did the work connected with issuing the school paper under the direction of two faculty members received valuable training in English usage and journalism from this experience. School spirit was helped by the publication of the paper. The guiding principle in this activity was remembering that the primary audience was the student body. An effort was made to see that each pupil's name appeared at least once during the school year in connection with some news item. All material was approved before publication.

The school stressed pupil safety at all times and in all places. Crossing streets only at corners was especially emphasized, and this particular safety measure was well observed by pupils at least in the school area in which their behavior could be observed by the staff. This safety program was inaugurated during the first week of school with members of the Richland County Safety Committee meeting with pupils and faculty. Fire Prevention

Week was observed by having members of the local fire department present and participating in a special fire prevention program.

No child failed to take part in physical education classes because of lack of proper equipment. The few pupils unable to provide their own equipment were furnished school-owned equipment.

Textbooks were furnished pupils on a rental basis. Pupils unable to pay the rental fees were furnished textbooks without charge. Approximately ten per cent of the pupils were unable to pay the textbook fee. Most of these pupils came from families receiving public aid.

The hearing and vision of each child were tested annually. Any child failing these tests and without financial means, was furnished medical attention with funds donated by various civic clubs. This monetary aid was also available for other health needs, such as tonsillectomies or dental work.

Most of the faculty belonged to local churches, lodges, and civic clubs. They took an active part in community affairs and thus maintained close contact with local groups and institutions.

Teachers' meetings at which educational problems and trends were discussed were held regularly. All faculty

members participated in these discussions and decisions were reached by majority vote of the group. An exchange of ideas and comments among departments was encouraged.

Staff members were encouraged to attend educational conferences with expenses paid by the school board. As a result, most faculty members attended conferences in their particular fields during the school year. All faculty members belonged to educational associations at the local, district, state, and national levels.

No regular parent-teacher association was organized, but faculty members urged parents to visit classrooms and contact classroom teachers at any time.

Effort was made to let the public know what the school was attempting to do for the pupils and to get the public's reaction to the work of the school. At no time, however, did the school exert undue pressure on patrons in support of programs the school particularly wished to have developed.

An example of staff listening to and acting on suggestions from patrons grew out of a shop incident in which a boy ruined a pair of good trousers. When his parents suggested that shop aprons be provided, the administration approved the suggestion and purchased the

aprons for the use of all pupils taking these courses.

The interest and approval of the school's public was shown when a spring program to beautify the school grounds was put in operation. The plan was suggested by one of the maintenance men and it was further discussed by the Student Council. The project suggested and accepted was that all interested pupils should bring one bulb or plant to the school on a designated day. The Student Council, with the help of the maintenance men, planted the bulbs and plants. The response from the student body was good and the campus presented an improved appearance with little expense or trouble to anyone. Moreover, the project led to increased pride in the school grounds on the part of pupils, patrons, and staff members.

A school program operating over a period of nine months with little or no adverse criticism from student body, faculty, board of education, or public evidently has a fairly satisfactory program and good school-community relations. No one person or group can claim credit for the East Richland Junior High School program. The program achieved whatever success it did only by all concerned working together toward common goals. As those concerned with developing a better program for the school work together,

they gain a better understanding of the purposes and needs of the school. As a result, a good groundwork has been laid for even better future home-school relations.

By centering the school program around the child, his needs were better met. The question of how well and to what extent each child's needs were met can probably never be fully determined. The aim is a continuing, sincere effort.

In the next chapter, an attempt will be made to evaluate the foregoing program and to suggest ways of strengthening it.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The revised program of the East Richland Junior High School has been presented in the previous chapter. An attempt will now be made to evaluate this program both in the light of accepted public relations practices and as to its success in meeting the needs of the community it serves. Following this evaluation, tentative recommendations for improving the program will be given.

It is quite generally agreed by the staff that the program in the East Richland Junior High School succeeded in getting the public and the local educators to work together more than they had in previous years. The interest that has been awakened can be felt in many quarters. Public response to such things as National Education Week, athletic events, plays, and musical productions is greater than it ever had been before. Parents are more willing to discuss their children's school problems with the teachers than they formerly were. Less adverse criticism is now being heard and some phases of the school program have been highly praised by patrons.

Teacher morale and classroom atmosphere have noticeably improved. A more cooperative spirit exists

throughout the school organization. As a result, staff members are more willing and better able to plan for an improved and expanded public relations program.

The school staff is in general agreement that pupils show much more interest in their school than they had here-to-fore. School spirit has increased. Most pupils are eager to participate in outside activities, and they feel that their parents and teachers are willing to be a part of these activities with them.

Even though improvements have been achieved in the East Richland Junior High School, there still remains much to be done. The school program needs further improvement to meet the needs of all the children. And still better school-home relations need to be developed, for as yet not all parents are acquainted with their children's teachers and not all patrons know as much about schools as they should or participate as is desirable in developing the school program.

A well-organized and active Parent-Teacher Association would be one means of stimulating better home-school relationships. The programs of the P. T. A. should deal with important school-home problems and they should be cooperatively planned and evaluated by the school staff and lay people. Panel discussions, in which teachers,



parents, administrators, and pupils participate, might be one device to get all concerned to participate in dealing with important school-home problems.

As a rule, parents are unacquainted with what actually takes place in a classroom. While it may not be feasible for them to visit classes, it might be possible to have movies or slides made of various classes in action. These movies could be shown to many different groups of school patrons so that a large number of citizens might learn more about the school in action.

It is not only important for the parent to know the teacher, but it is equally important that the teacher know the parent. Admittedly, the parent has the advantage in this situation for his child frequently talks about the teacher at home. The parent gains information of some kind in this way. To further this getting-acquainted process, greater use could be made of parent-teacher conferences, both of the group type where general educational problems are discussed and with the individual parents where discussion might center on a particular child.

In some cases, home visits might be made by the teacher, but these should only be undertaken with great tact and caution. Many parents feel that a teacher visits the home only to snoop, and a teacher, visiting a home without

having given adequate forewarning, may find herself not too welcome.

Much could be accomplished by having the community and the school decide together what sort of report card should go home to the parents. Newer trends in reporting to parents generally indicate that the parents would like more information than mere indication of academic achievement. If Johnny has trouble getting along with his fellow-students or shows a special aptitude in extra-curricular newspaper work, parents are interested and would like to be informed.

A regular schedule might be set up for sending bulletins to parents. These could contain varied information concerning school projects such as campus beautification, school events such as games or dramatic productions, and school problems like tardiness or juvenile delinquency. Questionnaires might be included to gauge public feeling on a proposed project. Each parent will then feel that his opinion is important to the school and helps to shape school policy. In this way, too, the school can better determine how well it is meeting the needs of the public.

It is not only important that parents be interested in and proud of the school--the pupils should share this

interest and pride. Each child is a different individual, with his own capabilities and potentialities. The classroom teacher should try to keep this in mind when planning his daily program so that each child can develop as fully as possible in every desirable way. The pupils are important emissaries in a successful public relations program in the school. When a parent sees that his child is recognized and accepted as a worthy individual he is more apt to be a parent who is satisfied with the school program.

An important part in developing the individual child is assumed by an adequate guidance program. The permanent records, achievement tests, aptitude and ability tests should be used extensively. Much of this information can be relayed to the parent so that the home can intelligently and effectively cooperate in the guidance program. Qualified guidance personnel might be called in to work with both parents and teachers. Special effort should be made to interest non-participating pupils in some type of extra-curricular activity.

As a further help in improving public relations, the school and community could obtain and profitably use material available from the National Citizens Commission on the Public Schools on the subject of school-community relations. This Commission is made up of many of the

nation's leading citizens and has as its major purpose helping communities to improve their public schools.

As the school staff works to improve public relations of the school, it is well for it to keep in mind the thoughts regarding home-school relations expressed by James L.

Hymes, Jr. He says:

Home-school relations is a new field. Very little research and experimentation are specific and peculiar and private to it alone. When you work in this field you need your imagination and creativity much more than you need your memory.<sup>20</sup>

To this might be added the need for courage and the ability on the part of the staff to overcome the disappointments and set-backs that inevitably grow out of human endeavors to bring about improvements.

This idea expressed as follows by Edwin Markham is one that might be kept in mind when educators and laymen strive for better educational opportunities for youth:

He drew a circle that shut me out--  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But love and I had the wit to win:  
We drew a circle that took him in!<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>. James L. Hymes, Jr., Effective Home-School Relations (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1953), p. 231.

<sup>21</sup>. Edwin Markham, Poems (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), p. 198.

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