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JACKSONVILLE COMMUNITY COUNCIL, INC.

A Report To The Citizens Of Jacksonville

SUSAN BLACK, CHAIRMAN

SEPTEMBER, 1979

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE SCHOOLS

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The Citizen Participation in the Schools study was adopted by the JCCI Board of Managers upon recommendation of the program committee. The major focus of the study was citizen involvement and participation in the Duval County Public School System.

Early in the study process the management team felt the need to define the terms of citizen participation and citizen involvement. The definitions cited in the report Improving Education in Florida: A Reassessment were agreed to by the committee:

Citizen Participation ..... citizens taking part in activities in order to exercise power or influence, to have impact on decision-making in policy matters.

Citizen Involvement ..... citizens taking part in activities where there is no clear intent to exercise power or to have an effect on decision-making.

There is some confusion in these terms because much that is called participation involves little or no power or influence. In this report these definitions of participation and involvement will be strictly adhered to.

Though there are many locally organized groups which promote citizen involvement in Duval County Schools, the committee found that only LSACs are designed to promote citizen participation. This report examines the LSACs and compares their functions to other local groups and the federally funded Title I ESEA Parent Advisory Councils in terms of function, organization, training, support and membership.

The committee operated under various assumptions. The first and most important was that citizen participation and involvement are valuable to the community and should be supported. The committee also endorsed the concept that in a democratic society laws are shaped to ensure broad representation in decision-making in government, and effective citizen organizations are an important means for citizens to participate in government and share authority with elected officials and professionals. Citizen participation in the schools improves the public's communication with, and understanding of the schools. This improved communication and understanding increases the public's confidence in education which has been decreasing according to recent polls.

Because the Duval County School System is so large with 134 individual schools, the committee decided to survey the schools concerning the Local School Advisory Council (LSAC) and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) programs. In addition, the members of the committee wanted to attend LSAC meetings and observe them for the purposes of this study. Conclusions drawn from the results of the survey are reported in this study.

HIGHLIGHTS

MAJOR PROBLEMS:

There is little evidence of citizen participation in the schools. Most of the LSAC time and energy is being spent on involvement in service activities. PTAs and PTOs are presently filling the role of citizen involvement and LSACs are duplicating their role in this area.

The commitment of the School Board and the administration to LSAC is weak, as demonstrated by an absence of adequate information, training, and other support services provided to LSACs.

Duval County's system of LSACs is not working well. The School Board and Superintendent assume each school has a functioning LSAC; however, the JCCI survey revealed that there are at least 16 schools which do not have LSACs, and that the quality and quantity of LSAC activities varies greatly from school to school and by type of school.

RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS:

The School Board should:

Clearly define the functions and responsibility of LSACs.

Provide training and incentives for LSAC members and principals.

Provide staff support to encourage LSAC activities.

Revise and update the LSAC manual.

Establish a communication network among LSACs, with the administration and the School Board.

Establish an ad hoc committee to develop an LSAC model.

FINDINGS

Findings are derived from published materials listed in the references or from a consensus of committee understanding as reported by resource persons.

LOCAL SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL (LSAC)

In a 1977 survey conducted by the Institute for Responsive Education and the Education Commission of the States, 27 states reported that they had state-level initiatives for citizen participation in the public schools. Seventeen states reported some type of legislation enacted in the 1970s related to public participation in education. Some of these laws created state-level advisory committees, others enacted legislation creating local advisory groups for special education or bilingual education. In some cases states instituted advisory committees which provided citizen participation in planning or evaluating school programs.

In Colorado, California and Florida a statewide structure of Local School Advisory Councils was instituted. The Florida Local School Advisory Councils(LSACs), established in 1973 by the legislature, stemmed from a report of the Governor's Citizen Committee on Education which dealt with the community and the school. The Governor's citizen committee made several recommendations:

- "(The Advisory Councils) should function as an advisory group to the principal and in general should work with him on the development of the budget, program, personnel policy and to improve the quality of education.

- One of the most important functions of the LSAC would be assisting the principal in preparation of the Annual Report of School Progress, detailed below. The School Advisory Council would thus have responsibility for evaluating the school's education effectiveness and reporting this to parents, students, and the public at large in a plain, simple, easily read manner.

- The individual school should be the basic unit of educational accountability in Florida. To achieve this accountability, there shall be an Annual Report of School Progress which details the improvements made in education at the school during the school year - and which identifies the areas in need of further improvement. Serving as a basic performance audit instrument, hopefully, the Annual Report will become a power tool for achieving school level improvements and innovations."

The Governor's Committee recommendations were met with some resistance and compromises were made to ensure passage of the law. The history of the legislation is outlined in the 1974 report by the staff of the Florida Senate Education Committee and reported again in the 1978 report entitled Improving Education in Florida: A Reassessment:

> "The initial Education Committee approach was to construct a bill which was in keeping with the spirit and intent of the citizens committee recommendations - that is, one which guaranteed an optimum degree of parental input and participation at the local school level by specifying certain crucial advisory functions to be assessed by each Council. In contrast, a weaker version encompassed those legislative counter proposals or amendments which sought to restrict both the degree and kind of parental input at the local school level by investing with the district school board discretionary power over planning and establishing these councils.
>
> "A major subject of debate between proponents of the strong and weak versions involved the extent of the state's role in education vis a vis the local school boards. The two major concrete issues commanding attention were whether there should be mandated one council per school, and what was the proper scope of the advisory powers to be afforded these councils. School board members, superintendents, and PTAs were not generally friendly toward the concept of councils and so the bill as passed, a weaker substitute version, mandated only that each district school board should establish at least one school advisory committee and the committee or committees would not have any of the powers and duties reserved, by law, to the school board.

It was also given to the school boards the prerogative to develop a plan for establishing each committee, provided that such plans guaranteed that parents of students be members and that it would be broadly representative of the community served by the school. The duties and functions of any committee are prescribed by the school board, provided that said committee participate with the appropriate school personnel in the development of an annual report of school progress. The bill also provided that the school board evaluate the effectiveness of the committee or committees and submit to the State Department of Education a copy of its evaluation. The Department was instructed to provide to the State Board of Education and the legislature an annual appraisal of the effectiveness of these committees based on district level evaluations."

DUVAL COUNTY ACTION

Duval County acted on the legislation in 1974 by designating a staff person from the Duval County schools to assist in implementing the Local School Advisory Councils and assigned staff to develop a manual to assist in their formation.

A manual entitled "Local School Advisory Committees - Duval County 1974-75" was prepared by Nannie Paul Thomas, Area I Director of Elementary Education, in November 1974. Included in the beginning of the manual is a transcription of the enacting legislation of 1973, the State Department of Education guidelines and the Duval County School Board policy. The School Board deems it more appropriate to have school advisory councils at each individual school rather than having several county wide ones or one to serve the entire county. The Board policy is stated below:

"Each school advisory committee shall function in an advisory capacity to the principal and in general should work with him on the development of the educational program and the accompanying school budget. This advisory committee shall not assume any of the powers or duties now invested, by law, to the school board or its professional staff."

Since 1974, the Board policy has specified that LSACs function in the area of budget and educational programs and specified that LSACs are to influence the principal through their advisory capacity. The LSACs were never intended to assume or lessen the powers and responsibilities of the principal. However, they were designed to influence the principal's decision-making.

In the 1974 manual, the Duval County School Board defined the purpose of the advisory councils to be as follows:

"The Local School Advisory Committee shall participate in decision-making by advising the principal in matters pertaining to the local school program. The committee is a resource to the principal who remains responsible for decisions which are necessary in the administration and supervision of the school. The term advising is intended to mean:

1) inquiring ..... asking about, searching into
2) informing ..... making known, giving information
3) suggesting .... proposing, offering for consideration
4) recommending .. formally stating suggestions."

The manual defined the functions of the advisory council and it suggested operations. Among other groups, the manual recommended the membership of the advisory council include parents, residents, teachers, the principal, students (in the secondary schools), and the community school coordinator if the school is a community school. The membership on the advisory council could be appointed, elected or selected. The size of the advisory council was recommended to be from 7 to 30 members. To achieve continuity in membership, the manual suggested that members serve staggered terms of one or two years.

The role of the principal and the number of meetings were defined. All the local school advisory council meetings were to be open, and the notice of regular meetings and the proposed agenda were to be distributed at least five days in advance to interested persons. Contained in the LSAC manual were sample bylaws and charter which each school advisory council could adapt, as well as a model evaluation. The manual contained suggested possible topics and activities for consideration by school advisory councils.

LSACs were not intended to function in service or fund raising areas. The suggested activities for the school advisory councils in six areas were:

(1) advise regarding the general operations of the school
(2) advise and assist in matters of school/community relations
(3) advise and assist in the establishment of courses and educational programs
(4) advise and assist regarding facilities and equipment
(5) advise and assist in evaluation
(6) advise and assist in miscellaneous ways such as personnel services, parent handbooks, open houses, etc.

A glossary of terminology is included to increase the LSAC members' understanding of educational language.

The manual was written to assist in the formation of LSACs in Duval County because the original legislation left the implementation strategies up to the local School Board. The 1973 law did not contain a clear statement of legislative intent, nor did it have the support systems necessary for implementation without further guidelines. Moreover, it did not allocate any funding for local staff to perform the new duties that are prescribed.

CHANGES IN THE LEGISLATION

The legislation was modified several times by the legislature. The 1976 changes in the LSAC legislation identified a range of general goals for educational systems, such as accountability, equity, efficiency, and effectiveness. These general statements did not refer specifically to public participation in decision-making, and no reference was made to the school as the principal planning unit until a later section on educational planning, Section 229.55 (1) (b). As in the 1973 law, the 1976 law still called for annual reports and advisory councils, and advisory councils were authorized to provide "such assistance as the principal may request in preparing the school's annual budget and plan." The statement of intent originally preceding the description and specifications for the annual report was dropped, as well as the School Board's annual evaluation of advisory committees. The only remaining reference to annual reports was mentioned in the section concerning the Department of Education which retained the responsibility for reviewing the annual reports.

The Department of Education had no funding for staff to support the Local School Advisory Councils. When the annual reports were submitted to the Department there was no one to read them or to give any feedback about them. With so little support from the Department of Education and so little accountability required from the local level, there was no encouragement to support LSACs. LSACs were not given the support they had had in previous years in Duval County. Because of budgeting shifts, the staff position which coordinated the LSAC activities was eliminated.

CURRENT DUVAL COUNTY TRENDS

By 1978, the Duval County School Board no longer reviewed the annual reports. The annual reports were written exclusively for local school use. Though the LSACs are supposed to assist in preparing the reports, examination of the 1977 annual reports of the schools reveals several reports with no mention of LSAC activities or even LSAC assistance.

The 1978 legislation for LSACs gave permission to School Boards to use other recognized school wide support groups to perform LSAC functions. It has been learned that in the fall of 1978, a committee of nine persons selected by the Duval County School Superintendent met to re-examine and recommend whether there would be one Local School Advisory Council for the county, or recommend continuation of the present system of one LSAC per school. The committee decided to keep the present system of one LSAC per school.

In surveying many of the Local School Advisory Council chairmen and principals throughout the county, it was revealed that many principals and LSAC chairmen are unclear about the function and mission of LSAC. The LSAC manual written in 1974-1975 has not been revised to express any new legislation or any new direction since it was initially written.

LSACs are dependent on the principal of each school for clarification of purpose and direction. They tend to reflect the principal's leadership and interests, yet the local School Board and school administration provide few incentives for principals to support LSACs.

LSACs in Duval County operate at the local school level only. According to Improving Education in Florida: A Reassessment there is a trend in Florida to have multi-tiered councils operating at the district and school level within counties, but that trend is not found in Duval County. In fact, the LSACs are discouraged by the School Board from meeting together and sharing ideas. During the process of the study, the Chairman of the School Board clarified the Board's policy. While an LSAC member or any individual could represent himself or his organization, an individual could not represent more than one LSAC. It was made very clear by School Board members, the Superintendent and the principals that the function of the LSAC is to advise the principal only.

There is currently no support given for training and orientation for LSAC members. In addition, school principals are not specifically trained to work with Local School Advisory Councils. Since principals are not evaluated on their abilities and success in working with the advisory councils, there are few incentives to do so. This lack of incentive may account for the differences in the quality and quantity of LSAC participation and effectiveness throughout the school district.

A local concern of both LSAC members and principals is the lack of volunteers or citizens willing to participate on Local School Advisory Councils. This problem is not unique to LSACs. The largest parent involvement and participation seems to be in the elementary schools and decreases in the higher grades. In the school centers, the participation is lower because the children are in the single grade schools for only one year. Another reason for the lack of participation and involvement in the middle grades seems to be the effects of the creation of the sixth and seventh grade centers. Although the centers may have some positive effects, they tend to reduce the benefits of neighborhood schools, causing transportation difficulties, and reducing participation by parents and citizens. At the junior high school and high school levels there is an additional obstacle for parental participation and involvement. In these schools there are many organizations competing for parental involvement, including band boosters, athletic clubs, choral boosters, and dads clubs. The list goes on and on. It is felt that these organizations may gain the involvement of adults who otherwise would participate in LSACs.

Local School Advisory Councils vary markedly in their activities. Of the 101 principals reporting on the JCCI survey, only 88 LSACs were reported existing in the local schools - 23 of those had no scheduled meetings. Some principals mentioned in the survey that LSACs were still organizing in March '79 for the 78-79 school year. Many principals felt that the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) could very well serve the function of the Local School Advisory Council. Some respondents mentioned that there was no difference between the PTA and the Local School Advisory Council in their activities or in their membership.

In summary, the Governor's Citizens Committee on Education recommended a system of Local School Advisory Councils to advise the principals. The legislature passed a law based on these recommendations in 1973. In the following years, the LSAC functions were left more and more to the discretion of the local School Boards and the legislation has changed, decreasing the legislated functions of LSACs. In 1978 the legislature allowed other school wide support groups to serve the LSAC function.

PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (PTA)

The Parent Teacher Association in Florida has a very long history. In 1899 the very first parent groups were organized by the East Jacksonville Mothers Club. By 1923 the first charter was granted to Florida. At that time, the PTAs in Florida had 20 associations with a total membership of 500 people. In 1979, Duval County has 90 PTAs in its schools, and in some schools nearly every parent, teacher and administrator are dues-paying members. The PTA members are involved in service projects to help the local school.

PTA has a very formal structure with several levels: local school level, the county councils, the regional office, the state office, and the national office. All PTAs must share some of the same articles in their bylaws and adhere to the same objectives which are:

(a) to promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, church and community

(b) to raise the standards of the home life

(c) to secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth

(d) to bring into closer relation the home and the school, that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the education of children and youth

(e) to develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for all children and youth the highest advantage in physical, mental, social and spiritual education

These objectives are promoted in cooperation with the state PTA, the national PTA and through an educational program directed towards parents, teachers and the general public. The PTA uses conferences, committees, projects and programs to implement these objectives, and the PTAs are governed and qualified by the basic policy set forth in their bylaws.

The basic unit of the PTA is at the local level. The local PTA has its own set of bylaws based on those prepared by the national PTA. They have a close relationship to the county council. Each local PTA selects its president and one representative as delegates to the county council. The local level sets its own system of dues.

The county council has the same policies as the local unit. It is organized to "bring the power of united planning and effort to bear on solutions to countywide problems affecting children and youth." It offers technical assistance and serves as a channel of communication. It also has a system of dues. Its membership elects its seven officers who appoint twenty-six other individuals to be members of the 31-person board of managers of the county council. The board may address the School Board at School Board meetings representing the entire PTA or the board of managers specifically. The board of managers takes positions on issues. These positions are often interpreted as being positions of the entire PTA of the county, even though the members of the PTA have not had the opportunity to express their view and may even disagree on these positions.

The county council relates to the regional organization of the PTA which facilitates administration of the PTA. The region reports to the state which approves local bylaws and has its own system of dues. The state office is the coordinator for all state activities and relates to the national office.

The PTA offers training and technical assistance to its members. The PTA has been in existence many years and has a tradition of school service. Its activities are designed around the needs of individual schools and usually involve some fund raising. Much attention is paid to the physical facilities and the welfare of the child. The PTA has a newsletter. PTAs are involved in lobbying for legislation, have publications, public relations and library services. The PTA teaches their officers to evaluate their organization and its programs and has a system of conferences where members of the PTAs can share their successes and obtain help on their problems.

Another organization, Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) is also associated with this national, state and local structure. In fact it is the same organization as the PTA except that it is in high schools and includes students.

Historically, Duval County PTA has been active. Currently the president of the state PTA is a Jacksonville resident.

PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION (PTO)

Parent-Teacher Organizations are similar to PTAs in that they are service organizations whose membership consists of parents and teachers at the local school. However, they have no formal link with each other nor do they have any relationship with the Parent-Teacher Associations. They vary from school to school depending on their bylaws. They also have a system of dues. The JCCI study shows that there are 18 PTOs in the 101 schools reporting in the survey.

OTHER CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

Jacksonville has an extensive volunteer program in the Duval County schools. The school system has developed a handbook for teachers, a handbook for each volunteer, and has designated a staff person to coordinate volunteer activities county wide. There is a staff person at the individual school assigned to work with volunteers in addition to regular responsibilities.

Over 15,000 volunteers serve two or more hours per week in the 134 Duval County schools throughout the school year. There are many opportunities for school volunteers in all grade levels in Duval County schools. The School Board brochure for volunteers describes those opportunities as follows:

"The school volunteer can do many things. He/She can assist in classrooms or in the library or provide individual help in math or reading, or tell stories, or read to students, or listen to students read their books, or help school personnel in performing non-teaching duties, or assisting in art, music, and special programs and projects, or serve as research volunteers to enrich the school curriculum, or help out on field trips, or participate in learning games with students, or just simply be a friend to school students. A school volunteer can always find some way of helping. It may be as a lunchroom helper, a recreational assistant, or even clerical or secretarial help around the school office. No matter what the volunteer does, it helps the students, school, and the community."

The trend seems to be toward more volunteers in each school which may be attributed to the new staff support which has been provided within the past year. There also seems to be a trend toward more volunteers in the elementary schools than in the higher grades.

Business Education Partnership

In 1978 Duval County began participating in the Business Education Partnership sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. Twenty-seven businesses are participating. Some of the opportunities and possibilities for businesses to help the schools are:

- assisting the principals in the areas of business management
- forming a company booster club for the adopted school
- training company employees and allowing time off to tutor in the schools
- having engineers or other experts teach their specialties to students
- having company volunteers assist with athletic coaching
- providing assistance with course scheduling

This program is just beginning and offers potential for citizen involvement in the future.

COMMUNITY SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT

The committee did not look into community education in depth.

TITLE I

Since the early 1970's nearly all school-related legislation has included regulations for citizen advisory mechanisms. Many include a participatory component or call for a permanent advisory committee at the local level.

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was passed by the Congress in 1965 and required citizen participation through its parent advisory councils (PACs). ESEA Title I provides funds for educationally disadvantaged children. The Parent Advisory Council must assess the needs of their educationally disadvantaged children and must formulate educational programs to meet these needs with Title I assistance. Schools are eligible for Title I on the basis of their enrollment of students from low-income families. Children qualify to receive Title I services according to their individual educational needs.

From the very beginning of ESEA Title I, the participation of parents and community representatives in the school programs was recognized as a crucial element in the ability of the schools to affect student motivation and success. Research findings point to the positive relationship between parental participation in a school and the academic achievement of its students. Reports from school districts around the nation, however, indicate that a more clear definition of parental participation is needed, as well as a detailed explanation of the authority and functions of the Parent Advisory Council.

In Duval County there are 15,000 students eligible for Title I at 85 schools, including 9 private schools. The county has a Title I budget of approximately $7.5 million. Each Title I school has a Parent Advisory Council which elects one or two representatives to the county committee. The principals are required by law to be involved or to send a representative.

At the county level there are between 55 and 60 active members and 5 to 10 active principals. Title I parents require some training before they can really be active in helping to plan and allocate the resources to the Title I program. With the

help of the PAC handbook, it takes about a year of experience to become thoroughly familiar with Title I programs. Title I parents are trained to look at budgets and curriculum and to make decisions to allocate limited resources. Jacksonville residents have been active in Title I Parent Advisory Councils. Currently the state Title I Vice-President is a Jacksonville resident.

DISTRICT-WIDE COMMITTEES

The appendix lists 56 district-wide committees and their enrollment of citizens and school personnel. There are 240 school personnel and 262 individual citizens involved. For the most part the citizen involvement and participation in these committees has focused on the area of curriculum development in the vocational classes. Other committees such as Human Growth and Development have actively advised the School Board.

COMPARISONS

The Citizen Participation in the Schools Committee was told by several resource people that one of the problems with citizen participation and involvement in the schools was duplication of membership and efforts by separate groups in the schools. The committee examined these overlapping functions by comparing the Local School Advisory Councils (LSACs) to the Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and the Title I Parent Advisory Committee (PACs). The comparison shall be made in terms of function, organizational design, training, support and membership.

Function:

LSACs were legislated by the state to participate in the local schools by advising the principal in the areas of budgeting and school curriculum. PTAs, on the other hand, are private citizen groups at the local level which are primarily service organizations improving the welfare of the child and the physical condition of the schools. Title I PACs primarily function in the areas of the Compensatory Educational Program for educationally disadvantaged children and PACs make decisions concerning the allocation of federal funds.

Organizations:

The organizational structure of the LSAC differs from one county to another depending upon the council. In Duval County, the Local School Advisory Councils do not feed into any other regional or district-wide council. They advise one school principal only. PTAs, as mentioned previously, have a local school, county council, regional, and state organization which are affiliated with the national organization. The PTA has a system of electing representatives to these different bodies and communicating with each other through conferences and the like. The organization structure of the PAC is stipulated by federal guidelines. Their representatives are elected or appointed from the individual school councils to a district-wide council. There is a move to have regional councils and a statewide council of the PACs.

Training:

Local School Advisory Councils are primarily dependent upon the principal for any training that they might receive. There is a manual developed by Duval County which is available to the LSAC membership. PTAs have a well-developed training program. They have defined bylaws and charters, and have technical assistance available through the state and regional offices. They have publications and a long tradition of service to the schools to help in their training. PACs have an extensive handbook and are trained by other members and through workshops which are required by federal guidelines.

Support:

Local School Advisory Councils are supported by principals and/or by their own initiative. There does not seem to be much support from either the School Board or the administration in encouraging the participation of Local School Advisory Councils. There is no staff support given to LSACs and no communication network established. PTAs, on the other hand, have a national, state, regional and countywide support system. They have a system of dues which helps them carry out their mission. Title I PACs are supported by the school system and the parental participation is mandated by the federal government. If parental participation does not exceed the participation of the professional school personnel, then the PAC is in violation of federal guidelines. Parents are motivated to participate through the federal support and by seeing the results of their efforts in determining monetary allocations to programs.

Membership:

The membership of the Local School Advisory Councils is recommended to be 7-30 people. Non-parent community representatives are recruited to the Councils to give them a broader base. The legislation emphasized that LSAC membership be representative of the community as a whole rather than only including parents. There seems to be more evidence of male participation in Local School Advisory Councils than in PTAs. PTA membership is encouraged and supported by the individual schools and its county council, regional, state and national office, and gives rewards for 100% membership (dues-paying members).

One hundred percent membership means that 100% of all teachers and parents pay dues. The PTA membership tends to be composed of a majority of mothers who are not working outside the home. Many of the PTA meetings are held during the day and therefore discourage other groups from becoming involved. The PTA bylaws allow non-parental participation. Membership in the PAC is outlined in the federal regulations. It is required that at least one parent and the principal of each school participate in the PAC organization. In actuality there are 50-60 active parents in the community and 5-10 active principals.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The recommendation for the establishment of Local School Advisory Councils (LSACs) as outlined in the 1973 report of the Governor's Citizens Committee on Education was a positive effort to promote citizen participation in the local schools.

2. The terms "citizen participation" and "citizen involvement" are many times used to mean the same activity. Using the definitions discussed in this report (participation - having impact or exerting influence on decision-making; involvement - no impact on decision-making), the committee has concluded that the School Board, school administration and local school principals, for the most part, tend to favor citizen involvement more than citizen participation in decision-making at the local school level.

3. There is little evidence of citizen participation in the schools. Most of the LSAC time and energy is being spent on involvement in service activities. PTAs and PTOs are presently filling the role of citizen involvement and LSACs are duplicating their role in this area.

4. Part of the LSAC mission is to advise the principal in the areas of curriculum and budget according to School Board policy. However, there is little local school discretion in curriculum since most curriculum decisions are made at the district and state levels. In the area of budgeting, there is some flexibility (13-15% of the budget) and control at the local level which LSACs can affect.

5. LSACs lack a mechanism for communication among themselves, with the School Board, and even in some cases with their schools. Some LSACs are not aware that they are permitted to address the school board directly as can PTAs or other parent groups. LSACs are not prohibited by legislation from communicating among themselves. In fact, almost half of the other Florida counties with school level councils have implemented a structure of LSACs which feed into countywide advisory councils for communication purposes.

6. The mission of the LSAC is not well understood.

7. The commitment of the School Board and the administration to LSAC is weak, as demonstrated by an absence of adequate information, training, and other support services provided to LSACs.

8. Most LSACs depend upon the principals for clarification of purpose and direction, and tend to reflect that principal's leadership and interests. Because of this dependence, the principals need support and training by the School Board and the administration, and in addition the LSACs themselves need training.

9. There is a problem of obtaining and retaining interested people on LSACs which can be attributed to a lack of clarity in the LSAC mission and the lack of support for the organization. It is therefore important that LSACs be given a useful and significant role to perform.

10. Duval County's system of LSACs is not working well. The School Board and Superintendent assume each school has a functioning LSAC; however, the JCCI survey revealed that there are at least 16 schools which do not have LSACs, and that the quality and quantity of LSAC activities varies greatly from school to school and by type of school.

11. Some of the problems of communication are inherent based on the large population of students and the large number of schools. Transportation difficulties and the single grade structure are not conducive to citizen participation or involvement. The sixth and seventh grade centers have hurt citizen involvement and participation and the feeling of belonging which the neighborhood schools promoted.

12. Though LSACs also include non-parent community members, LSACs overlap and compete for membership with other organizations, especially in high schools where there are numerous other parent groups. Though there may be some duplication in membership among organizations in the schools, there would be no duplication in the functions if the LSACs were utilized to advise in decision-making.

13. The school volunteer program is well supported by the school administration. This program serves a needed function and has increased substantially in the recent school year, 1978-1979. There seems to be ample opportunity for citizen involvement in the schools through PTA, PTO, school volunteers, Band Boosters, and other groups.

14. ESEA Title I Parent Advisory Councils are effective bodies for decision-making in the areas of curriculum and budget for special federal programs.

15. District-wide committees have contributed to citizen participation in the vocational and special interest areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Florida State Legislature has delegated responsibility for the operation and success of the Local School Advisory Councils (LSACs) to the Local School Board. We recommend that the School Board support and encourage LSACs.

   A. Clearly Define the Function and Responsibility of LSACs.

   The LSAC members can lend valuable expertise to the schools and in turn can learn a great deal about the educational system. The mission of the LSAC should be well defined and well understood, and should reflect the importance of citizen participation. LSACs should be encouraged to advise in the area of curriculum by communicating with those departments in the administration which are responsible. They should be able to have an impact on decision-making concerning the budgets of the individual schools. In addition to budget and curriculum, their duties should be expanded to include advising on criteria for selection of personnel in their school.

   B. Provide Training and Incentives for LSAC Members and Principals

   Informed citizen participation benefits both the school and the members of LSAC. LSAC members need training to obtain a good understanding of the educational system, its resources, and problems. LSACs can be trained through workshops, orientations, and newsletters. The training can be provided by principals, knowledgeable LSAC members, or agencies involved in that area.

   Principals need training in promoting citizen participation through LSACs. With the encouragement of the School Board, the Administration could provide in-service training in this area.

   LSAC members can be motivated by positive feedback from principals and by seeing the results of their advice. These activities could be publicized at the school and through the media. Awards and recognition for participation should be provided to active members.

The School Board should provide incentives to principals by considering their work with LSAC as a factor in their evaluation.

The School Board should recognize the work of LSACs and other citizen groups at School Board meetings.

C. Provide Staff Support

Staffing is essential in encouraging the viability of LSACs. The School Board and administration should provide the appropriate staff to support an active LSAC program. A small staff similar to the one position previously assigned, would be sufficient. It is anticipated that the resources for staffing can be found within the present system.

D. Revise and Update the LSAC Manual

The manual prepared in 1974-1975 provides many good suggestions for LSAC operations. However the manual should be revised to include a further clarification of LSAC duties. LSACs should be trained in the use of the manual and be required to use it as a guide to their activities. After citizens are trained to effectively work through LSACs, the LSAC members should further develop and refine the manual themselves, including specific recommendations and suggestions which have been successful. These ideas will help other LSACs through the years.

E. Establish a Communication Network Among LSACs, with the Administration and the School Board

LSACs should be encouraged to share ideas about good programs and positive activities among themselves. LSACs from lower grades which are feeder schools to a common high school should meet together once or twice a year to be trained and share ideas about programs and activities. However, a countywide LSAC organization should not be created as another level of bureaucracy. Another example of how LSACs can improve communication among themselves could be a newsletter which may be financed through a SNAP grant or a grant through the Office of Education.

LSACs should be made aware that they (as a representative group) are permitted to communicate with any group within or outside the school. While the primary activity of LSAC should be to advise and work through the principals, LSACs should also be able to communicate with the administration either through the principal or directly to the school administration staff. An example of such communication could be contacting district staff for information on curriculum.

It is particularly important that LSACs be able to communicate to the School Board. LSACs can serve as an information source for School Board members. Through LSACs, School Board members can be more aware of problems and opportunities at the school level. The School Board should be informed of LSAC activities, successes, and problems through the Annual Report or by other means. There should be feedback and recognition from the School Board.

2. The School Board should reassess the concept of the sixth and seventh grade centers. The centers have negative impact on citizen participation and involvement.

3. The community representation unique to LSACs should offset the problem of overlapping membership in LSAC and other parent organizations.

4. We recommend that an LSAC model be developed by an ad hoc committee consisting of members from civic organizations which have experience with a democratic structure, identification of issues, studies, recommendations and the orderly implementation of those recommendations. The ad hoc committee's charge would be:

   A. to create a model for LSAC operating procedures

   B. to identify, as examples, a list of issues which would fall within LSAC guidelines

   C. to recommend or develop a plan for the orientation and training of new LSAC members

5. Citizen involvement as represented by school volunteer programs should also be continued and supported by the school administration and the School Board.

6. The Human Growth and Development Committee and the Vocational Advisory Committees are good examples of how citizens can participate and advise in decision-making. The use of such broadly representative groups which are created for specific purposes should be encouraged.

7. Regarding existing school-community groups like PTA, PTO, it is recommended that such organizations continue to be an important part of the school and fulfill their essential purposes. When compared to a Local School Advisory Council, these specialized groups are not as comprehensive in scope nor as extensive in purpose. Thus, an existing group may very well become a true Local School Advisory Council, or it may desire to have representation on the Council, but it alone should not serve in lieu of a Local School Advisory Council.

APPENDIX

SURVEY CONCLUSIONS

The JCCI committee attempted to survey all principals and LSAC chairpersons to obtain additional data concerning citizen participation. One hundred and one (101) principals and thirty-seven (37) chairpersons returned the survey. The conclusions from the results follow:

1. According to the 101 principals completing the survey, about 85% of Duval County schools have an organized LSAC which meets once a year. Between July 1977 and February 1978, 4 LSACs have had no meetings, 40 have had 1 or 2 meetings, 27 have had 3 or 4 meetings, and 14 have had between 5 and 7 meetings.

2. The number of official members in LSAC varies considerably (generally between 4 and 22).

3. The size of the membership and the amount of activity of that LSAC does not seem to be related.

4. LSAC memberships tend to disproportionately favor persons with a direct contact with the schools (e.g., parents and school personnel comprise the bulk of the active membership). Membership does not seem to represent a cross section of the community in which the school resides.

5. LSAC chairpersons, elementary school principals, and secondary school principals do not significantly differ in their opinions regarding the activities of their LSACs, the impact of LSACs, and the services which LSACs provide to schools.

6. As a group, principals respond more homogeneously to questions about LSACs than do LSAC chairpersons.

7. With only infrequent exceptions, principals and LSAC chairpersons agree that their LSACs have not had a profound influence on the operations of their schools.

8. Chairpersons and principals tend to agree that LSACs have been more service oriented than they have been influential in determining school policies. However, neither principals nor chairpersons as a group rate this service as effective as that provided by parent/teacher organizations.

9. While (as indicated above) impact of LSACs on school policies has been minimal, the impact of the LSACs has been stronger in the areas of identifying school needs and establishing priorities than it has in assessment of educational needs and defining and evaluating educational goals as they relate to academic effectiveness.

10. LSACs appear to be of greater assistance to school programs (in the traditional manner of PTAs) than in facilitating community/school communications.

11. The activities of LSACs and the amount of activity vary widely from school to school. The greatest variation from school to school seems to occur in the area of planning school programs.

12. High schools tend to have organized, inactive LSACs.

13. Elementary schools do not all have organized LSACs as do high schools. However, when elementary schools do organize LSAC groups, these groups tend to be more active than the LSACs of high schools.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND WORK

The management team met frequently during the fall to define the direction of the study. The major focus of the study was citizen involvement and participation in the public schools.

From January through April the full committee met weekly. It developed findings based on testimony gathered from resource persons during its meetings. The committee also reviewed additional resource material on local, state and national citizen participation trends. Other parent and citizen involvement organizations in the local schools were reviewed.

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ABOUT THE JACKSONVILLE COMMUNITY COUNCIL, INC.

The Jacksonville Community Council, Inc. is a non-profit broad based citizen organization chartered in 1975. JCCI represents a merger of three former community groups:

The Community Planning Council
The Commission on Goals and Priorities for Human Services
Delegates to the Jacksonville Community Planning Conference at Amelia Island

Its goals are:

- To build citizen competence and awareness in effectively participating in community affairs.
- To strengthen and improve the capability of community institutions to serve citizens of the community.
- To forecast emerging trends and opportunities that will impact the quality of community life.
- To act as a catalyst for bringing together decision-makers.

JCCI is funded by:

The United Way of Jacksonville
The City of Jacksonville
Gifts from private corporations
Grants for specific research and evaluation projects

JCCI functions primarily through the volunteer citizen study committee process:

A Program Committee from the JCCI membership recommends issues of community interest.

The JCCI Board of Managers approves the issues of study for the year.

Study committee chairpersons and management teams are selected.

Study committee participants are recruited from JCCI membership and the community.

The Study Committee obtains a data base by means of regular meetings with responsible, knowledgeable resource persons, and staff research.

When the fact finding phase is completed, the committee reaches conclusions and makes recommendations as part of the final report.

The report of the Study Committee is released to the public after consideration and approval by the Board of Managers.

JCCI members work to implement the recommendations of the report by communicating their findings to appropriate public officials and the community at large.

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A JCCI report: Citizen Participation in the Schools