

***Standard 6: Stakeholder Communication and Relationships***

***The system fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.***

The West Feliciana Parish School System defines stakeholders in the broadest possible terms, including students, staff, parents and the community at-large. All individuals and groups in the parish have an interest in student learning. Support for student learning is sought and obtained from all segments of the community. Regular communication, both formal and informal, among stakeholders is open and reciprocal.

District-wide communication is achieved by various means: print, electronic, and interpersonal. In a small community such as West Feliciana, interpersonal communication generally builds the strongest and longest-lasting bonds. The community has high expectations for teaching and learning. Working collaboratively with the school system, those expectations have come to fruition.

The school district website is one way that any interested person can learn the system's vision and goals and current school information. The local weekly newspaper regularly features student achievements, activities, and programs. News pertaining to the West Feliciana Parish School System is frequently included in the Baton Rouge newspaper, *The Advocate*.

Successful collaborative efforts result from effective communication among stakeholders. A recently passed tax proposal, jointly sponsored by the schools, Police Jury and the town, is one example of effective relationship building. Community groups, organizations and agencies work together to support students and their families. *Families in Need of Assistance*, a local collaborative of service organizations, meets regularly to assist the families of students with financial and other concerns. Many stakeholders volunteer their time to share their knowledge and skills with students and their families: WF Parish Library staff read to children and co-host literacy events; the Louisiana Cooperative Extension implements *Character Counts* and provides training for parent groups; local physicians volunteer time to school-based health center pediatric clinics.

The West Feliciana Parish Sheriff's office works with the school system to provide Resource Officers at each school, a DNA database for parents, and *Know the Law* curriculum. Through the District Attorney's Office, the elementary schools have an early intervention program.

The Family Service Center of the West Feliciana Parish School System provides a unique opportunity for community stakeholders to play an active role in the school system. Interagency agreements and understandings exist with local groups such as the Council on Aging, the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, Capital Area Human Services District, Quad Area Action Agency, Early Steps, LSU Health Sciences Center, Children's Trust Fund, and the Health Unit. These agencies, along with service organizations such as Women's Service League,

Happi Llandiers, and faith-based organizations, participate on the Family Service Center Advisory Board.

Business leaders are engaged in regular communication with the school system through the Rotary Club and the Chamber of Commerce. The Bluffs, a residential community, donates the use of a private golf course each year for a benefit tournament. The West Feliciana Parks and Recreation Commission has collaborated with the school system in upgrading the high school football field/track and in organizing sports and recreational events. In addition, the Parks and Recreation Commission provides and maintains the playing fields for numerous Middle School and High School varsity sports. Middle School and high school baseball, softball, and soccer teams play all their home games at the parish sports park. In turn, community organizations, such as Pee Wee Football and Bidy Basketball utilize school facilities for games on a regular basis, and the high school auditorium is widely used for community activities, such as dance recitals, plays, and programs.

Parents and community members are active in all phases of school life. Parent-teacher organizations at each school have a positive impact on school organization and student outcomes. The West Feliciana Parish School Board and Early Head Start-Head Start Policy Council reflect community participation in setting policy and guidance. Parents and community businesses and agencies assist in the classroom and sponsor individual teachers by acting as Class Sponsors. They volunteer both their time and financial support to school events and activities,

helping with everything from the Bear Fair at Bains Lower to Project Graduation at the high school. Over 35 community-based college scholarships are awarded by local businesses and individuals to West Feliciana High School graduates to help them further their education.

Schools communicate with stakeholders through Open House meetings, school and teacher newsletters, LEAP/iLEAP/GEE informational meetings and correspondence, parent/teacher conferences, progress reports and many informal one-on-one conversations with parents via telephone or in person. In the early childhood programs, home visits are regular occurrences. OnCourse, Passport and the Homework Hotline are useful communication avenues for students and parents.

Communication within the school system, among stakeholders, is regular and inclusive. The Superintendent conducts bimonthly meetings with his administrative staff, sends regular newsletters to all staff, and visits school campuses frequently, speaking with students, parents and staff. Faculty and staff meetings for the purposes of professional development, exchange of information, planning, and team building occur at each school/facility site.

The importance of effective community relationships cannot be underestimated. In the aftermath of the disasters of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the school system was in the forefront of an active community response to the needs of hundreds of individuals who moved to West Feliciana either temporarily or permanently. Because positive relations and coordinated efforts were already in place, agencies

and organizations were able to put together a massive local effort very rapidly.

The community's response not only benefited new families and students, but also served to strengthen the bonds among the school system, faith groups, service organizations and agencies.