

The Booster Club

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Standard 4

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Performance Indicators

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

- High visibility, active involvement, and communication with the larger community is a priority
- Relationships with community leaders are identified and nurtured
- Credence is given to individuals and groups whose values and opinions may conflict
- Partnerships are established with area businesses, institutions of higher education, and community groups to strengthen programs and support school goals
- Community stakeholders are treated equitably

Scenario

Dr. Ray Hollister had accepted the position of superintendent in the New Bedford School

District five years ago and since arriving in the district he had been approached several times by various individuals and sometimes groups of individuals about forming an athletic booster club to support the athletic teams in the district. The high school and the middle school both had a wide variety of men's and women's athletic programs and were reasonably successful in fielding teams that competed well with other schools from the area. The football and basketball teams had a very good following by people in the community. There was a great deal of pride in the athletic teams.

The topic of a booster club seemed to come up periodically. However, Dr. Hollister had a booster club in the school where he was previously superintendent and, although there were not big problems, there always seemed to be some little fire to put out or some problem to deal with concerning the booster club. He wasn't particularly excited about a booster club at New Bedford. He had also heard some horror stories from some of his older colleagues in the superintendency about some of their experiences with booster clubs. In addition, he had discussed it several times with the high school principal and the athletic director, who had both been in the district over twenty years, and they were adamantly opposed to a booster club for some of the same reasons. Therefore, when someone would raise the issue, Dr. Hollister would always discourage the idea by saying we always have good support for the athletic program with a good following of fans and the school appropriates an adequate amount of funds to support the program. He usually related some of the bad experiences other schools have had with booster clubs.

This approach had always worked pretty well in staving off efforts to organize a formal athletic booster club for the district. However, one day Dr. Hollister got a visit

from two nice young men who requested that he support their effort to organize a booster club. After explaining his reasons why he was not in favor of or saw no need for a booster club the young men requested permission to meet with the Board of Education to petition the Board to sanction the organization of a booster club. The two young men were former students in the district, with one being a successful high school athlete. They had both been off to college and after graduation had come back to their home town and became successful businessmen. They were not considered trouble makers, were considered good solid citizens, and were very supportive of the schools, especially the athletic programs. Dr. Hollister told them he would put them on the agenda for the next regular meeting of the Board of Education. This was the first time anyone had gone to the extent of requesting board approval.

The two young men showed up at the next board meeting with a small contingent of supporters. When the time came for their presentation to the board, they presented each member of the board and the administration with a portfolio of letters of support from members of the community, reasons why they felt a booster club was needed, proposed activities the club would be involved in, and letters from area school superintendents stating all of the great things their booster clubs did. These were letters from many of the same superintendents that had criticized booster clubs to Dr. Hollister. They made an impressive presentation and were not confrontational. They stated that they knew they did not have to have board approval for a booster club, but they were of the opinion that if it was to be successful it needed to be sanctioned and supported by the school.

After a considerable amount of discussion about the pros and cons of an athletic booster club, the board voted unanimously to sanction the formation of the organization for one year with the approval to be reviewed again at the end of one year and subject to another vote by the board at that time.

Assignment

- How should the superintendent react to the board's approval of an athletic booster club?
- What approach should the superintendent take in communicating this action of the board to the school community as a whole and especially the high school principal and athletic director, the two people that will be working closely with the booster club?
- Should the superintendent assist in making the booster club successful? If so what are some things he can do to help make it successful?
- What are some things the superintendent, principal, and athletic director can do to keep from having booster club problems similar to those in other schools?

Instructor Notes and Scoring Guide For

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Instructor Notes

One suggested approach to utilizing this case study is to divide the class into groups of 3 or 4 students, have them read the scenario, and discuss in their groups the answers to the questions at the end of the case study. Ask them to list their responses on a piece of chart paper and be prepared to explain their rationale for the responses to the class. Another possibility would be to have the students respond individually to the case study in a written response and present them to the class for discussion. There is also the possibility of role playing the situation in class.

Scoring Guide

- 2 point response.** The response indicates that the superintendent should be supportive of the board's decision, realizing that the people who support athletic programs are a valuable constituency and can do good things for the programs if their support is channeled in the right direction. The superintendent should take a positive approach in communicating the decision to the school community, especially the principal and athletic director, pointing out the positives that can come out of the school's relationship with the booster club. The response suggests that the superintendent, principal, and athletic director should become active by becoming members and helping to organize the booster club. In addition, they should all three attend as many meetings as possible, enabling them to stay informed and possibly head off problems before they become serious.
- 1 point response.** The response indicates the superintendent should take a position of minimal support for the booster club because he was not in favor of the board sanctioning the club. There is no suggestion of the superintendent joining the club or that he/she should suggest that the principal or athletic director become involved.
- 0 point response.** The response indicates that the superintendent should take a position of non-support for the booster club. The superintendent did not recommend that the board sanction the club, therefore he/she is not obligated to support it. The superintendent discourages the principal and athletic director from becoming involved in the hope that it will fail.

References

Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships
<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/default.htm>

Coalition for Community Schools
<http://www.communityschools.org/new.html>

National School Public Relations Association
<http://www.hspra.org/entry.htm>

Article by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory titled "The Power of Public Relations in Schools: School Public Relations Strategies."

<http://www.nwrel.org/request/feb01/strategies.html>

Success Link

<http://www.successlink.org/>

Pilot Test

This case study was piloted in a masters level class "Foundations of Educational Administration." The comments from the students were favorable and there were no recommendations for change.