
7.0 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

As Florida schools move forward with the implementation of school improvement and accountability under the auspices of the Blueprint 2000 legislation, substantive involvement of the community is vital. Community resources that are applied efficiently and wisely can greatly strengthen the quality of education while at the same time enhance the significance and value of schools to their communities. The old model of neighborhood schools that had a loyal and constant base of support from well-established communities has given way to students who attend schools in areas where they do not reside, parents who work and cannot be involved in traditional classroom activities, large numbers of families who are ethnically disconnected from the prevailing cultures of the schools, and an economic base that demands a labor force skilled and ready to work. Extensive community involvement efforts are imperative if school districts are able to face the challenge to improve student outcomes within a scenario of high population growth and tight financial restraints.

Students who are prepared to work can also improve a community's economic quality of life, and business and industry involvement in schools of a community can align the labor force in order to shape tomorrow's workforce.

A school district must assume responsibility to find, recruit, and use the valuable resources available through parents, businesses, volunteers, organizations, and community members. A district must provide schools with the technical support necessary for them to seek, recruit, and train the different segments of a community in meaningful involvement while balancing the respect for each school's individuality, its management structure, and its relation within its own school community.

This chapter analyzes the efforts of the Hillsborough County School District to involve the Hillsborough County community and to communicate with various stakeholders in the community. The chapter is organized as follows:

7.1 Community Interaction

- Business Relations and the Hillsborough Education Foundation
- SERVE and Volunteers
- Collaborations with other Agencies

7.2 Parent and Family Involvement

- School Advisory Councils and PTA/PTSAs
- Parent Involvement Program and FOCUS
- Title I Parental Involvement Program
- Parent Education Centers

7.3 Communications

- Hillsborough Tomorrow Project
- Public Relations, Media Relations, and Publications
- Government Relations

7.1 Community Interaction

For a school system to receive the level of support from taxpayers that is necessary to sustain quality and ensure adequate growth, it must find effective ways to generate and receive input from different segments of the community. Of particular importance is the participation of parents, business and industry, and community members in the schools. Student outcomes can be improved by the effective use of businesses and industries, parent and community volunteers, school advisory councils, family involvement programs and Foundation resources.

BACKGROUND

School volunteer and business partnership programs have been promoted in Florida through legislation passed during several legislative sessions. This combined legislation has provided a strong impetus to school districts to implement school reform efforts through volunteer, business, and parent involvement programs. Specific sections of several statutes related to community involvement programs are summarized below.

A school volunteer is defined in Section 228.041, Florida Statutes, as “any nonpaid person who may be appointed by a school board or its designee [and may] include but not be limited to parents, senior citizens, students, and others who assist the teacher or other members of the school staff.” The volunteer legislation also addresses intergenerational school volunteer programs (Section 230.71, F.S.) and notes its legislative intent to “recognize and unite senior citizens and school children in order to enrich the lives of both” by creating “a mechanism for the development, expansion, and support of effective and innovative intergenerational school volunteer programs in the state.”

Florida legislation also addresses ties between public schools and the private sector. The “Florida Private Sector and Education Partnership Act” (Section 229.602, F.S.) recognizes the benefits to teachers, schools, and students from the support, recognition, and expertise provided by the business community as well as the benefits to the business community by enhancing its image and enlarging its pool of potential employees. The legislation states that “local communities with strong support from the business community have better educational systems, contributing to a better quality of life, greater community stability, and a healthier economic climate.”

The Legislature also created the Office of Business and Education Alliances (OBEA) within the Department of Education “to encourage and enhance partnerships between education and the private sector, to function as a clearinghouse for material dissemination, and to provide training and consultation to school districts as appropriate.”

Activities of the OBEA include serving as liaison with state and non-profit agencies to coordinate parent and community involvement statewide and to maximize the use of resources to meet the educational needs of students and educators. Major focus for these activities centers around coordinating intergenerational programs, school-to-work collaborations, parent involvement programs, school advisory councils, volunteer programs, and business partnerships.

The School Improvement and Accountability Law was created in 1991 (Section 229.59, F.S.) and established school advisory councils. This legislation reforms and restructures education, requiring community membership on the school advisory councils and community involvement in the process. The law states that each school advisory council should be composed of the principal and an “appropriately balanced number of teachers, education support employees, students, parents, and other business and community citizens who are representative of the ethnic, racial, and economic community served by the school.”

The School Reform and Accountability Act of 1991 also contained seven goals (Blueprint 2000) with an eighth added in 1996 that speaks directly to community and parental involvement as follows:

Goal 8: Communities, school boards, and schools provide opportunities for involving parents and guardians as active partners in achieving school improvement and education accountability.

In the Hillsborough County School District, community interaction has five main components: business relations, volunteer efforts, collaborative arrangements with governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations, parent involvement efforts, and governmental relations. Each area is described below.

7.1.1 Business Relations

CURRENT SITUATION

Traditionally, business involvement in public schools has been financially limited to “adopting” a school and donating equipment and, to a lesser extent, involving tutors and volunteers. Under the adopt-a-school model, the number of partnerships rather than their quality has been the indicator of the success of a district’s business involvement program. Often, business partners have used the schools as “extended markets” to promote their products while benefiting from tax breaks. Business involvement in schools has sometimes been tied to marketing strategies for the business, for example, in the form of pizza coupons to students who excel in reading.

Nationally, the level of corporate giving to public schools has been a small fraction of what it has been to postsecondary institutions. Corporate giving to public schools in 1990 was less than \$250 million, equal to many single donations to a university or college. Most universities and colleges have a “development office” charged with raising and securing funds from alumni, businesses, private donors, and philanthropies.

Florida statutes allow public school and university boards the opportunity to create educational foundations as private non-profit, "direct support organizations" to raise funds for schools teaching grades kindergarten through high school, colleges, and universities. A direct support organization is defined in statute as an entity which "is organized and operated exclusively to receive, hold, invest, and administer property and to make expenditures to or for the benefit of public pre-kindergarten through 12th grade education and adult vocation and community educational programs in this state."

The function of these educational foundations is to increase the level of corporate giving and to leverage supplemental funding for the schools. In 1996, the Florida Department of Education allotted \$500,000 statewide in matching funds to 58 educational foundations, for an average of \$8,621 per district with a foundation (not all counties have one). The foundations leverage this small amount of money as developmental "seed money" to reach out and convince the private sector to give meaningful monetary donations to schools.

In 1988, the Hillsborough County School Board started the Hillsborough Education Foundation to secure private corporate giving in order to supplement dwindling federal and state funding. The arrangement between the Hillsborough County School District and the Hillsborough Education Foundation is basically a contractual outsourcing service for corporate giving, public relations, and fund raising which the Foundation does through aggressive outreach and a broad range of programs and events. Besides corporate and matching gift programs, the Foundation also conducts market research, has a volunteer cadre of 9,000, and provides the district with a promotional awards program for district employees, volunteers, and business partners. "Help It Happen for Students" is the Foundation's public education and awareness campaign focusing on active roles that the community can take to support education in Hillsborough County. The Foundation also has a payroll deduction program for school district employees.

The Hillsborough Education Foundation operates like a university development office with an internal board of directors comprised of some school board members, the Superintendent, and 23 business representatives. Under the state statute, members of the Foundation's Board of Directors are approved by the district school board, and the district auditor conducts an annual post-audit of the Foundation's financial accounts. All Foundation records and information are considered public record except for the identity of donors and all information identifying donors and prospective donors.

The Hillsborough Education Foundation has a staff of eight who, except for the Director of Development, are paid by Foundation funds. The district pays for the executive director and secretary salaries. The Foundation's total budget of \$4 million in 1995-96 includes the salary and bonuses of its director. For its approximate \$100,000 investment in 1995-96, the district received \$3.2 million in direct donations from the private sector to the schools.

According to the Foundation's 1996 *Annual Report to the Community*, the majority (60%) of the Foundation's revenue source came from local businesses and to a lesser extent from individual donors (11%). Allocation of donations was mainly for:

- Classroom enhancements and scholarships (37%); and
- Communities in Schools and At-Risk Programs (27%)

Exhibit 7-1 provides information on Foundation donations.

The Hillsborough Education Foundation uses several charitable vehicles for providing donations. Two examples are cited below.

- **Endowment funds** are a source of permanent funding for districtwide programs or individual schools. Endowment funds are mutually beneficial because they create income for school programs, preserve the fund principal, and typically provide the donor with income, gift, and estate tax benefits. The designated recipient for student scholarships, teacher grants, or other enhancement programs can use the earnings off the principal in the fund. By enabling donors to target specific projects or schools, the Foundation facilitates the formation of partnerships between donors and those projects or schools within a “pooled” funding vehicle. This collective approach offers all schools districtwide visibility and long-term gains.
- **Planned giving** involves gifts to the Foundation that are intended to benefit the Foundation at some future time, such as a gift in a will that the Foundation receives when the donor passes away. This form of giving offers individual donors the satisfaction of helping students succeed and typically offers income, gift, and estate tax benefits.

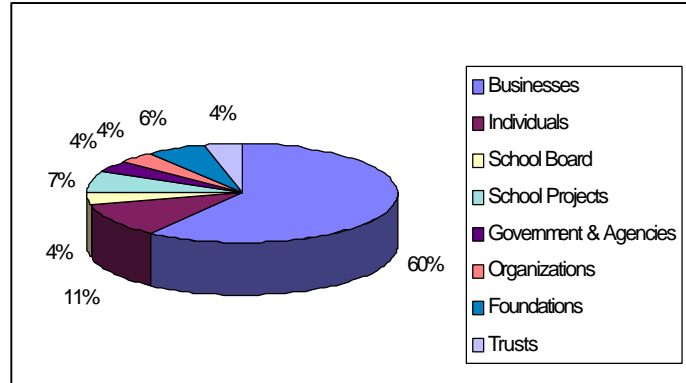
Key initiatives and programs of the Hillsborough Education Foundation include:

- Communities in Schools;
- Scholarships Program;
- “Presidents as Principals” and “Great American Teach-In” Programs;
- Grants program for teachers, principals, and students;
- Recognition Program for teachers and schools; and
- Payroll Deduction Program for district employees.

Communities in Schools (CIS) is the nation’s largest dropout prevention program and provides an alternative education program for at-risk students in Hillsborough County. The Florida Department of Education allots \$1.5 million to CIS statewide, with \$100,000 to CIS in Hillsborough County to pay for the CIS Development Director, an assistant, and some direct service programs. Several public events also raise funds for Hillsborough County’s CIS, including “Celebrate Safe” to usher in the New Year and an annual “Project: I Can” Golf Classic.

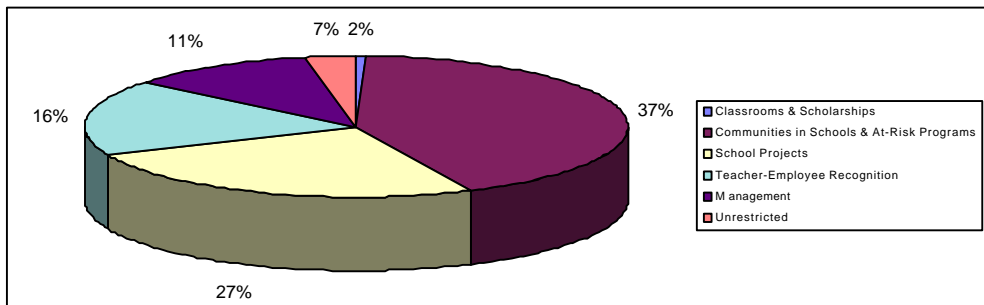
**EXHIBIT 7-1
HILLSBOROUGH EDUCATION FOUNDATION
ORIGIN OF DONATIONS BY PERCENTAGE
1995-1996**

Origin	Percentage
Businesses	60%
Individuals	11%
School Board	4%
School Projects	7%
Government & Agencies	4%
Organizations	4%
Foundations	6%
Trusts	4%



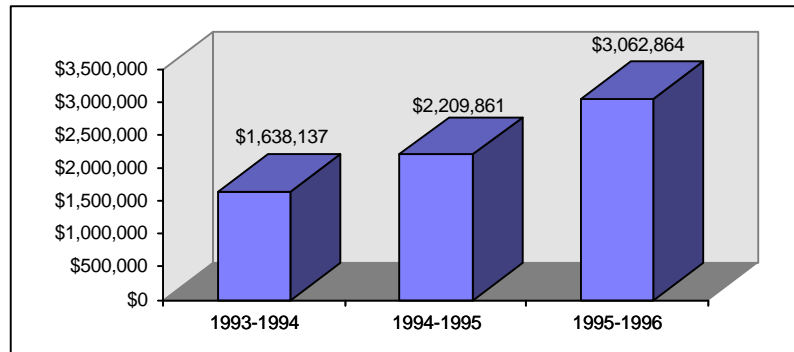
**ALLOCATION OF DONATIONS BY PERCENTAGE
AND BY PROGRAM AREA
1995-1996**

Program Area	Percentage of Total HEF Budget
Classrooms & Scholarships	37%
Communities in Schools & At-Risk Programs	27%
School Projects	16%
Teacher-Employee Recognition	11%
Management	7%
Unrestricted	2%



**TOTAL ANNUAL REVENUES, BY YEAR
1993-1996**

Year	Amount
1993-1994	\$1,638,137
1994-1995	\$2,209,861
1995-1996	\$3,062,864



Source: Hillsborough Education Foundation, *Annual Report to the Community*, 1996.

In 1996, the Florida Commission on Community Service awarded a \$215,000 grant to CIS to fund a tutoring and community outreach program at Cleveland Elementary School through the AmeriCorps Program, a domestic program modeled after the Peace Corps to give individuals an opportunity to earn an educational stipend while providing service to the community. The program has both tutoring and mentoring components. AmeriCorps members tutor Cleveland Elementary School students in reading, conflict resolution, social skills development, behavioral intervention strategies, and visit the homes of all students to share event information, recruit volunteer tutors, train parents in ways to assist the academic needs of children, and encourage school involvement.

CIS started in 1992 as a development committee of the Hillsborough Education Foundation. However, CIS exclusively targets at-risk students and dropout prevention programs with an emphasis on early intervention (pre-K through 2nd grade). Like the Hillsborough Education Foundation, CIS has its own separate development board that functions as a fund raising body but specifically for the district's at-risk and dropout prevention efforts. CIS operates at 27 sites serving 3,000 students; it operates as a "board within a board." CIS and the Hillsborough Education Foundation share some business partners, such as Nations Bank, which donates \$2,200 for pre-paid tuition to alternative students and \$6,000 for technology at the East Tampa Horizon Alternative School.

The Foundation's Scholarships Program is a main component of the Foundation's work. Through corporate and community sponsors, the Foundation awarded \$600,000 in scholarships in 1996 to deserving students. In 1995, over 600 Hillsborough County seniors were named Florida Academic Scholars, leading the state of Florida for the eleventh consecutive year. Hillsborough County also led the state and nation in the percentage of advanced placement students who earn college credit. The Horizons to Success Committee hosts several annual fund-raisers including the All-Star Education Gala to showcase both scholarship and EDDIE (Excellence, Dedication, Devotion in Education) recipients. In addition, the Scholarship Committee sponsors several limited-engagement special events to add momentum to the scholarship drive.

The “Presidents as Principals” Program is a Foundation program allowing 110 corporate executives the chance to be principals for a day in Hillsborough County schools. Results of a post-attitude survey of the executives show that, after their service, many executives changed their negative attitudes toward students, schools, teachers, and administrators. Significant attitudinal changes are shown in Exhibit 7-2.

The Hillsborough Education Foundation has its own volunteer program that centers around the Great American Teach-In and uses over 7,500 volunteers who make presentations in classrooms (including heart surgeons, plumbers, corporate CEOs, and community-minded grandparents). Teach-In volunteers talk with students about the skills and personal characteristics necessary to work in today’s competitive marketplace.

**EXHIBIT 7-2
HILLSBOROUGH EDUCATION FOUNDATION
“PRESIDENTS AS PRINCIPALS” SURVEY
ATTITUDE CHANGES IN PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
BEFORE AND AFTER THEIR SERVICE
APRIL 1996**

Issue	Attitude Before	Attitude After	Difference*
Legislative support for education	18.5%	10.4%	(8.1%)
Crime & safety issues	18.7	62.5	43.8
Drug & alcohol use	15.6	41.3	25.7
Gang activity	16.9	50.0	33.1
Exterior appearance of schools	70.8	79.2	8.4
Interior appearance of schools	70.8	83.3	23.9
Adequacy of books and supplies	38.5	34.7	(3.8)
Adequacy of computers and related technology	29.2	24.5	(4.7)
Teacher : student ratio	20.0	47.0	27.0
Student discipline	23.5	77.1	53.6
Health needs of students	52.3	64.6	12.3
Teacher salaries	23.1	17.0	(6.1)
Effectiveness of school-based administration	42.9	78.7	35.8
Overall student behavior/demeanor	31.3	85.5	54.2
Scope and availability of extra-curricular activities	38.4	47.9	9.5
Overall quality of education to prepare students for the future	33.9	64.6	30.7

Source: Memorandum to Hillsborough Education Foundation from Hill & Associates, April 17, 1996.

*The difference is a measured change in respondents’ attitude before and after their service as “Principals for a Day.” For example, of the 110 respondents, 53.6% had more positive attitudes regarding student discipline after their service than they did before they were “Principals for a Day”.

The Foundation offers grant awards available to over 8,000 Hillsborough County teachers who instruct and inspire students each day of the school year. Donor businesses choose their recipients based on award applications with technical assistance from the Foundation. Classroom winter, spring, and summer grants are available to regular teachers and parent/teacher organizations in schools to stimulate imagination and creativity in students. Another grant is available for special education teachers to create an innovative and exciting arts curriculum for special education

students. Business Partnership Challenge Grants, a matching grant program from the Florida Department of Education, made \$20,000 available based on a partnership match contribution valued at 60 percent of the total project. Incentive Planning Challenge Grants are three-year grants for Break-the-Mold schools with innovative and risk-taking programs that have the potential for statewide replication.

The Foundation manages a recognition program for Hillsborough County employees, volunteers, and business partners. Annually, more than 1,000 business and community leaders attend the Foundation's Annual Business Partnership Breakfast to recognize the collaborative efforts of school and business partnerships. The annual Teacher of the Year and Support Employee of the Year Awards dinner recognizes many full- and part-time teachers and support personnel. The Ida S. Baker Award is presented annually to recognize the significant contributions of a Hillsborough County minority educator who represents Hillsborough County at the state level.

The payroll deduction program managed through the Foundation allows school district employees to support the work of the Foundation. According to the Foundation's executive director, by 1996, the payroll deduction program raises approximately \$40,000 annually.

In addition to the work of the Hillsborough Education Foundation, business involvement in Hillsborough County School District also includes a series of informal discussions between the Superintendent and local business executives called the CEO Roundtable. This group of business leaders meets regularly and advises the Superintendent on business and industry concerns in education.

Business involvement at the district level also includes School-to-Work, a new program that places students as "externs" with participating local businesses. One of the goals of the School-to-Work model is "to make business and industry viable and important partners in the effective development and delivery of instruction." The School-to-Work Opportunities Act was signed by President Clinton in 1994 to provide seed money to state and local partnerships of business, labor, government, education, and community organizations to develop School-to-Work systems. The Hillsborough County School District's School-to-Work Program started in the fall of 1996.

FINDING

Hillsborough County businesses have been supportive of Hillsborough County schools and have made significant commitments and contributions to public education in the county. Businesses in Hillsborough County contribute significantly to classroom instruction, scholarships, at-risk prevention, and even staff morale. Some corporations donate resources tailored to their own interests, choosing to improve curriculum related to their industry. For example, GTE allocated \$10,000 for an updated computer and graphics program at Bloomingdale High School, funds a Center for Technology, and matches GTE employee volunteer time with grant dollars to the Hillsborough Education Foundation.

Other businesses contribute significant non-monetary assets, such as First Union Bank's policy to allow each of their employees four hours per month, with expenses

paid, to be involved in the schools. Many businesses donate matching funds (for example, Barnett Bank contributes \$70,000 in matching funds for a four-year college scholarship for students who consign to stay in school and stay drug-free). Solomon Brothers sponsors the Communities in Schools Program by offering grant money to fund projects which have helped at-risk students improve their reading level, develop small business skills, improve their self-esteem, and learn appropriate social behavior.

The high level of business involvement is directly tied to the successes of the Hillsborough Education Foundation which has raised the standards of public school development efforts to those more commonly found in colleges and universities. For its 1995-96 investment of \$100,000 in the Foundation, the school district received \$3.2 million in direct donations to the schools. This high rate of return is being used to enhance instructional and public relations functions in the district.

Of significant value is the Foundation's work to involve the business community in meaningful and often innovative ways that result in long-lasting effects. Scholarships for almost 400 students, classroom grants for students and teachers, public awareness campaigns, and direct engagement of business leaders in meaningful roles in the district lead to increased support for the schools. As shown in Exhibit 7-2, when business leaders change their attitudes and perceptions about public schools, businesses realize that public schools are, indeed, good places to learn. Positive messages about the schools lead to increased meaningful business involvement. Programs such as Presidents as Principals, as well as the new School-to-Work, demonstrate promise to close the barriers between schools and workplaces by establishing mutually-beneficial links for schools, students, and the community's pool of potential labor.

The Foundation's promotional awards program has recognized the Teacher of the Year and Support Employee of the Year. Staff also can feel that they "make a difference" for the schools by contributing through the payroll deduction program established through the Hillsborough Education Foundation. By 1995-96, district staff had contributed \$200,000 through the Foundation's Payroll Deduction Program.

Outsourcing for business involvement through the Foundation has minimized "token" involvement such as that commonly found in the traditional adopt-a-school model used by many school districts nationally. The Foundation's success in creating a development model for public schools has centered on giving and has fund raising resulted in less commercial infiltration of the school curriculum. The experience of the Foundation has been that businesses can be more meaningfully involved without programs that exploit schools as marketing venues, especially if they are attached to low expectations for students (for example, awarding prizes that promote buying a product in return for a minimal reading requirement).

The Foundation also supplements the district's publicity and public relations efforts. Since the Foundation does its own press releases, the district benefits because this venue results in direct promotional publicity for the schools. The more schools are highlighted in the media and the more positive publicity for the schools, the more all sectors of the community are stimulated to be involved in the schools. Positive publicity

is critical in a school district with 50 percent of its students on free and reduced lunch and a large portion of students in portables.

COMMENDATIONS

The Hillsborough Education Foundation is commended for its invaluable contributions to the Hillsborough County School District.

The Foundation leads the state in managing business involvement through innovative ways that have proven meaningful and significant for schools, students, teachers, and the community as a whole. The district's investment in the Foundation has showed a high rate of return (\$100,000 into \$3.2 million) and has provided the district with opportunities to supplement instruction and improve staff morale. The Foundation has benefited the district by providing important public relations and publicity assistance, helping to secure additional support for public schools by placing them in a positive public light. The Hillsborough Education Foundation is well recognized throughout the county and the state for its leadership role. Its business involvement efforts have provided the Foundation with the respect, trust, and support of the local business community, and has provided a model for other educational foundations across the state.

Businesses in Hillsborough County are commended for their commitment to public education and for their role in supporting schools.

The significant and consistent involvement of Hillsborough County businesses creates a greater quality of life for the citizens of Hillsborough County by helping to ensure that the community is better educated, understands how to be better involved corporate citizens, and has stronger links between education and earning power. The rate of return on significant business involvement is not only monetary: students years from now will remember the tutors, mentors, and volunteers who helped them, and in turn, will be more likely to become donors and supporters of the schools.

FINDING

A 23-member Board of Directors sets policy and serves as a development board for the Hillsborough Education Foundation. Bylaws for the Foundation require board membership to include a school board member, the Superintendent, two at-large members, legal counsel, and business representatives. An Executive Committee appoints Board members for two-year terms. No representation is found from parent/teacher organizations, the teachers' union, and central office divisions.

The Foundation's director is a district employee, and reports both to the Foundation board and to the Superintendent. Emphasizing the work of the Foundation at the school level are school staff who are assigned as business liaisons and who are members of the School-Business Partnership Committee. Each school in Hillsborough County has a business partner and business representatives are members of each School Advisory Council.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation 7-1:

Revise the bylaws of the Board of Directors of the Hillsborough Education Foundation to include some representatives from parent/teacher organizations, the teachers' union, and district administrators.

In order to keep its purpose and integrity, the Board of Directors of the Hillsborough Education Foundation should continue to be comprised mainly of business representatives. Extending seats on the Foundation Board to more members from the school district and parents will help link the Foundation with the district and its customers. It will also reduce barriers of communication between the Foundation and district administrators while preserving its integrity and purpose.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 1. The Board of Directors of the Hillsborough Education Foundation should revise its bylaws to include board membership from the County Council of PTA/PTSAs, local PTA/PTSAs, the teachers' union, and central office divisions. | Fall 1997 |
| 2. The full Board of Directors of the Foundation should vote on the inclusion of members from the above groups as Board seats are vacated. | 1997-98 school year |
| 3. The Executive Committee of the Hillsborough Education Foundation should find representatives from the County Council of PTA/PTSAs, local PTA/PTSAs, the teachers' union, and central office administrators for the 1996-1998 term. | Ongoing |

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this recommendation.

FINDING

Fragmentation of efforts and duplicative solicitation of the business community occur when district administrators and principals compete with the work of the Hillsborough Education Foundation. Duplication and indirect requests and receipt of funds from donors undermines the work of the Foundation by decentralizing its accountability and weakening its development position within the business community. Major examples of this duplication and multiplicity of requests to and from businesses include the following:

- Businesses who wish to be involved in the schools may approach the Foundation but often they call on the district's staff who may not always refer them to the Foundation. The district should not be in a

position to lose valuable involvement from the business community because of a lack of communication and clarity of roles between district staff and the Foundation.

- Monetary donations from businesses, private individuals, and philanthropies are usually directed to the Foundation, but sometimes the district's Office of Finance, under the Assistant Superintendent for Business and Research, also receives donations. No explanation was provided for this duplicity, other than historically (i.e., this is the way it has always been done). However, accounting streams in the Foundation and the Office of Finance are different and the Office of Finance sometimes holds these funds for many months, classifying them as "interagency transactions."
- Principals and teachers often call the Office of Finance requesting matching funds, which are best managed by the Foundation. Some schools receive direct monetary gifts from corporations (e.g., scholarships). The school bookkeepers write a check from those funds to the Foundation.
- Some administrators ignore the role of the Foundation by contacting businesses themselves and requesting their support. Business leaders reported receiving multiple requests from different district staff asking for their support.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation 7-2:

Identify the Hillsborough Education Foundation as the central point for requesting and receiving business support and all monetary donations to the district.

The roles and responsibilities of the Foundation should be clearly understood by district staff. All businesses and donors calling the central office to contribute to the schools should be referred to the Foundation by any central or cluster administrator or principal who receives the request to donate. The Office of Finance should direct monetary donations to the Foundation.

While the Foundation should serve as the districtwide vehicle for development, the efforts of individual schools to involve their own business partners should be respected and the Foundation should provide principals with technical assistance on how to recruit and apply business partners in meaningful ways.

It is in the district's best interest for administrators to consolidate efforts to solicit from businesses for their support because many businesses do not appreciate multiple solicitations from one organization. This developmental role appropriately belongs to the Foundation and is respected by the business community as evidenced by their significant contributions.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The Superintendent should ensure that all staff understand the role and responsibilities of the Hillsborough Education Foundation. July 1997
2. Central office administrators should refer all businesses or donors who wish to make a contribution to schools to the Hillsborough Education Foundation. July 1997
3. The Director of the Office of Finance should direct all monetary donations to the Foundation. July 1997
4. The Director of Development of the Hillsborough Education Foundation should serve as the districtwide coordinator for all development projects and efforts and should continue to provide technical assistance to schools in how to involve businesses in significant ways. Ongoing
5. The Director of Development of the Hillsborough Education Foundation should increase the number of presentations made to school principals detailing the work of the Foundation. The director should provide training to the principals and School Improvement Teams to expand the development message at the school level. 1997-98 school year

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact on the district associated with this recommendation.

FINDING

Business leaders interviewed for this performance review noted that Hillsborough County has a short supply of labor skilled in technology, impacting on the low presence of heavy industry and manufacturing in the county. There is an adequate supply of a labor force trained in clerical skills, however, ensuring a steady supply for the service industries. The district received an \$800,000 grant in September 1996 from the Florida Department of Education to develop a School-to-Work Program, called EducationWORKS, with an emphasis on developing technical skills through workplace experience. The School-to-Work Plan delineates methods to select and use community partners and to establish partnerships. EducationWORKS is currently piloting a construction academy at Tampa Bay Technical School.

COMMENDATION

The district's School-to-Work Plan to select and involve community partners and businesses shows great promise as a model for other school districts.

Hillsborough County schools could use the strategies from the School-to-Work Plan to select and apply their own business partners and establish community partnerships. The School-to-Work Program could also help to ensure that Hillsborough County students have the technical skills needed to draw manufacturing and other heavy industries to Hillsborough County.

7.1.2 Volunteer Program (SERVE)

School volunteers, whether they are parents, community or business partners, or citizens without children in the schools, are most effective when they are part of an organized school volunteer program designed and created to meet the needs of a particular school or school district. Organizing and coordinating a large pool of volunteers requires an organized approach to find the volunteers and recruit them; train volunteers and school staff in their best use; and retain volunteers to promote continued success of the students with whom they interact. Volunteers are best used when their service is continuous rather than sporadic, especially when they serve as tutors and mentors for students.

Most Florida counties have a school volunteer program. Exhibit 7-3 lists the number of volunteers and the ratio of volunteers to total population and to the population age 50 and over in Hillsborough, Palm Beach, and Broward Counties.

**EXHIBIT 7-3
NUMBER OF SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS BY COMPARABLE SCHOOL DISTRICTS FOR
TOTAL COUNTY POPULATION AND POPULATION AGE 50+
1995-1996**

County	Total Population	Population Age 50+	Total Number of Schools	Schools with Volunteer Programs	Total Number of Volunteers	Total Number of Volunteers Age 50+	Ratio of Volunteers To Total Population	Ratio of Volunteers To Population Age 50+
Hillsborough	834,054	284,233	164	155	24,487	1,584	1:34	1:148
Broward	1,255,488	476,773	235	235	23,887	1,722	1:53	1:277
Palm Beach	863,518	386,728	129	11	10,954	1,631	1:79	1:237

Sources: *Florida Almanac*, Economic & Demographic Information, 1995 and Interlock, 1997 Directory, Florida Department of Education, Office of Business and Education Alliances, 1996.

The Hillsborough County School District does not have a district-based central volunteer program. The district outsources for school volunteers through SERVE (School Enrichment Resource Volunteers in Education), a private non-profit agency. SERVE's goal is to provide educational supplements to the district through volunteers. The volunteer pool in 1995-1996 consisted of about 24,500 individuals who contributed over one million hours to Hillsborough County schools (see Exhibit 7-4). As can be seen, in nine years, the number of volunteers has increased by almost five times.

SERVE's mission is "to promote and facilitate the involvement of volunteers in Hillsborough County Schools by acting as a liaison among schools, the local community, the Hillsborough County School Board, and the Florida Department of

Education.” SERVE volunteers are used for tutoring, job shadowing, and speakers through its Speakers’ Bureau. A SERVE coordinator coordinates SERVE volunteers at most school sites.

**EXHIBIT 7-4
SERVE TOTAL VOLUNTEERS AND VOLUNTEERS HOURS
1987-88 through 1995-96**

Year	Total Volunteers	Total Volunteer Hours
1987-1988	5,047	151,705
1988-1989	8,113	239,540
1989-1990	11,284	290,026
1990-1991	13,560	485,457
1991-1992	20,120	688,823
1992-1993	21,150	877,786
1993-1994	22,795	906,547
1994-1995	21,594	952,179
1995-1996	24,447	1,069,666

Source: SERVE program data, 1995-1996.

SERVE has the following major programs:

- School-based Volunteer Program: Volunteers recruited from the community are referred to local schools. SERVE trains the volunteer coordinators at each school with handbooks, training videos, and technical support. Countywide recognition of speakers, tutors, and volunteers is celebrated at an annual awards event.
- Community Resource Volunteers: This is SERVE’s “Speakers’ Bureau” which makes presentations by individuals, community groups, businesses, colleges and government agencies available to students. SERVE recruits, schedules, and evaluates the presentations. Speakers act as role models to motivate, provide career information, assist in developing coping skills, and enhance the curriculum. Speakers are also provided for teacher workshops and parent meetings.
- Tutor Partners Program: This program is designed to recruit, train, place, and recognize volunteers from colleges, universities, community groups, businesses, PTA/PTSAs, and senior citizens groups to tutor elementary school students. Private and public school secondary students tutor in neighboring elementary schools as well.
- FAST (Florida Academic Scholar Tutors): FAST is a new after-school tutoring program that matches potential Florida Academic

Scholars with elementary or middle school students who need assistance in mathematics or language arts. FAST programs are to begin in Fall 1997 with 30 students tutoring at one of six school sites.

- **Business Partnerships:** This program coordinates partnerships, which develop at individual schools and through the Speakers' Bureau, Tutor Partners Program, and the Hillsborough Education Foundation.

- **Family Involvement Program:** Lutz Elementary won the state award for its Family Resources Center. The Center is housed at the school site and includes parenting discussion groups, material library, absentee call back program, hands-on-art, family reading night, and parenting classes.

- **Job Shadowing Program:** The Job Shadowing Program functions in conjunction with the district's new School-to-Work Program and SERVE coordinates a partnership with downtown businesses.

The school district provides from one-third to one-fourth of SERVE's total budget. SERVE has two school district employees -- a Secretary II and a Senior Public Relations Information Specialist. SERVE is funded by the school board, Full Service Schools Grant, local foundations and grants, corporate fund raising, individuals, schools, and PTA/PTSAs. Exhibit 7-5 provides SERVE's budget and school board contributions.

**EXHIBIT 7-5
SERVE TOTAL BUDGET AND SCHOOL BOARD CONTRIBUTIONS,
AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL SERVE BUDGET
1988-89 through 1995-96**

Year	SERVE Budget	School Board Contribution	School Board Contribution as a Percentage of SERVE Budget
1988-1989	\$64,800	\$26,000	40.12%
1989-1990	75,200	28,900	38.43
1990-1991	80,243	28,900	36.02
1991-1992	88,879	28,900	32.51
1992-1993	109,900	28,900	26.30
1993-1994	100,320	44,320	44.17
1994-1995	126,785	48,700	38.41
1995-1996	109,445	38,900	35.54

Source: SERVE program data, 1996.

SERVE and the Hillsborough County School District have a written agreement to provide supportive services to Full Service Schools. This agreement includes recruiting

and training volunteers for tutorial services; a variety of services as defined by the school advisory councils; a career awareness program through the Speakers' Bureau; and role models for drug education, self esteem, behavior, and motivation to students in the Full Service Schools.

SERVE sponsors the Five-Star Schools Program for the district. Twenty-one (21) district elementary schools won a Five Star Award in 1995-1996, seven of them for the second consecutive year. The Five Star School Award is presented annually to those schools that have shown evidence of exemplary community involvement. Schools that achieve this designation receive a Florida Department of Education's award for community involvement. In order to qualify, a school must achieve 100 percent of established criteria in the categories of business partnerships, family involvement, volunteers, student community service, and school advisory councils. For the volunteer criteria, for example, a school must:

- have a staff training program in which a minimum of 80 percent of the school staff have participated during the school year;
- designate a volunteer coordinator to provide leadership for the school volunteer program through recruitment, placement, training, and supervision of participants; and
- have a total number of hours in volunteer service which is equivalent to twice the number of students enrolled in the school.

Five Star Schools also use their own students as volunteers. The criteria for student volunteers include:

- the school must provide opportunities to students for service learning that focus on an identified community need (i.e., renovating a park, feeding the homeless, working at election polls); and
- 50 percent of the students must be involved in community activities such as pen pals to shut-ins, food drives, cross-school tutoring activities, etc.

FINDING

Hillsborough County volunteers donated 1,069,666 hours of time for students and schools in 1995-1996. At an entry-level, part-time hourly rate for a teacher aide (Group A, 10 months, Schedule PG-13, equivalent to \$7.50 per hour), the 1995-96 dollar amount donated by volunteers to the district is equivalent to \$8,022,495.

The district outsources for its volunteer services through SERVE. SERVE administers a tutoring program for all schools in the district and coordinates a number of school-based recognition programs as well as a Speakers' Bureau.

In 1996-97, the district allotted over \$100,000 for SERVE including \$38,900 for program support and over \$65,000 for personnel.

For its investment, the district received over \$8 million in volunteer hour services for instructional and non-instructional support.

More residents of Hillsborough County are volunteers in the schools than in the comparable counties of Palm Beach and Broward (see Exhibit 7-3). SERVE has been able to increase the level of volunteer services to schools and students from 21,594 volunteers in 1994-1995 to 24,447 in 1995-1996 through grants, awards, and philanthropic donations.

COMMENDATION

SERVE is commended for its outreach and training models and for the coordination of services for a large number of school volunteers.

Hillsborough County's volunteers have contributed over one million hours to Hillsborough County students and schools in 1995-1996. The support of these volunteers has been invaluable in the areas of tutoring, job shadowing, behavior modification, and role modeling.

The arrangement with SERVE to outsource volunteer training and coordination has provided the school district with cost-efficient supplementary instructional and non-instructional services, and has helped to integrate the school system with the community through the use of volunteers.

FINDING

Hillsborough County has a substantial number of older persons (about one-fourth of the total population is over 50), who provide an invaluable pool of potential volunteers. Harnessing the support base of older persons is critical for the school district because Hillsborough County's projected growth and proposed construction of new schools will require a strong base of taxpayer support. Using older volunteers and making schools important to them is one method to secure the support base of older taxpayers.

Over 284,000 residents in the county are 50 and older, and many of them are retired. Numerous citizens serve as volunteers for Hillsborough County schools and students, surpassing the ratios of older volunteers in both Broward and Palm Beach Counties.

The Intergenerational Coalition, established by the Florida Departments of Education and Elder Affairs, is an independent statewide organization which meets twice a year at the Florida Aging Network Conference sponsored by the Florida Council on Aging and the Florida Association for Partners in Education. Regional meetings are held to share information on a regular basis.

The national Adopt-a-Grandparent Program brings students into nursing homes, adult congregate living facilities (ACLFs), and senior citizen centers in order to build caring relationships through the sharing of activities and time. The district had a Foster Grandparents Program, but eliminated its \$60,000 contribution to the program in 1994-95.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation 7-3:

Intensify intergenerational efforts by recruiting and training additional volunteers from the older population in Hillsborough County.

Older citizens are often the most vocal opponents of school-related tax increases. Lobbying for their support by integrating older volunteers into the schools is one way to harness this important support base, especially as the district continues to grow and the need to construct schools increases. By making older persons an important part of public education and recognizing their services as valuable assets, the district will help to secure their support.

SERVE has many options available to join state or national intergenerational programs linking older residents with the schools. SERVE can join associations such as The Intergenerational Coalition and the national Adopt-a-Grandparent Program. SERVE can also explore the possibilities of securing grants from both the Florida Departments of Education and Elder Affairs to assist in outreach recruiting efforts for older volunteers.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The Executive Director of SERVE should explore the possibility of joining statewide and national intergenerational programs that perform outreach to older citizens in order to increase the volunteer pool for Hillsborough County schools. Summer 1997
2. The Executive Director of SERVE should help each school volunteer coordinator identify senior groups and organizations such as RSVP, AARP, Foster Grandparents, nursing homes, church groups, local senior centers, and other senior organizations in each school's cluster community. Volunteers should be recruited from these groups. Fall 1997
3. The Executive Director of SERVE should explore the possibility of securing a grant from the State Departments of Education or Elder Affairs for intensifying the recruitment of older volunteers. The grant could be used to revive the Foster Grandparent Program which the district previously eliminated. 1997-1998 School Year

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this recommendation.

FINDING

The Executive Director of SERVE is a SERVE employee who reports to the Executive Committee of SERVE. SERVE provides Full Service School sites with tutorial services, career awareness programs, and assists in recruiting and training volunteers for these schools. Full Service School sites include four elementary schools and one junior high school, the exceptional education center, the pregnant teen program, and two inner-city community centers. There is a formal contractual agreement, (dated September 24, 1996), between SERVE and the school district for the Full Service Schools Program with a reimbursable amount of \$22,045 in state funds from the district to SERVE for the supportive services at the Full Service Schools sites.

There is minimal coordination between SERVE and either the Office of Communications or the Office of Community Coordination. Except for Full Service Schools, no formal means of coordination is evident between SERVE and district initiatives that deal with community or parent involvement. Although SERVE and the Hillsborough Education Foundation both have volunteers and business partnerships, the roles and responsibilities between the two agencies is unclear. SERVE has 5,000 business and community volunteers and the Foundation has 9,000 volunteers from the business community who donate services to schools.

Like the Hillsborough Education Foundation and the Communities in Schools organization which resides under the Foundation umbrella, SERVE has its own board of directors. Also like the Foundation, the executive director is a district employee who reports to the district administration.

No formal evaluation of the impact of SERVE volunteers has been conducted to assess their value in terms of student performance.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation 7-4:

Clarify the lines of command and roles and responsibilities between SERVE, the Foundation, and the district, and evaluate services provided by SERVE volunteers.

SERVE's executive director should administratively report to the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent under the proposed reorganization found in Recommendation 7-13.

A Task Force should be appointed by the Superintendent to explore greater collaboration and coordination between SERVE, the Foundation, and the district. The Task Force should also explore the possibility of SERVE being placed under the auspices of the Foundation, much as the Communities in Schools Program is now. As a part of Foundation, SERVE could have access to a larger base of support for its programs and would avoid duplication or competition with the Foundation for the same pool of community resources, particularly volunteers from the business community.

SERVE's excellent record of recruiting and coordinating volunteers could also help the Foundation in expanding its total volunteer pool.

Because of their stringent reporting requirements, Full Service School sites offer an opportunity to evaluate the impact of SERVE volunteers. Program evaluation should include changes in test scores of students who are tutored by SERVE volunteers and changes in at-risk indicators for students served by volunteer mentors.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The Superintendent should appoint a Task Force to explore greater collaboration between the Foundation and SERVE, and the possibility of SERVE being placed under the auspices of the Foundation, much as the Communities in Schools Program is now. Members of the Task Force should include board members from both organizations, the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, and the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction. July 1997
2. The Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, with assistance from the Office of Assessment, Accountability and Evaluation, should evaluate the impact of SERVE volunteers on test scores and at-risk indicators for students tutored by SERVE volunteers in Full Service Schools. The evaluation should be conducted annually. Commencing in
1997-98
School Year

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be accomplished with existing resources.

FINDING

Ninety-five (95) percent of Hillsborough County Schools have a school volunteer program. All high schools have a program, but one elementary, two middle, three adult/vocational and three exceptional centers do not have a school-based volunteer program in place, as shown in Exhibit 7-6.

According to SERVE's executive director, many teachers, especially those at schools with no volunteer coordinator, are unaware of SERVE's role in recruiting and training volunteers as tutors and speakers. Many teachers and some principals are unaware of the potential benefits to their schools and students from the meaningful use of SERVE volunteers.

Although the volunteer coordinators who are appointed by the principal at each school that has a volunteer program are trained by SERVE, the organization does not monitor their performance.

**EXHIBIT 7-6
STATUS OF SCHOOLS WITH SCHOOL VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS**

1995-1996

Type of School	Number in District	Number with School Volunteer Programs
Elementary Schools	106	105
Middle Schools	27	25
High Schools	16	16
Adult/Vocational Schools	5	2
Exceptional Centers	10	7
TOTAL	164	155

Source: "Status Report of School Volunteer Programs" to the Department of Education, Office of Business and Education Alliances, 1995-1996.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation 7-5:

Fully implement a school volunteer program at each school in Hillsborough County.

All schools should have a school volunteer program with an assigned volunteer coordinator who is both trained and monitored by SERVE to recruit and train volunteers with assistance from the principal and the School Advisory Council. Students and teachers at all schools should have access to volunteers for instructional and non-instructional support services. Principals at those schools with no volunteer program should assign a staff member as the volunteer coordinator. Each volunteer program should be monitored and evaluated annually by the SERVE executive director in conjunction with the school principal and the School Advisory Council.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. SERVE's Executive Director should contact those principals at the schools without a volunteer program. The principal should assign a staff member as the volunteer coordinator for the school. SERVE should provide the training for these new coordinators in outreach strategies and meaningful use of volunteers. | September 1997 |
| 2. The SERVE Executive Director should develop a monitoring instrument useful to assess the work of the volunteer coordinators at all schools. | December 1997 and annually |
| 3. The director should also visit schools regularly and conduct an annual evaluation of the school volunteer programs in conjunction with the principal and the school advisory council. | Ongoing |

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact for the implementation of this recommendation.

7.1.3 Collaborations With Other Agencies

CURRENT SITUATION

Collaborations with governmental and non-governmental agencies are important to a school district, particularly the Hillsborough County School District with a large number of at-risk students who need non-instructional support services to retain students in school and prepared to learn. Educators are often held responsible for the non-education problems of students. It is debatable whether this is the job of educators, as the reality is that most students who drop out of school do so because of non-educational problems. Community-based initiatives that can bring together agencies and individuals with related concerns and shared goals to improve and expand services for at-risk children and families maximize limited resources and can help to keep students in school and ready to learn.

In Hillsborough County, many agencies -- both governmental such as the Department of Family and Children (formerly DHRS) and non-governmental such as the Children's Board -- provide health and human services to youth and families. These agencies assist the district by supporting families and students, either directly as in Full Service Schools or indirectly as in multiple collaborations with local community agencies. As the district's student enrollment continues to grow, and as the efforts of the Foundation and volunteer program continue to showcase the schools, the integration of services between the district and other providers in the community is essential in order to complement the instructional program.

In 1991, Hillsborough County School District was chosen by the Florida Department of Education to pilot a community collaboration project called the Shared Services Network. The goals of the Network are to place the district in a more visible position within the realm of service providers in the county, and to coordinate services between the district and governmental and non-governmental agencies. Frameworks have been built upon the premise that the base of the Network's infrastructure is an alliance of policy makers and top-level administrators in public and private organizations. The CEO Roundtable, comprised of officers and chief executives of the major community agencies, was established as a forum for dialogue and community problem solving.

State funding for the Network was deleted two years ago, but the district continued the initiative and created the Office of Community Coordination, under the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent. The Office of Community Coordination is directed by a Supervisor who participates in and manages collaborative activities at various phases of development, including:

- start-up and establishment of relationships;
- implementation of collaborative activities;
- maintenance of collaborative relationships; and
- enhancement of activities.

In order to continue the function of the Shared Services Network, the Office of Community Coordination has established priority linkages and has made the district a

full partner with initiatives involving governmental and non-governmental organizations dealing with children's issues in Hillsborough County (see Exhibit 7-7).

In addition to the priority collaborations noted above, the Office of Community Coordination is also involved with the following community and government agencies, committees, and work groups. Due to the nature of human service delivery and the judicial system, stakeholders may be involved in more than one collaboration as shown in Exhibit 7-8.

The job description for the Supervisor of the Office for Community Coordination contains the following responsibilities:

- serve as staff to CEO Roundtable;
- act as a community liaison at the policy level between the Hillsborough County School District, the Children's Board, the Florida DHRS (now Department of Children & Families), and other participating community agencies;
- establish and maintain internal linkages within the Hillsborough County School District, DHRS, and the Children's Board; and
- provide technical assistance and consultation to governmental and community agencies.

FINDING

There are multiple collaborations in place between the district and local organizations and government agencies. Six major current initiatives are considered priority collaborations by the district (see Exhibit 7-7) and other relationships are in place (see Exhibit 7-8). There are hundreds of stakeholders and individuals involved in committees or work groups related to the collaboration activities, most of which are staffed and coordinated by the Supervisor of the Office of Community Coordination.

The concept of collaborating with other organizations that deal with children and families is appropriate and leads to improved relationships for the district in the community. Also, using the resources of other agencies to expand the district's resources certainly is cost-efficient, especially in efforts related to at-risk early intervention and prevention.

**EXHIBIT 7-7
CURRENT COLLABORATION ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICE OF
COMMUNITY COORDINATION, STAKEHOLDERS, EXPECTED OUTCOMES, AND
BENEFITS TO THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT AND
AFFILIATED COMMITTEES 1995-1996**

Name of Collaborative Activity and Role of District	School District & Community Stakeholders	Expected Outcomes and Benefits to the Hillsborough County School District	Affiliated Committees
<p>Countywide Pro-Family Integrated Services Initiative</p> <p>Office of Community Coordination provides staff support and coordination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hillsborough County School District Division of Instruction ■ Children's Board ■ Florida Department of Children & Families ■ Agency for Health Care Administration ■ Community Providers of Mental Health and Family Support Services 	<p>Leverage over \$1.5 million in community funds to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Implement a county-wide system of school linked, neighborhood based family support services which improve linkages between home, family, and school; ■ Improve student performance; <p>Coordinate programs between the school district and the community, which share a common service delivery approach but which are unevenly dispersed throughout the county and do not have a stable funding base.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Department of Children & Families Children's Committee ■ Children's Board Joint Venture Steering Committee ■ Pro-Family Steering Committee
<p>Juvenile Assessment Center</p> <p>Office of Community Coordination provides staff support and coordination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hillsborough County School District Divisions of Instruction and Administration ■ Hillsborough County Sheriff's Department ■ Department of Children's Services ■ Department of Juvenile Justice ■ University of South Florida ■ Agency for Community Treatment Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Maximize service coordination and share information, direct intervention and triage to over 100 truant and 1,000 delinquent youth monthly. ■ Two district staff are located at the Juvenile Assessment Center and account for approximately seven percent of total resources of the JAC. These staff maintain communication with school security officers and site administrators on an as-needed basis for delinquent and truant youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CEO Work Group ■ Juvenile Justice Council

**EXHIBIT 7-7 (Continued)
CURRENT COLLABORATION ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICE OF
COMMUNITY COORDINATION, STAKEHOLDERS, EXPECTED OUTCOMES, AND
BENEFITS TO THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT AND
AFFILIATED COMMITTEES 1995-1996**

Name of Collaborative Activity and Role of District	School District & Community Stakeholders	Expected Outcomes and Benefits to Hillsborough County School District	Affiliated Committees
<p>Child Health Investment Program</p> <p>Office of Community Coordination provides staff support and coordination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hillsborough County School District Division of Instruction ■ Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Leverage children's health and mental health dollars to school health, Healthy Start, Hillsborough County Department of Health & Human Services, county health unit, and other funders. ■ Implement countywide children's health initiative in the middle and high schools. ■ The proposed budget offers the existing school health dollars as a match for \$10,000,000 in new funds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Human Services Council ■ Health Care Advisory Board
<p>Comprehensive Truancy Intervention Project</p> <p>Office of Community Coordination provides staff support and coordination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hillsborough County School District Divisions of Instruction and Administration ■ County Sheriff's Office ■ Tampa Police Department ■ State Attorney's Office ■ Florida Department of Juvenile Justice ■ County Department of Children's Services ■ County judicial system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Comprehensive, coordinated approach to truancy intervention (zero tolerance) by strengthening the multi-agency response. ■ Use a prevention approach. ■ Institute a system for accountability tied to school and community indicators. ■ Sheriff's Office has dedicated two staff part-time and other resources to match the commitment of Hillsborough County School District staffing and coordination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CEO Work Group ■ Juvenile Justice Council

**EXHIBIT 7-7 (Continued)
CURRENT COLLABORATION ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICE OF
COMMUNITY COORDINATION, STAKEHOLDERS, EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND
BENEFITS TO THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT AND
AFFILIATED COMMITTEES 1995-1996**

Name of Collaborative Activity and Role of District	School District & Community Stakeholders	Expected Outcomes and Benefits to Hillsborough County School District	Affiliated Committees
<p>CEO Work Group</p> <p>Office of Community Coordination provides staff support and coordination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Superintendent ■ Chief Judge ■ Sheriff ■ State Attorney ■ County Administrator ■ Public Defender ■ Chief of Police ■ District Managers of Departments of Children & Families and Juvenile Justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify and resolve issues and outcomes which require policy and administrative changes across and through the community's education and governmental institutions. 	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Human Services Council (Staffing & Coordination)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ community funding agencies such as United Way, Community Foundation, Funder's Forum, Hillsborough Education Foundation ■ local education and human service agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Maximize use of private and public funds around issues of primary importance to education and human services providers. ■ Target available public and private resources more collaboratively and efficiently. 	<p>N/A</p>

Source: Office of Community Coordination internal data, 1995-1996.

**EXHIBIT 7-8
ORGANIZATIONS, COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES THAT
NETWORK WITH HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
1995-1996**

District 6 Department of Children and Families
District 6 Department of Juvenile Justice
Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office
The Children's Board of Hillsborough County
Hillsborough Tomorrow
Hillsborough County
United Way
City of Tampa
DACCO
ACTS
Child Abuse Council
MHC, Inc.
Northside Mental Health Center
Healthy Start
Urban League
CDC of Tampa
Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute at University of South Florida
Children's Home

Source: Office of Community Coordination internal data, 1996.

However, making the district a full partner in all efforts related to children and families in Hillsborough County is a challenging task, the outcomes are not always clear and the success of the collaborative efforts is not easily measured. An example of a mutually beneficial collaboration can be seen in the Comprehensive Truancy Intervention Project created to reduce truancy. In 1996, a collaborative work group was formed between the major stakeholders, including the county sheriff, the school superintendent, and the chief judge, to leverage problem solving methods in truancy reduction and juvenile justice. Technical assistance, staffing, and coordination is provided by the Supervisor of the Office of Community Coordination. The expected result of the work group is a comprehensive community plan to reduce truancy, using public service announcements contributed by the sheriff's office.

Although all six priority collaborations (see Exhibit 7-7) have established expected outcomes and benefits to the district, not all existing collaborations are assessed fully for benefits to the Hillsborough County School District. It is difficult to determine the quantitative value of each collaboration to the district and to its students.

The district did attempt to assess the benefit of some collaborations when it was faced with a budget shortfall of 15 percent in the spring of 1996. In March 1996, the School Board and Superintendent requested a review of all contracts with outside agencies on the premise that budget cuts might affect those contracts rather than classroom services. The recommendations for the 1996-1997 budget from the Committee to Review Contracts with Outside Organizations, chaired by the Deputy Superintendent, were accepted by the Board and resulted in a 43 percent savings of the amount budgeted for the previous year (1994-1995). The plan eliminated some of the contracts

and reduced others by varying amounts. The committee made its recommendations based upon the services delivered and the district's ability to provide similar services through other means. Eliminated completely were district allocations to the Science Fair, the Math Expo, the Foster Grandparents Program, and Full Service Schools. Reduced were district budgets for the Mendez Foundation (a drug prevention education program), Florida Concerts and Artists in the Schools (fine arts supplementary programs), and a Joint Venture with The Children's Board (therapeutic mental health services to students and their families). The total amount of savings to the district was \$169,620 through these budget cuts in contracts with outside organizations.

According to the Deputy Superintendent, most of the areas affected by the budget cuts have now been able to secure supplementary funds through grants or donations, and continue their collaboration status with the district.

There is no evident criteria, direction or guidance for choosing which collaborations the district should prioritize and which collaborations are outdated or of minor benefit to Hillsborough County students and schools. Interviews with district staff and stakeholders (parents and community leaders) for the performance review indicated that some confusion exists regarding the district's many collaborative efforts. Although several stakeholders praised the multiple efforts of the Supervisor of Community Coordination, many others noted that the district was involved in too many relationships with outside agencies, were not aware of what their purpose or benefit to the district was, and did not know the district's role in the collaborations.

COMMENDATIONS

The district's approach to developing collaborations with local organizations and government agencies that serve children and families is exemplary and can serve as a model for other school districts across the state.

The district is commended for its initiative in establishing collaborations which make it possible to offer enriched programs to Hillsborough County students and in providing greater service at a reduced cost.

The collaborations have helped to put the district in the limelight of service providers in Hillsborough County and have integrated the district with other agencies in the community and the state. The district's experiences, strategies and methods are being used to train other school districts in the state in how they can develop mutually-beneficial collaborations.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation 7-6:

Review the multiple collaborations with outside organizations annually to assess their expected outcome and benefit to students, teachers, parents, and schools.

Outcomes expected from each collaborative effort should be clear. The exercise for reducing the 1995-1996 budget is an appropriate method to assess the benefit and expected outcomes of each collaboration. The district can use the methods of the ad hoc Committee to Review Contracts with Outside Organizations and establish a standing committee, comprised of major stakeholders that meet annually to review contracts with outside organizations. The standing committee should also develop a monitoring instrument that measures the value of each collaboration including student performance, at-risk indicators, and measurements commonly used in social services to assess program performance.

Continuous monitoring of the relationships with outside organizations should ensure accountability for the collaborations, specific outcomes for Hillsborough County students and families, and confirm that the district is benefiting from each one.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

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|--|--------------|
| 1. The Board should establish a standing committee to annually assess the benefits to the district from each collaboration with an outside organization. The standing committee should be composed of major community stakeholders, district administrative staff, and staff from the Full Service Schools Program. The committee should be coordinated by the Supervisor of Community Coordination. | August 1997 |
| 2. The standing Committee to Review Contracts with Outside Organizations should develop an instrument to measure the impact of each collaboration on Hillsborough County School District students and schools, to include test scores and at-risk indicators as well as social service indicators. Staff from Full Service Schools can assist with the social services indicators. | Fall 1997 |
| 3. The Supervisor of Community Coordination should provide the staff support and technical assistance and the Deputy Superintendent should provide consulting support to the standing committee to Review Contracts with Outside Organizations. | Ongoing |
| 4. The Committee to Review Contracts with Outside Organizations should review and assess each of the collaborations using the instrument to determine which ones are priority for the district. | Spring 1998 |
| 5. The Supervisor of Community Coordination should seek the approval of the standing committee before embarking on any new contractual collaborations. | Ongoing 1998 |
| 6. The Committee to Review Contracts with Outside | 1997-98 |

Organizations should develop a long-range plan that contains clear goals and measurable objectives for all collaborations and for the district's involvement in each collaboration.

School Year

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this recommendation.

FINDING

The Office of Community Coordination is administratively located under the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent, and the Supervisor of the Office of Community Coordination reports directly to the Superintendent's Administrative Assistant. Many district priority collaborations also involve the Division of Instructional Services, Full Service Schools Project, as a primary stakeholder (see Exhibit 7-7).

No coordination is evident between the Office of Community Coordination and other community involvement efforts such as the arrangements with SERVE for volunteers and FOCUS for parent involvement. One of the priority collaborations denotes the Hillsborough Education Foundation as a stakeholder, but there is also no evidence of formal coordination between the Office of Community Coordination and the Foundation. Likewise, there is no formal coordination in place between the Office of Community Coordination and the Office of Communications.

The job duties noted in the position description for Supervisor of Community Coordination are more in line with those of a coordinator rather than a supervisor of an office.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation 7-7:

Change the Office of Community Coordination to the Office of Community Relations.

The Supervisor of Community Coordination should be realigned to a Coordinator for Community Relations. This office will be housed in the Department of Community Affairs (also see Recommendation 7-13).

Mechanisms should be established to coordinate and provide accountability for the contractual relationships between the district, FOCUS, and SERVE through the Office of Community Relations under the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent. Centralizing all collaborative efforts and community contractual relationships in one central administrative location should ensure coordination and should allow the proposed Coordinator to pursue those relationships of greatest interest to the district. Priority collaborations should include the contractual arrangements between the district and FOCUS and SERVE.

Accountability for all collaborations and contractual arrangements is strengthened by this recommendation, which places the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent in a position to monitor the relationships with outside organizations to ensure benefits to Hillsborough County students and schools.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. The Superintendent should change the name of the Office of Community Coordination to the Office of Community Relations and the Supervisor of Community Coordination position to that of Coordinator for Community Relations. | July 1998 |
| 2. The Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent should establish formal working linkages between the Offices of Community Relations and the Office of Communications (see Recommendation 7-13). | July 1998 |

FISCAL IMPACT

The reclassification of a Supervisor position to a Coordinator position will save the district about \$10,300 per year, using the actual Supervisor salary and the salary for a mid-level coordinator (Step 12) plus 32 percent benefits.

Recommendation	1997-1998	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002
Reclassify a Supervisor as a Coordinator	---	\$10,300	\$10,300	\$10,300	\$10,300

7.2 Parent And Family Involvement

CURRENT SITUATION

Most educators believe that active involvement of a student's family in his or her education can make the difference between a student who succeeds and one who fails. Parent involvement has often been limited to membership in a school's parent-teacher organization or visiting the child's teacher during an annual open house. However, more and more, the success of a student is determined by the extent to which his parents and family support his or her education and commit to tutoring, mentoring, as well as assisting the student in all academic and extra-curricular endeavors. Schools, too, are changing the ways they utilize parents.

Educational studies, particularly in the last ten years, are proving that students with involved parents have:

- higher grades and test scores;

- long-term academic achievement;
- more successful programs; and
- more effective schools.

The studies also show that children from low-income and minority families have the most to gain when schools involve their parents.

Parent-teacher organizations have provided a venue for parental participation for many years. PTAs/PTOs have had great successes in supplementing funds for individual schools. However, they have often been remiss at including all parents in a school and extending membership to other family members such as grandparents.

The advance of site-based decision making has offered another opportunity for parents to become meaningfully involved in the schools and has promoted schools to actively involve parents. School advisory councils provide a vehicle for parental input into school improvement plans and for assisting the school staff and administrators in making school-related decisions.

Many federal and state programs mandate parent involvement. For example, the federal Title I program has a strong parent involvement component. Several state mandates related to school reform and accountability also involve parents, as do criteria for the receipt of public and private grants to schools.

7.2.1 School Advisory Councils

CURRENT SITUATION

In Florida, School Advisory Councils (called “School Improvement Teams,” or SIT teams, in Hillsborough County) are mandated by law found in the state’s School Improvement and Accountability legislation (Blueprint 2000). The mandate calls for the representation of three parents on each school SIT team for the planning and implementation of school improvement.

Prior to this legislation, the Hillsborough County School District had implemented site-based decision making using a process which was designed in part by parents and community members as well as teachers and administrators. The site-based decision-making Task Force developed the policies and procedures which were eventually incorporated into the reforms associated with Florida’s Blueprint 2000 and were adopted and used across the state.

Blueprint 2000 legislation requires that the school board annually review SIT teams to ensure that they are appropriately constituted. The legislation also requires that SIT members representing each stakeholder group be elected by their respective peer groups at the school (with the exception of business representatives who can be appointed by other members of the team).

Many program evaluations that the district conducts through the Department of Assessment, Accountability, and Evaluation include components that measure the

perception of parents about the schools. The evaluation of SIT teams at all Hillsborough County schools for 1995-1996 shows that parents comprise over one-fourth of the membership on all SIT teams. Exhibit 7-9 shows the percentage of stakeholders required by the law, including parents, by type of school.

**EXHIBIT 7-9
COMPOSITION OF SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILS (SIT TEAMS) BY
PERCENTAGE OF REQUIRED STAKEHOLDER GROUPS BY SCHOOL TYPE
1995-1996**

School Type	School-Based Administrators	Teachers	Educational Support Personnel	Parents	Business and Community Members	Students *
Elementary	8%	37%	13%	29%	10%	3%
Middle	8	40	12	25	9	6
Senior High	6	36	9	21	8	20
Adult Centers	11	42	15	0	19	13
Special Education	8	32	25	23	10	2
Total	8%	37%	14%	26%	10%	5%

Source: *School Improvement Teams, 1995-1996: A New Spirit*, Office of Assessment, Accountability and Evaluation, 1996

* Student membership is required only at the adult centers and high schools.

The Superintendent set a 1995-1996 target for racial and ethnic balance on all SIT teams to within 15 percentage points of each school's ethnic composition; the State Auditor General set a lower standard of 20 percentage points. The ethnic composition of the SIT teams, as compared to the student population in Hillsborough County for 1995-1996 is provided in Exhibit 7-10.

**EXHIBIT 7-10
RACIAL AND ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAMS AS
COMPARED TO THE ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY
STUDENTS BY PERCENTAGE 1995-1996**

	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native American	White	Other
Total SIT Membership Across the District	1%	24%	14%	1.0%	60%	1.0%
District Student Population	2%	24%	17%	0.3%	57%	0.1%

Source: *School Improvement Teams, 1995-1996: A New Spirit*, Office of Assessment, Accountability and Evaluation, 1996.

PTAs are present at most schools, and the County Council of PTAs coordinates activities, collects information, and shares successful ventures among the individual school PTAs within the Hillsborough County School District. The County Council of

PTAs also serves as an advisory group to the Superintendent, meeting with him monthly.

FINDING

For the last three years and in accordance with Blueprint 2000 legislation, SIT teams in Hillsborough County School District have been evaluated to ensure appropriate member composition and progress towards school goals. The evaluations show that SIT teams are well established within Hillsborough County schools and include teachers, parents, school administrators, and business representatives (see Exhibits 7-9 and 7-10).

The evaluations show a constantly increasing number of parents who belong to SIT teams. During the 1992-1993 school year, 614 parents, business, and community members served on SIT teams. In 1994-1995, the number had increased 132 percent, to 1,426 parents, business, and community representatives on SIT teams. Total parent representation was 26 percent of all SIT team membership in 1995-1996.

The SIT team evaluations further show that:

- 87 percent of SIT team members were able to attend all or most of the School Improvement Team meetings;
- 80 percent of the members reported that their input was valued and the time and effort spent on the team was worthwhile; and
- 84 percent of the members stated they felt comfortable sharing their ideas at the School Improvement Team meetings.

This finding is supported by the large proportion of SIT members, (over 75 percent), who reported they were responsible for or involved in the various activities in the school improvement process.

The district evaluations are generally consistent with MGT's Survey Responses (survey of administrators, principals and teachers) which show that 72 percent of principals and 48 percent of teachers agree with the statement that "Parents play an active role in decision-making in my school."

COMMENDATION

Hillsborough County schools have made an effort to increase the participation of parents and community members in school improvement initiatives and to balance their School Improvement Teams with a diverse group of individuals.

All schools should continue to strengthen efforts to further involve parents, business, and community members on School Improvement Teams. The 1997 Legislature recently enacted legislation to require that the majority of the members of School Improvement Teams be persons not employed by the district. The Hillsborough County School District must now meet this requirement, which became effective July 1997.

7.2.2 FOCUS and Parent Involvement Program

CURRENT SITUATION

In addition to the SIT teams and PTAs in Hillsborough County schools, the district has three other important components for parent and family involvement: FOCUS, the Title I Parental Involvement Program, and the Parent Resource Center.

The district outsources for parent involvement publicity to a private non-profit organization called FOCUS (“Friends Offering Children Unlimited Success”). FOCUS was started in February 1995 as a community-based group established to increase public awareness of effective parenting skills. FOCUS also serves as an impartial coordinator of information on accessing the many parenting and mental health services available to all parents and families in Hillsborough County.

An ongoing media campaign is the major thrust behind the FOCUS initiative. The goals of FOCUS are to involve the entire community through a public awareness campaign and to emphasize the importance of every person’s role in promoting and practicing appropriate parenting skills. The services of FOCUS are available to parents of students in private schools as well as the district schools, and include:

- a 24-hour hotline for anyone with questions about parenting or other family issues. This service provides a direct linkage to the many community support agencies;
- the publication of a comprehensive “Guide to Parenting Services,” listing over 140 agencies, both for profit and nonprofit, that serve families or individuals. Services range from child development, counseling or home management to parenting classes, nutrition, and problem solving;
- a Speakers’ Bureau of experts in parenting skills which is available at no cost to groups or organizations interested in parenting topics;
- a parenting Checklist, printed in Spanish and English, for parents or individuals to self-evaluate their skills quickly and easily and as a starting place for promoting interest in effective parenting skills; and
- public service announcements on radio and television, billboards and print ads, to communicate messages and stimulate parent and family involvement.

In 1994, the Board directed a one-time Florida Department of Education Parent Involvement grant to FOCUS, and has since continued its support in-kind by providing office space and telephone for the FOCUS Project Manager. There is an Interlocal Agreement (dated January 18, 1997), between the district and FOCUS that formalizes roles and responsibilities. The Interlocal Agreement was coordinated by the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent for Business and Research.

From the sale of its "Teacher Barbie Doll," the Mattel Toy Corporation created the Hand-in-Hand Program nationwide. Hand-in-Hand, coordinated by the Institute for Educational Leadership (a Washington-based nonprofit educational organization), began its second year in 1996 with a \$1 million renewal grant from the Mattel Foundation. Hand-in-Hand selected eight cities around the country to support local school reformers with opportunities to showcase and strengthen local efforts to involve parent participation in education. Tampa was selected as one of the cities nationwide and FOCUS was chosen as the local recipient of the \$60,000 Hand-in-Hand Grant to develop public awareness campaigns for family involvement in Hillsborough County.

The Family Learning Centers are sponsored by FOCUS and Hand-to-Hand, and are designed to provide parents with information and resources to assist them with parenting skills, provide information on becoming involved at school, and stimulate ideas for helping their child's education. At this time, there are only a few centers open at various schools. FOCUS has submitted a proposal to develop a model Family Learning Center at the Hillsborough County School District Parent Education Center. A committee of teachers, parents, and school specialists are designing the center, and lead teachers or Title I parent involvement specialists will coordinate the site.

FINDING

Although operational for only two years, FOCUS has been able to increase parent involvement in the schools through an active and aggressive public awareness campaign for families.

Other examples can also be provided of FOCUS accomplishments. Over 15,000 "Guide to Parenting Services" directories have been distributed free to schools and the community; the Guide is distributed to all school social workers and principals. The Parent's Checklist, brochures and posters are also distributed free to all schools and to the community at various events. Billboards, print ads, and public service announcements (PSAs) on local television and radio help to market the concept of parent involvement. FOCUS co-sponsors a weekly television show, "Parenting with Dr. Bob," which offers help to families with the challenges of parenting. FOCUS also helps to sponsor a \$15,000 grant, "Parents Actively Involved in Children's Education," through Communities in Schools. Free parenting classes are offered once a week, morning and night, at a centrally-located community center in Tampa.

FOCUS and the Title I Parental Involvement Program coordinate a variety of activities to promote parental involvement. For example, FOCUS has offered \$20,000 in matching Hand-to-Hand funds for a Parent Involvement Bus, coordinated with the Title I Parent Involvement Program. The bus will be used to present parent workshops,

provide information on community services, make available a library for parents to checkout videos and books, and provide trained staff to assist with special needs or services. The Parent Involvement Bus will visit community centers, neighborhoods, health clinics, family centers, elementary, middle, and secondary schools, as well as malls and shopping centers. The bus will be coordinated by the Title I Parent Involvement Supervisor and will be driven by an existing bus driver from the Division of Supportive Services.

COMMENDATION

FOCUS is commended as an exemplary and cost-efficient program which serves the district as an effective vehicle to promote family and parent involvement.

FOCUS is an exemplary model of a public-private partnership to benefit the schools. The district's relationship with FOCUS, through outsourcing for parent involvement, ensures that the use of private funds directly promote active parent and family involvement in education.

As FOCUS becomes more established, the district's outreach capacity to parents and families will grow, resulting in increased parental involvement which should in turn increase the performance of Hillsborough County students.

7.2.3 Title I Parental Involvement Program

CURRENT SITUATION

The Title I federal program was revised in 1996 and, under the new legislation, now extends services to all students enrolled in Title I schools. Schools are eligible for Title I funds if 60 percent or more of their students are in the free and reduced lunch program. The new Title I legislation mandates that all schools receiving Title I funds of at least \$5,000, spend one percent of those funds on parental involvement and no longer mandates an advisory council for parental involvement. Hillsborough County School District has 58 schools receiving Title I funds; the total number of students in Hillsborough County School District Title I schools was 30,000 students in 1995-1996.

Each school that receives Title I funds must:

- reserve at least one percent of its allocation for Parent Involvement activities (if the Title I allocation to the school is over \$5,000). Decisions regarding the use of the funds are to be made with the involvement of the parents;
- have a written plan which involved parents in its development and implementation. The plan must be incorporated into the Lead Educational Agency's (school district's) plan and must be distributed to all Title I parents. The school must submit to the state any comments from parents dissatisfied with the policy;

- hold an annual meeting to inform parents of their child's participation in the program and explanation of the Title I program;
- offer a flexible number of meetings and times, such as morning and evening meetings. Title I funds may be used for transportation, child care, and home visits;
- involve parents in the development, planning, review, and improvement of the programs;
- provide performance profiles that show the school's progress toward meeting the state's performance standards;
- provide individual student assessment results, individual student data, and an interpretation of those results to each student's parents;
- provide opportunities for parents to meet regularly to discuss their child's education and timely responses to a parent's questions or suggestions; and
- share responsibility with parents for achieving high student performance and work together to develop a Parent-Student-Teacher Compact. The Compact describes the school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment, specifies ways in which parents are responsible for supporting the child's learning (such as monitoring school attendance, homework, and television), and denotes the student's responsibilities and what is expected of him or her.

The recent the federal legislative changes also cut funds for administering the Title I program. At the Hillsborough County School District, budget cuts impacted the program, which was reduced from a staff of eight to a Supervisor of Parent Involvement and a secretarial position.

The Supervisor of Parent Involvement reports to the Assistant Superintendent for Supportive Services. A lead teacher at each Title I school is assigned by the principal to be a parental involvement liaison.

FINDING

New changes to the federal legislation deleted the mandate for a Title I Parent Advisory Council. However, the district has opted to keep its Title I Parent Advisory Council to ensure a cross-section of knowledgeable participants who represent the entire community and who have experience in planning and designing the district Parent Involvement Plan, the needs assessment, the parent survey, and staff development training.

In spite of reductions in federal funds resulting in a major loss of staff, the Parent Involvement Program has been able to keep up with the growth of the extended Title I program. The involvement of parents at all Hillsborough County schools, including Title I schools, has increased over the last two school years.

The federal legislation kept the requirement for annually evaluating the content and effectiveness of the district's Title I parental policy. The 1995-1996 evaluation was conducted through a mail survey compiled from existing surveys used by the Florida Department of Education and other school districts in the state, with input from parents, staff, and school administrators. The response rate of 11.5 percent was very low. Five schools had no parents responding. This low response rate does not permit analysis that is representative of the Title I population. However, the district opted to treat the data as a pilot study to identify, modify and eliminate confusing questions. Because of the low response rate, the district will conduct future surveys by telephone.

The Title I program is administratively housed within the Office of Supportive Services; the Title I Parent Involvement Supervisor reports to the Assistant Superintendent for Supportive Services. As stated in the Title I law, the Supervisor serves as a liaison to other programs and committees that deal with parent involvement, such as Hillsborough County Children's Services, FOCUS, and the Parent Education Center.

There is effective coordination between the Title I Parent Involvement Program and FOCUS because many Title I schools are also Full Service Schools and there is an agreement between the district and FOCUS for the Full Service Schools. FOCUS also functions as a public information venue for the Title I Parent Involvement Program, and is helping to supplement the procurement of a Parent Resource Bus for the Title I program.

COMMENDATION

The Title I Parent Involvement Program is commended for its effective leadership and innovative practices to involve parents of students in Title I schools.

In spite of federal budget cuts, the Title I Parent Involvement Program has managed to maintain its integrity and has been part of the effort to increase the number of parents involved at the schools.

7.2.4 Parent Education Centers

CURRENT SITUATION

In addition to PTAs, SIT teams, FOCUS, and the Title I Parent Involvement Program, the school district also has a Parent Education Center which serves as a central clearinghouse of information for Hillsborough County school parents and community members. The Parent Education Center originated from the 1991 mandated Consent Order allowing the Hillsborough County School District to implement its Middle School Cluster Plan. As a result, the planning and operation of the Parent Education Center is a part of the district's effort to maintain compliance with the new court-ordered

desegregation guidelines. The intent of the Consent Order in relation to parent education was: "To serve the needs of parents in better understanding the public school system, their children in that system, the teachers who impact their children, and themselves."

The Parent Education Center is a component of the Full Service School complex between Stewart Middle and Just Elementary Schools. The Stewart/Just Community, in west Tampa, is designated as an Enterprise Zone and consists of densely populated public housing and low income homes. The area is 99 percent minority and has a median household income of \$5,000 per year of those living in public housing. Ninety-eight percent of the students within the area receive federal lunch assistance. As a result of the school district's desegregation order, students living in this area are bused to 15 elementary, five middle, and three separate high schools. Although the students are attending schools in Clusters Two and Four, they are still being bused for desegregation. Students living in one block can actually attend several different elementary schools. The economic conditions make it difficult for parents to own cars or telephones. Additionally, many parents residing in the area report that they had less than satisfying experiences when they were in school or have not completed 12th grade. These issues have resulted in parents being underrepresented in the school life of their children within this geographic area.

The county is faced not only with the high cost of transporting students to maintain desegregation, but also with the social and community issues of intrusion and disruption of neighborhoods and families by busing. The middle school cluster plan was designed to help reduce minority student group isolation without overly disrupting the naturally occurring demographic dynamics of the community. In this light, the Parent Education Center is one part of the county's efforts to maintain compliance with new court-ordered desegregation guidelines. Given that the county's population is in a constant state of flux, the center was developed to help address the needs of these changing dynamics by assisting families in the acquisition, access, and utilization of the school system's resources.

School administrators and teachers find it challenging to establish contact with parents who live in one area but whose children attend school in another area. In these satellite areas, parental involvement is a challenge due to several reasons: differences in perceptions between teachers and families, lack of home-school communication skills, changes in family structure and lifestyles, lack of transportation or telephone, low self-esteem, and sometimes an unwelcoming climate on behalf of the schools.

The overall function of the Parent Education Center is to provide a friendly, non-threatening setting where parents can call or visit for the purpose of acquiring information about the processes, procedures, or services related to the educational experiences of their children and the school system. The center is managed by the Parent Education Center Facilitator, a 12-month teacher-on-special-assignment position, appointed to fulfill the position as prescribed in the Consent Order. The center operates Monday through Friday from 8:15 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. In addition, a 24-hour telephone hotline is available.

FINDING

Fragmentation and possible duplication exist between FOCUS, the Title I Parent Involvement Program, the Parent Education Center, and SERVE. These programs all recruit and train parents for involvement in the schools. They all perform outreach, public relations, publicity campaigns, and training for parents, who are often school volunteers. Both FOCUS and the Title I Parent Involvement Program target parents, but FOCUS serves all parents and families, including those from private schools in the county, and the Title I program serves only parents with children in the Title I schools. Title I federal law states that only students and parents in Title I schools can benefit from Title I funds; the program's resources cannot be extended to non-Title I schools.

The Title I Parental Involvement Program is a centrally based, district-administered initiative to involve parents. However, it can only involve parents of the 30,000 students enrolled in the 58 Title I schools. Title I parents constitute only about 23 percent of all parents in the district that have a centrally organized parent involvement program available to them. The remaining 77 percent of district parents must use other available parent involvement venues, such as individual staff and principals who may involve them, school-based PTA/PTSA's, SIT teams, or FOCUS.

Because the new Title I legislation extends services to all students in Title I schools, the same extension applies to parents: since the new legislation came into effect, all parents in Title I schools can participate in and receive the benefits of the Title I Parental Involvement Program. Over 30,000 students and their parents are now eligible to receive the benefits associated with the Parent Involvement Program in the 58 Title I schools, such as parenting skills workshops and seminars, remedial instructional assistance, parent literacy training, frequent contact with each student's teacher, and homework help.

For public awareness about parent involvement and parenting resources, the district contracts out to FOCUS and offers parenting resources and information through the Parent Education Center. The coordination of parent volunteers is outsourced to SERVE. However, there is no comprehensive district initiative to involve all parents at all schools in the district.

In 1996, a board member requested a review of FOCUS and Title I to ensure that duplication of services did not exist. The review was inconclusive and amounted to a description of the job duties of the Title I Supervisor and the Executive Director of FOCUS.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation 7-8:

Establish a districtwide central parent involvement program that is comprehensive and targets all parents of all students at all schools.

The proposed districtwide parent involvement program can be developed using the existing and available resources of the district, such as its arrangements with FOCUS

and SERVE. Consultation can be provided by the Full Service Schools project and the Title I Parent Involvement Program.

The proposed comprehensive districtwide parent involvement program should be administratively housed in the proposed Office of Community Affairs (see Recommendation 7-13) under the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent. The proposed Coordinator for Community Relations should coordinate the district's parental involvement program through the proposed Office of Community Relations.

The formation of a new districtwide, centrally coordinated parent involvement program should help to clarify the relationships between FOCUS, SERVE, the Parent Education Center, and the Title I Parent Involvement Program. Each existing program can contribute its own "specialized" resource to the districtwide program, as follows:

- FOCUS can contribute public awareness and publicity,
- SERVE can locate, train, and contribute parent volunteers,
- Full Service Schools can offer increased parent involvement activities at its sites,
- the Coordinator for Community Relations can contribute coordination and staff support; and
- the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent can contribute organizational structure and accountability to the proposed districtwide parent involvement program, including the clarification of reporting lines for the executive directors of FOCUS and SERVE.

For the proposed districtwide parent involvement program, each non-Title I school should assign a parent involvement liaison, who should be trained to recruit parents using the methods from the Parent Involvement Program and the Parent Involvement Resource Manual (which is not proprietary to Title I). Every school should have an assigned parent involvement liaison who works with the PTA and the SIT team to develop strategies to involve parents and families in the school lives of their children. The role of the Coordinator for Community Relations should be expanded to include training and monitoring of all parent involvement liaisons at the schools, with the assistance of principals and existing supervisors at the cluster levels.

The proposed districtwide parent involvement program should help to delineate roles and responsibilities for parent involvement throughout the district. The proposed program should have a written strategic plan that specifies what the district expects from each program participant in terms of outcomes related to student performance, as well as the roles and responsibilities of each participant in the proposed parent involvement program. The plan should also frame the mechanisms of coordinating the proposed parent involvement program within clusters and district divisions.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The Superintendent should expand the duties of the proposed Office of Community Relations to include the development of a districtwide parent involvement program. August 1998
2. The Coordinator for Community Relations should coordinate the district's parent involvement program. Duties related to this charge include coordinating and monitoring the contractual arrangements with FOCUS and SERVE as they relate to parent involvement. September 1998
3. The Coordinator for Community Relations should develop a strategic plan to use the resources of FOCUS and SERVE as well as the district's own resources through the Title I Parent Involvement Program and Full Service Schools-Parent Education Center. The plan should include goals, objectives expected outcomes and strategies for increasing parent involvement at all Hillsborough County schools. The plan should also delineate the roles and responsibilities of the participants in the program, such as FOCUS, SERVE, Title I, and Full Service Schools. The plan should also frame the mechanisms of coordinating the proposed parent involvement program within clusters and district divisions. September 1998
4. The Supervisor for Title I Parent Involvement Program should offer technical advice and consultation to the development of the districtwide (non-Title I) parent involvement program. September-October 1998
5. The Coordinator for Community Relations should ensure that the principal of each non-Title I school assigns a parent involvement liaison. September-October 1998
6. The Coordinator for Community Relations should train all non-Title I parent involvement liaisons in proven methods to recruit and involve parents, using the Parent Involvement Resource Manual. The school's assigned parent involvement liaison should work with the PTA/PTSA and the SIT team to develop strategies to involve parents and families in the school lives of their children. November 1998
7. Principals and existing supervisors at the clusters should help monitor the performance of the parent involvement liaisons and should assist the Coordinator for Community Relations in coordinating their efforts. Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this recommendation.

7.3 Communications

Open, two-way communication with the public is essential if a school system is to maintain and increase its support base in the community. As various services vie for tax dollars, messages about the education that the public pays for must be placed constantly before residents, a large number of whom have no direct relationship with the schools since they do not have school-age children. A school system must also find effective ways to publicize its accountability to the taxpayers and to generate and receive input from the different segments of its community. An informed public, and one which is heard, provides the added support needed to maintain district excellence.

Communications functions at a school district include all venues used to transfer information to and receive input from parents and other segments of the community. Often, a school district's communications office serves as the central locale for district-wide community involvement. By transferring information between the district and the schools, linking schools with the community, and serving to broker the many aspects of involving the different segments of a community in its schools, a district's central communications office integrates efforts to link schools with the community.

Communications at a central office level usually include public relations and public information, media relations, government relations, and publications. The central communications operation at the district level is often a referral site for parents and the public who call for information about individual schools or general educational questions.

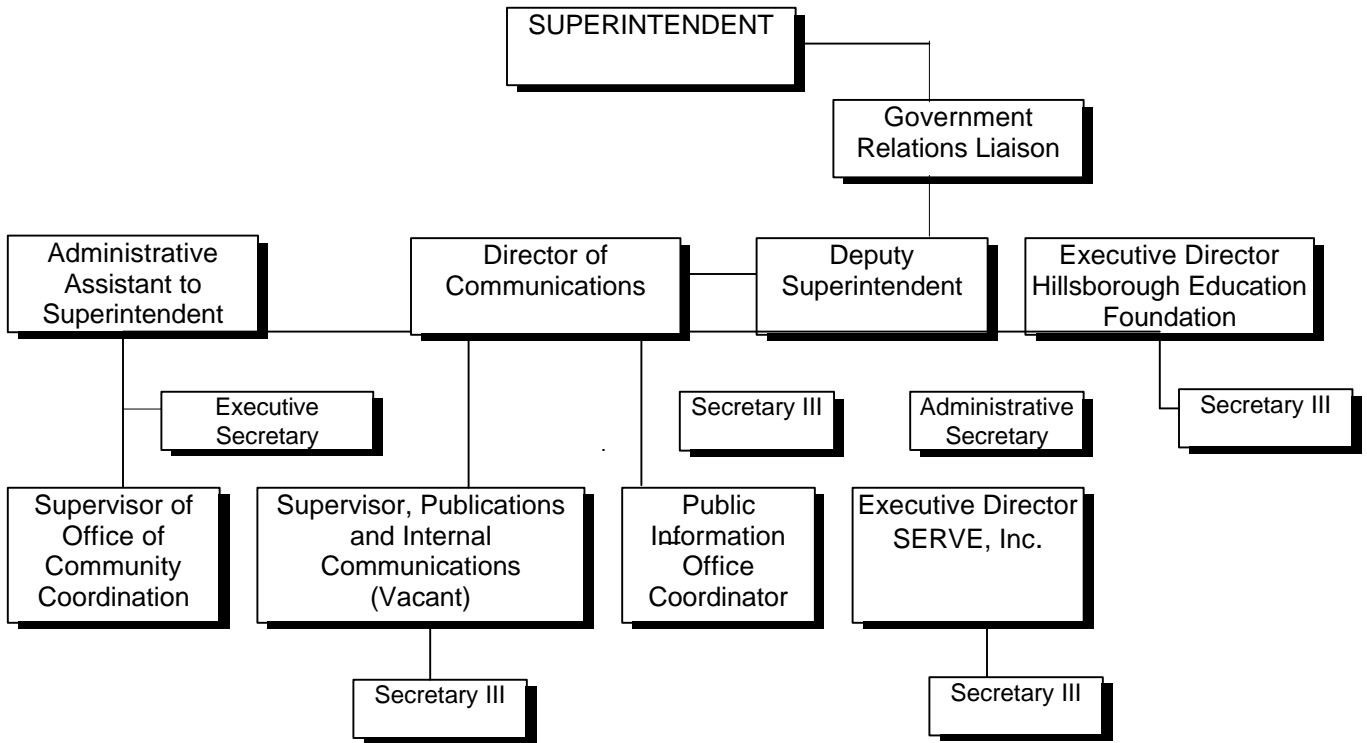
The role of the district-based communications function is to promote the schools in the community, to inform the public about school events and educational concerns, to support and assist individual schools in their efforts to communicate with their parents and communities, and to keep district staff and personnel informed.

The Superintendent's "District Reorganization Proposal," approved by the school board in January 1997, notes that his reorganization goals include "to improve parental and community confidence in district schools and improve communication with school personnel and community." The Superintendent proposes to bring the district-level administration closer to students, parents, schools, and the community it serves, hoping that closer proximity will strengthen communications and public relations.

In the Hillsborough County School District, the central districtwide communications and public relations functions are administratively housed within the Office of the Superintendent. The Office of Communications handles media relations, including press releases and publications for the district. The Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent is involved in major community involvement initiatives such as the Minister's Roundtable, the Vision and Goals Task Force, and Hillsborough Tomorrow, and also supervises the Supervisor of Community Coordination (see Section 7.1, Collaborations).

The administrative units and the district employees that are involved with the community at varying levels and that are housed within the Office of the Superintendent are currently organized as seen in Exhibit 7-11.

**EXHIBIT 7-11 *
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT,
ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS INVOLVED WITH THE COMMUNITY
1997**



Source: Hillsborough County School District, January 1997.
* The exhibit shows district employees only.

7.3.1 The Hillsborough Tomorrow Project

CURRENT SITUATION

In early December 1996, a citizen's group calling itself *Hillsborough Tomorrow* held its first public assembly in the Tampa Museum of Science and Industry and at the Sun Dome at the University of South Florida. The Assembly was the first major public activity of the group and was planned for months leading up to it by over 60 different individuals from throughout Hillsborough County, varied both by the geography of their residences as well as the backgrounds and experiences that brought them together.

Hillsborough Tomorrow describes itself as "a grass-roots movement of civic-minded residents who have come together to forge a new vision for our community." The aim of the group was to assess the community's strengths and weaknesses, develop some consensus on a vision for the future, determine necessary steps to achieving that vision, and create performance measurements to gauge the success of the group and the community at achieving their goals.

The Assembly activities included open discussion sessions held at varied times over two days, as well as a written survey that Assembly participants were asked to complete. At the end of the three-day Assembly, participants reviewed and generally agreed to a draft "Policy Statement" created to convey the consensus that was arrived at over the three-day event.

Leaders of *Hillsborough Tomorrow* are insistent that the group continue to meet and work on issues brought forward by the Assembly. Subcommittees have been formed in major policy areas to continue working on issues and initiatives that were identified, and to generate performance measurements regarding their specific areas of concern. In addition, small community forums to be held throughout the county have been suggested to continue soliciting input from the Hillsborough County community.

In the policy statement issued as a result of the Assembly, strengths and weaknesses of Hillsborough County were identified. The strengths included:

- climate, rivers, lakes, and the bay
- geographic location and transportation
- higher education
- the people
- the arts, museums, and attractions.

Weaknesses identified included:

- elementary and secondary education
- weak leadership
- crime
- a cynical electorate
- the economy.

The Assembly's policy statement said that the public education in Hillsborough County is "at best a mixed bag." The statement connected a "moral decline in the larger society" with the conditions in public schools. In addition to disciplinary problems, other problems listed included overcrowding, lack of adequate resources, overloaded teachers, inefficiency, and a lack of accountability.

School Board members were listed along with other local government officials as part of a problem of "weak leadership" in the community, which included perceptions that public entities were not cooperating with each other to solve problems, that politicians were out of touch with their constituents, and "more debate and consensus-building" are needed.

The leadership of the Hillsborough County School District is obviously concerned about the perception of this group that elementary and secondary education is listed as a weakness for the community, and in fact, listed by this group as the most serious weakness of the community.

In fact, district leaders admit that their very first reactions to the conclusions of the *Hillsborough Tomorrow* policy statement were ones of disappointment and confusion. They could not understand the group's feelings, given that:

- ACT and SAT scores for college-bound juniors and seniors are above the state and national averages;
- the district ranks first among the ten largest districts in the state in scores by eleventh graders for the High School Competency Test;
- the district leads the state, for the 12th year, in the number of seniors named Florida Academic Scholars and Florida Undergraduate Fund Scholars; and
- the National Merit Scholarship Program identified 69 seniors as finalists in 1996, including six named by the National Achievement Program for Outstanding Negro Students and 12 named as National Hispanic Scholar Program finalists.

However, after the initial feelings of anger, the district responded by encouraging many of its employees to get more involved in the *Hillsborough Tomorrow* process. In addition, the district has accepted the fact that even if it feels it is doing a better job than the *Hillsborough Tomorrow* statement seems to say, the fact is that "perception is reality" in many ways. Hillsborough County administrators have said they must do a better job of communicating with "customers," be they the students and their parents, the employees of the district, or those taxpayers who help to fund the district activities even though they have no direct interaction with the schools.

FINDING

Based on the *Hillsborough Tomorrow* policy statement and subsequent work with members of the group, district staff have identified what they consider to be the seven major areas of improvement they need to make, or areas where they need to make the community more aware of current activities that are attempts at improving problem areas identified by *Hillsborough Tomorrow*:

- a need to improve opportunity for all students, regardless of economic class, ethnicity, or race;
- equal treatment for all students regardless of economic class, ethnicity, or race;
- less time spent by teachers dealing with crowd control;

- increased cooperation among area local governments with regard to selection of school sites;
- more aggressive attempts to take advantage of federal and state support;
- use of school facilities as community centers and after school activities; and
- greater accountability of school district officials.

The district is aware of the need to take concrete steps aimed at accomplishing greater community buy-in regarding the accomplishments and goals of the Hillsborough County School District, and this list of improvements is an attempt to turn the concerns of the community, picked up through the *Hillsborough Tomorrow* process, into concrete steps for improvement.

The district has recently hired a new Director of Communications, and that office, as well as the Office of the Superintendent, is well aware of the advantages and need for pro-active communications and outreach with the community. To that end, a number of initiatives have been started by the district, and attempts to make the details of initiatives, both new ones as well as those that have been around before, available to the media and general public. These have included a reorganization plan for the district, creation of a “Stakeholders Coalition,” “Presidents as Principals,” “The Great American Teach-In,” the voluntary request for a state-sponsored audit which led to this report, and the organization of an education summit aimed at bringing together community leaders to discuss and analyze education trends, needs, and goals in Hillsborough County.

COMMENDATIONS

The Hillsborough County School District has recognized the need for a more pro-active approach towards its communications with its constituents and customers.

Pro-active communications about the services offered by a public organization, as well as information regarding the goals and accomplishments of the organization, help constituents become aware of the activities their tax dollars are paying for, as well as allow them to hold their public officials more accountable. The district has begun, or will continue, to conduct outreach and consensus building activities aimed at its varied stakeholders, including district employees, the Hillsborough County business community, parents, and district taxpayers. The *Hillsborough Tomorrow* project has helped the district understand the need to listen to its constituents, and then communicate with them in order to build support and consensus for school district activities, and to target their activities to better address the needs and expectations of their customers.

The district should be recognized for requesting the state-sponsored performance evaluation of the district’s operations that led to the production of this report, both because it should be useful in helping the district perform more efficiently and

effectively, and because it is a concrete step in showing the Hillsborough community that it is willing to be held accountable for its operations and performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 7-9:

Continue working with the *Hillsborough Tomorrow* project to disseminate information about the district to these committed civic activists and to listen to complaints, ideas, and feedback regarding the district's operations.

Hillsborough Tomorrow is meant to be a citizens' committee, and therefore, the district should not try and "stack" members on subcommittees and working groups. However, this is a unique opportunity for the district to hear from constituencies that it may not have the chance to interact with on a regular basis. The district should continue to encourage its employees to become involved with the project and communicate information both to the other activists involved with *Hillsborough Tomorrow*, as well as funnel constructive information back to district officials.

Recommendation 7-10:

Develop a proactive communications plan for the Hillsborough County School District.

A public sector organization like a school district, that has diverse constituencies and is an integral part of a community, should go through the process of creating a communications plan to help it better serve the community. The point of such a plan is not for the sake of marketing, but rather to coordinate and maximize outreach.

An external communications plan should accomplish a number of objectives:

- First, various audiences (stakeholders) of the district should be identified.
- Second, the district should determine the type of information that each of those audiences wants to hear about, and in addition, determine the messages that the district wants the various audiences to receive.
- Finally, the district should determine the most effective and efficient ways to reach each of these varied audiences and identify those methods that overlap and those that are wholly distinct, and seek the most efficient mix of methods to deliver messages.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The Director of Communications and Assistant to the Superintendent, as well as other senior staff, should Ongoing

continue working with the Hillsborough Tomorrow Project.

2. The Superintendent should assign the Director of Communications the task of developing a draft communications plan. July 1997

3. The Director of Communications should work with administrators of the district, the Executive Director of the Hillsborough Education Foundation, and leaders of constituency groups to identify both internal and external stakeholders and audiences of the district. Summer 1997

4. The Director of Communications should identify all feasible methods of communication at the disposal of the district, including but not limited to, newsletters, speakers bureaus, Internet, cable TV, and “brown bag” type forums. Summer 1997

5. The Board should approve an external communications plan that is tied to accomplishing the mission and goals of the district, and agree to formally review the plan on an annual basis. October 1997

FISCAL IMPACT

The development of a communications plan can be achieved using existing resources. Since employee involvement with this citizens groups would be strictly voluntary, there should be no cost related to carrying out this recommendation.

Recommendation 7-11:

Board meetings of the district should be conducted at sites throughout the community (also see Section 4.1, Recommendation 1).

The findings reflected in the *Hillsborough Tomorrow* policy statement in many ways reflect a distance between important constituencies and the district itself. In interviews conducted with participants of *Hillsborough Tomorrow* there was some sentiment that the school district is part of the “downtown Tampa crowd.”

Board meetings held at locations throughout the county would send a message that the district is sensitive to the needs and concerns of all its stakeholders and not just those who regularly participate in functions held at the main administrative building. It would be a pro-active step to encourage more communication with the district, and perhaps allow for more information to be distributed to a larger number of people throughout the county who pay school taxes. In addition, the whole board may hear a wider variety of opinions and concerns than they are able to hear at their regular downtown meetings.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The Board should formally agree to hold one meeting per month at a location off-site from the main administrative building, in a pattern that reflects an understanding of the varied communities and constituencies within Hillsborough County. July 1997
2. District staff should prepare a list of suitable locations for Board meetings at sites for the next 12 months. Summer 1997
3. The Director of Communications should include in the first annual district communications plan a list of the approved sites for off-site Board meetings, and suggested steps to be taken in advance of each meeting to inform the area communities of those meetings. Summer 1997

FISCAL IMPACT

Off-site locations selected for Board meetings should be at other public facilities, or at locations where costs can be limited to utility reimbursements and minimal maintenance costs. While there may be some additional costs to move necessary equipment to off-site locations for Board meetings, many of these costs are already accounted for in staff requirements for Board meetings at the main administrative building. Therefore, it is anticipated that this recommendation can be accomplished within existing resources.

Recommendation 7-12:

Survey Hillsborough County businesses to assess the image of the Hillsborough County School District, the graduates it sends into the local workforce, and the district's responsiveness to area business needs.

The impression that district graduates give to the employers who hire them can have a great impact on the overall community's impression of the "products" being put out by the school district. In addition, a perception by the business community that the district is interested in their needs and takes steps to match those needs with the needs of students can help the district develop significant sustainability.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. A random sample of area businesses, perhaps as many as 5,000, should be mailed a survey that seeks information on the recent experience of business, if any, in hiring district graduates, the quality of those workers, and the district's ability to teach skills and knowledge needed by area businesses. September 1997
2. The results from the mail survey should be tabulated and analyzed by an objective third party. October 1997

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|---|---------------|
| 3. A minimum of two focus groups, comprised of a selection of business owners and managers from the Hillsborough County area, should be conducted to validate the findings of the mail survey results. | November 1997 |
| 4. The results of the mail survey and validation focus groups should be presented to the Superintendent so that areas of poor perception can be addressed in terms of curriculum and business community outreach efforts. | December 1997 |
| 5. The Superintendent should present the findings of the survey and focus groups, along with any appropriate recommendations to improve the district's service, to the local business community with regards to preparing quality workforce participants. | January 1998 |

FISCAL IMPACT

A survey process such as this should be conducted by an outside, third-party source to assure confidence in the results and objective, innovative analysis. The costs for a mail survey will include production of the questionnaire and mailing (\$1 X 5,000 = \$5,000), reply postage paid to increase the response rate, and tabulation and analysis costs for returned surveys (\$2 X 500 = \$1,000). Focus groups, including the recruitment of participants, normally costs in the range of \$2,000 per group. Using a figure of \$2,000 per group for four groups, validation costs would be \$8,000. The entire cost for the survey project described above would be a one-time cost of \$14,000.

Recommendation	1997-1998	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002
Conduct Business Survey	(\$14,000)	0	0	0	0

7.3.2 Public Relations, Media Relations, and Publications

Public relations, media relations, and publications fall under the Hillsborough County School District Office of Communications. The Office is headed by a Director of Communications who formally reports to the Superintendent and who supervises two professional positions: the Supervisor for District Publications/Internal Communications and the Public Information Coordinator.

The position summary for the Director of Communications (revised August 1996) includes the following charges:

- to develop and implement a comprehensive internal and external communications plan for Hillsborough County Public Schools, including publications, media relations, governmental relations, community relations, and video production; and
- to encourage and maintain two-way communication between the district and its various publics by providing information and

resources that contribute to the public's understanding and support of Hillsborough County School District within the community.

Further primary responsibilities related to these charges include:

- the development of communications programs which promote positive reactions to and support of the Hillsborough County School District;
- work with community organizations, businesses, and chambers of commerce to promote public schools and maintain lines of communication;
- function as liaison with PTA/PTSA, Friends of Public Education, the Hillsborough County Education Foundation, and other support organizations;
- provide media relations management, requested information and additional information through news tips, releases, interviews, news conferences, and special events;
- coordinate and distribute regular publications; and
- assist schools and district offices with communications and community relations activities.

The Public Information Coordinator reports to the Director of Communications and is responsible for most of the district's media relations and campaigns to promote the schools as well as assisting in the preparation of publications. The Supervisor for District Publications/Internal Communications position has primary responsibility for regular publications for the district.

The district regularly publishes a monthly newsletter for employees and staff called *The Intercom*. Printing costs for *The Intercom* are \$1,535 for 20,000 copies. "Fast Facts" are one-page informational flyers for parents and the community about specific topics such as how to enroll in adult education or summaries of school social work services. Ten thousand copies of "Fast Facts" are printed annually at a cost of \$550. The Office of Communications also has developed maps, calendars, and brochures for community distribution. Twenty thousand school-locator maps and 20,000 calendars are printed annually at a cost of \$5,930 and \$10,000 respectively. The *Tampa Tribune* donates matching funds of \$10,000 for printing of the school-locator maps.

FINDING

There are too many units coordinating different community involvement initiatives at the district. There is no central unit that reports to the Superintendent and is accountable for community involvement, whether it be parent involvement, business involvement, volunteers, publications, or public relations.

Five separate units within the Office of the Superintendent are doing community involvement functions. All five units report to the Superintendent.

Of the 14 total administrative employees within the Office of the Superintendent (the 14 include administrators not seen in Exhibit 7-11 such as the Director of Reform Initiatives), nine are involved in community involvement initiatives. Of the nine secretarial positions in the Office, five serve those nine administrators involved in different community involvement activities.

As shown in Exhibit 7-11, the administrative positions heading the five units active in community involvement include:

- the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent, who is involved in representing the district in community initiative activities such as the Vision and Goals Task Force, Hillsborough Tomorrow Task Force, and the Ministers' Roundtable. The Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent is listed in the Florida Department of Education-Office of Business and Education Alliances as the Business Partnership Coordinator/Contact for the School Volunteer Program Annual Survey, (1995-1996). The position also supervises the Supervisor of the Office of Community Coordination, which is heavily involved in representing the district in multiple collaborations (see Section 7.1);
- the Deputy Superintendent, who has reporting authority over the executive director of SERVE (the district's outsourced volunteer program). The Deputy Superintendent was also involved as the chairperson of the Committee to Review Contracts with Outside Organizations for the 1996 budget cuts;
- the Executive Director of the Hillsborough Education Foundation, who reports to the Superintendent and an internal Board of Directors and directs development efforts for the district;
- the Director of the Office of Communications, who is responsible for the district's major public relations efforts as well as media relations and publications; and
- the Government Relations Liaison who links the district's needs with state legislative initiatives regarding education policy and funding.

Duplication of efforts and a lack of accountability result from many administrators who are active in community involvement. The lack of a central point of contact also makes it difficult for the public and the stakeholders of the collaborations to know who to call with questions, concerns, or even donations.

The lines of command for the Director of the Office of Communications are unclear. Formally, the position reports to the Superintendent, but informally also reports to the Deputy Superintendent and the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent. The Supervisor for District Publications/Internal Communications position has been vacant for over one year due to retirement, and the Public Information Coordinator has absorbed the duties related to the position. Two Secretary III positions are assigned to the Office of Communications, which currently has two professional positions (the Director and the Public Information Coordinator).

The Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent coordinates the “Vision and Goals for Quality Education Task Force” that created a plan for the district to meet the goals of Florida’s Blueprint 2000. The task force worked on the seven goals found in Blueprint 2000; the eighth goal related to community and parent involvement was not yet developed when the task force produced its “Vision and Goals for Quality Education” report. The Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent also serves as staff support to the Minister’s Roundtable, a volunteer mentoring program for minority at-risk students to reduce expulsions and suspensions.

The Interlocal Agreement between FOCUS and the district, approved by the school board in early 1997, was coordinated by the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent for Business and Research.

It should be noted that other district administrators are also involved in public relations for the district. The confusing structure currently in place is no reflection of the capacity of administrators to manage, to promote the district, and to involve the community as much as possible.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation 7-13:

Create the Office of Community Affairs in the Hillsborough County School District.

The recommendation serves to streamline and centralize many community involvement functions and to ensure accountability to the public.

The following initiatives should take place:

- Move all community involvement functions within the Superintendent’s Office to the new Office of Community Affairs.
- Place the “Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent” in charge of the Division of Community Affairs. The Coordinator for Community Relations should report to the “Assistant to the Superintendent”.
- Move the Office of Communications within the Office of Community Affairs.
- Eliminate the Supervisor for District Publications and Internal Communications position.
- Strengthen the linkage between the Hillsborough Education Foundation, Government Relations Liaison, and the Division of Community Affairs by more effective coordination and resource-sharing.

- Align the Executive Director of SERVE under the Assistant to the Superintendent.

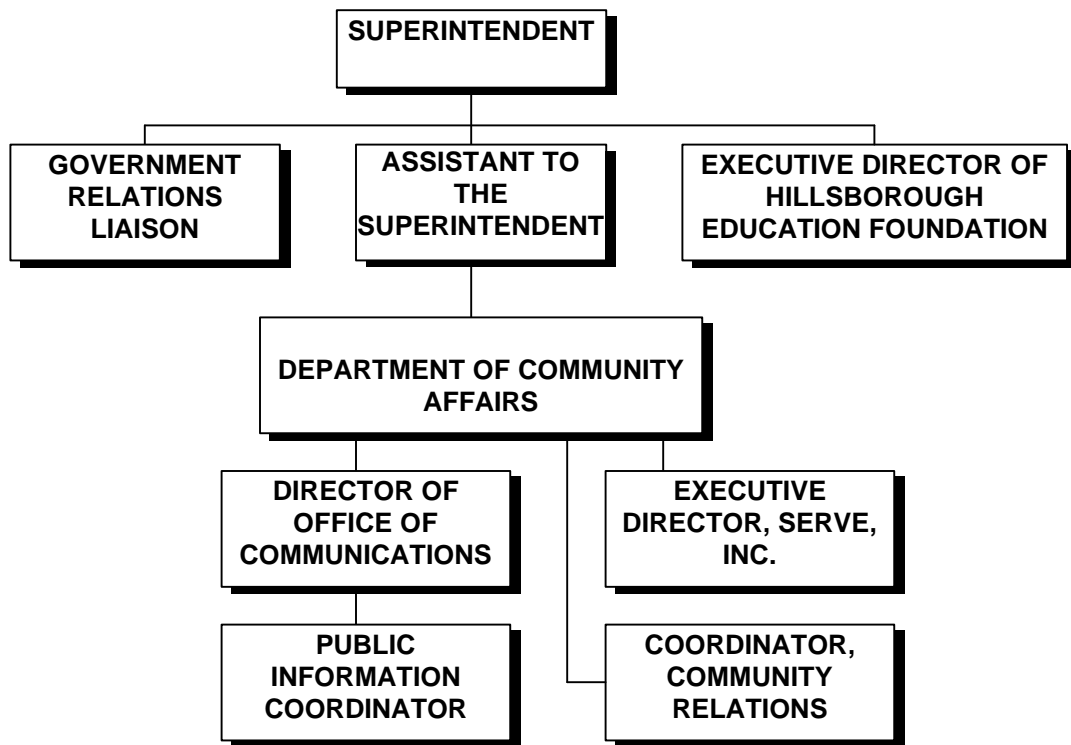
Exhibit 7-12 reflects the proposed reorganization of the district's community involvement functions.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The Superintendent should create the Department of Community Affairs by consolidating the various community involvement initiatives from the Office of the Superintendent and centralizing them within the new office under the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent. July 1998
2. The Superintendent should transfer most community involvement efforts currently within the Superintendent's Office to the new Office of Community Affairs. July 1998
3. The Superintendent should transfer the Office of Communications under the Office of Community Affairs. The Director of Communications should report directly to the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent. July 1998
4. The executive director of SERVE should be included in the new office and report to the Administrative Assistant. July 1998
5. The Board should eliminate the Supervisor for District Publications and Internal Communications position which is currently vacant. July 1997

6. The Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent and the Executive Director of the Hillsborough Education Foundation should coordinate activities which can share resources of both units, such as providing mutual support for the employee recognition programs and should complement their individual resources such as public relations, media and business contacts. Beginning in 1997-98
School Year

**EXHIBIT 7-12
PROPOSED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
FUNCTIONS IN THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT**



FISCAL IMPACT

The recommendation will save the district \$65,000 including salary and benefits for eliminating the Supervisor for District Publications and Internal Communications position.

Recommendation	1997-1998	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002
Eliminate Supervisor for District Publications/Internal Communications	\$65,000	\$65,000	\$65,000	\$65,000	\$65,000

FINDING

The Office of Communications is not performing the level of public relations needed by Hillsborough County School District and its schools.

Too few opportunities are sought to portray the district in a positive public light because the Director of the Office of Communications spends a great deal of time reacting to and managing immediate crises, many of which result from negative press about the district, its schools, teachers, and students. The Director of Communications reports spending approximately 75 percent of the time reacting to the negative publicity about the district and its schools and managing related issues, such as preparing the Superintendent's responses or speeches to the media.

The current Director of Communications has been in the position for less than one year; the former director is now on the staff of the *Tampa Tribune*, the newspaper with largest circulation in the county. The Tribune donates \$10,000 in matching funds to the Office of Communications to print the school calendars.

The district must strengthen public relations opportunities because it does not have the base of taxpayer support needed to construct future schools as projected by dramatic population increases in Hillsborough County. The district experienced a public relations issue when the half-cent sales tax referendum for school construction failed to pass in a special election held in September 1995. The proposed half-cent sales tax was projected to raise between \$55 million to \$62 million annually for 10 years. Consistent with the authorizing state statute, the district planned to spend the new dollars on school construction and computer technology improvements.

The half-cent sales tax proposal was defeated by a margin of 60 percent to 40 percent. Voter turnout was 22 percent, slightly higher than projected. Community stakeholders and staff interviewed for the Performance Review noted that the district failed to communicate its needs adequately and could not rally the public support necessary to pass the sales tax for the schools.

The Department of Government and International Affairs at the University of South Florida, Tampa Campus, conducted an exit survey as Hillsborough County voters left the polls in September 1995 to ascertain who was voting for or against the half-cent sales tax and the reasons why they cast their ballots. The results show that the strongest support for the sales tax came from African Americans and voters with children in the public schools. The strongest opposition came from older voters, lower income voters, conservatives, and those with no grandchildren in the schools (see Exhibit 7-13).

The University of South Florida report notes that opponents to the school tax were repudiated by the process used to "sell" the tax to the public. Just under 60 percent noted they "resented school officials campaigning for the tax increase at taxpayers' expense." Opponents also had "serious doubts about the credibility, truthfulness, and motives of school officials."

**EXHIBIT 7-13
 VOTER PATTERNS RELATED TO THE SPECIAL ELECTION TO PASS A
 HALF-CENT SALES TAX FOR SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AND TECHNOLOGY
 BY PROPONENTS AND OPPONENTS
 SEPTEMBER 1995**

Who Voted	Who Voted in Favor (Proponents)	Who Voted Against (Opponents)
The electorate was: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • older and more Anglo (93%) than Hillsborough County voters overall; • fifty-four percent of those who voted were 50 years of age or over; and • sixty-eight percent had no children in school. 	The strongest support came from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • voters with children in public school (70%); • newcomers to Florida who have lived here 1-5 years (62%); • African Americans (100%); • liberals (68%); and • Democrats (52%). 	The strongest opposition came from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • older voters (73% of those 65 years of age and older); • lower-income voters (78% of those earning less than \$20,000 annually); • longer-term residents (70% of those living in Florida more than 10 years); • those with no children (68%) or grandchildren (80%) in school; • persons widowed (74%) or divorced (64%); • Hispanics (68%); • Republicans (68%); and • conservatives (79%). <p>A majority of the voters who had someone in their family who is an employee of the school district also voted against the tax, although by a slim margin.</p>

Source: *Hillsborough County Voters Reject Earmarked Sales Taxes for Public Schools and Public Safety, Exit Survey Results*, University of South Florida, Office of Governmental and International Affairs, October 1995.

The report sheds some light on how ineffectively the district has handled public relations and communication with the public, especially the older population in Hillsborough County. In 1996, another half-cent sales tax proposal was brought to the voters. A private firm performed the public relations and communications functions for this new proposal which passed. The 1996 proposal included a new stadium for the Tampa Buccaneers.

Reacting to the *Hillsborough Tomorrow* identification of the district's "image problem" in the community, and as a result of the lack of passage of the half-cent sales tax in 1995, the district recently developed a plan to address public relations more effectively. The district's new public relations plan, developed by the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent and using a Stakeholders Coalition, starts with changing the

community's image of district staff. This Internal Communications Plan attempts to train staff to change attitudes and behaviors internally in order to provide better "customer relations."

An Internal Communications Plan was developed by the Stakeholders Coalition comprised of:

- Hillsborough Association of School Administrators;
- Hillsborough School Employees Federation;
- Phi Delta Kappa;
- Hillsborough Alliance of Black School Educators;
- Classroom Teachers Association; and
- County Council of PTA/PTSA.

The premise for this "Internal Communications Plan" is the competition that the district faces with private schools and home education, charter schools under district contract with certified teachers, a state-mandated choice program that may offer more options in education, and the possibility of private school vouchers. These options place the district in a disadvantage, as they would drain students and financial resources from Hillsborough County School District. The premise is bolstered by the perception of some public who believe that the school district is overly bureaucratic, not "user-friendly" and does not use its resources wisely. In addition, school-based personnel often report that they feel disenfranchised from employees at the central office.

The Internal Communications Plan includes objectives, strategies, key messages, and tactics to improve customer service. The plan conveys a sense of urgency about the new competitive environment facing the district and extols district personnel to improve communications and public relations with their customers and with themselves. A video is to be developed about the importance of a customer-service orientation within the district, featuring the Superintendent and other opinion leaders. The plan recommends evaluation of programs, job training, and self-improvement programs in the areas of telephone etiquette, interpersonal communications, and leadership skills, as well as in total quality improvement, benchmarking performance to the best known practices of comparable organizations, computerization and technology, and professional ethics. No timeframe or fiscal impact is provided in the plan.

The Hillsborough County School District is the 12th largest district in the country, yet only two press releases per week are submitted to the local newspapers from the Office of Communications. Local reporters noted that the district does not submit sufficient press releases and they must either call the school directly or search the community looking for information about the schools.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation 7-14:

Increase press releases as part of an ongoing and aggressive external public relations campaign to harness the confidence of the public, particularly those disenchanted with public education.

As an integral part of the external public relations campaign, the district should significantly increase the number of press releases it disseminates. The Public Relations Campaign should target the following segments of the community who voted against the proposed sales tax for school construction and technology:

- older voters (65 years of age and older);
- lower-income voters (those earning less than \$20,000 annually);
- longer-term residents (those living in Florida more than 10 years);
- residents with no children or grandchildren in schools;
- persons widowed or divorced; and
- Hispanics, Republicans, and conservatives.

These groups may not be those traditionally associated with public schools and reaching out to them may be challenging. However, the district can use the credibility and respect provided by the Hillsborough Education Foundation as well as SERVE's skills in finding and applying volunteers. Using the resources of the Office of Communications, the Foundation, SERVE and FOCUS, the district can increase its base of support in the community. All avenues and resources available to the district, indirectly or directly, should be used to promote the external public relations campaign.

The pivot of the public relations campaign should include a dramatic increase in press releases. This can be accomplished through a network of media liaisons at each school who supply the Public Information Coordinator with one press release per month per school (equal to 148 per month). School press releases should highlight activities, events, and special students and staff at the schools. The Public Information Coordinator should collect all press releases through the established electronic modem between the district and the schools, add two press releases per week for the central office, and could submit at least 150 press releases per month to the local media outlets. This significant increase in press releases should ensure greater positive media coverage for the Hillsborough County School District, which should result in greater visibility and subsequent community support for the schools.

The district should use its relationship with its collaboratives and partners to maximum advantage to get the word out to the public regarding positive messages about Hillsborough County schools. Using these established vehicles in a new way to promote the schools in a unified campaign is cost-efficient because many of the resources available to the district, such as FOCUS and the Hillsborough Education Foundation, do their own public relations and publications.

Special Fact Sheets should be developed for the older population in the county to inform them of how important the schools are to the future, how valuable their support is, current events in the schools, invitations to participate in the schools, and strategies for becoming involved in the schools. These Fact Sheets could be used as flyers and distributed to organizations and associations of older citizens through SERVE.

Many of the tactics and strategies from the Internal Communications Plan can also be used to develop the external public relations campaign for the community.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent, with assistance from the Director of Communications and the Coordinator for Community Relations, should identify the major organizations which represent the public who voted against the school half-cent sales tax; (for example, the Republican Party of Hillsborough County and the AARP). July 1998

2. The Administrative Assistant and Director of Communications should develop a public relations plan for the community which targets those groups who voted against the half-cent sales tax. July 1998

3. The Administrative Assistant should use available and existing resources with the Division of Community Affairs such as the Office of Communication's capacity to produce press releases and its contacts with the media, as well as the Office of Community Coordination's many contacts in the community. The resources of the Foundation can be tapped to supplement publicity and to do press releases. The resources of SERVE to find, train, and involve volunteers can be used to market the campaign. August 1998

4. The Public Information Coordinator should develop and print special Fact Sheets for the older population in the county to inform them of how important the schools are to the future, how valuable their support is, current events in the schools, invitations to participate in the schools, and strategies for becoming involved in the schools. These Fact Sheets could be used as flyers and distributed to organizations and associations of older citizens through SERVE. August 1998

5. The Public Information Coordinator should use a network of media liaisons, assigned by the principal at each school, to increase the number of press releases about school events, activities, and special students and staff that is submitted to the local and state media outlets. The target rate for press releases should be one per school per month, plus two from the central office per week, for a total of over 150 press releases submitted per month to the local media. This is not a daunting task with the use of FIRN, the electronic link September 1998

between the district and the schools, and the Coordinator's own electronic link with the media outlets.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this recommendation using resources already available to the district.

FINDING

There is no unifying visual theme for the Hillsborough County School District such as a logo which is easily recognizable by the public and the district's many collaborative partners. This is problematic when the district appears to be fragmented to its internal staff and to the external public. It also impinges upon the district's capacity to develop an effective public relations marketing campaign to increase its support in the community.

The Hillsborough Education Foundation did an informal survey within the administration center to count the number of different logos used on staff business cards and district letterhead. A total of 92 different logos was counted. This does not count the logos from individual schools and centers.

The district's lack of a logo may seem insignificant, but not having a symbolic and unifying visual theme -- easily recognizable by the community and students alike -- impinges upon its public relations capacity and impedes advances in publicity for the district and its schools. Also, central office and school staff may feel disconnected from each other and from the "larger organization" due to the lack of a simple, yet effective visual symbol that links all offices, schools, and programs together. Having multiple logos and themes in place further fragments the district and its many relationships with outside organizations.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation 7-15:

Create a logo for the Hillsborough County School District to be used in all district business, letterhead stationery, business cards, and publications.

A contest among Hillsborough County students should be held to develop and choose the best logo for the Hillsborough County School District. The logo should be designed so that individual school names or their own logos can be superimposed upon the Hillsborough County School District logo.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The Public Information Coordinator and the Office of Communications should sponsor a contest among the Hillsborough County School District students, K-12, to design the best logo for the Hillsborough County School Fall 1997

District. The logo should be designed so that each school can superimpose their own name, theme, or logo on top of the district's logo.

2. The Public Information Coordinator and the Office of Communications should establish a promotional campaign to promote the logo contest. Fall 1997

3. The Administrative Assistant should establish a committee of staff from the central office, the clusters, HEF, SERVE, and FOCUS to choose the best logo. Fall 1997

4. The Superintendent should direct that all district offices, divisions, schools centers, and other organizational or programmatic units use the new logo on business cards and stationery. January 1998

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this recommendation.

7.3.3 Government Relations

CURRENT SITUATION

Until recently, the Office of Communications also included the Government Relations Liaison, a position created in 1991 to support the district in state education funding reforms. The Government Relations Liaison position was originally created to employ a resource teacher as "lobbyist" for the district with the intent of securing funding from the state legislature. The position originally reported to the Assistant Superintendent for Finance.

The position summary from the position description for the Governmental Relations Liaison notes that the primary charges are to assist in the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of the district's efforts in governmental relations. The position also is to assist in the day-to-day lobbying and other liaison activities at local, state, and federal levels. The Governmental Liaison represents the district during the legislative session annually and informs the district of changes in laws, rules, and regulations which could impact school policy and procedures.

FINDING

The duties related to the position of Government Relations Liaison are often sensitive and diverse and have the potential to affect all teachers, staff, support employees, and students. The district continues in the forefront of statewide reforms in education finance, ensuring that equity is established in the financing for school districts across the state.

The Government Relations Liaison works closely with the Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent for Business and Research, and the General Director of Finance. There is minimal coordination with the Office of Communication. The Government Relations Liaison has no clerical support.

The Superintendent has established changes in the reporting structure for the Government Relations Liaison, and in July 1997, the position will be reporting to the Superintendent instead of to the Director of Communications. The new reporting structure for the Government Relations Liaison is appropriate and will ensure that both the Superintendent as well as the Assistant Superintendents for Business and Research and General Director of Finance receive timely information regarding education laws and regulations that could impact the district. The new location should ensure that the Government Relations Liaison receives access to the Superintendent's four clerical staff.

COMMENDATION

The Government Relations Liaison is recognized for defending and promoting the Hillsborough County School District in legislation related to equity in state school-finance reforms.