

- Newstreamz San Marcos - <http://newstreamz.com> -

School/community dialogue, desired but elusive

Posted By [Blake Doelle](#) On August 13, 2008 @ 10:21 am In [Blogs](#), [Opinion](#) | [4 Comments](#)

Yesterday, August 12, at a luncheon in the San Marcos High School library, representatives of four groups gathered to discuss how to maximize the education experience of public school students. The meeting was hosted by Men's Fraternity, a nondenominational group dedicated to restoring men of faith to proactive purpose in their homes, church and society.

The other three groups represented were the San Marcos Consolidated School District; the San Marcos Ministerial Alliance; and A Call to Excellence, a grassroots group that is in dialogue with the school district's administration.

The primary purpose of the meeting was to discuss how churches can provide resources to students as part of a network of service organizations.

A clear, twofold consensus of those in attendance was: (1) The academic purpose of schools cannot be achieved if nonacademic dimensions of students' lives are neglected, and (2) students will be better off when the community and its service groups find ways to support school leadership.

Forty interested people attended, including 11 principals of San Marcos schools, Superintendent Dr. Patty Shafer, Vice Superintendent Yolanda Almendarez, School Counselor Elaine Jones, SMCISD Public Information Officer Iris Campbell, Albert Phelps of Region XIII Education and Service Center, and Mayor Susan Narvaiz.

Pastor Paul Buntyn, president of the Ministerial Alliance, gave a realistic evaluation when he called the meeting a "conversation that begins a process" that indicates "we're headed in the right direction".

For now, as evidenced in the meeting, separate community groups seem to be talking past each other.

The message of Men's Fraternity, the host group, is: "Let's not blame the schools for student's problems; blame the home and especially the fathers; and let's focus on lifting the quality of what goes on with fathers and homes."

On the other hand, A Call to Excellence is focused on the schools and seeks clarification on how behavior and safety issues can best be handled and how students and staff can be retained.

The school district has higher aspirations. Superintendent Shafer and her colleagues want the school to be "exemplary" in terms of instruction, leadership and the quality of students who graduate.

The schools new "Positive Behavior System", as explained by Albert Phelps of the state's Education and Service Centers, puts an emphasis on the 80-90 % of students who should be positively reinforced for their positive behavior-rather than overemphasizing the 10-20 % who need to face meaningful, appropriate consequences for negative behavior.

However, there is also a strong emphasis on the amount of resources used to operate Parent Liaison/At-Risk Coordinator Centers in each school that focus on students who are troubled. An emphasis on students with problems is also reflected in the new practice of forming, in each school, a two-person team of Vice Principal and Counselor and placing their offices close together, in locations easily accessible to students.

Troubled youth still seem to get the bulk of attention.

Finally, the pastors' concerns were expressed by Buntyn when he posed the question, "What if a student just wants someone to pray with?" In so many words, he's asking, "Why not connect faith-based and faith-hungry kids with faith-based resources?"-a possibility well within constitutional constraints.

Then he warned, "Do not eliminate these kind of things, or chaos will be multiplied."

So as stated, hopeful but difficult conversation has begun.

By BOB GARRINGER

4 Comments ([Open](#) | [Close](#))

Article printed from Newstreamz San Marcos: <http://newstreamz.com>

URL to article: <http://newstreamz.com/2008/08/13/schoolcommunity-dialogue-desired-but-elusive>

URLs in this post:

[1] <http://acalltoexcellence.com>: <http://acalltoexcellence.com>