

Administrative Operations

Philosophy and Goals:

Dade County Public Schools

Professionalization of Education

The School Board of Dade County, Florida supports Professionalization of Education, a systemwide restructuring process designed to insure that students are prepared for an economically competitive, technologically and culturally rich, knowledge-based 21st Century.

Professionalization of Education encompasses: professional levels of compensation; increased school-site autonomy and responsibilities, including greater control over school budgets and greater responsibility for instructional and curricular decisions within schools; increased shared decision-making among teachers, administrative staffs, parents, and students; and appropriate accountability standards for student achievement outcomes.

This process includes major educational restructuring efforts which have been initiated since establishment of the joint DCPS/UTD Professionalization of Teaching Task Force (in 1985) and a number of other related programs and activities which have evolved over several years as a result of School Board policies, collective bargaining, and a clear and escalating pattern of labor-management cooperation.

DEFINITION

Professionalization of Education is an educational restructuring initiative designed to improve schools and student achievement by raising the status of the education profession and increasing parental involvement.

BELIEF STATEMENTS - PROFESSIONALIZATION OF EDUCATION

The School Board of Dade County establishes the following set of belief statements which reflect the Board's attitudes and perceptions regarding Professionalization of Education and serve as the school district's rationale for educational restructuring.

We believe:

The economic vitality of our nation depends on the ability of students to learn how to think critically, to process and adapt information, and to adjust to a rapidly changing society.

Since students differ in their learning styles, instructional methods and school designs must provide flexibility in meeting student needs.

Parents shape their children's motivation, confidence, and academic success by being interested and involved in their academic development. Accordingly, effective partnerships between the family and school are critical.

The individual school is the critical unit for educational change; classroom teachers and school principals are at the heart of effective school restructuring; and, interaction between teachers and students is the most important interaction in the school system. Accordingly, it is each school faculty's intellectual and professional responsibility to structure learning activities that provide students with the educational experiences necessary to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

To overcome teacher isolation in the classroom, a variety of professional development opportunities should be available for teachers to discuss problems of professional practice and to expand professional knowledge; also, relationships between schools and higher education institutions must link educational research and development with professional practice.

Shared decision-making by teachers, principals, other staff, parents, community members, and students builds a sense of ownership of school instructional goals and a stake in the future of the educational enterprise.

An environment conducive to professionalization emphasizes leadership at all levels; fosters increased autonomy and accountability at the school level; provides compensation of teachers and principals commensurate with their professional status and sets high expectations worthy of this remuneration; and supports and reflects cooperative labor-management relations.

Encouraging greater school autonomy, shared decision-making, and cooperation will change the traditional roles not only of school staffs, parents, and students, but also School Board members, the Superintendent, and union leaders. Also, the leadership role of the area and district office in a restructured environment requires a new kind of relationship with schools: serving as support centers for school improvement efforts at the feeder pattern, school, and classroom levels.

Systemwide restructuring/professionalization is a long-term, comprehensive, strategic effort to improve student achievement and the quality of teaching and educational administration. Obstacles to educational improvement in this regard, whether in School Board rules, negotiated labor contract provisions, and/or state and federal regulations, should be addressed jointly by the School Board and UTD through actions designed to secure waivers and/or appropriate legislative remedies.

Professionalization initiatives must be effectively and widely communicated throughout the school community, including the fundamental perception that an exemplary school district is one in which every teacher is a leader, every principal is a teacher, and every child is a success.

Specific Authority: 230.22(2) F.S.

Law Implemented, Interpreted, or Made Specific: 231.001 F.S.

History: THE SCHOOL BOARD OF DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

New: 4-19-89