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# ROLE AND DUTIES OF MONITORS*

The dictionary definitions can be misleading. Perhaps because when Noah Webster began the compilations for a dictionary, racially isolated schools were unheard of or were not so defined. Perhaps, for our purpose the best definition of a monitor is a person who scrutinizes or checks systematically with a view to collect certain specified categories of data.

The data to be collected is specified in the forms which you will receive later on in the day.

However, it must be born in mind that in order to systematically collect the data we need, our role as monitors needs to be clarified. When we speak of the role of a monitor we are referring to the characteristics and expected behaviors of an individual charged with a certain task. In our case, the task is to be a monitor as defined above - that is, we are to check and scrutinize systematically with a view to collect certain specified categories of data.

In our role of monitors, then, Judge Welch has stated that,

> "Monitors should be encouraged to develop harmonious relations with school administrators."
>
> "Monitors should be instructed to make fair evaluations, neither to find fault where none exists nor to ignore significant deficiencies."

This calls for a certain degree of objectivity so that our observations are conveyed with clarity and without being clouded by our emotions. Additionally I believe that a great deal of sensitivity is demanded of us - sensitivity to the efforts being made by each school's staff, sensitivity to the feelings of the principal, teachers and others

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involved in the integration effort at school, and sensitivity to the constraints which each school encounters on a day to day basis which often get in the way of making the plan work. This does not mean that we excuse, but we don't judge, we only report what we observe.

As a monitor our role calls for us to maintain independence and neutrality while avoiding any adversary stance.

Thus it appears that our task as monitors is to be responsible for fact-finding, information gathering, observation, and reporting. Evaluation is done after data is collected and analyzed.

In order to do this we must be objective, open-minded, and maintain an unbiased attitude.

As a first step we must become thoroughly familiar with the integration program in the plan designed for our assigned schools and our observations should be based on the elements of the plan we see in operation and a mention of those elements which are not evident.

1. Monitors are encouraged to develop positive, harmonious relationships with the school and its constituents, based upon mutual understanding and trust. Such relationships will open reliable, representative channels of communication and promote free flow of valid information which can be reported to the Task Force and acted upon.

2. It will be essential that close communication be maintained throughout the school year between

monitors and Task Force members assigned to the same schools in order to assure a constant and reliable flow of information from the various schools to the Task Force.

3. Monitors are expected to explain their role and function to persons and groups concerned with the affairs of the schools, but they should never presume to interpret or evaluate publicly school compliance or non-compliance with the judges order. Monitors should not publicly express personal positions on matters affecting the school, nor should they publicly evaluate or interpret actions or positions of Integrated Task Force, the school administration, or the judge.

4. Monitors must never assume an advocacy role. Neither should they attempt to negotiate, resolve, or reconcile differences of position regarding matters affecting the assigned school.

5. Monitors should receive and relay suggestions, petitions, or compliants from interested groups or individuals, and should facilitate communication and finding of fact through the chairperson of the Task Force or Task Force member assigned to that particular school.

6. Monitors should refer requests for speakers before school or community groups to the Integrated Task Force.

7. Undoubtedly many school matters will be brought to the attention of the monitor which are not germane to the judge's order. Monitor should not allow themselves to become sponges for individual petty gripes or problems.

The judged in his order has asked that we as monitors establish harmonious working relationships with school administrators and staffs. The chairperson of the Integrated Task Force as well as each one of us in the Task Force believe this to be essential. Therefore as monitors we should be governed by certain principles. Among these principles we recommend:

1. At all times monitors will respect the authority of the principal as the chief administrator of the school. Under no circumstances should this authority be questioned, challenged, or undermined.

2. Monitors will keep the principal informed at all times of his or her activities and maintain open, honest communication.

3. Monitors appointed to the same school may operate as a team. Effort should be made to conduct the initial interview with the principal as a team to avoid undue intrusion on the principal's time. Monitors are encouraged to conduct individual observation and review. However, reports may be a team effort when monitor consensus prevails. Otherwise, monitors should feel free to submit reports expressing an individual point of view. In any event, care should be exercised not to impose unduly on the time and attention of the principal.

4. Monitors shall have access to school building and grounds.

5. Monitors will have authority to monitor classes in session after establishing a procedure with the principal regarding classroom visitation.

6. Monitors may interview teachers or staff during school hours, but should not interfere with assigned school activities.

7. Monitors should feel free to interview students within existing policies of the district. Check with principal on these.

8. Monitors are encouraged to interview or discuss school matters with parents or other concerned persons.

9. Monitors should have the authority to monitor the assigned school's transportation program, including the right to board and ride school buses when appropriate.

ML:mg
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