

RECLAIMING ROSE PLACE

Rose Place is a middle-class community that has been engaged in the development of a new low-income housing project. During the past 50 years, it has been the home of influential white supremacists. This group frequently protests changes in the community and has recently voiced dissatisfaction with the low-income housing project. They have expressed concern about the potential problems they believe newcomers will bring to the area.

Even though it was believed that many of the original white supremacy members migrated to regions elsewhere in the nation, they left behind many children and grandchildren who have been influenced by their ancestors.

Smith-Jackson is a 40-year-old elementary school located just north of the center of town. It has an enrollment of 600 students, 20 of whom are special-needs students who require classrooms with special access to accommodate their physical handicaps. The community is proud of this program, and many of the parents in the area volunteer to help the physically handicapped students at Smith-Jackson.

In addition to these students who are bused to the elementary school, the school district has adopted a voluntary busing program that encourages underrepresented students to enroll in the school. This is the district's attempt to integrate Smith-Jackson in response to the state's mandate that all schools be integrated by the end of the decade.

In spite of the community's acceptance of the busing program that brings special education students to Rose Place, there is a strong and vocal group of parents who object to the busing of students to the elementary school who are ethnically different from the majority of the population in the community. According to some individuals, "If they aren't white, they aren't right." This same group of parents is quick to point out to the school board that a number of the students who participate in the voluntary busing program are experiencing problems at school and do not seem to be keeping up with the other students academically.

The principal of Rose Place was hired recently and is the first minority administrator in the school district. Previously, he had a successful career as an administrator in inner-city schools, and he had a reputation for working well with the school superintendents. The principal was referred to the school board by the mayor of the city, who knew the principal. The mayor mentioned to the president of the school board that it would be politically advantageous if Rose Place hired a principal that the mayor recommended.

The staff at Smith-Jackson Elementary School is 100% Caucasian, which presents another problem for the students who use the voluntary busing program. A few of the students have expressed their opinion to the principal that they wished more of the teachers had the same background as they do.

For this case, assume that you are the newly hired principal and that your ethnicity matches that of many of the students who are in the voluntary busing program.

The Problem

A number of children who ride the bus and participate in the voluntary busing program have academic and disciplinary problems at school. Some of the teachers have expressed to you how pleased they are to have someone of your ethnicity at the school so that you can relate to the newcomers. Parents of students who are bused see you as an advocate not only for their children, but also for themselves.

During one of the school meetings community members were invited to attend, a parent raised the issue of losing funding for the next school year because of a decline in the projected number of students who planned to attend Smith-Jackson. She reported that a recent parent survey indicated that 75% of the students currently enrolled in the voluntary busing program did not plan to attend Smith-Jackson the following school year.

One of the parents, who had lived in Rose Place for many years and was the son of the former white supremacy group's president, responded to the issue by stating that he thought the school was better off without the voluntary busing program. He added that many of the students that came to Smith-Jackson from outside of the community caused trouble at school and did not do well academically. He also said that he thought things were much better before the government stepped in and tried to change Rose Place by integrating Smith-Jackson.

Several days later, you met this same parent outside the classroom where he served as a parent volunteer. After you greeted him, he stated, "I don't have to talk to you, you know. This is a free country, and I wish you and your kind would just go back where you came from. Why don't you leave and take the students who look like you with you."

Case Analysis Framework

1. Summarize the case.
2. Identify the problem in a single sentence.
3. Select specific information from the case and categorize it according to people, place, or program.
4. Review and prioritize the information.
5. Refer to the data in each category to solve the problem identified in the case and to respond to the case study questions.

Questions to Research and Consider

1. What is your initial reaction to the parent?
2. What insights do you gain from this experience about some of the community's opinions about the voluntary busing program?
3. What are your role and responsibility to the students in the community? To the students who are bused?
4. How do you go about gathering information on the feelings and experiences of the students who are bused?
5. How do you monitor race and human relations at your school?
6. Should you inform the superintendent of your encounter with the parent?
7. Does the parent have a legitimate concern?

8. How will you address his concern regarding the students who are bused to Smith-Jackson?
9. Should you plan a race relations development day for your staff?
10. What is your district's policy on hate crimes?

Developing Your Leadership Expertise:
ISLLC Standards 1, 2, & 4

Develop a plan for creating a forum to address race relations in your community. Identify priorities, list goals and objectives, and include the primary purpose for wanting to improve race relations in your community.

