

The staff of Northern High School is of the opinion that any dialogue with the community should start with a clear statement of the objectives and the priorities of both groups. This report is meant to be an outline of our goals with summarizing explanations for clarification.

- 1/ We believe that the main purpose of Northern High School is to provide as many of our students as possible with the best possible education.
- 2/ We believe that the teachers are trained to teach students. In order to be a teacher, one must have successfully completed the teacher preparation requirements at an accredited college or university. One must show proficiency in the area in which one teaches. If a person meets these qualifications, performs satisfactorily in terms of his contract, and does not commit any crimes he is protected under his contract between the Detroit Board of Education and the Detroit Federation of Teachers. If a teacher performs all of his contractual duties but fails to effectively raise the educational level of his students, he is a poor teacher. If he raises the level of his students one year each year, he is an effective teacher. If he can not only raise the skill level of his students but also inspire them to love learning, he is a great teacher. In order for a school to be effective, it must assume that great teachers are the exception. The school must be structured in such a way as to function effectively, with average teachers. Their development is as mysterious as the development of great doctors of medicine or great lawyers. But our hospitals and courts are geared to function, with a staff of average, efficient practitioners. Schools must also be able to function with the average teacher.
- 3/ We believe that, as with the teacher, the students' role should also be clearly defined. It has always been the function of the elementary school to produce students. It is in those grades that the basic attitudes toward learning are formed; not absolute and unchanging attitudes but definite sets of behavioral patterns which are cumulative and tenacious. By the time a young person reaches 9th. grade he has developed a general attitude toward school and learning. If it is a positive one, he will be a student and ready for secondary education. This means that he will attempt to attend his classes every day and on time. He will desire to learn certain subjects and will recognize the necessity of learning others. He will have the necessary skills which will allow him to successfully complete the advance courses in high school. Not all young people arrive at our high schools as students, however. Some are still becoming students. They have to be reminded of their roles, counseled by trained counselors, and given time to mature. By the 10th. grade, however, they must be able to assume their responsibilities as students. In most cases, this will occur. There will always be, unfortunately, a small number who, for numerous reasons, are unable to freely accept their roles. These students must be forced to act like students even though their development has not reached the point where they can understand the necessity of such behavior. For, as we have stated previously, we must accept the fact that we are trained to teach students and this is the limit of our abilities. The nature of teaching quite often deludes us into thinking that we have more influence over our young people than we have. Most psychological studies of recent years indicate

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conclusively that our secondary schools have limited influence on non-students. Their failure to accept their roles as students is the result of numerous and complex experiences which, in most cases, can only be dealt with effectively by trained professional specialists. These young people need to be rehabilitated before they can be educated. If we, as teachers, attempt to educate them, we deprive them of the competent assistance they actually need. Our duty here is obvious but unpleasant. We must exclude these few young people and must emphasize the fact that we are speaking of a very small number. Neither these young people nor the teachers can afford to waste the time and energy attempting to do things which are beyond our abilities. For such an expenditure of time and energy on the part of the teachers results in a diminishing of effectiveness in our actual teaching of students. The result is that by attempting to accomplish too much we end up not accomplishing enough. The general level of education for the majority of students is reduced and the students whom the teachers are trained to teach are deprived of the quality of education they deserve.

There is one more, rather insidious effect of trying to do too much. Most studies indicate that those few who are not ready to accept their role as students eventually drop out at eighteen or nineteen anyway or are graduated without having actually been adequately educated. Society feels no compulsion to offer further aid to eighteen or nineteen year old people. They are, in legal terms, adults and are supposed to be self-sufficient. If we exclude these young people at 15 years old, then society is still responsible for them and they must find some other institution for them. As long as the schools pretend to administer to these young people, society assumes its obligations are being met. The loser is the nineteen year old non-student drop-out or graduate. He can not go on to college and in the eyes of industry he is untrainable. The unemployment rate among these people has always been three to five times the national average and it will remain that high or grow higher unless we allow them to receive the kind of attention and care they deserve.

- 4/ In conclusion, we, as teachers and parents must recognize certain realities. We have certain problems in education today. In order to solve these problems we must gather accurate information concerning the problems and work out solutions based on that information. We can not demand nor wish for better teachers; we must produce them. We can not demand nor wish for quality education; we must produce it. As of now, no one seems to know how to train great teachers. Hopefully, our colleges of education are working on this. Until they come up with a formula, we must work with what we have instead of demanding what is not presently available. We do have much more information on how to produce students. But it all indicates that the important years are zero through seven. We must start there. And in the later years we must work as effectively and realistically as possible with what we have. Some maintain we have made progress in this area; no one maintains we have solved the problem. We will still have failures and to deny this is naive, cruel and unrealistic. To deny that some of our young people do not have serious problems is to insure that these problems will never be effectively dealt with. And let us finally admit that there are young people in this country who are receiving quality education. They come from different parts of the country, from different racial groups and from different economic backgrounds. The one factor they have in common is that they all attend schools which teach students and exclude non-students on the basis of non-performance. They

exclude them because of their inability to accept their roles as students or because of their lack of academic performance. We, the Union Committee of Northern High School, recommends that this become our policy. If you support us in this, we will guarantee you that our students, your children, will graduate with a quality education. If you do not support us then you must assume the greatest share of responsibility for the lack of quality education in our schools. We are public servants and can not do what we would like to do. We also can not do what you command us to do. We are only able to do what you allow us to do. We want to teach students. As of now, we are not being allowed to do this as effectively as we are able to. It is up to you to make this possible.

