

**ROLE OF A
FACILITATOR**

III. ROLE OF A FACILITATOR

A. FACILITATORS MAKE MEETING EASY

You are going to be the facilitator at several meetings of parent groups.

Facilitator contains the Spanish word "fácil", meaning "easy", and that is your role. You are there to make the whole process easy for the parents. Parents are the center of this entire program.

When parents from the community go to their first meeting, they often feel as uncomfortable as they do when they go to the school for a meeting with the teacher.

It is a lot easier for them to let the facilitator do the talking and the work. It is easier for the facilitator to lead, to define the problems parents face, state the needs, and set the agenda for the group. Unfortunately, this is a problem encountered often. There is no way you should allow yourself to be put in this position.

It's not your role to be a leader in the usual sense. Group members should have a role in leading. As a facilitator, you will have to be careful not to let group members make you their leader so they can passively follow what you do and say.

Parents may not bring the skills of trained educators to these sessions, but they do bring applicable skills. They have experience. They are self-directed. They have learned to deal with and solve problems all their lives. Because of this, a group of parents must learn to identify its own needs and set its own agenda for its community, no matter how difficult or uncomfortable that might be for them at first.

B. FACILITATORS ARE ACTIVE ADVISORS

Facilitators are very important to the program and to the parents who would not learn or do as much without their efforts.

A facilitator can be any one of several things --

- a person who coordinates and organizes the work of others so that it gets done faster and more effectively.
- a person who guides and directs a group towards the completion of its tasks.
- a person who informs, orients, and instructs others.
- anything else you want to add?

As a facilitator, you will have several tasks. At first, you will lead the group, but only until the group members select their own leader. If they offer you the job, refuse it.

The heart of your task is to encourage discussion at group meetings. Encourage taking of sides on information that will be gathered once you start the discussion meetings.

You will relay information to the group, which comes from meeting with the facilitators of other groups like yours to solve problems, learn skills, and share experiences.

You will always be recruiting new members, organizing and developing new groups, coordinating and implementing required group activities, and helping to generate and coordinate new activities for the group.

You can be a technical advisor about consensus, listening skills, and constructive criticism, all of which are skills everyone will need to learn.

You can also help people make clear their own views on community and school issues and how to approach them. In fact, most of your time will be devoted to explanation.

In summary, a Facilitator...

- ___ · helps to recruit members into the group
- ___ · helps develop the group
- ___ · gives information to group members
- ___ · coordinates and organizes the work of the group
- ___ · takes on responsibilities and tasks, and carries them out
- ___ · delegates responsibilities and tasks to group members
- ___ · serves as a communication "link" between group members (on club matters) and school staff
- ___ · guides the group towards its goals
- ___ · leads the group until leaders are selected

(This checklist can be useful to you as you go about doing your job as facilitator. Keep it handy.)