

LIFT² Case #1

Houston-Warwick Regional

Houston-Warwick Regional High School (grades 9-12) has 950 students from three communities. Two towns are part of the regional agreement to share financial support and legal custody. The third community tuitions its students to Houston-Warwick from a nearby former fishing community, Eagleston, now more of a summer resort town.

The communities are basically composed of three socio-economic-historic elements:

- A former religious summer campground low socio-economic element sited in Houston
- An upper class WASP enclave that plays polo, mainly in Warwick
- A growing professional class escaping the city to green and non-industrial land in both towns

Houston, where the school is located, is 30 miles away from the metropolis. There is train service to the two base communities and a major shopping center about 15 minutes away by automobile, in the nearest town with any major industry. Thirty minutes away in the opposite direction is the beach.

The two towns are governed by open town meeting and town manager with citizens' advisory and regulatory boards. The schools are overseen by a regional school committee made up of members from the two base towns in proportion to their population.

Houston-Warwick Regional High School considers itself a comprehensive high school and so offers four years of science and mathematics (required for graduation) as well as CAD and computer graphics. Technology is also used by all the other disciplines extensively. Although there is a technical vocational high school which HW students are able to attend, very few choose that option. Approximately 90% of students go on to some form of higher education. The three communities are predominantly white.

Students can bring their own laptops to school and access the school network. For those who do not own a wireless computing device, the school provides one that students can take off campus.

Recently, a young physics teacher has been hired to replace someone who was at the school for a long time and who was much loved for his total absorption in activities for the high school students, both in and out of school. Almost everyone in the senior class took physics with the former teacher.

After several weeks, a group of girls comes to speak with the high school principal and tells her that they want to drop physics. The principal has been at Houston-Warwick Regional for a number of years and had hired the departed physics teacher as well as the new teacher and is a proponent of technology in all aspects of teaching, learning and managing.

What actions should the following people take and why?

1. The principal
2. The department head
3. The teacher
4. The superintendent
5. The school committee