

## The 5-P Relay

William Purkey  
(1991)

One method for encouraging the involvement of all parties is called the 5-P Relay (Purkey, 1991). The 5-P Relay was adapted from the Pass It On exercise developed by Doug MacIver (1991) at the Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools at Johns Hopkins University. A description follows of the 5-P Relay as it could be applied in a school setting. Counselors who wish to facilitate a relay in their own institutions will need to add their own creative juices and adapt the 5-P Relay to the unique characteristics of the organizations in which they work. The idea is to encourage creative thinking during a nonthreatening, fun-filled activity.

### Preparation

A large room such as a cafeteria, media center, or gym will serve as the location. Create five stations—one for each P (People, Places, Policies, Programs, Processes)—around the area. Five tables will be needed; one for each station. (In schools with more than 50 staff members, two identical 5-P Relays can be run simultaneously, in two sets of five stations.) Identify each station with a large sign: People Station, Places Station, Policies Station, Program Station, and Processes Station. At each station, place five large sheets of newsprint and label each sheet with one of the following headings:

Goals, Procedures, Obstacles, Overcoming Obstacles, and Action Plan. All five stations will need five sheets of newsprint with the five headings. In addition, each station will need felt-tip pens, extra newsprint, and a roll of masking tape.

### Process

Usually, a three-hour time period is scheduled for the relay and is divided accordingly:

*15 minutes:* During an orientation period this description is distributed to all participants and read aloud as everyone follows along. Questions are answered until everyone understands the purpose of the activity and their role.

*15 minutes:* Teams are formed randomly by having everyone count off by fives. After everyone has counted off, they are assigned to the five stations. “All the number ones please go to the station marked People. All the number twos please go to the station marked Places. All the number threes please go to the station marked Policies. All the number fours please go to the station marked Programs, and all the number fives please go to the station marked Processes.” After these five teams are formed, everything is ready for the activity.

*15 minutes:* Instruct each team to brainstorm at least three doable goals for their particular P. They should write these goals on newsprint with their heading (People, Places, Policies, Programs, or Processes). The goals they choose should enable the institution to become a more personally and professionally inviting place. It is important that the goals they list be specific and measurable. Once each team has written the goals for their P, it prioritizes its goals, with 1 being most important, 2 the next, and so forth. The groups mark these priorities next to each goal they have written. At the end of this 15-minute activity a bell rings (any sound system will do, and timekeepers should be creative in the ways they keep people moving).

*5 minutes:* At the sound of the bell, each team immediately leaves its station, leaving its list of goals, and moves to the next station (that is, the People team moves to the Policies Station, Policies team moves to the Processes Station, Processes moves to the Programs Station, Programs moves to the Places Station, and Places moves to the People Station). After this move each team should be at a new station looking at a set of goals, written by a previous team.

*15 minutes:* Each team reviews the list of goals at their table and writes procedures to accomplish each of the goals starting with the highest priority. On a piece of newsprint, the group writes the heading

“Here’s How to Do It,” and proceeds to list ways to accomplish each goal. At the end of this period, the bell rings.

*5 minutes:* Each team leaves its table and moves to the next station in the same order as before.

*15 minutes:* Each team studies the goals and procedures at its new station left by the two previous groups, and makes a list of obstacles (barriers) that might prevent these goals from being accomplished or these procedures from being established. At the end of this period, the bell rings.

*5 minutes:* Each team leaves its lists and table, and moves to the next station.

*15 minutes:* The teams study the set of goals, procedures and obstacles and makes a list of ways to overcome the obstacles. At the end of this period, the bell rings.

*5 minutes:* Each team leaves its table and moves to the next station.

*15 minutes:* Each team now reviews the goals, procedures, obstacles, and ways to overcome obstacles left by previous teams. Now they make a list of suggestions on ways to evaluate whether or not the goals have been accomplished. “How will we know when each goal is achieved?” Teams will list methods to use in measuring outcomes and results. At the end of this period, the bell rings.

*5 minutes:* Each team leaves its table and moves to the next station. At this point each team should be back at the home station, where they first started the relay. Every participant has had an opportunity to be involved in each of the stations, as illustrated in Figure 5-3.

*15 minutes:* Each team studies its lists of goals, procedures, obstacles, ways to overcome obstacles, and methods of evaluation and prepares an action plan. This plan should include clear time lines, assignments and responsibilities for staff members, and an evaluation process. At the end of this period, the bell rings.

*35 minutes:* All participants come together in a large group and each team places its action plan on the wall where everyone can see it. A spokesperson for each team gives a brief report to the entire group. After the meeting these plans are typed, signed by team members, duplicated, and distributed to all the participants.

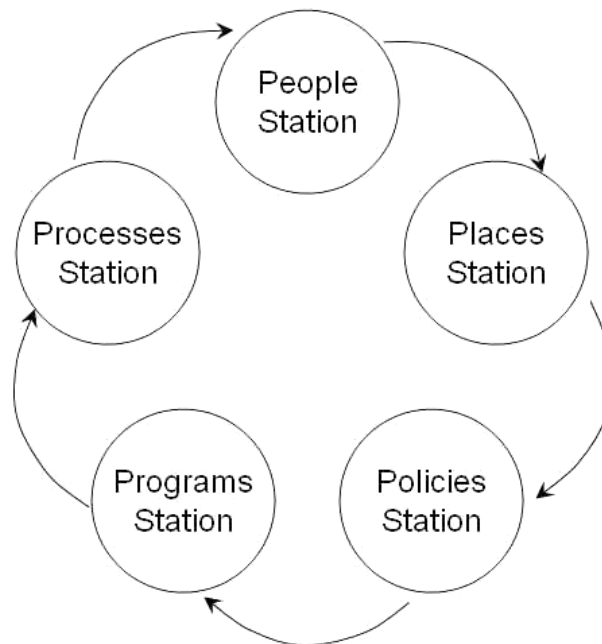


Fig. 5-3

**Follow-up.**

After the 5-P Relay, each of the five teams (People, Places, Policies, Programs, and Processes) remains intact for the school year. Each team selects a captain and meets at regular intervals during the year to assure that its goals are being accomplished. In addition, the five team captains meet on a regular basis to report progress and share ideas. Accomplishments should be shared periodically with the entire organization.

The 5-P Relay is one method for assessing influential factors in a large institution and involving everyone in decision-making. What is significant about the 5-P Relay is its inclusion of everyone who has an investment in the organization. The essential point is to involve as many people as possible in the assessment process and in the action plans that are selected. Once actions have been selected, the next step is to encourage commitment from all parties and assign appropriate responsibilities. Because everyone has an investment in seeing that identified goals are attained, they also have a part to play in achieving these goals.