Enabling and Hindering Rules

One useful way to analyze rules is by whether the help solve problems (Enabling Rules) or get in the way or cause problems (Hindering Rules).

Enabling rules help employees solve problems rather than get in the way of solutions; they are rules that are flexible, cooperative, collaborative, and geared toward promoting teaching, learning, and safety. Administrators use such rules to give teachers the tools, confidence, and power to exercise their professional responsibilities effectively. Let's examine some examples of enabling rules:

- *Open-access rule*: Administrators create time for teachers to consult with them on Saturday mornings from 8:00 to 12:00—no secretaries, no intermediaries, no scheduling, no pressure, no necessity—just call any Saturday and the administrator will answer the phone and answer your questions or help you with a problem.
- *Check-in rule*: Anyone not an employee who enters school while it is in session must register with the secretary at the school entrance.
- *Safety-rule*: External doors are locked to outsiders, but not to the insiders.

Hindering rules get in the way of solving problems; they are rules that focus on control and discipline. Administrators use such rules to control teachers and students. The threat of punishment looms over perspective violators. The negative consequences of these rules are clear: They hinder positive outcomes, and they produce alienation rather than commitment to the school. Enabling rules tend to be democratically developed whereas hindering ones are top-down and unilaterally developed rules. Examples of hindering rules include:

- *Faculty-meeting rule*: Teachers attendance is mandatory unless excused by the principal.
- *Smoking rule*: Students caught smoking will be expelled from school.
- *Tardy rule*: Teachers must send tardy students to the vice principal's office.