

Business/Education Partnerships



A Guide for Business Partnership Coordinators



**Duval County Public Schools
Community Involvement Office**



Community Involvement Office

August 2004

Dear Business Partnership Coordinator,

Thank you for serving as your school's Business Partnership Coordinator. Last year alone, our schools received over \$6 million in donated services and equipment from nearly 1,500 business partnerships with schools throughout the district.

Duval County Public Schools actively promotes relationships between businesses and schools for one reason alone—to improve the quality of education in the district. The more business and education work together, the better each of our needs becomes known, and the better we can invest in the future of our community.

Each business partnership is unique; it is based upon the size and nature of the business, the resources the business can provide, and the needs of the school. Partnerships may be very simple and involve one teacher or classroom and a local “Mom and Pop” store, or it may include the whole school and a large, high-profile corporation.

This booklet offers suggestions and ideas for leading a strong business partnership program at your school. As with any publication from the Community Involvement Office, we welcome and encourage your input and suggestions on how to make this a more useful tool. We also love to hear success stories—please share them with us so we can include them in a future “Best Practices” collection.

We are here to help you build a strong business partnership program—please call upon us for any of your needs. We can be reached at 390-2960 or 390-2916. Thanks for your interest in helping our schools become world-class, and best wishes for a super school year!

Warm regards,

Tina Wirth
Community Involvement Specialist

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ABCs of Partnership Recruitment

Assess your needs

What kind of help do you need? Brainstorm with staff members and check your school's School Improvement Plan. Outline your needs on paper. Be able to explain how a business partner can help you. Other considerations are:

- Are you looking for a short-term partnership? A long-term relationship?
- Establish a list of outcomes for your partnership that will meet your objectives.
- How will the school benefit? How will the business benefit?

Be sure to target the right partner

When identifying potential partners, consider the following:

- Don't overlook parents! They can serve as tutors, technology consultants, speakers, etc. Plus, many have connections with local businesses and community organizations.
- Check out your neighbors. A business located near the school will be convenient. They will also be familiar with your school.
- Look at who is already involved at your school. What connections do your School Advisory Council (SAC) members and faculty members have?
- Ask your current partners for suggestions.
- Be on the lookout for new businesses in your community. Send a welcome letter from your school.
- Network! Build community relationships through participation in local professional groups, Chamber of Commerce events and service organizations.

Once you've identified potential target(s), do some research about the company:

- What is their partnership status/history? Are they already partners with another school? Did they used to be partners? Why did they stop?
- How are they otherwise involved in the community?
- Who is in charge? Who should you contact? CEO? Human Resources Manager? Is there someone who can make introductions for you? Someone on the INSIDE?
- Is there a particular day or time of day to make contact? Tip: Do *not* call a restaurant manager during lunch time!

Contact

Once you've done your background work, schedule a meeting to determine if the business is interested. Send a letter or place a phone call. Invite the business person to your school. The business may agree to a partnership but may need subsequent meetings to work out specifics.

If asking for a cash donation, don't make the mistake of asking for too little. A major employer who would turn down a request for \$100 for an ice cream social may actually be more likely to approve a request for \$2,500 for a year-long academic achievement program. Tailor your request to the resources of the business.

A Special Note on Student Safety and Volunteer Policy

Please remember that all volunteers—those who will be on school grounds and/or with students—must complete a Volunteer Application **and** be checked against the Florida Department of Law Enforcement’s Sexual Offender/Predator Registry. This is a new requirement signed into law by the governor in May. This information is free and can be accessed online at http://www3.fdle.state.fl.us/sexual_predators/ . You may search by individual names, or you may type in your district name and pull up a listing for all registered offenders in your county.

Also, if any of your volunteers will be working one-on-one with students, without a staff member present in the same room (or immediate area if outdoors), he or she must have a full background check conducted and complete mentor training through Kesler Mentoring Connection. The training/background check process is free to the school and the volunteer. Call Kesler Mentoring Connection at 224-2400 for more information or to register a volunteer.

If you have any questions about this policy or how to implement it, please call the Community Involvement Office at 390-2960.

Steps to a Successful Business Partnership

When YOU initiate the relationship...

1. Determine what your school needs.

What programs would you like to deliver during the school year? What types of volunteers are you looking for? What equipment needs do you have?

2. Identify your potential business resources.

What are the businesses close to your school? Where do your students' parents work? Where do spouses of your faculty members work?

3. Develop a plan.

Match your school's needs with the businesses you feel would be most likely to meet them. Develop an outline of what you would like the partnership to include. Be sure to include ways in which your school can benefit the targeted business.

4. Make contact.

Write, call or stop by the business. Remember that phone calls are more effective than letters, and visits are more effective than either calls or letters. Get an appointment and present your proposal.

5. Establish an agreement.

Both you and the business representative will work together to establish a relationship agreement that works for both parties. This agreement is then formalized on the Business Partnership Agreement form.

6. Complete the paperwork.

Copies of the completed Business Partnership Agreement are provided to both the business partner and the Community Involvement Office. Once the form is received by the Community Involvement Office, a Partnership Certificate will be issued to the business, along with a welcome letter from the Superintendent.

7. Track the relationship, and keep it healthy.

Maintain regular contact with your business partner, and ensure that projects are on time and on target. Track the value of cash and in-kind (equipment, service or merchandise) donations on the Donation Tracking Form. Be sure to uphold your commitments as well, and remember to thank your business partners regularly!

Steps to a Successful Business Partnership

When THE BUSINESS initiates the relationship...

1. Respond quickly.

When a potential business partner calls your school with an offer of help, make sure you return the call quickly. Often, people calling with offers to provide time, talent or money are quick to get turned off if they do not receive a quick response.

2. Arrange a meeting.

Establish a time to meet—preferably at the school so that you may provide a tour. Otherwise, arrange the meeting so that it is convenient for the business partner—both in time and location.

3. Develop a plan.

When the business initiates a partnership discussion, there may be a specific way in which the business may want to partner with your school. Come prepared to discuss your school's needs, but if the business representative has a plan they would like to share, let them do so first. This will give you time to absorb what is being proposed and alter your request, if needed.

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Ways Businesses Can Benefit Schools

- Encourage parental involvement for employees through worksite displays and/or publications.
- Provide release time for employees to tutor, motivate, or read to students.
- Serve on a school advisory council.
- Provide incentives for students who have improved in performance in attendance, academics, behavior, attitude, citizenship, etc.
- Provide “career shadowing” opportunities for students.
- Donate used equipment or surplus materials.
- Serve as judges for various school events.
- Sponsor school beautification projects.
- Sponsor field trips.
- Assist in school publications.
- Provide display space for student artwork.
- Serve as guest speakers on career awareness topics or special interests.
- Recognize students who enroll in honors or advanced placement classes.
- Sponsor special programs or school clubs.
- Provide educational or curriculum support materials.
- Provide part-time employment for students.
- Provide seminars for students, parents, faculties, administrators.
- Host meetings.
- Provide tours of the worksite.
- Assist with school fundraising activities.
- Participate in school events.
- Provide recognition to teachers.
- Sponsor contests in art, writing, math, reading, etc.
- Offer services to the school that may be unique to your organization.
- Sponsor needy families at holiday times.
- Sponsor scholarships.

Ways Schools Can Benefit Businesses

- Put your partners on your mailing list to let them know what's happening at school.
- Provide visibility. Include partnership information in newsletters, newspapers, school marquees.
- Encourage your partner to be an active member of your School Advisory Council.
- Send thank-you notes (especially nice from kids!).
- Provide art work for display at partner's work site.
- Invite your partner to visit school regularly.
- Include your partner as a participant in school activities and community projects.
- Provide choral or musical groups for entertaining employees.
- Give your partner a specific liaison at the school to coordinate activities.
- Offer to provide services to the business; i.e., making banners, buttons, student designs; sharing school facilities.
- Invite your partner to participate in Career Day, serve as a guest reader, etc.
- Invite your partner to a faculty meeting to meet staff.
- Introduce partner to students and parents, possibly at school open house event.
- Be tuned in to publicity regarding your partner. Offer congratulations or support as appropriate.
- Send greeting cards on special occasions (again, these can be made by kids).
- Suggest and provide materials for a Partners in Education bulletin board at the business on which to share samples of student work, school news, volunteer needs, "want ads" for supplies, parenting tips, calendars, etc.

Evaluating the Partnership

Ongoing evaluation is an essential component of a successful partnership to ensure that the goals are being met and to provide feedback to the partners. Regular updates should be shared with the school and business employees to strengthen their relationship and keep the awareness of the program and morale high.

Business/Education partnerships should provide benefits to both the school and the business.

Indicators of success for the school may include:

- Improved attendance rates, academic performance, test scores, or drop-out rates
- Improved student conduct or enthusiasm for learning
- Improved student ability to perform tasks required to attain employment
- Students getting or furthering education beyond high school
- Parent and teacher feedback that the business involvement is making a difference

Indicators for the business may include:

- Employees advancing their presentation, leadership and interpersonal skills
- Improved employee morale
- Enhanced image in the community
- Increased understanding of the company and its products by the community
- Increased understanding of the school system by employees.

Recognition and Awards

There are many opportunities for recognition and awards for business partners. Businesses enjoy the special recognition that schools provide, and this recognition in turn fuels and strengthens the business partnership.

Ways to Recognize Your Business Partners

- Send a large thank-you banner or card to post at the business; note cards from students are also very effective.
- Be sure to single out and recognize the business partners for their contributions at any group appreciation events you may be having. They'll appreciate the positive P.R.
- Do business with your partner whenever feasible.
- Provide space in the school to highlight partnership activities.
- Provide choral or musical groups for special occasions.
- Provide the business with an inside look at school, tour the school and explain curriculum.
- Provide student art work for display at the business.
- Invite your partner to serve on advisory committees, task forces, etc.
- Send monthly activity calendars and/or newsletters to the business.
- Put the business on your mailing list, and communicate often.

- Provide visibility by submitting partnership information to be used in press releases, human interest articles and school publicity.
- Most businesses love positive publicity. Let the Communications Department know about any unique or notable business partnerships, so they can help get the word out to local broadcast and print media! Call them at 390-2126.
- Include business partners (management and any individual employees who are involved at the school) in school or classroom volunteer appreciation activities. *Be sure to give your partners plenty of advance notice—at least 2 to 3 weeks.*

Commissioner's Outstanding Business Recognition Award

Business partners are offered an opportunity to participate in a formal recognition event as well: the Commissioner's Outstanding Business Recognition Award. Awarded by the Florida Department of Education, this distinction provides statewide recognition of exemplary business education programs in each of the five Department of Education regions. Nominations are sent to all schools in November and are due in December. Criteria include:

- Quality and longevity of the partnership
- Impact of the project, especially as the partnership relates to improved student performance
- Commitment of the organization, including in-kind and financial contributions
- Innovation and/or unique and pioneering collaborations

This award is a wonderful way to showcase your business partnerships. Accurate record keeping throughout the year will enable you to complete the requested information on in-kind donation and financial donations. Volunteer hours should be considered an in-kind donation.

Tracking and Reporting Requirements

The Community Involvement Office requires annual reporting of all cash and in-kind donations made to the schools. It is very important that you carefully track all donations. Remember that in-kind donations—equipment, merchandise or services—must have a dollar value assigned to them. It is the responsibility of the donating company to determine what the value of the donation is. Get in the habit of asking for that information when the equipment is received, or even beforehand.

Volunteer hours provided by business volunteers are usually tracked as volunteer hours only and have no cash (or “hourly wage”) value. The only exception to this rule is for those services provided by a business for which a school might normally pay; i.e, “billable” services. These might include graphic design work performed by a professional graphic designer, dry cleaning services for costumes or uniforms, sports physicals provided by a medical professional, a special guest speaker’s customary speaking fee, etc.

An example of what would not count as an in-kind donation of billable hours would be an attorney who mentors a child. His usual hourly fee is not an in-kind service, as he is not providing legal services to the child. Instead, his time donation should be tracked by number of volunteer hours in the

Volunteer Sign-In Book. Feel free to call the Community Involvement Office for clarification on how to track any donations.

Training and Ongoing Support

Please know that the Community Involvement Office is here and happy to assist you in developing a strong Business Partnership program. We offer training throughout the year on topics related to volunteer management, business partnership management, and parental involvement. Forms and policies are available online at www.educationcentral.org under the “Parents & Community” tab. As always, we are just a phone call away. Please let us know how we can help!

Sample Letters

Following are some examples you may wish to use when writing to prospective and existing business partners. If you have some sample letters you have written that you would like to share, please forward them to the Community Involvement Office, and we’ll include them in the next edition of this manual.

(on your letterhead)

Sample Partner Recruitment Letter

Date

Company CEO
Company Name
Address

Dear CEO:

(School name) is committed to meeting the educational needs of all our students and preparing them to meet the challenges of the future. Developing strong partnerships among families, businesses, and community groups will help us accomplish our goals. We need your help! Please consider becoming a Partner in Education with **(school)**.

Partnership activities are as varied as the schools and organizations involved. They are dependent upon the needs of the schools and the resources of the business.

Our school improvement goals include:

(list)

Your help is needed to:

(list)

I will call you in the next few days to answer any questions you may have and to offer you a tour of our school. We do hope you'll choose to *make quality education your business!*

Sincerely,

Principal/Partnership Coordinator

(on your letterhead)

Sample Partner Recruitment Letter

Date

Company Contact

Company Name

Address

Dear Stakeholder in **(School Name)**:

Congratulations! As a local business you are one of the most important stakeholders in the education of the students attending **(School Name)**. For that, we say thank you. Businesses such as yours give our children opportunities to further the education process by allowing them to increase the knowledge gained through on-the-job experience. The fulfillment of connecting training to experience is the key to making the academic efforts these students put forth feel worthwhile.

Please continue to help us build a better community by providing our local businesses with dedicated, capable employees. How can you do this? The answer is simple: Become a business partner. There are so many areas within our school that could benefit from your support. Enclosed, you will find a copy of our "Business Partners" brochure. Please take the time to look it over and get a feel for **(School Name)** and our expectations for the 2004-2005 school year. A representative from our Business Partnership and Volunteer Committee will be calling soon to speak with you about ways in which we can work together to be a better "village."

Thank you for your interest in the future of our young people.

Business Partnership Coordinator

(on your letterhead)

Sample Letter to Prospective Partner for Specific Request

Date

Company CEO
Official Title
Company/Agency Name
Address

Dear CEO:

In an effort to respond to the need for parenting education, **(School Name)** will be hosting a Parent Training Conference on **(Date)**. We plan to involve parents from all grade levels. The focus is on encouraging parental involvement in their children's education. Workshops and activities will relate to parenting skills and techniques. We are anticipating around 200 participants for this half-day event.

(CEO NAME), we are able to absorb the cost of workshop materials, and our teachers are volunteering their time. We do, however, need financial assistance of **\$(amount)** in order to provide a continental breakfast for the parents attending. **(Name of business)** seemed a natural choice for sponsorship, given your company's position on the importance of parental involvement. We will, of course, advertise the fact that you are providing the breakfast. Naturally, if you have employees interested in attending, we would welcome them!

I will follow up with you by the end of this month about whether you will be able to sponsor this event. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely yours,

Principal/Partnership Coordinator

(on your letterhead)

Sample Thank-You Letter – Commendation to Employees

Date

Company CEO
Official Title
Company/Agency Name
Address

Dear CEO:

As part of **(Company/Agency name's)** participation in the business partnerships program, a number of your employees have been visiting our school regularly to work individually with our students. I want you to know what a positive impact they are making here and how very much we appreciate their help at **(school name)**.

With full-time jobs, it would have been easy for your employees to say, "I work full-time. I can't help." But because of their desire to help children succeed and your policy of providing release time to volunteer, they are finding the time to make a difference!

Their selfless efforts are already paying dividends for our students in terms of improved self-esteem, motivation to learn, and increased personal and academic success. These are the keys to the future that the students can get only through repeated contact with caring adults and positive role models such as your employees. They include **(list names)**.

We at **(school)** commend you, **(Company name)**, and most particularly the individuals named above for your outstanding support of our school through the Partners in Education Program.

Sincerely,

Principal's Signature

Master Forms