

Building Business & Community Partnerships for Learning

**Schools cannot do it alone. But together, we can improve
American education--school by school and community by
community. Together we can move every child toward
achieving high levels of learning.**

*Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education*



**PARTNERSHIP
for Family
Involvement
in Education**

Building Business and Community Partnerships for Learning

Many state and local leaders are examining ways to improve student achievement and help students set higher expectations and standards for themselves. In 1994, Congress passed the Goals 2000: Educate America Act to help initiate and expand local and state efforts to raise standards of achievement and discipline.

Why encourage higher standards?

- ⇒ Students who work harder and achieve more get on the right course to make the most of their lives.
- ⇒ Each year an increasing number of the best jobs are requiring more skills. Most students will need a solid foundation in elementary and secondary schools to be prepared for 1-4 years of college, work-study experience, and productive employment.
- ⇒ The shift to an “information and technology economy” requires a commitment to learning for a lifetime and the development of flexible and transferrable skills. The effort to improve educational opportunities for all students and prepare them for the challenges in the coming century requires the best from all of us. Schools, businesses, universities, and social and cultural organizations are working to meet this challenge by creating partnerships.

In order to effectively engage potential partners in all aspects of education, the community needs a road map or strategic plan that clearly defines goals, shows how all the pieces can fit together to reach these goals, and monitors progress and results. Working together, business and community members, parents, and educators can identify existing resources and, more importantly, recognize gaps at different levels within the system that need to be addressed. School improvement needs to be reinforced by all parts of the system.

Both small and large organizations can help improve student learning by acting on their own and with others. Partnerships occur at many different levels. They can happen between one business and one classroom; they can be a collaboration of businesses, parents or organizations working together to maximize impact on student learning; or they can involve an entire community coming together to achieve the National Education Goals or their own goals.

Partnerships can evolve over time based on changing needs and resources. Successful partnerships are characterized by an exchange of ideas and resources among all of the partners and by a willingness to direct activities toward achieving the desired goals. What ever form they take, when partnerships know what they want to accomplish and have a way to measure their results, they can make a real difference in helping to improve teaching and learning so that more students can be prepared for college, for careers, and for productive citizenship.

Education partnerships bring all stakeholders to the table and can be beneficial to all partners.

Students

- ★ Course work is more challenging, exciting, and relevant to the real world
- ★ Higher expectations and standards for learning
- ★ Improved basic skills, discipline, and computer and advanced skills

Families

- ★ Enhanced opportunities for family involvement in children's learning
- ★ Opportunities for lifetime learning
- ★ Involvement in setting school goals and direction

Schools

- ★ Additional resources and technical assistance
- ★ Enhanced opportunities for on-going and better teacher training
- ★ Increased public confidence and support for education

Business

- ★ Highly skilled and globally competitive workforce for a strong and vigorous economy
- ★ Opportunity to develop higher academic and skill standards
- ★ Positive consumer response to "socially responsible" companies

Community

- ★ Opportunity to convene all the stakeholders
- ★ Enhanced economic development and quality of life
- ★ Renewed community spirit and citizen participation

How to Build Business and Community Partnerships for Learning

⇒ IDENTIFY ISSUES TO ADDRESS AND REFORM GOALS

What are our school goals and mission?
What changes do we need to make?

⇒ DEFINE PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF PARTNERSHIPS

What do we hope to accomplish and how do we plan to work together?
What changes do we plan to make?
Where in the education system should we direct the partnership--classroom school, district, community, policy arena? Or some combination thereof?

⇒ IDENTIFY AVAILABLE RESOURCES

What kinds of resources will help us meet our goals--money, materials and equipment, volunteers, advisors and consultants, or advocates?
Where can we locate the resources we need?
How will we approach companies, foundations, and community organizations?
How will these resources be managed?

⇒ CONNECT PARTNERSHIP RESOURCES TO IMPROVEMENT

How will our partnership improve the quality of learning and teaching?
How will the partnership make a difference for students learning to higher standards?
What kinds of activities or involvement are needed to reach our goals?
Will our partnership better connect parents and teachers to help students achieve more?

⇒ MEASURE PROGRESS AND RESULTS

How will we know if we're making progress toward our goals?
What evidence will we use to measure results?
What benchmarks will we establish to know we are on track?

⇒ SHARE SUCCESS STORIES

How will we communicate results to other partners and the public?
How will we recognize and express appreciation to our partners?
How will we share our success stories with others?

Successful business and community partnerships for learning concentrate on helping schools create safe, disciplined learning environments with higher levels of student achievement. By linking much-needed resources with school and district needs, partnerships can become powerful catalysts for improving education.