

# **Business/Education Partnerships**



## **A Guide for Business Leaders 2008-09 School Year**



**Community & Family Engagement Department  
(904) 390-2960**

## Introduction

Thank you for your interest in improving the quality of education in Duval County. Duval County Public Schools actively promotes relationships between business people and schools for the purpose of better education. By joining this effort and becoming a business partner with a school, you will make a real difference in the quality of education provided our children.

Your business partnership is unique; it is based upon the size and nature of your business, the time you have to contribute, and the needs of your partner school. Your partnership may be very simple and involve you and one teacher or classroom within the school, or it may extend to many employees within the company working with the entire faculty and student body.

Partnerships may be formed with any school and at any grade level. Some schools are in greater need of partners due either to a lack of existing business partners or a student population who may be facing significant challenges. We encourage you to consider selecting a school based on how much need exists so that you may realize the greatest impact for the investment of your time and resources.

This handbook offers ideas and examples of activities and ideas from past and existing partnerships. We hope it will make establishing your partnership easier, with less duplication of effort and waste of time. You are encouraged to undertake any activities that you and your partner school decide would be worthwhile. You are not limited to the ideas presented here.

As you proceed, please call upon your partner school's Business Partnership Coordinator or on the district's Community & Family Engagement Department at 390-2960 for any assistance or advice you may need.

### **Your School's Business Partnership Coordinator:**

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(School)

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(Coordinator Name)

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(Phone/Ext.)

## **Business Partnership Begin with Parent Involvement**

Improving student achievement is a top priority for Duval County Public Schools. We cannot do it alone. The most important factor in student achievement is parental involvement. Parents are the first and best teachers for their children.

Research shows that parental involvement is a critical link to achieving a high-quality education and a safe, disciplined learning environment for every student. Children whose parents participate in learning activities with their children and make visits to the schools:

- Show improved academic performance
- Have greater self-esteem
- Show more positive attitudes toward school
- Have better behavior

Over the years, there has been a decline in parent visitations to schools. One of the greatest challenges facing schools today is getting parents more actively involved in their children's education.

Since most parents are employees, too, businesses are being asked to help them, their children, our schools, and ultimately, themselves by increasing parents' opportunities to be more involved in their children's learning by:

- Encouraging employees to be involved in the schools, both parents and non-parents
- Enabling them to be involved through flextime or release-time policies
- Expecting involvement!

It is clearly in a company's best interest to support employees in their roles as parents. Children do better when their parents are involved with school, and parents are happier and more productive when their children are doing well. By supporting family involvement, businesses help today's students to become tomorrow's well-educated, highly skilled, and motivated workforce.

## **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 and faculty.
- 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**

- Place partner on mailing list to let them know what's happening at school.
- Provide visibility. Include partnership information in newsletters, newspapers, school marquees.
- Encourage partner to be an active member of the School Advisory Council.
- Send thank-you notes (especially nice from kids!).
- Provide art work for display at partner's work site.
- Invite partner to visit school regularly.
- Include partner as a participant in school activities and community projects.
- Provide choral or musical groups for entertaining employees.
- Give 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 partner to participate in Career Day, serve as a guest reader, etc.
- Invite partner to a faculty meeting to meet staff.
- Introduce partner to students and parents, possibly at school open house event.
- 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.

## **A Special Note on School Volunteer Policy**

In order to ensure the safety and well-being of our students, we require our volunteers to complete a Volunteer Application (enclosed in this packet) and consent to a criminal background screening.

Also, any volunteers who will be working one-on-one with students, without a school staff member present in the same room (or immediate area if outdoors), must have a full background check conducted and complete mentor training through Jacksonville Children's Commission. Call the Jacksonville Children's Commission at 630-3647 for more information or to register.

If you have any questions about this policy, please contact your partner school's Business Partnership Coordinator or the Community & Family Engagement Department at 390-2960

## **Communications with Schools**

One of the challenges you may face as a business partner is communicating with your partner school. While these issues are easily resolved, it is helpful to understand them early and to discuss them openly:

- Business people and educators speak “different languages.” Just as different businesses have jargon and technical terms, educators have theirs. It is important to take the time to understand the style and terminology of education, and it is equally important to share the words and concepts of business with students and educators.
- It is critically important to find one person within the school to be your liaison with all other school faculty and staff. Communication problems are compounded if you try to work through a variety of people. This person can be the designated Business Partnership Coordinator, the principal, or a teacher who takes a special interest in this partnership.
- Schools do not have the same types of communication equipment as modern businesses. Teachers are limited in when and how they can make and receive calls. They do not have fax machines at their sides, and computer access may be limited. Talk about this with your partner, and devise convenient ways to reach each other. You may designate certain times to talk, use a third party as a message center, or choose to talk from home.
- Most business people plan events and think in terms of January to December; most educators think August to May. This can have an impact on communication and should be considered when discussing projects, deadlines, and meetings.

The most important tip about business-school communication is to talk openly and often. If all of your discussions are guided by a spirit of caring and helpfulness, you will overcome minor “technical difficulties.”

## **Structuring the Partnership**

Do you have specific ideas in mind when you think about partnering with a local school? Would you prefer to base your involvement on the school’s identified needs? Is your company interested in donating time, money, talent, equipment, services, or other resources?

Sometimes it may be difficult to determine what a school’s biggest needs are. Maybe there are many needs, or perhaps the school contact is stumped as to what to ask of you in the partnership. At these times, you may wish to ask for a copy of the School Improvement Plan (SIP). The SIP is an annual, comprehensive, school-level plan of action created to provide a systematic process for improving student performance at the school.

By meeting with your chosen school's contact person and completing a Business Partnership Agreement, you both can define what your goals are for the partnership and the activities you will engage in to meet those goals. *Please be aware that Business Partnership Agreements are usually one school year in length.*

A blank copy of the agreement is in this packet. Your selected school's Business Partnership Coordinator will complete the agreement with you.

## **Partnerships with All Schools or Multiple Schools**

If your business wishes to partner with all schools in the district or a large group of schools, please call the Community & Family Engagement Department at 390-2960 for more information. We have a Districtwide Business Partnership program that offers unique opportunities for visibility and involvement.

## **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.

**Thank you for your interest in helping Duval County  
Public Schools and your future workforce!**