

# This We Believe About the Role of Business Education at All Educational Levels

## Policy Statement 64

The twenty-first century and the “Net generation” have arrived! What does the reality of the new century hold for business education?

**We Believe That** all persons regardless of age, gender, and career aspirations can benefit from participating in business education. Meeting the needs of the Net generation, who in the year 2000 will be between the ages of two and twenty-three, will be a primary focus of our profession. They will influence how each of us will interact in the world. Thus, business educators must recognize that there is a major difference between Net generation learners and those from previous generations. Powerful technology has enabled the Net generation to develop different mindsets about work. Traits of these learners include:

- 1. Independence.** The Net generation thrives in an independent environment where they determine their own priorities.
- 2. Collaboration.** The Net generation favors peer-oriented relationships that grow out of mutual respect for each other’s expertise.
- 3. Respect.** The Net generation expects to be treated as equals and assessed according to their contributions rather than their age and position.
- 4. Multitasking.** The Net generation is comfortable performing many tasks at one time. While they do not consider multitasking stressful, they do expect immediate results.

These new mindsets require change. Business education can be adapted to respond to these traits.

### An Evolving Business Education Environment

**We Believe That** the business education curriculum is vital because of the knowledge and skills it provides. In order for business education to be an integral and equal partner within a school’s educational community, business educators must proactively respond to industry needs and connect with changing student learning styles.

**We Believe That** the knowledge and skills taught in business education are essential in the foundation for emerging careers in e-commerce and other job clusters. In addition, **We Believe That** people skills must be integrated throughout the curriculum. Business educators teach soft skills through modeling, classroom culture, and daily interactions in a project-based environment.

A project-based environment is where learners learn by doing. Learners work in teams, refine people skills, and establish business contacts through a series of organized activities including field trips, career presentations, job shadowing, mentoring, and work-site experiences. They learn from the strengths and weaknesses of others in a real-time mode in virtual classrooms.

At all educational levels, the business educator must transform the classroom into a virtual enterprise. Here, learners apply their learning “just-in-time” for the daily operation of the business. In this virtual enterprise, learners face and learn to handle actual business situations such as creating business plans, handling finances, identifying staffing needs, marketing products and services, and fulfilling customer needs. Delivering business knowledge, skills, and attitudes in this way enables the business educator to facilitate student problem solving and decision making at its highest level.

**We Believe That** business education is a rigorous discipline that challenges learners to develop their creative thinking skills and become independent learners. Through analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, learners apply their business knowledge and skills in other disciplines and in the real world.

### Role of Business Education at Various Levels

**Elementary. We Believe That** learning is a lifelong endeavor in which business educators serve as resource persons and teach career awareness and technological literacy at the elementary level. A business educator may be a technology coordinator, peer coach, media specialist, or team teacher. By partnering with elementary teachers, business educators integrate technology and career awareness into the curriculum.

**Middle School/Junior High. We Believe That** business educators teach learners to use technology effectively in the learning process for all content areas. They provide career exploration through school-based enterprises, job shadowing, and job mentoring activities at the middle/junior high school level. Through realistic simulations, learners apply technology skills and demonstrate effective soft skills needed to become successful participants in the business world.

**Secondary. We Believe That** business educators facilitate learning in a student-directed environment based upon learning for and about business. Learners are guided in many ways as they develop skills necessary to be effective consumers,

citizens, workers, and business leaders. Learners customize their learning by selecting projects based on personal and career interests. Learners, working independently or in teams, use a wide range of technology to solve unstructured problems. All of these opportunities support their desire for independence and creativity, as well as their need to collaborate. Learners continue their career exploration and demonstration of their career skills through work experience and student organizations.

**Postsecondary/Four-Year University. We Believe That** postsecondary institutions are in an ideal position to provide education and training to persons desiring to change careers, expand employability options, and/or upgrade technological skills. These goals can be accomplished by developing occupational competencies through certificate and degree programs,

practical work experiences, and coherent courses to provide a smooth transition from high school to two- and four-year colleges or to work. Advanced technological competencies, economic understandings, workplace literacy skills such as communications, critical thinking, management, personal finance, problem solving, team building, and decision-making skills are developed through a variety of formats.

### **Summary**

The evolving environment created by the Net generation provides business education a window of opportunity to be vibrant, viable, and involved as leaders in the educational process. Thus, **We Believe That** the rich heritage of business education provides the confidence needed to renew the profession and to grow to a greater level of involvement.