

This We Believe About the Need for Partnerships in Business Education

Policy Statement 70

Establishing partnerships is an integral part of any business education program. Partnerships must be formed to provide an awareness of and visibility for business education in meeting the needs of a dynamic global environment. Business educators recognize the need for and advantage of having collaboration with business/industry, government, education, and social communities. Equally important is the recognition by all communities of what this collaboration can provide for each partner. Effective partnerships have advanced from specific activities and donations of money to collaborations of partners actively involved in improving education through time and service.

Establishing a Comprehensive Learning Community

We Believe That multiple partnerships are needed to provide a comprehensive learning community for students. These partnerships, classified into four categories, include business/industry, government, education, and social communities.

Advisory boards, chambers of commerce, professional organizations, vendors, and not-for-profit and for-profit organizations are part of the business/industry community. The government community may include agencies, legislators, voters, and lobbyists. The education community is comprised of students, teachers, administrators, and board members from all levels. Families, neighborhoods, peers, and civic and faith-based organizations are included in the social community. Parents participate as members in each of these communities.

WE BELIEVE THAT the student is the heart of the partnership. The student should be an active participant and/or the beneficiary of a partnership. Whether the partnership is a one-time experience or an extended long-term relationship, the goal of the partnership is that the student becomes a contributing member of society.

We Believe That benefits are derived from forming partnerships. Partnerships promote effective communication exchanges about current business and economic trends, technological demands, and realistic job requirements. Participants in successful partnerships become advocates for mutual opportunities to

- share experiences and visions;
- mentor;
- consult;

- network;
- provide technology, manpower, funding, and expertise; and
- create employment possibilities.

Designing Effective Partnerships

We Believe That forming successful partnerships depends on a clear understanding of the role and purpose of a collaborative effort. This understanding can be accomplished by establishing a common language, common goals, and clear expectations. Successful partnerships depend on selecting the right partners, outlining roles and responsibilities, providing orientation and training opportunities, and offering value to participating partners.

Selecting the right partners. Selecting partners who can help achieve desired goals is essential. Partners can bring diverse opportunities, knowledge, expertise, resources, views, and political influences to the partnership. The cumulative effect of this diversity provides a dynamic forum for optimum results.

Outlining roles and responsibilities. Collaborating partners should establish the roles and responsibilities of each member. Members should have an understanding of what is expected and how their roles fit the overall objectives.

Providing orientation and training opportunities. Orientation and training opportunities must be provided for members to reach their potential in the partnership. A well-orchestrated partnership allows members to contribute effectively to a common objective by doing what they do best. Orientation topics may include school, business, and agency policies that affect the operation of the partnership. Examples of training activities include teachers learning how to communicate with legislators or worksite mentors learning how to supervise student interns.

Offering value to the participating partners. Partners participate for diverse reasons. Among these are opportunities to make a difference, to network, to be recognized, to influence curricular activities, and to contribute to society. Effective and ongoing partnerships are characterized by mutual benefits gained from these experiences.

We Believe That partnerships depend on administrative support and an effective communication system. Ongoing administrative support is vital to the development, mainte-

nance, and growth of any partnership. Administrative support may include teacher release time, financial commitment, flexible work schedules, and clerical support. An effective communication system is one in which members are informed, concerns are heard, needs are met, and overall relationships are developed and maintained through mutual trust and respect. Public awareness is an essential element in a communication system. For example, press releases and featured articles provide valuable community exposure.

Assessing Partnership Effectiveness

We Believe That assessment is vital to the longevity and effectiveness of a partnership. Ongoing and collaborative review of partnership goals and proposed outcomes should be conducted. Partnership activities provide the tools and environment to enhance classroom learning. In reviewing the success of the partnership, the following goals must be addressed:

- Students participate in career orientation and development activities.
- Students benefit from opportunities for learning, practice, and application.

- Partners recognize the value of a partnership for all participants.
- Partners appreciate the unique contributions available through partnerships.
- Students and partners benefit from a positive public relations program.

We Believe That partners must be actively involved in assessment activities. The role of the business teacher is to make certain that assessment occurs. Assessments may consist of surveys, interviews, or other evaluation methods deemed appropriate for the specified activities of the partnerships.

Conclusion

We Believe That the business teacher must take a leadership role in initiating, forming, implementing, and assessing partnerships. The value of partnerships to all communities cannot be overestimated. A successful partnership results in a positive learning environment for students. Regardless of the nature of the partnership, partners work together to form the ultimate team—a strong network built on trust and respect.