

# This We Believe About Business Education as Core Academic Content

BY THE POLICIES COMMISSION FOR BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION

**L**earning for and about business is inherently academic. Business education provides a rigorous and relevant contextual learning opportunity for core content (English, math, science, and social studies). The business curriculum creates a powerful vehicle for motivating and educating students. Stakeholders need to recognize the contribution of business education to a student's academic achievement.

All people apply business concepts and skills throughout their lives. Business surrounds us. To prepare students for their roles as citizens, consumers, and workers, the business curriculum presents learning opportunities for (a) understanding fundamental economic and business concepts; (b) developing positive dispositions for working and living in a changing environment; (c) making wise economic and career choices; and (d) securing knowledge and skills necessary for success on the job.

Research supports that academic achievement is improved for many students when core content is taught in an authentic context. **We believe that** business is an authentic context for learners. Business educators design a variety of relevant, student-centered learning experiences within that context.

Instructional strategies that enhance the contextual learning experience may include case studies, simulations, and team-building projects. Many real-life situations require the application of skills from a range of subject areas. An inability of students to connect what they learn in school with real-world applications can lead to inert knowledge—knowledge stored but never applied. Connections occur when students transfer learning while making decisions, solving problems, and applying concepts to situations they encounter. When students see the relevance of their education, they are more likely to be engaged in their education and to remain in school.

In recent years, business and government leaders have stressed a need for a more rigorous education that emphasizes accountability of schools through student performance. A school's accountability is measured by student performance in core content areas. Governmental mandates to improve academic excellence have led to an increase in core course requirements. As a result, many students have difficulty scheduling a business course sequence as part of their educational program. Therefore, **we believe that** administra-

tors, counselors/advisers, and teachers must work together to create opportunities for students to have flexible schedules for completing a meaningful business course sequence.

**We believe that** business courses that meet substantial core content standards should fulfill academic graduation requirements. Business educators must appropriately design learning activities that focus on core content standards embedded into the business curriculum. According to longitudinal research data from the Southern Regional Educational Board *2000 High Schools That Work Assessment*, students who completed a core academic and a career concentration

- had reading, math, and science scores equal to or above those of college-prep students
- continued their studies at a higher rate than those students who did not complete an upgraded academic core and a career concentration
- had a higher GPA in college and were more likely to remain in college than other high school graduates

Such performance assessment data must be communicated to stakeholders. In addition, business educators must rigorously assess and report business

student performance on core content standards.

**We believe that** education for and about business is vital to the economic well-being of the individual, the community, the nation, and the world. People in any organization, business, government agency, or household need a working knowledge of business to operate effectively and efficiently. Further, **we believe that** the information technology strand in business programs requires substantial application of core content standards, specifically in English and math.

The National Business Education Association has published national business standards that are a synthesis of what students should know about business and be able to do in business. The eleven content areas are accounting, business law, career development, communication, computation, economics and personal finance, entrepreneurship, information technology, international business, management, and marketing. In addition to these national standards, states have developed their own academic standards for business education. Together, the national and state academic standards guide business curriculum development. Therefore, **we believe that** the core content in these standards should be validated by state departments of education, teacher education programs, and other educational agencies.

Business teachers must be prepared to accept a role in a standards-based accountability environment. Therefore, **we believe that** business teacher educators must prepare preservice business educators to create cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary learning experiences, analyze core content for curriculum alignment, construct performance assessments, and interpret assessment data. In addition, business teacher educators must provide related professional development experiences for inservice teachers.

**We believe that** business education is laden with core content. Business educators

- prepare students for the many phases of their academic, career, and personal lives
- provide opportunities for students to apply core content in an authentic context
- improve student academic achievement in core content areas through a rigorous and relevant business curriculum.