

INTRODUCTION TO PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

Why Business Partnerships?

In the past decade, business and education partnerships have become integral components in thousands of school districts across the nation, working together to strengthen the educational process through collaborative relationships.

Education needs to be everybody's business. By utilizing our community's manpower, material and financial resources effectively, our schools can build a resource network that helps supplement tight budgets and meet the challenge of providing quality education to all children. Of course, business and industry also need a skilled and educated work force to stay competitive. Working together, we can meet our respective needs and goals.

A key concept of school improvement is that: "**A successful education system is one in which every stakeholder feels a sense of ownership and involvement in the system's programs and services.**" That's what successful business partnerships are about ... **involvement and teamwork!**

What is a Partner in Education?

A partnership is a **mutually supportive arrangement between a business and a school or school district**, in which the partners commit themselves to specific goals and activities intended to **enhance educational opportunities to benefit students**. Usually, this is in the form of a **written agreement**.

The mutually agreed upon goals and objectives are met by **matching community resources to the identified needs** of the school. In meeting these goals and objectives, school resources are also matched to the identified needs of a partner such as a business or community group.

The focus of partnerships differs for each company and school, but all partnerships share a common commitment to improving education. Individual schools and their community partners develop activities at their own pace, consistent with their needs and resources.

The partner may be a business, service organization, governmental agency, association, community group or institution of higher education. Using human and other resources, the partner has an impact on student achievement. As in any successful partnership the resources, ideas and personnel from both sides are shared for **mutual benefit**.

Partnerships often are "facilitated" by a third party. The third party could be a chamber of commerce or District or Area Partnerships Coordinator. Many businesses choose to partner with schools that are close to their offices or stores, and a school may look for a nearby business that has special resources or expertise the school needs. Partnerships are sometimes established because an individual had an idea and acted on it!

Partnerships may involve business employees as tutors, mentors, coaches, or guest lecturers in the partner schools; a business may or may not make material or monetary contributions, as well, but **people resources** are the most important. In good partnerships, schools provide something to their partners in return. This may be something intangible, such as good will, or a tangible benefit, such as use of school facilities or academic resources.

Businesses may at times be willing to make a monetary donation, especially if it goes directly toward classroom activities and academics. However, fund raising is not the primary goal of the partnership program. Also, business people say that it is usually best not to ask for money initially, but to **build a relationship with them first**.

Successful partnerships have agreed-upon and well-defined goals and objectives; the business may wish, for example, to support the mathematics or science program of a school. Together, they develop activities that will implement their objectives. Once they are joined, partners should attempt to stay together for a long time. Though the partnership may change and evolve, **commitment and continuity** are essential for success, especially when dealing with students.

The business may offer internships for students, incentives for academic achievement, training for teachers, use of its labs or equipment, instructional enrichment, or employees who can be mentors or tutors.

The school, in turn needs to know its instructional objectives, define its needs, plan for and structure the business relationships, and monitor outcomes. In good partnerships, all activities undertaken by the school and business together are intended to enhance the academic achievement of students.

It is important for prospective partners in education to understand that partnerships do not live by good will alone; they take hard work and good management. Businesses and schools are structured differently and sometimes have problems communicating.

Experience also shows that it is essential to have someone in the school in fairly regular contact with someone at the business to plan or iron out difficulties and keep channels open. Well-constructed partnerships between schools and business are good responses to concerns Americans feel about education. In a complex world, it is becoming clear that energy and resources from the wider community are needed if schools are to succeed in educating all youngsters (as they say, "It takes a village").

What Are Partnerships And How Do They Work?

Educators have a historic opportunity to allow community members to make a strategic investment in the schools. The involvement of business resources will directly impact the health of our communities today and the quality of the workforce available tomorrow.

Business is at the leading edge of change in technology, information services, finance and a host of areas that impact the economic health of the entire community. Sharing expertise and resources helps bring schools up-to-date, and allows business the opportunity to

assist students in developing the work ethic and skills that are critical for success in the workplace.

The district's Department of Communications and Community Development is looking for business leaders to develop partnership programs that enhance student achievement

What Are the Types Of Partnerships?

Partnerships can be school-specific (Adopt-a-School programs) or program/project-specific. It's not the size of a business or organization that is key, but the level of commitment. Partnerships and resources come in all shapes and sizes. Each partnership is autonomous, and there are no set requirements. Individual schools or programs and businesses have unique needs and resources to bring together. A mutual agreement will clearly spell out commitments, planned activities and time frames.

Levels of involvement can be characterized by 3 stages: support, cooperation, and collaboration. In the **support stage**, typically a beginning phase, some member of the school community engages a partner to provide resources. These relationships often focus on acquiring new resources for specific activities. These are first steps that begin to build interest and support, and which lay important groundwork for greater involvement. Partnerships usually **start small and expand gradually**. As mutual trust builds, expanded activities and involvement occurs.

The **cooperation** stage is characterized by a greater degree of communication, participation, leadership, and shared decision-making. Typical examples are the development of mentorship projects or school-to-career transition programs.

In the **collaboration stage**, the partnership begins to assume "a life of its own." In this stage, the partnership has the full attention and involvement of top-level leadership and has implementation support. Partners have established long-range goals that address essential school or community needs. Major resources are committed and there is widespread staff involvement on all parts.

Options for Business Partners

This handbook takes you through several steps in a process for developing Partners in Education. It is a series of guideposts for school-based business partnership coordinators.

The handbook offers a menu of options that partners may want to consider. All are aimed at enhancing and enriching the education received by students. Some partnerships will be comprehensive, meaning they include a wide range of activities. Others will be more limited, with only one or two kinds of activities. For almost all partnerships, it is best to start small. Branching out into new activities comes naturally as the partners get to know one another, and see further opportunities for cooperation.

In general, business partnerships operate in the following areas of school life, though imagination and need may add others.

Instructional Support and Enrichment

Business people may work directly with students, one-on-one, or in groups, to remediate skills, motivate performance, or enrich the curriculum. Depending on the nature of the business and the identified needs of the schools, the partner may bring business personnel into the schools as volunteer mentors, tutors or lecturers. Good partnerships try to match the special expertise of businesses with the instructional programs of schools, so students can see real-world applications of the skills they are studying. In some partnerships, the business opens its laboratories or offices to students for training on specialized equipment or for career awareness. Some partners prefer to work with your after-school programs.

In all instructional-support activities, the **business partner works in collaboration with school staff to further the school's instructional objectives.**

Also in this category, are incentives and rewards for academic achievement offered to students by the business partners. These may include scholarships, special trips, recognition events, books, or other minor items, such as T-shirts, caps, or buttons. All incentives work best when people from the partnership are in regular contact with students as part of the incentive program. The business partner should not, of course, offer any incentive without consulting school authorities.

Staff Development

Businesses may help schools with staff development by offering summer internships to teachers or funding attendance at professional meetings and seminars; or they may make corporate experience in management and strategic planning available to school staff and administrators. In fields in which changes have occurred since teachers were trained, business can provide state-of-the-art updates on equipment and content. In turn, schools, particularly high schools, can offer career development courses and basic skills training for business employees.

Curriculum Development

Business partners with technical expertise may develop supplemental instructional materials in fields such as science and mathematics to augment the regular school curriculum and textbooks. This is an advanced step in most partnerships and should be taken in cooperation with the school district's curriculum development staff.

Material and Financial Support

Business partners and school administrators often think of this as the first step in partnership development, but it should probably be the last. Experience shows that **involving people is more important for good partnership development, and is more likely to improve education.** Donating a computer lab to a school, for example, may be an ineffective strategy, unless the business partner and the school have worked out the problems of staff support, training, and maintenance involved in the gift. Schools often need and welcome material support, but it should be accompanied by **people support.**

Career Shadowing and Internships

Partnerships may include a component of counseling and guidance for students, for careers or college. This may take the form of job shadowing, in which students are assigned to business mentors for in-school or out-of-school experiences; or it may involve business people listening to problems and discussing students' plans for the future.

Some partnerships focus specifically on the schools' responsibility to provide education for employment, and businesses' responsibility to employ graduates of the school system. In this kind of partnership the businesses pledge priority hiring in return for students' achievement of certain academic, attendance, and other standards.

Policy Development and Advocacy

Many schools welcome partnerships with business as a way to improve their community relations, as well as a way to improve education. Surveys also show that businesses cite a desire to enhance their image in the community as the single most important reason for forming a school partnership. This mutual desire for good public relations translates into advocacy, with businesses and schools working together to support and promote school-improvement strategies through the School Advisory Councils (SAC's).

As you plan your partnership, it is important to determine which element or elements of a comprehensive partnership you want to develop first. To some extent, this will depend on the needs and resources you have identified in both schools and businesses, and the goals and objectives you want your partnership to achieve.

Team Approach to Partnership Development

The principle of collaborative planning must operate from the very beginning of a partnership, not only between partners but within each of the partner organizations as well.

When possible, use teams to develop partnership plans. Teams, with their inherent synergy, will give you greater chances of success. In designing a partnership to operate in a school, the team (on the school side) may consist of the principal, the partnership coordinator, the volunteer coordinator or a teacher. Some of these team members will also maintain contact with the business. The District's Partnerships Coordinator and Volunteer Coordinator may also be involved in some phases of many partnership activities.

On the business side, the team should include the person who will coordinate with the business, including recruiting business resources and working closely with the school staff. There may be other business representatives as well, such as a member of the local Chamber of Commerce. **The size and makeup of a team will be somewhat different for each partnership.**

The purpose of this team approach is to involve key decision-makers from the beginning in the design of the partnership and the activities the partnership should undertake. Early involvement can minimize misunderstandings and problems in the implementation phase of the plan.

AWARENESS

The success of a comprehensive partnership will, in large part, be dependent upon your ability to create the right environment for growth of the program. Creating an environment conducive to partnership development and growth is accomplished by conducting well-planned awareness activities. Awareness is informing key populations that community partnerships are being considered as a means of improving the schools and the community.

Awareness involves aspects of networking, marketing, brainstorming and public relations. An effective awareness strategy will create the climate in which your partnership can begin and to continue growing.

Different Cultures, Different Values

As you begin the analysis of the structure of the businesses and schools that will be involved in your partnership, keep in mind that business leaders and school leaders may have different sets of values. Your partnership will attempt to bring these groups together.

Understanding the differences between business people and educators in philosophy or accustomed ways of operating is key to developing successful awareness activities. For example, business leaders typically want to move ahead quickly, make decisions and look for immediate solutions. Educators may want to discuss the problem, consult their colleagues, and study alternatives. This means that different strategies may be needed for each group. The question to keep in mind is, "What does this particular key group need to know in order to become involved in the partnership?"

Key School Populations

The **Principals** of each school have overall responsibility for programs and projects operating in that school. Principals need to be informed early that the partnership is a mechanism that can help them reach their existing goals and objectives, and to help achieve existing priorities.

The school's **business partnerships coordinator** will likely be involved in many or most of the school's partnership activities. This entails being knowledgeable of available businesses and resources in the neighborhood and handling the necessary partnership documentation.

Teachers are often the last to learn of a new initiative in a school, despite the fact that they are the people who will help make it work. Teachers may view the use of external community or business resources as added work. Helping them to understand the potential benefits of a partnership to them and to their students is important.

Awareness of the **support staff** of a school is very important. A secretary or receptionist may be the first person in the school to have contact with a business partner and needs to know how to handle the situation.

Key Business Populations

The support of the business' **chief executive officer** or **owner** is crucial to the success of a business education partnership. In addition to the top officers of a business, a number of others, including **managers** and **directors** need to know a partnership is planned, since they will probably be involved at some point. All personnel of a business need to know how an education partnership can improve the company's image and help it fulfill corporate responsibilities to the community.

A key group that is often involved in business/education partnerships, is the local **chamber of commerce**. Chambers of commerce can provide leads for partnerships, help organize events (like career fairs), sponsor scholarships or solicit summer employment opportunities.

Developing Awareness

The **awareness plan** that you develop is dependent on your understanding of how the school and business partners are structured. Who needs to be made aware at the school? What conditions exist in the school? How will the partnership improve those conditions? What is the structure of the business' management system? What financial and human resources does the business have? How can the partnership tap these resources?

Awareness activities will vary by target group and based on the message you want to convey. Following is a list of common awareness activities:

- Breakfast meetings with business groups and Chambers to outline partnership elements such as mentoring, tutoring or school advocacy.
- Discuss needs and priorities at school meetings.
- Public service announcements for the community at large.

School Profile

A profile of your school presents your image to the public. This profile can be used for partners, and as a public relations instrument. When compiling this profile, many persons can participate in providing the information. The profile should enable your partner to better understand your school and its needs.

A profile might include such items as:

- Special programs
- A description of the school
- The number of students, teachers and other staff
- Accomplishments of the school and its students and teachers
- Include your School Improvement Plan goals, and objectives

Benefits of Business / Education Partnerships

For Students:

- Students are exposed to positive role models, where they receive encouragement and support
- Graduates are better prepared for work; have an increased awareness of career opportunities and the job market; help in getting into better colleges.
- Students have higher aspirations, and are better motivated to prepare for the world of work.
- Students have a better understanding of real work applications of abstract concepts.
- Students have increased confidence, self-esteem, pride and motivation.
- Students have more interest in school and better attendance.
- Students have better study habits, hopefully leading to improved test scores.
- Students develop special interests, and have the opportunity to see and use equipment that schools do not have or cannot provide.
- Students receive technical assistance on advanced projects and concepts.
- Classroom studies are supplemented with relevant learning experience in business and the community through internships.

For Teachers:

- Help in covering the assigned curriculum; new approaches and ideas than can be incorporated into examples for teaching concepts
- Familiarization with recent developments in technical skills students need to prepare for those careers
- Interaction with other professionals in the community.
- Better understanding of the business world.
- Enhanced opportunities for professional growth and networking opportunities.

For the School:

- Schools offer, and students receive, a more complete educational background.
- Schools acquire a more realistic and positive image in the corporate community; increased community support and confidence.
- Schools improve their resources, to enhance students' contact with the "real world."
- Access to experts for special courses; supplies and/or equipment that school systems cannot justify; increased public support for school systems.
- Variation in the teaching method and setting, adding another dimension to classroom instruction.
- Recognition for outstanding achievements.
- Better attendance on partnership days.
- Activities that can lead to a variety of assistance (donations of equipment; video tapes and other special teaching materials; persons to serve on curriculum advisory committees).
- Increased resources (human and financial)

For the Business:

The ultimate benefit is knowing that strengthening our school system positively impacts the community as a whole; providing students who are better prepared to enter the workforce and be productive, responsible citizens.

Businesses and organizations gain a greater understanding of the quality and needs of our public schools while making an investment in preparing tomorrow's leaders, employees and consumers.

- Partners receive visibility and recognition for valued community services; and enhance their image in the community.
- Business people can affect how school staff and parents perceive their company.
- Businesses help develop their employees by providing them opportunities to be involved in the community.
- A creative outlet is provided for employees; strengthens workplace team building.
- Increases employee moral, and helps business retain employees.
- Generates an increased understanding of schools and local education.
- Causes enhancement and expansion of a future well-educated job applicant pool.
- Companies can reduce their costs of recruitment, remediation, absenteeism and poor work habits.
- Access to school facilities and special programs.
- Businesses and organizations have an opportunity to affect the quality of the public schools and ultimately, the community.
- Businesses and organizations help students gain a better understanding of business and the community and how they work.

For Business Volunteers:

Business volunteers enjoy rewarding and satisfying experiences with students

- Enjoy working with students and seeing them learn
- Have a sense of social responsiveness and contribution to the community
- Elevate the excellence of the school which volunteers attend

For Parents:

- Parents' positive attitudes toward public education increase as they see their children benefiting from partnership programs.
- The communications gap that may exist between parents and students and business narrows through their mutual concern and support for public education.
- Many parents are served directly by adjunct partnership activities.

ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS AND RESOURCES

Defining Areas of Need and Setting Priorities

Needs assessment is the process of gathering and interpreting information regarding school and business needs that will determine the goals and objectives of the partnership. Determining specific educational needs and designing partnership elements around those needs is closely tied to the awareness process and essential to the partnership process.

Needs assessment is ongoing because school and business and community **needs change over time**, and also because the partnership itself may alter the needs.

All schools have unmet needs. Students may need tutoring in basic skills, hands-on experiences in math and science, or enrichment in art, music, or history. Your task in planning a needs assessment strategy is to decide how best to determine the existing priority needs of each of these areas.

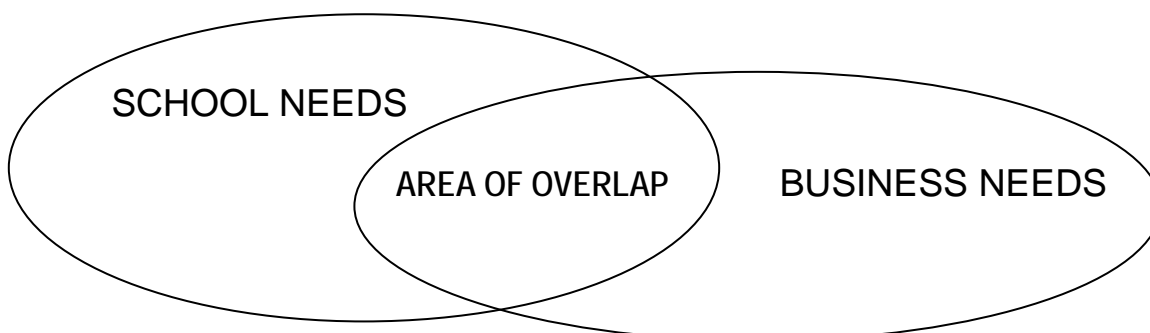
The following page is a needs assessment form that may be used to help determine and organize the needs of your school. Remember to review the “**resources needed**” section from your **school improvement plan**.

The primary objective a business/education partnership has is to address the needs of schools. But, in good partnerships, it is recognized that the **business partner** has needs as well.

Areas of Need That Overlap

So many needs, so many businesses and organizations. Where do we begin? It will help for us to focus on areas where the needs of schools and businesses overlap.

The following indicates that each group has its own set of needs and priorities. Successful partnerships define common areas of need and common priorities. The partnership becomes a two-way street, and each group feels the partnership is beneficial.



Identification of Possible Resources

Potential resources are all the people, materials, equipment, and monies available within the school, school district, and businesses to help meet the needs you have identified. This stage of the partnership development process invites you to think about and plan for the use of possible resources.

Where do you find resources of people, materials, equipment, and money? What is already present in the school or the business to help you establish and improve a partnership?

Use your completed needs statement to focus your search. Your needs (volunteers, incentives, or whatever) will direct you to the resources you seek.

Business Resources

You may be surprised at the variety of resources available in a business. Most people initially think of business and corporate contributions to education in terms of donations of equipment and money. But, in fact, the major resources available from business are **people and services**.

Take time to do research by examine corporate news reports and advertising. If your company is a branch office, investigate whether the headquarters or other branches have partnerships with their local schools.

Schools and Community Resources

Seeking student support is an easy task when it takes place on a college campus. Young people are, in general, enthusiastic about giving their time and effort to a cause such as better education. Most universities have programs that allow students time to volunteer in the community. Some universities offer credit to students for community service. College students are eager for the opportunity to participate in schools, especially when they are considering teaching as a career. High school and middle school students are also good resources to tap. Peer tutoring is regarded as an effective way to improve the student volunteer's academic achievement and self-esteem.

State Agencies

State government also has resources available. The **Governor's Mentoring Initiative** began in late 1999. This program allows state employees to take one hour of Administrative leave per week to volunteer in schools as mentors or tutors.

Do not overlook the local government's involvement. Partnership opportunities and resources exist with police departments, correctional facilities, post offices, fire departments, mayor's offices, etc.



BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The goal of this assessment is to develop meaningful partnerships. Use this list of focus areas to determine the **primary needs and priorities** of your students, staff, and school programs, and to **prioritize** them. The more clearly the need is defined, the better the partnership match. Objectives may be short-term or long-range.

Review your **school improvement plan** and think of ways to include businesses, organizations or other education stakeholders in achieving your goals.

Increased Student Performance / Academic Achievement –

- Volunteer readers.
- Tutoring services.
- A business or organization project that requires student involvement.
- Business resources to enhance instruction (personnel, equipment or materials).
- Incentive awards to recognize students for improved performance
- Showcase for student artwork or display of notices of school events.
- Acknowledgement of student achievement or school activities.
- Company speakers for classroom presentations or assemblies.

The school's primary needs in this area are:

Career Awareness and Job Preparedness –

- Job shadowing, internship or employment opportunities for students.
- Guest speakers on career awareness topics (interviewing, resumes).
- Career day, job fair or other career awareness activity.
- Volunteers to instruct through Junior Achievement.
- Store visits, or tours of a business facility.
- Career mentor.
- Summer jobs and internships for students.
- Short-term job shadowing for students and/or teachers.

The school's primary needs in this area are:

Increased Parent/Community Participation -

- Provision of parent workshops, or speakers at parent meetings.
- Print parent (PTA, PTO) newsletter.
- Co-sponsor fundraising or community service projects.

The school's primary needs in this area are:

Involvement in an Advisory Roles / Encourage Innovation:

- Participation on the School Advisory Council.
- Participation on a PTA, PTO, or athletic board or school-to-work committee.
- Participation on a curriculum or other committee.
- Educational or curriculum support materials
- Marketing, public relations, computer or other consulting services to school staff.

The school's primary needs in this area are:

Enhanced Learning Environment, Motivation, Dropout Prevention –

- Adult role models for students (mentoring).
- Participation in an after-school program.
- Involvement in school beautification or other projects or events at school.
- Printing of a school newspaper or other publications.
- Guest speakers for faculty development workshops or parent meetings.
- Recognition of teachers, by issuing awards or certificates.
- Seminars or skills training for students, parents, faculty or administrators.
- Judges for various school events.
- Participation in sports activities with teachers and/or students.

The school's primary needs in this area are:

Other –

- Sponsorship of clubs, special programs or educational field trips (museum or zoo).
- Donations of used furniture, equipment or surplus materials for classroom use.
- Sponsorship of recognition events or incentive awards for students or teachers.
- Grants for research on effective strategies for school improvement.
- Sponsorship of essay or art contests.
- Donated tickets to cultural or other appropriate events.

The school's primary needs in this area are:

What type of **businesses** might best enhance your curriculum or program priorities?

What specific **projects** are you planning, or what type of grant(s) have you applied for, that a business or community group could enhance? Attach more information if needed.

SCHOOL NAME _____ CONTACT _____

Questions? Call the Business Partnerships office, Office of Community Involvement at 434-8771 (px 48771).

RECRUITING PARTNERS

The Recruitment Process

Recruitment is the process of engaging people and resources to become involved in your partnership, to service the needs identified by the school community and business. Recruitment is synonymous with promotion of the partnership.

The recruitment strategies you develop for your partnership depend on which elements of a comprehensive partnership you have decided to implement. Recruitment is, therefore, driven in large part by identified needs of principals, teachers, students, and other school personnel, and by the school's instructional priorities.

Schools and businesses are limited only by imagination when they design partnership activities. The opportunities are infinite. Each school has unique needs, goals and priorities, just as each business or organization has unique objectives and resources. So, *no two partnerships will be exactly alike.*

When a school is recruiting a new partner, or renewing an alliance with an existing partner, the school business partnership coordinator and the business contact person should meet in person to discuss the needs and goals of the partnership and the activities that will help achieve them.

Business people also want to see a connection between the partnership and improving education. You may want to point out a relationship between future workforce needs and the partnership.

Specific Strategies for Direct Recruitment

- Person-to-Person
- Group presentations
- Slide or video presentations

Remember that follow-up is vital.

Specific Strategies for Indirect Recruitment

Printed materials: posters, brochures, news clips, articles, newsletter

Media: Public service announcements, slide shows, video tapes

Satisfied business leaders and business volunteers are the most important factor in recruitment. Their enthusiasm becomes highly contagious and generates powerful interest, support, and excitement about partnerships in the schools.

Here are some **tips for recruiting Business Partners**. The steps can be modified to suit the partner's knowledge of or involvement with the school.

1. Call the potential partnering organization and find out the name and address of the person in charge of making decisions, and about the business's community involvement programs.
2. Send a letter to that contact person describing the Partners in Education program, the school's goals, and the involvement the company could have in helping the school reach its goals. (See sample of partner recruitment letter). You may want to include the Business Partnership Interest Inventory.
3. Follow up the letter with a phone call to the contact person to ascertain the company's interest in becoming involved.
4. If the contact person is interested, make an appointment to meet with them. When asking for something from someone, be prepared to accommodate that person's schedule. This means the coordinator might offer to visit the potential partner's office. The coordinator also should offer to give the company representatives a tour of the school.
5. In the meeting, be prepared to describe the Partners in Education program district wide. Let them know it is a well-established and successful endeavor in which they could be proud to take part.
6. Give them an overview of the school, including its goals and needs.
7. Describe how they can help you meet those goals and needs.
8. Discuss how the business will benefit from the partnership. Emphasize ways the business will be recognized by the school.
9. Ask about their company's goals and needs.
10. Describe how you can meet those needs and goals.
11. Discuss and plan partnership activities.
12. **Sign them up!**