

MADEIRA CITY SCHOOLS PLANNING COMMISSION

BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP STUDY

February 10, 2011

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Madeira Schools Planning Commission
School and Business Partnership Study
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BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

Madeira has been successfully integrating principles of 21st Century learning into school programs and curriculum for several years. In addition to the incorporation of these skills into the traditional curriculum, partnerships with businesses, in the form of special projects and ongoing relationships, has emerged as an increasingly attractive option for further developing these skills.

The Planning Commission has been asked to explore the possibility of creating more connections, or partnerships, with the business community in order for the students to have more “real world” exposure to these 21st century skills.

While business partnerships is a very wide topic, with many areas of possible study, the team has chosen to focus on some core areas of foundational understanding that will allow the Board of Education to position the district to build on its current programs and curriculum.

OBJECTIVES

1. Provide a framework of the importance of business partnerships in the development of 21st century skills including critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication.
2. Identify/highlight successful partnerships in place today.
3. Propose a vision to the Board of Education for adoption and dedication of resources.
4. Involve Madeira Chamber of Commerce, or other business group, as a strategic partner to help foster partnerships.
5. Identify potential partners for 2011-2012 pilot project.

METHODOLOGY

The study involved several key initiatives and steps:

- Internet searches of business partnerships and 21st century skill development
- Interviews with Madeira school leaders
- Interviews with local and national schools
- Interviews with local business leaders
- Interviews with Gyro HSR staff and a review of student feedback

FRAMEWORK/BENEFITS TO STAKEHOLDERS

In the course of the review, the team spoke with individuals from schools and businesses involved in current partnerships. The following are some of the benefits for each of the stakeholder groups:

Students

- Authentic learning opportunities – Students are presented with “real world” problems and issues that require the use of 21st century skills – skills that are not necessarily covered during the school day.
- Improved motivation – Working on “real-world” issues can lead to higher commitment level from students. By choosing to be involved in a specific project, vs. part of a “requirement”, students are better aligned with their interests
- Direction for future learning and career decisions – Exposure to businesses and “real-world” job requirements and day-to-day responsibilities can help students more effectively plan for their careers by giving them insight into skills necessary to compete/thrive in the business environment.
- Exposure to diverse environments – Partnerships can take students out of the comfort and familiarity of the school environment and help in the development of social skills necessary in the business environment.
- Accountability – Students working with one another, and relying on each other, for a business project helps develop personal accountability to something other than a grade.
- Opportunities for leadership skill development – The team-based environment allows for students to assume leadership roles and experience importance of strong leadership skills.
- Development of contacts in the community/work environment – Students are able to build relationships within the business community for future use.

School System

- Broader range of experiences – Schools are able to widen the opportunities available to students beyond the traditional curriculum.
- Increase student engagement – By allowing students to choose projects of their interest, it has the potential to reduce discipline issues and may encourage students to stay in school.
- Teacher development and engagement – The teachers have the opportunity to work with students in new, innovative ways outside of the traditional school environment. While providing new experiences for students, teachers are also exposed to more real world applications of core educational skills.
- Benefit from human and financial resources – The interaction of students with the business community allows the district to apply this time/energy as an addition to the budgeted resources of the district. Through the philanthropic work of partners, existing educational resources can be stretched.
- Increase the partner’s knowledge, understanding and advocacy for public education – Any involvement from the business community serves to give a closer look, and understanding, of the current state of public education. A deeper

appreciation for the specific programs and individuals involved in education can allow future program development and community support.

- Portal for ongoing updates in current business environment – Overall linkage between students, teachers, and the business community serves to build a foundation for an engaging and healthy relationship moving forward.

Businesses

- Future workforce development – Involvement in schools partnerships helps to ensure that today's students are getting the exposure to, and appreciation of, current business practices. The higher the familiarity/exposure, the more the students will be able to tailor their education to the needs of businesses increasing the overall “readiness” of students as they enter the workforce.
- Ability to influence public education – Involvement with the schools allows business to have a hand in the development of learning models that more closely relate to the specific skills/qualities needed in the 21st century workforce.
- Employee development and engagement – Partnering with schools can add to the job satisfaction of employees involved. By working with students, in ways outside of normal job responsibilities, can build additional skills and sensitivities in the workforce that build employee diversity.
- Develop relationships and communication with the community, current and future customers – Businesses can increase the awareness of their company/brand, including positive perceptions, through partnership with the schools.
- Additional resources for strategic planning and achievement of goals – Depending on the specific project, businesses can receive benefits to their business ranging from new points of view, consumer research, product testing, etc.

DISCUSSION OF PARTNERSHIPS INVESTIGATED

Anchorage School District Anchorage, Alaska

Partnerships originated more than 20 years ago when a middle school teacher returned from a job in business and started a program for 7th and 8th graders to introduce them to the business world. The program grew to be so successful that the department has spun off into a non-profit organization with an executive director, board of directors, and staff. Currently there are business partnership coordinators at each middle school and the high school. These coordinators reach out to the community to develop new partnerships.

The program is active in elementary through high school. Examples:

- Elementary school: Seimans Corporation employees offer engineering related math lessons 3-4 times per school year; a trucking company brings rigs into the parking lot for students to explore and works with teachers to develop lessons in transportation of goods.
- 7th grade: a business course that teaches resume creation, phone and interview skills, communication with adults, etc.
- 8th grade: students use new skills to create and execute a public event that is run in cooperation with the Anchorage Convention and Visitor's Bureau.
- High School: students complete a one period related class each day then attend a workplace experience/internship on their own time after school.

- High School: mentorship program specifically for students in the gifted program- students are responsible for contacting businesses and setting up the internship program. Students complete 45-60 hours at the workplace in order to earn credit. During semesters when the business elective class is not offered due to low enrollment, or for students unable to fit the class into their schedule, they can petition for credit by completing a culminating project/presentation. Student interns meet with the mentorship coordinator three to four times per semester to discuss their progress and the culminating project.

Safe environment training is required for all students prior to participation in any off site experiences. Any events, tutoring, lessons or discussions occurring on school grounds must always have a licensed teacher present at all times, no exceptions.

Acton Public Schools/Acton Boxborough Regional Schools Massachusetts

The School-Business Partnership committee of the Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce, in collaboration with the Acton Public Schools and the Acton –Boxborough Regional School District, runs the school business partnership in Acton, Massachusetts. There is a student-Faculty Support Coordinator for the district who works with a part time school-business liaison to develop and maintain partnerships.

The program is active in elementary school through high school. Examples:

- Elementary: field trips, speakers and engineering/design experiences
- High School: paid and unpaid work experiences during which students complete work hours after school. Internships are scheduled from ten weeks to one semester, depending on the internship choice.
- High School: short term, voluntary three week supervised work experience during the last three weeks of their senior year

Hilliard City Schools Columbus, Ohio

In past years Hilliard dedicated a full time position to a coordinator of school business partnerships. This person recently resigned and budget issues have kept the position unfilled.

A district high school teacher teaches a mentorship elective course and handles student mentorship/partnership relationships. This faculty member acts as liaison between the businesses, the school and the students. These responsibilities are in addition to the teacher's other duties, although compensatory planning time is given for work on these projects.

The program is active in the high school. Examples:

- Internships/experiences last one semester
- Students attend academic classes from 7:30am to 1:00pm and have their afternoons blocked for mentorship class
- The first 2-3 weeks of the semester are spent working in the classroom on interviewing and communication skills, resume creation, phone skills, etc.

- Following the introductory period students spend four afternoons per week in the workplace. The mentorship class continues one day per week so students can share, reflect, discuss and ask questions about the experience
- Students meet with the program director during the class to debrief, ask questions and hear other students experiences
- At the end of the internship students complete a culminating project/presentation to earn course credit

Common Elements

Each of the three districts made reference to the importance of developing a relationship with the local Chamber of Commerce (COC), both as a means of attracting potential partners as well as a means of promoting programs that are in place. In Anchorage, for example, students and faculty members attend COC luncheons and give presentations highlighting a specific partnership program. The COC also allows the school to publish periodic articles in Chamber publications, and gives the school access to their mailing lists for the purposes of event and program promotion.

All of the districts offer businesses various means and levels of interaction. The programs have developed momentum such that businesses contact the schools to become involved.

Students in all programs are responsible for their own transportation if their internship takes them away from school property.

ELEMENTS OF AN IDEAL PROGRAM FOR MADEIRA

With all things considered, like school size and resources, we see a program for Madeira City Schools having these basic elements:

A Vision

It is clear from the input from various schools interviewed that a key to the successful implementation of partnership programs is the commitment, both strategically and financially, from the school district. This commitment takes the form of paid staff, inclusion in district priorities, incorporation into required curriculum, etc.

A critical step in beginning this journey is to adopt a vision signaling the district's commitment to the pursuit of business partnerships. The following is given as an example:

Madeira City Schools will be a leader in leveraging the business community, through strategic partnering and involvement, to provide opportunities for all students to have real-life, hands-on experiences creating true competitive advantage as they enter college and/or the 21st century workplace.

The adoption of such a vision is appropriate because it:

- a) Shows commitment to the program to faculty, students, parents, the Madeira community, and the area's business community

- b) Allows the business partnership initiatives to be considered among the districts priorities going forward
- c) Positions the district to invite businesses into further discussions about specific partnering opportunities

Assign Dedicated Resources

The successful programs have identified an individual or group dedicated, at least part time, to running the program. This provides needed focus, attention and consistency.

Create Levels of Partnerships to Assure Programs Available for all Students

Possible examples:

- Level 1- all grades; on campus; service oriented (in class volunteer, scholarships)
- Level 2- all grades; on campus opportunities (speakers, career lunches)
- Level 3- elementary and/or all grades; off campus opportunities (company tours, job training)
- Level 4- Middle School/High School; off campus individualized/small group; observation oriented opportunities (job shadowing)
- Level 5- High School; off campus individualized/small group; work –study and internship opportunities lasting a pre-determined time (internships, mentorships)

Leverage a Strong Partnership With the Chamber of Commerce

Many schools have cited that a relationship with the Chamber of Commerce has been instrumental in the connection and ongoing maintenance of many partnerships. If the board is willing to adopt of vision for business partnerships (as stated above), the Madeira Chamber could be a conduit to many local businesses able/willing to be involved with the schools. Creating this relationship is seen as a next step and was not fully investigated during this study. Resources are also available through the Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky and U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION/STUDY

Topics/questions that the team discussed but did not study as a basis for further work:

- changes to bell schedule to create time during the school day to facilitate partnerships
- implications of student transportation to/from business locations
- impact of partnership programs on college admission, grades
- Identify the student populations to be included: Consider development of partnerships for all students at different levels and with different interests- AP, Honors, CP, those whose primary interest is art, music
- Identify teacher/staff responsibilities, educational needs and time commitment

CONCLUSIONS

1. Schools districts can increase the quality of education through business partnerships.

2. Business partnerships give students a “real world” education beyond what they get in traditional coursework.
3. Successful programs include a coordinator, liaison, central point of contact, or similar dedicated position, in place in order to develop, implement and sustain a school-business partnership program.
4. Successful partnerships with a tie to the community have a higher chance of success. Businesses with an existing relationship with the school district (location, parents are employees/owners, etc) provide more ongoing incentive (vested interest).
5. Businesses, at the high school level and below, may gain a financial impact from partnerships but, most likely, the benefits are in community involvement and human capital development.
6. With school funding an ongoing challenge, districts need to explore new ways to seek funds and/or incorporate into the budget.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Madeira School Board should adopt a vision for a School-Business Partnership Program (proposed vision or variation)
2. The Madeira School Board appoint committee of staff/parents/businesses to pursue additional partnership opportunities
 - a. Further investigate various school-business partnership structures
 - b. Develop a preliminary “menu of opportunities”
 - c. Develop potential business contacts/Gauge business interest
 - d. Explore funding opportunities
 - e. Develop a relationship with Chamber of Commerce
 - f. Develop job description/responsibilities for a program coordinator

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In the 2000s two programs published guidelines for successful school and business partnerships- The Daniels Fund and the Council For Corporate and School Partnerships

THE DANIELS FUND SCHOOL BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

<http://danielsfund.org/sevenstrategies>

- 1. What Works? Seven Strategies for Success**
- 2. Best Practices**
- 3. Success Tips**
- 4. Barriers to Avoid**

THE COUNCIL FOR CORPORATE AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

<http://corpschoolpartners.org>

- 1. Guiding Principles for Business and School Partnerships**
- 2. Corporate and School Partnerships: Best Practices and Guiding Principles**
- 3. How to Guide for School – Business Partnerships**
- 4. Case Studies**

[LINKS](#)

Anchorage School District
www.asdk12.org/depts/sb

Acton Schools – Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce
www.mwcoc.com/committees/school-business-partnership.html

Hilliard City Schools
www.hilliard.k12.oh.us/departments/businesspartners.cfm

US Chamber of Commerce Institute for a Competitive Workforce (ICU)
www.uschamber.com/icw/default

Partners in Education- Broward County Public Schools
www.browardpartners.com

Feedback from MHS students who participated in the Gyro HSR Partnership

Positives

- Experience in a business setting
- Exposure to marketing concepts
- Exposure to computer programs used in graphic design
- Learned to balance collaborative group work and independent role
- Realized importance and necessity of good teamwork skills
- Continued development of public speaking skills
- Universal contribution versus one person doing all the work
- Learned to better accept and provide feedback and criticism
- Great leaders emerged
- Interviews with GYRO employees
- Ability to manage a demanding schedule revealed
- Managed high pressure and stress
- Glimpsed into life after school
- Revealed personal trait of being detail oriented
- Ability of group to make progress in the midst of confusion – “not having the total hands-on guidance we receive in school”
- Collaboration outside of usual peer group
- Perseverance under criticism of ideas
- Pride in the magnitude of accomplishments in limited amount of time
- Interview process to be part of internship beneficial
- Perceived advantage over other students in the business world
- Degree of professionalism attained and advantage of opportunities taken
- Aided in deciding what to do in college
- Revealed leadership potential and ability to delegate
- Focus on *really* collaborating
- Books/Book Reports
- Learning to let go and let others do their jobs
- Individual accountability, sole responsibility for tasks
- Sharing of ideas
- Learning through self-instruction
- Assessment of one’s own behavior throughout the project
- Expanded horizons beyond comfort zone
- Learned to apply knowledge to program and acquired program knowledge to real life

Negatives

- More explicit instruction about final product would have reduced stress
- Group setting lead to off-task behavior and inefficient use of time
- More interaction with employees desired
- Immensely time-consuming

- Schedule in flux
- No winner or loser declared – final presentations weren't competitive so interest & motivation were lost
- Time luxury at beginning and not at the end of the project
- Sitting in on meetings in which they were not (immediate) stakeholders
- Book work felt like busywork
- More time desired for final project
- Couldn't complain about group
- Disparity in advice given to different groups
- The way individual roles on the team were delegated - so-called leaders failed, some roles not fully exploited
- Time spent away from other classes
- Desired a focus to get started earlier on project
- No credit earned for experience
- Little accountability for individual members/lack of tangible incentives, i.e. honors credit
- Desire to share mentors – Mr. Dobbs & Ms. Ladd – among the two groups
- More rigorous interview process to determine suitability of assigned roles
- Team members focused on workload rather than benefit of experience
- Vaguely defined mentor roles
- Expected to learn more about business in general as opposed to marketing in specific
- Insufficient feedback about ideas from mentors
- Insufficient time to access school resources
- Mentors' occupations within GYRO HSR not clearly indicated which lead to inhibitions about what questions to direct towards them
- Ice machine concept not relevant
- More involvement/constructive criticism from relevant Gyro employees
- Constrained creativity in the presentation of final product – must present in the GYRO fashion
- Role rotation within the team desired