

When Business Asks “Why”?

1. **Business is education’s largest consumer.** Many high school graduates go directly to work for these partners. Educators need to know their business “customers” value their knowledge and respond quickly to their needs.
2. **Business and industry personnel have expertise that needs to be incorporated into the educational system.** The global economy is a reality. Educators need to understand free markets, global economies, international competition and emerging philosophies of business management to prepare their students for success in the workforce.
3. **Business and education need to develop a mutual understanding of what each other does.** Education needs to become a greater part of the world of work by internalizing and modeling the philosophies of business leadership and best practices (e.g., teamwork, quality circles) used throughout the industry.
4. **The success of individual students depends on the involvement of all.** Research shows that student achievement increases with greater involvement of the community. The ancient African proverb that “it takes a whole village to raise a child” applies here. Developing educational partnerships is one way to get the whole community involved.

Cultivating successful business-education partnerships may depend on recognizing an important factor. Business partners want to be engaged in the process, not asked to support pre-determined ideas and activities (too often educators have heard business say—and justifiably so—“I don’t want to serve on the committee just to “rubber-stamp” your ideas”). It becomes very clear very fast that a partnership must benefit each side.

Some Do’s to Ensure Successful Partnerships

Do make a commitment to the partnership for at least one year.

Do involve the school superintendent and business CEO in the plans.

Do understand that the main goal is to enrich the educational environment and prepare learners for the world of work.

Do include faculty, students, management and labor in the project and goals.

Do open doors to each other to investigate and learn from your different environments.