



by Chris Emigholz
 Director, Education Policy
 Deputy Director, NJPRO

At Issue

True Partnerships Help Businesses and Schools

The word “partnership” is often overused, but its true meaning is important to the future of both the business and education communities in New Jersey. Schools and businesses have a symbiotic relationship: Schools create the employees that business must have and business creates the tax revenues and resources that schools need to function. In an age when taxpayers are clamoring for relief and accountability, and many employers are not satisfied with the quality of employees coming out of school, businesses and schools must work together to seek out public-private partnerships.

A true partnership is more than writing a check to the local PTA or providing needed supplies and equipment. It requires meaningful interaction between the two groups with mutual goals, mutual understanding, mutual effort and mutual benefits. That mutuality is the key component to a successful partnership, yet that is often the most overlooked aspect. There must be an element of give and take for a partnership to succeed, as well as a sense that both parties are heading in the same direction. There are many examples of successful business-education partnerships.

One is for a business to directly send its employees into a classroom. This type of partnership provides educators with the opportunity to bring practical, real world experience into their classrooms, while business helps provide tomorrow’s workers with the business skills they will need.

Junior Achievement is one of the most user-friendly of these business-education partnerships. The nonprofit organization already has the school relationships, resources and lessons to teach, so it is able to facilitate businesses’ entrance into classrooms in a way that reduces the typical obstacles associated with starting a new partnership. If you are interested, call Junior Achievement at 609-419-0404 or visit <http://newjersey.ja.org/>.

Another type of partnership involves advising educators. Many schools and education programs have advisory teams that need community and business support. NJBIA’s nonprofit affiliate, the NJPRO Foundation, recently participated in such a partnership in the development of its small business curriculum. A team of New Jersey middle school teachers wrote the curriculum. A team of education and business experts guided its development. And businesses and educators together are helping to implement it in the classroom. To learn about this partnership, please call 609-393-7707, ext. 201 or visit www.njprofoundation.org/pages/overview.htm.

Internships are another example of business-education partnerships. Internships can be done on both the high school and college level and are an excellent way to show future employees what will be expected of them when they enter the workplace. For many businesses, internships are an excellent way to find and prepare new, entry-level employees. For schools and students, internships are valuable in providing another educational option to expand a student’s real-world learning. If you are interested in learning more about intern opportunities in New Jersey, please contact me at cemigholz@njbja.org.

A statewide group supporting education partnerships is the New Jersey Association of Partners in Education (NJAPIE), which develops and maintains an alliance of businesses, educators, volunteer programs, organizations, associations and individuals to promote partnerships and improve the quality of education throughout the state. Visit www.njapie.org to learn more about how NJAPIE can help you develop a new partnership, strengthen an existing one or get involved in supporting them here in New Jersey.

NJBIA hears member dissatisfaction with the quality of entry-level workers, the cost of education and the impact these things are having on business. Certainly, there are many areas in which our schools and our policy makers could be doing better. It is in businesses’ best interest to get involved, and partnerships are a good way to start. 