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Schools and Business Benefit Mutually Through Service Learning

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out to the community to show concern and to provide assistance when and where needed.

My vision of school for the 21st century is of a totally seamless relationship between the school and the community. The school will be a place where parents, business, state and local social service agencies, not-for-profit community agencies, and the community in general interact on a daily basis; where collaborative relationships exist between and among these groups, with the school as the centerpiece of the collaboration. The school, as the focal point of the community, becomes the chief learning organization in the community; in fact, the schools become the convener of a community of learners where everyone understands that learning is both lifelong and extends beyond the school as an institution. Activities and events are integrated to engage the total larger community and the students in such a way that effective learning is taking place as a result of those relationships. School becomes a place where there is no distinction between learner and teacher.

For each person or group involved, commitment to improve the quality of life, within and without the school walls, is paramount. The school must be an integral part of the community.

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Schools and Business Benefit Mutually Through Service Learning

Mike Bookey, President,
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When you take away all of the consequences, all you have left is
irresponsibility.

Schools are modeled after the industrial factories of yesterday. The goal of the education process is to mass produce standardized, educated citizens and workers. In this factory model, we teach students the hierarchy of decision making, to follow orders, and to work individually. Businesses, however, need graduates who are self-directed, responsible employees, who can solve problems, who can handle computers and the latest technology, and who can work in teams. In this the information age, business can no longer continue to sidestep the need to reformulate the processes and goals of public education.

Electronic media and communication systems are replacing the technology of pens, pencils, paper, ink, books, trucks, autos, and airplanes as the primary means by which we record, acquire, and move information (knowledge). Today, we require information workers in business to be skilled in the use of electronic media as a condition of employment. In the future, a person not adept at working with electronic media and communication systems will be considered functionally illiterate. This is the same label we use today to describe people not able to read or write using paper and pen. Despite this remarkable transformation to electronic technology in society, our public schools continue to function as if nothing has changed. The last stronghold of

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paper technology and the industrial process is our public schools. It is ironic that an institution specifically charged with preparing our young people for the future, so fervently clings to the past.

One way business can help is to work with schools to provide opportunities for students to participate in meaningful situations in their schools and communities, outside the four walls of a classroom. Business/school partnerships have traditionally been viewed as a way for business to help schools assist needy students. Businesses have provided tutoring, materials, and funding for field trips. Though these are valuable resources, businesses can play a more vital role in restructuring the educational process by working with schools to develop opportunities for young people to participate in the functioning of their school and community.

Technology Information Project

Through the Technology Information Project (TIP) in the Issaquah School District in Washington State, young people have played a central role in bringing technology into their schools and community. Succeeding generations of students have built and now operate a computer network of more than 2,000 computers encompassing 20 school locations. Every classroom and office computer connects to a school local area network (LAN). Each school LAN links to a wide area network, creating a District Enterprise network. The District Enterprise network connects to the Internet. The Internet connection enables parents, teachers, students, and local businesses to send e-mail to one another; it allows students to access knowledge bases throughout the world; and it enables teachers to electronically communicate with parents about their children's progress. Students are now working to build an Internet Web service that will provide their community with information about Issaquah Schools, city government, city police and fire departments, local community groups, and instructional resources for home schooling.

Students and teachers at Issaquah have worked together to develop the TIP network. DNA's role was to provide technical assistance to this process, but teachers and students were the ones who made it happen. Many schools are encouraging teachers to get away from the traditional "teacher-as-lecturer" role and move to the role of coach, giving students the opportunity to be on the playing field. If business is to be provided with a team of talented players, business leaders must also take on the

role of coach and help create opportunities for students to develop their skills on "real-life" playing fields. Businesses can expand the playing field by offering students and teachers expert knowledge of computer and communication technology. A number of examples are currently taking place in the state of Washington.

Students' Projects

Students Develop Products.

- In Tacoma, Washington, a hospital physical therapist sent a videotape of an 18-month-old child with multiple sclerosis to a high school Industrial Design class. The students built a wheelchair that was mobile and had the capacity to be enlarged as the child grew. Students applied technical knowledge and problem-solving skills to this project and were rewarded with a feeling of great joy as they saw the smiles of gratitude from this child and his parents.

- MicroSoft puts students to work as part-time managers. They work with software developers to write codes, work in test teams to debug them, and send their work back to developers and then to Release Coordinators and marketing people. Schools have been used by MicroSoft as Beta Test sites for a number of networking systems. Several students now run a consulting business to help schools and small businesses set up computer networks.

Students Do Research.

- The Tree Top company has involved students in research on certain fungi that affect the fruit crop. In exchange, the company provides the science class with the latest technology. Because they know that their research will actually affect the local economy and local farming practices, students have a strong commitment to quality control; and students' research benefits the community.

- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has partnered with a number of school districts, funding students' data collection on significant environmental issues, such as wetlands preservation and air particulates. Students in the science classes begin to connect their chemistry and biology studies and apply them to a local environmental issue. At the same time, EPA has exponentially expanded its "work force," collecting more valuable data for policy making and engendering an ethic of environmental stewardship.

Students Develop Marketing or Community Outreach Programs.

Seattle City Light contracted with a high school drama department to develop districtwide energy conservation assemblies. Students were involved in all phases of the program, from dramatics, lighting, and design to performance management; and they produced a top-quality program. Evaluations indicated the these assemblies were more engaging than were previous programs because the high school students had a natural rapport with the elementary audience and were willing to take risks.

Mutual Benefits

School/business partnerships work for mutual benefits in the following ways:

- Businesses can help restructure schools by updating their technology and bringing them into the "Communication Age."
- Businesses can provide opportunities for youth to apply their learning to real life, so the youth can see themselves as capable resources for their schools, businesses, and their community.
- Businesses will be provided with graduates who will be skilled, thinking, capable employees.

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Schools and Community-Based Organizations: Partnerships Based on History

Rick Jackson, Vice President, YMCA of Greater Seattle, Seattle, Washington

During the early 1900s, when young people were no longer needed as a part of the rural farm economy, community-based youth organizations such as YMCAs/YWCAs, Campfire, Scouts, 4-H, and Boys and Girls Clubs were developed to provide positive ways to engage young people in their communities. Communities recognized that they needed new ways to provide meaningful roles for youth that would provide character and leadership development.

Changes in society in recent years have caused many community youth groups to change their focus. Women have moved from the home to the workplace, and many organizations have lost their traditional leaders—such as Cub Scout den mothers and leaders of Campfire groups. In addition, many of these programs have been forced to change their focus from involving young people in positive youth activities to providing social services like counseling, youth employment, gang interventions, and alternative education programs.

Educators are concerned by this change in focus. Although they see the need for direct services, they feel that positive youth development should involve kids in fun, fellowship, and service, the core values of many youth-serving organizations. This would eliminate much of the need for youth intervention and remediation. If youth have positive things to do, including good relations with peers, access to mentors and