



PARTNERSHIP TIPS: WORKING WITH K-12

Partnerships between schools, colleges, universities and their surrounding communities can have a positive impact on both parties involved. Too often relationships are strained by assumptions made by both sides. However, if both sides collaborate to work towards the common goal of community improvement, great strides can be made. Remember in many ways schools and campuses are their own little communities. They are all different and they all have a number of forces exerting pressure on them from within, as well as from the outside. In some schools Principals have great relationships with teachers, but in other schools that relationship is strained. The same situation is true of parent groups, clubs, faculty, campus organizations, and other administrators. This makes it extremely important to involve the appropriate stakeholders in the planning process to be sure no one is undermining the process. Additionally it is a good idea to learn the history or relationship between these different groups at a school, college, or university so you know if groups generally work well together or if the dynamic will be a challenge. This may be a good time to reevaluate the scope and goals of the partnership.

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH TEACHERS

- Teachers must understand how service learning will better engage their students
- Students have diverse interests and abilities
- Teachers need support too, provide materials and on-going support to help teachers build a strong program into the curriculum.
- Teachers can be hard to reach. Be sure to ask when it is best to contact a teacher. (It may not be while they are school!)
- Teachers have limited decision-making power
- Educational outcomes are the priority for teachers
- Work with others in the school, so the teacher does not have to spend time “defending” a program to others in the school that know little about it.



SUGGESTIONS FOR CONNECTIONS WITH SCHOOLS

Remember to look at your personal relationships to see if you have a connection to the school. That person can often help you get to the best person to speak with. If you get stuck here are some good places to make connections:

- School Administrator (Principal/Vice Principal)
- School or Career Counselor
- Student Activities Director
- Student Government
- School Clubs (ex: Builders and KEY Clubs)
- Honor Society
- Social Studies Department
- State Department of Education*
- Community Service/Service Learning Coordinator
- Parent Organization (PTA, PTO, HSA...)
- Specific courses/teachers related to issues your organization addresses

HOT BOX!

* Remember while a State Department of Education will not give you a full understanding of each school, you can learn a lot about schools including state standards of learning, testing schedules and other helpful information. Because schools face so much pressure around these standards, showing an understanding of them and a willingness to recognize the implications can be very powerful in establishing a relationship with schools.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY & ON-LINE RESOURCES

Agencies + Schools = Service-Learning--A Training Toolbox.

The Points of Light Foundation (1996)

A comprehensive manual to assist trainers, agencies and schools engaged in service-learning. Illustrates how to produce effective training sessions and provides sample agendas and handouts. Explores how agencies and schools can develop successful partnerships.

Community Agency and School Collaboration: Going in with Your Eyes Open.

Mark P Batenburg (1995)

Agency/school partnerships were analyzed from the agency perspective in this research report. Individuals from agencies were interviewed about their experiences working with schools and youth volunteers. The study shows some specific problems and solutions from real partnerships.

Collaborators: Schools and Communities Working Together for Youth Service.

Rich Willits and Susan Althoen Cairn, National Youth Leadership Council (1990)

This guide describes ways CBOs and schools can be resources for each other. Fourteen CBOs explain their missions, needs, and specific examples of how young people can meet those needs. Guidelines for successful collaborations are also included.

Critical Issues in K-12 Service-Learning: Case Studies and Reflections.

Edited by Gita Gulati-Partee and William Finger, National Society for Experiential Education (1996)

This guide is broken into sections, including "community", which has six articles written by teachers, agency project managers who manage partnerships between schools and agencies.

Everyone Wins when Youth Serve: Building Agency-School Partnerships for Service-Learning.

The Points of Light Foundation (1995)

Written for agencies, this publication highlights the power of creating service-learning opportunities for youth. This easy to read booklet discusses service-learning, benefits of involving youth, common concerns related to creating service-learning opportunities and the first steps to developing these kinds of opportunities.

A Practical Guide for Developing Agency/School Partnerships for Service-Learning.

The Points of Light Foundation (1995)

This manual guides organizations from the agency perspective on how to provide service-learning opportunities for youth. It includes information on the concept of service learning, how to develop partnerships with schools, involving youth, and practical and logistical elements related to developing a service-learning program. It is presented in an easy to read format with ready to use worksheets.

Communities in Schools www.cisnet.org

This organization offers training, networking opportunities and resources to schools and community based organizations to involve students in the community.

Family Education Network www.familyeducation.com

This website is a good place to get an idea of some the issues facing schools.

LEAP (Leadership, Education and Athletics in Partnership) www.leap.yale.edu/index.html

This is a nice example of partnership between schools, agencies, and campus with other resources available.

National Association of Partners in Education www.napehq.org

This membership organization has direct links to school districts, community organizations, and other networking opportunities. They also offer training and extensive resources.

Public Education Network www.publiceducation.org

"The Public Education Network Web site is an important gateway to the key issues affecting student achievement in America's public schools." The site also has a number of publications to download.