

Community/Business Partnerships Exhibit

Principles which underlie the formation of successful partnerships are:

- 1. Successful educational partnerships address real problems.** Potential partners should share their perceptions of the problems faced in the community and in the schools. Formal needs assessments help focus activities, but it is equally important that participants identify shared concerns to which they can commit themselves and their organizations. Not all problems are best addressed through partnerships, so the discussions of problems should include conversations about whether developing a partnership is an appropriate response.
- 2. Successful educational partnerships can take many forms.** Partnerships can operate with a dominant partner, as a coalition or as a collaborative effort. Success is not predicated so much on the organization of the partnership, but whether it is appropriate for the problems being addressed and the community in which the partnership is situated.
- 3. Successful educational partnerships build on conversations with all players that include discussion about the content of activities.** Prior to forming a partnership, all organizations, including the school unit or program to be affected, must engage in discussion about the partnership. The conversations provide necessary information about limits and possibilities and build commitment. Although it is possible to gain commitment after the partnership is formed, implementation is smoother if key parties are on board as work begins. The more the partnership requires individuals to change what they are doing and how they relate to one another, the more important it is for them to be involved in early conversations. Some partnerships simply reorganize existing activities or bring existing multiple partnerships under an umbrella. Pre-partnership conversations, while necessary, can be less detailed in those circumstances.
- 4. Successful educational partnerships communicate with all participants and the community after they have been organized.** Early partnership communications should focus on the reason for the partnership, including the problems the partnership is designed to address. Communication of the content and the roles of participants also is important. These communications should respect the existing knowledge and skill of participants. Those who will receive services from the partnership should be informed of service availability, and those who are expected to change practice should be told of the time commitments required and the supports they will receive.
- 5. Leadership in successful educational partnerships helps build commitment and support activities.** Leadership can be distributed among participating organizations, or one individual can serve as a leader of the partnership. Individual leadership can be facilitative or visionary. The leadership function must fit the nature of the partners. If, for example, all participating organizations have strong leaders, facilitative or distributive leadership is likely to be the route to success.

- 6. Successful educational partnerships provide resources, particularly technical assistance, to those who are expected to change behavior, roles, and/or relationships.** Necessary resources include training opportunities, matching talent to activities, and providing technical support. The greater the change required at the activity level, the greater the need for technical assistance training and for identifying appropriate personnel.
- 7. Successful educational partnerships engage in evaluation and adaptive planning.** In addition to identifying needs for particular activities, successful partnerships analyze community demographics and economic conditions. They also gather information about past innovations and how people feel about previous efforts, as well as constraints that may limit the operation. The need for such information is one reason all players should be involved in early discussions. Gathering information also models the kind of open exchange necessary for successful operation. Equally important, successful educational partnerships engage in evaluation so that changes can be made in response to problems and concerns; thus everyone can learn whether the partnership is having an impact.
- 8. Successful educational partnerships acknowledge and confront problems.** Problems are used as an opportunity to examine processes and structures. Decision making procedures are designed to advance the partnership, as well as to solve the immediate problem. Efficiency in dealing with concerns is less important than ensuring continuing partnership cohesion. Partners take into account the feelings and interests of one another when making decisions within their own organizations.

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