

The Playbook for Business Leaders

Successful Students Are
The Best Investment in our
State You Can Make



Employers of our state have a vested interest in supporting students and in improving educational outcomes. After all, businesses hire the products of our public schools. Students are your future talent pipeline. Following are ideas and actions for you to consider when you think about the needs of your local schools. These suggestions are designed for small and large businesses alike.

Ideas to Help You Support Students, Teachers and Schools

Idea #1:

Enact workplace policies or practices that support education at all levels.

Did you know that one of the main obstacles employees (especially parents) face in supporting students and schools is a lack of paid time off to volunteer and participate during the work day? Did you also know that children of parents who achieve academic success are far more likely to follow in their footsteps? Here are some ideas to inspire your action.

TAKE ACTION BY

- ❑ Update your attendance policies to allow parents and families greater flexibility to participate in conferences and other work-day activities that support student success.
- ❑ Encourage your employees to serve on school boards, School Improvement Councils, or other school or district committees. These groups are eternally searching for new talent and ideas, and they need parent voices.
- ❑ Enact policies that allow employees release time to volunteer as reading tutors or mentors to students (whether they have kids in school or not). Caring adults and mentors can make a significant impact in the lives of children.
- ❑ Support and recognize employees who have gone back to school to earn a high school diploma or college degree. Such recognition elevates the importance of education in a community and within your business.
- ❑ Incentivize your employees to participate in education-friendly activities with “hours for volunteering” credits and/or recognition for spending time on education issues.
- ❑ Showcase students, especially those who are children of employees, who have achieved academic awards or honors. This can be accomplished through bulletin boards, publications, social media, or billboards. Again, recognition of education achievements raises expectations.

Idea #2:

Explore more impactful ways to invest in education.

There are so many ways to “invest” in your employees’ education successes. What matters is that you are intentional with your dollars and you find greater ways to make an impact. Your investments speak volumes about your priorities!

TAKE ACTION BY

- ❑ Invest WITH Your Employees - Start a giving circle (donor-advised fund) where employees contribute in and the employer matches it and all dollars are directed towards educational investments.
- ❑ Invest IN Your Employees - Start a “college fund” for your employees and their children that meets certain criteria to incentivize them to start or complete higher education or industry certifications. College can be the single most expensive investment people make these days!
- ❑ Sponsor a scholarship for high school graduates who are also first-generation college students, who are pursuing education as a career, or who are pursuing a two-year degree or certificate from a local college/university.
- ❑ Get Targeted with Your Investing - Don't just donate to causes; direct your giving towards specific schools within geographic proximity that meet certain criteria (at risk, high needs, high density of employee children). Investing in the schools where your employees’ children attend is a double win. You'll boost employee morale and help your employees’ kids succeed.
- ❑ Be specific with your investing. Instead of investing in education broadly, find specific needs in schools that have gone unmet or unfunded.
- ❑ School and classroom libraries are often low-priority on the school funding list but we all know access to books is critical for student success! Assist classrooms or school libraries with purchasing new books. Some businesses may want to help purchase books for students’ home libraries.
- ❑ A recent study out of NC shows the benefits cycle for public assistance for food and nutrition directly impacts student behavior and test scores for low-income students. Businesses can provide supplemental meals and snacks during end-of-year testing for students.

Idea #3:

Leverage Your Business and People To Support Education.

Your entire business -- your employees, hiring practices, physical building, etc. -- are incredible resources for schools. Businesses have so many resources that young people need to thrive. From employee mentoring, to onsite education to meeting space for busy parents and teachers.

TAKE ACTION BY

- ❑ Designate space at the work site for teachers to meet with families for parent-teacher conferences.
- ❑ Offer up your facility for community conversations around education and student achievement.
- ❑ Build relationships with the leaders of your school system. Meet and create a relationship with local superintendents, school board members, and principals. Upon developing those relationships, you can identify specific education needs and opportunities in the schools.
- ❑ Create a Teacher-for-a-Day Program in which members of the company's management team trade places with classroom teachers at a school. The company CEO could also "trade places" with a principal or superintendent.
- ❑ Start a formal apprenticeship, internship or job shadow program with schools in your area. Sometimes the best education a student can receive is a real world education.
- ❑ Allow classroom teachers to complete internships or job shadowing in your business over the summer so that teachers can understand the workplace skills that students need to succeed
- ❑ Volunteer the expertise of your employees to schools. This expertise could assist teachers in designing real-world projects that engage students in how to apply academic knowledge to real-world problems.