



## BECOMING A COMMUNITY PARTNER

Henrico County Public Schools Department of Communications and Public Relations oversees school-community partnerships. HCPS policies and regulations provide the basis for this program.

### WHAT IS A COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP?

A community partnership:

- ✓ Involves a community organization (business, faith-based group or other community group).
- ✓ Is or has potential to grow into an ongoing relationship between a school and an organization.
- ✓ Strengthens the overall academic program of the school.
- ✓ Includes specific responsibilities for each party reflected in the Community Partnership Agreement.

### HOW TO ESTABLISH A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP

Successful community partnerships in HCPS are driven by a collaborative relationship between two parties who work to achieve common goals.

1. All partnerships must be documented on the *Partnership Agreement Form*, which should be completed by the school and the partner, and then submitted to the HCPS Department of Communications and Public Relations at Central Office.

Each party should define the terms of the partnership agreement by specifying:

- The products or services to be provided
  - The purpose of the partnership
  - The place in which the activities will be performed
  - The scope of the activity (class, department or school)
  - The specific responsibilities of each partner (Ex: preparing students for an activity, providing specific instruction for volunteers, and communicating expectations clearly at the onset of the partnership)
  - The estimated value of the agreement
2. After the Department of Communications and Public Relations' review of the *Partnership Agreement Form*, two copies will be returned to the school, one for the partner and one for school records.
  3. Partners can provide appropriate materials to the school for distribution in the front office area, at the discretion of the principal. Materials provided for distribution to staff can also be made available.
  4. At the end of each school year, Communications and Public Relations will request a verification of all community partnerships, which will include a confirmation of the value of each.

*NOTE: Principals have the authority to determine which partnerships best suit the needs of their school.*

## EVERYONE BENEFITS FROM COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS!

### Students

- Students learn that adults genuinely care and have positive expectations of them.
- Students work with positive role models, tutors, and mentors.
- Academic goals and awareness of the worlds of work are heightened.
- Students receive help in mastering basic skills on an individual basis.
- Students learn the value of cooperative effort and the importance of participation in their community.

### Teachers

- Teachers receive concrete reminders of the community's interest and support for education
- Teachers receive an increased recognition from the community of their talents and efforts.
- Teachers gain access to previously unknown but available resources at a time when educational programs are facing rising costs and traditional resources are becoming restricted.
- Teachers can take advantage of valuable professional contacts.

### Community Partners

- Partners can exercise their social responsibility, thereby increasing their visibility in the community.
- Partners can share their professional skills and broaden the scope of student experiences.
- Partners can directly impact morale by showing their support of the work being done each day.
- Partners can provide valuable resources to schools that will enhance the academic experience for students.

## AS A PARTNER, A COMMUNITY BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION CAN ...

- Articulate business job requirements and expectations to high school students
- Donate surplus equipment and supplies to supplement the curriculum
- Sponsor students and teams for competitions
- Arrange job-shadowing experiences for students
- Provide assistance to improve the environment of the school building and grounds
- Display student work in corporate offices and employee work areas
- Provide recognition for outstanding teachers and students
- Consider teachers and students for summer employment and/or internships
- Provide programs to encourage and train students in leadership skills
- Release employees during the day to volunteer in a school
- Tutor students in basic skills or special academic and technical areas
- Serve as classroom assistants and guest speakers
- Serve as reading partners in the classroom
- Sponsor seminars for teachers, administrators or students based on specific needs
- Provide facilities and/or volunteers to work with students
- Provide hands-on learning opportunities
- Mentor individual students
- Serve as on-site consultants for subject areas
- Give presentations on travel, special collections or hobbies and historical or technical topics
- Sponsor or volunteer for special events
- Instruct students on special equipment not available in the school

## IN RESPONSE, A SCHOOL CAN ...

- Provide choral or band groups as entertainment for company functions
- Provide complimentary tickets to school activities, such as plays, concerts and athletic events
- Feature the business partner in the school newspaper
- Provide honorary membership in the PTA/PTSA organization
- Assist with community service projects
- Present an original work of art or a group project to business/community group
- Provide student art work for a company publication
- Send "thank you" notes from the students
- Provide article in "School Days" featuring company's contribution
- Provide "Thank You" bulletin board plate on HCPS TV

## PLANNING FOR PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

Once the partnership is approved, the partners must plan together the activities on which they have agreed.

1. Prior to the activity, each individual who will be working with students must complete an *Application for Volunteer Service*, which is returned to the school's Volunteer Coordinator for processing.
2. Plan activities that will make the best use of a volunteer's valuable time. Mentor relationships, shadowing experiences or assistance with clubs or teams may include activities that take place outside of school, so planning of these should involve the students' parents.
3. Decide how these activities will be evaluated and monitored.
4. Keep an open line of communication between the partner and school during the planning stage.
5. Be sure to prepare students for partnership activities. Students need to know the purpose of the activity, how it (and they) will be evaluated and any other follow-up plans.
6. Schools should plan partner-appreciation activities. Students and teachers who wish to honor a partner in an appropriate manner should invest in the same careful planning that is evident in any other successful partnership activity. Be sure to clear time with volunteers to prevent possible scheduling conflicts.

## IMPLEMENTING A PARTNERSHIP PLAN

Implementing a partnership plan involves carrying out the activity, evaluating it and making adjustments based on the evaluations. Like any other endeavor, partnerships are not without risk. The knowledge gained from activities that fail to meet expectation is sometimes more valuable than what is learned from those that are overwhelmingly successful. Good working partnerships are based on the willingness of both parties to identify and institute improvements.

- ✓ **Emergency Planning:** Some well-planned activities go off without a hitch, but of course, some do not. Teachers should anticipate possible problems and make contingency plans. At the very least, they should be prepared to cope with a breakdown of any piece of mechanical or electronic equipment; to rescue a speaker who has gone totally off the subject or lost the interest of the student; and to handle any breach of rules of student conduct.
- ✓ **School Appreciation:** Regardless of the degree of success of any particular partnership activity, both teachers and students should be aware of the importance of showing appreciation to business people for their interest, participation, and support. The school system or the school may show their gratitude to a business and the community in a multitude of ways, but the most effective method of conveying appreciation from the teacher and students is a thank-you letter. Phone calls and a personal thank-you are also important, but a letter is a permanent reminder.
- ✓ **Student Evaluations:** Student assessment of partnership activities is recommended. If students are not capable of filling out the form, the teacher should note their reactions and complete the forms for them. Students should evaluate single events and on going activities, such as with a tutor, mentor, or club advisor as well. Unfavorable evaluations from students call for investigation. Situations that call for termination of a partnership should be rare; but teachers need to be aware that they can call on the administration for help if situations arise.
- ✓ **Community Partner/Teacher Evaluations:** Volunteers should be given an opportunity to evaluate each activity in which they participate. Teachers must evaluate activities in terms of instructional objectives and student response, and these concerns outweigh any satisfaction volunteers may feel as a result of participating.

## **ANNUAL PARTNERSHIP EVALUATION**

It is recommended that partnerships between a school and a community group be evaluated at the end of each year. By doing this, all parties are able to focus on the responsibilities stated on the original agreement form and revise it if necessary. Evaluations can improve a good partnership and realign a partnership that is not working for all involved.

Schools are encouraged to schedule an evaluation time with all parties if possible. The *Annual Partnership Evaluation Form*, is provided for this purpose. Evaluations that are completed with all parties present will result in the best feedback. If this is not possible, it is suggested that the school partner provide a draft of the evaluation form and send it to the business partner for revisions or additional input. When all parties have reviewed and revised the form and a decision has been made as to the partnership continuing for another year, a final evaluation form should be forwarded to the HCPS Department of Communications and Public Relations.