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Examining the Role of Corporate Sponsorship in the Public School System: Appropriate Pathways

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Examining the Role of Corporate Sponsorship in the Public School System:

Appropriate Pathways

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Abstract

To compensate for declining public school budgets, an increasing number of local public education organizations are soliciting and accepting financial support from U.S. corporations. There is considerable debate as to whether corporate involvement ultimately aids or hampers students' academic achievement, and there are many conflicting opinions as to the sorts of problems that corporate involvement creates. This study is aimed at determining what types of cooperative efforts between corporations and educational institutions are currently functioning across the spectrum of school-business partnerships, and what type of oversight is needed to make them work better.

A qualitative method was applied as the primary basis for organizing this research. The project utilized case studies and research literature to examine the positive and negative aspects of these relationships. The sampling group included an expert in the field of education and a corporate executive involved in school-business partnerships. This paper analyzes the business community's current involvement in the public schools, various case studies and suggestions as to how these two entities might collaborate.

A quality public education is a right, not a choice for our children. "According to the most recent Funding Gap report by the non-profit group The Education Trust, many states still provide the least amount of funding to school districts serving students with the greatest needs" (Woodruff, 2008, para. 5). It is imperative that we find alternative approaches that address this imbalance. Our nation's future demands this, because success will depend on the academic achievements of our young people.

The results of this study demonstrate that schools and businesses support these relationships, but the fear of change is holding us back. To a significant extent, this resistance is stunting our nation's development.

Chapter 1 Introduction

According to the Educational Bill of Rights for California's Students,

Every student in California has a fundamental constitutional right to an adequate education that prepares him or her to graduate from high school qualified for a 4-year state university, a living wage job, and active participation in civic life.

Every student has a further right to educational opportunities equal to those provided to most of the students in the State (UCLA's Institute for Democracy, 2001, p. 1).

This right includes but is not limited to: a suitable learning environment and school classrooms, a building and facilities that enable learning and health, adequate learning materials and resources, as well as quality teachers and counselors. Clearly, these basic rights are not only lacking in the State of California but around the country. We need dramatic improvements in the quality of education across the United States. I believe a collaboration of the public school system with leading and local nonprofit and public agencies committed to developing innovative ideas and implementing change is a sustainable solution. Certainly, these school-business relationships won't eradicate all the problems within our system, but they may prove to remedy some of the State's shortcomings.

Over the course of my practicum, I witnessed the extreme lack of funding in the public schools of a local affluent county. Teachers stressing about over-crowded classrooms and slim resources, necessary arts and athletics programs being eliminated, and top administrators grumbling and cutting corners at every turn just to squeak by are among the common sights in any nearby school. This county is ranked among one of the highest-income counties in the United States. If the situation is bleak here, we can only imagine the obstacles encountered within a community of a lower socioeconomic status. As I search for my own employment in

this now very competitive market as a middle-aged woman and a mother, I fear that my enthusiasm to follow my calling in life to be an educator will all be for naught. It is apparent that the funding from corporations in our schools is a fact of life with which we need to contend and attend. Considering we need their participation to stay afloat and actually function, it is imperative that we agree on proper management and organization of their involvement.

Statement of Problem

There is an enormous funding problem in our nation's public school system and no clear way to resolve it. For the past thirty years, corporations have been extremely involved in school reform efforts around the country to different degrees. It seems only logical that we, as a collective unit, should decide on one nationally approved, standard policy of management and conduct that all districts adhere to, so that our crumbling system of "free education" might have a chance to thrive and advance.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to investigate effective ways that corporations are currently involved in our schools and how to expand and improve their impact and participation. "Education is a labor-intensive industry" and there are myriad possibilities, including human and monetary resources, that businesses can contribute to our necessitous institutions (Augenblick & John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, 1985, p. 1). Many teachers and parents feel that corporate involvement undermines a school's efforts to teach adequate academics and allows marketers to target children. Advocates of school-business relationships argue that these partnerships are necessary to move our nation forward, and by ignoring this, we are doing a disservice to our children. More extensively, I present the notion of a non-profit, third-party agency, organized by a leading education philanthropist, collecting monies from participating corporations and allocating funds to schools, depending on need.

Research Question

What policies must be observed and followed by a business to maintain a sound educational environment that also allows for a reciprocal relationship? Is it feasible to institute a national, third-party agency that has no partisanship toward either the corporations or the schools involved? This proposed agency could be organized by one of the current leading philanthropists in public education, for example: Bill and Melinda Gates, Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, or the Hilton Foundation. The firm would be a centralized, non-profit organization that would work for both schools and businesses.

Theoretical Rationale

The relationship between schools and community organizations is changing. It is no longer adequate or even acceptable for schools to simply accept what the States are willing to provide. Schools and the business community must continue to work collaboratively to make sensible, sustainable changes in the system. Collaboration is a process where two or more parties work together to reach a shared goal, while examining and considering additional possibilities that may increase their success as a team (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2003).

“People want to believe in the good old days. It is an assertion of the belief that there was a time when all the institutions in American democracy functioned smoothly and that current problems are just temporary aberrations” (Kohl, 1982, p. 29). Corporate involvement can be viewed as one way to help schools produce a more capable workforce. According to proponents of this view, jobs in the 21st century are increasingly complex and it is a challenge to keep a position based on a standard skill set. Students are required to learn advanced technical and communication skills to qualify for even entry-level jobs in our global economy. Advocates argue that school-business partnerships can be a vital component, shaping and preparing our

students in an unpredictable workplace by exposing them to seasoned business leaders, managers, and personnel (Sanders, 2003).

Assumptions

My assumptions at the beginning of this study encompass the overarching view that teachers and parents are vehemently opposed to corporate involvement in the public schools. Conversely, I suspect that most businesses and some reluctant but optimistic administrators are in favor of successful collaboration.

Background and Need

Nearly every state faces a budget deficit. Yellow slips are more common than new hires and art is the first, but not only subject to be completely withdrawn from the daily curriculum in public education. The checklist continues in some surreal perpetuity — no physical education, no electives, no remedial tutoring, no foreign languages, no technology — none!, a shortage of books and paper, and then there is an increase in class size (Lassahn, 2009).

Around the world, the countries with the top-performing schools, like Finland, Singapore and Canada, emphasize equity in school financing to provide added resources for schools in poorer communities. These international leaders also emphasize ensuring that all students have access to a high-quality curriculum and providing all teachers with support to continuously improve their skills — instead of forcing teachers and schools to compete for artificially limited pools of money (Easton, 2012).

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

Introduction

The review of the literature examines the topic of corporate funding in public schools. It is organized into the following sections: Pros, Cons and Types of Partnerships.

Critics of school-business partnerships are aligned in their beliefs that corporations are evil and have nothing of value to offer our schools. These critics view the practice “as something akin to the Hansel and Gretel tale, in which companies offer nourishment to children, only to ‘cook’ their minds with advertising and consume their attention, opinions, and money” (Larson, 2002, p. 2). Leading experts in the debate have labeled the practice of school-business relations: “schoolhouse commercialism” (Molnar, Boninger, Wilkinson, Fogarty, Geary, 2010, p.1). They believe that there is a complete annihilation of critical thinking skills and informed decision-making in the case of the student when companies are donating their time and money.

Proponents on the other hand, view these connections as natural symbiotic relationships that can be favorable for both parties involved. “As the public debate intensifies over commercial activities in schools, cash-strapped districts are increasingly finding themselves caught in the middle” (Larson, 2002, p. 2). There are legislative initiatives under way in states from New York to California that prescribe established guidelines around cooperative involvement and participation of corporations in their schools. However, it is essential that we institute a national policy for school-business partnerships. “Those in favor of school-business partnerships contend that the traditional isolated way that many schools have functioned is anachronistic in a time of changing family demographics, an increasingly demanding workplace, and growing student diversity” (Sanders, 2003, p. 162).

Historical Context

Business leaders' involvement in education is not brand new. It began in the early 1900s when organizations wanted urban schools to imitate the core business model. Corporate leaders believed that U.S. schools were failing to efficiently prepare their future workforce.

Over 100 years later, we are still dealing with the same issues. Public schools have been gravely scrutinized since *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* was published in 1983. From that crucial report until the present day, the business community has had a major influence on systemizing and implementing school reform agendas. Without prevarication, the motivating factor for business involvement in education hinges on maintaining superiority and power in the competitive nature of our global marketplace (Gelberg, 2007).

Review of the Previous Research

Pros

School leaders are dealing with horrifically less-than-ideal situations, including insufficient funds and resources, while simultaneously being asked to administer higher test scores and graduation rates. As Paul Vallas, chief executive of the Philadelphia schools, has been quoted, "My approach is Leave No Dollar Behind...There are tremendous needs in this system where 85% of the kids are below poverty level. I'm not uncomfortable with corporations giving us money and getting their names on things. As long as it's not inappropriate, I don't see any downside" (as cited in Gelberg, 2007, p. 47).

Successful Relationships

Successful relationships can be found at all grade levels, from one-room schoolhouses to large urban high schools. Cincinnati Bell in Cincinnati Ohio has a partnership with the Robert A. Taft High School. Their relationship has allowed an expansion of technology-based programs and is

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now known as the Taft Information Technology High School. Doctors Inlet Elementary School in Middleburg, Florida has a valuable relationship with U.S. Navy personnel from the VP-62 Squadron in Jacksonville, Florida who visit every Thursday to assist the middle school students with math. At Harriet Gifford Elementary School in Elgin, Illinois, students who read a mystery during “Kids Love a Mystery Month” were able to participate in a special event sponsored by Books at Sunset, a neighborhood bookstore (Education World, 2011a, para. 4). In Mountain Home, Idaho, students identified exhibiting outstanding behavior were awarded a gift certificate from a local business. Furthermore, Doctors Inlet Elementary School established a newly minted partnership with BJ's Wholesale Club; they sponsor faculty-meeting snacks and provide incentives for students, such as pizza or ice cream for grade levels that do something exceptional.

It appears that any school leader who is not making an active commitment to forge these relationships within their community is failing to appreciate an advantageous connection that could improve their situation. At Silver Sands Middle School Port Orange, Florida, the principal makes every effort to introduce himself to possible business partners. He claims that being proactive is imperative when seeking sponsorship for his school; in the same respect, he believes that the relationship needs to be reciprocal. His clear approach is similar to a business model in that his presentation refers to a bottom line, in other words, how each partner will benefit from the outcome. “I have had partners ask for our choral groups to sing on special occasions and for our "Brain Brawl" club to compete with the partner's best brains in a fun competition" (Education World, 2011a, para. 38).

According to Jennifer Medina (2010), the Los Angeles Unified School District suffered massive budget cuts and a slew of teacher layoffs. The district decided to seek out private funding through corporate sponsorship as a way to mitigate the challenges that would ultimately become a reality. A substantial partnership worth \$18 million dollars presented itself. “This is

really our way of being responsive to that reality; we need to look for other sources of revenue. As uncomfortable as it may be for folks, it's less comfortable to get rid of programs or go through more layoffs," said Melissa Infusino, the director of partnerships for the district (Medina, 2010, p. A22).

It is common knowledge that kids are aware and capable of every new trend that traverses our constantly evolving society, especially in technology. One company that recognizes this is New York based Sweat Equity Enterprises (SEE); it designs new fashion, shoes and other products. It also sponsors an after-school program that works with the disadvantaged youth in that area. The students involved in the program participate in the entire process, from design to creation to transaction. Nissan, Mark Ecko Enterprises and Radio Shack are a few of the major names that support the operation. It is a productive and positive way for these children to express their creativity and increase their self-esteem. A prominent corporate executive involved in the program admits that he was amazed at the product ideas and store enhancements that the SEE members contributed (Education World, 2011b).

Science- and technology-centered businesses tend to have large philanthropic arms that truly reach out to education. IBM is one company that believes improving the public schools is an essential part of its business paradigm because helping to shape future employees and customers is an indispensable way to spend its money. Between 1994 and 2004, IBM's *Reinventing Education* initiative awarded \$75 million in grants to various public schools. It was estimated that over 90,000 teachers and millions of students used the educational technology tools designed and donated by IBM. To further prove their commitment to education, IBM allowed salaried employees from high executive positions to donate their time to work with educators in the schools.

Initially, when *Reinventing Education* was implemented, its primary goal was to help educators and students navigate the World Wide Web. Now, that the Internet is a ubiquitous tool in education throughout most of the United States, IBM reinvented its educational goals with the *Reading Companion*, which is a Web-based program that uses voice recognition technology to aid reading strategies. *¡Tradúcelo Ahora!* is another program that facilitates communication between Spanish speaking families and the school, as well as those same families and English speaking parents within the community by translating important emails and notices into their native language. IBM estimates that about 500 schools and nonprofit organizations use this technology, worth nine million dollars.

Hewlett Packard (HP) is another technology firm that views public education as a top priority on its list of foundation goals. HP has developed a long-term partnership with a school district in northern California that has flourished for almost a decade. The corporation also instituted an “employee giving program” that offered a 3:1 match of employee donations, resulting in over \$40,000 in computers.

Northwest Community Bank in Winsted, Connecticut awarded a \$72,000 state grant to a school district within their community. The high school administration utilized the funds to create an honors-level course based on money, banking and business. A viable, operating branch was also established on school grounds so that student bankers could open accounts — meeting all routine banking needs for fellow students, faculty and families. Actual bank employees lecture in class and ultimately control the operation, but only students staff the campus bank. The 12 selected students who work at the bank, which is open for two hours during the school day, undergo a rigorous process beginning with passing the course, an interview, and then 25 hours of basic training with a coach in an established branch. This partnership has made working at a bank and applying the skills learned in school appealing to the students. The bank

reaps the reward of having a qualified pool of employees during the school year and even after graduation (Hann, 2008).

Those in favor of school-business partnerships find it stifling to proceed on the continuum of an outmoded, doctrinaire view of pedagogy in the public school system. “As Cisco System's Chambers states, ‘we need fundamental changes in our education system. Government leaders, teachers, parents, and businesses need to embrace accountability and competition in our schools if we are ever going to improve the current situation’” (McEwen, 2002).

Cons

A leading expert on commercialization of education declares that “schoolhouse commercialism,” has accelerated and intensified over the past thirty years (Molnar, Boninger, et al., 2010, p.1). During the early eighties when *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* was published, President Reagan and the Secretary of Education, T. H. Bell announced to the world that the United States was failing to meet our national need for a competitive workforce. At the time, student achievement in math, English, geography and history was way below foreign schools, and this data forecast a dismal employee profile. In an effort to improve our country’s standards, corporations along with government and education officials, decided to change the path of our public education system, for better or worse (McEwen, 2002).

On the surface, it seems that businesses have an altruistic nature with the ultimate goal of helping our struggling schools and striving students, but then their philanthropic gavel hits the boardroom table with a resounding, dominating thump. Many school-business adversaries believe that these corporate machinations are causing great, permanent damage to the minds of our young children. For instance, Scholastic Magazine’s donation of computers, book covers and interactive materials to one school appears to be genuine and public-spirited; however, upon

further investigation, this contribution reveals a marketing tool used to record student life to increase sales. One of the most successful but thoroughly invasive programs of “schoolhouse commercialism” is Channel One News (Molnar, Boninger, et al., 2010, p.1). During the school day, a student is required to watch 12 minutes of a news program, which includes a mandatory commercial viewing in exchange for monetary support. Programs like this one are using valuable teaching time to propagandize our children. This type of advertising in schools is severely wrong and eliminates any potential advances that a financial contribution might produce (Abbarno, 2001).

“Careful professional assessment of the age-appropriateness, relative value, and simple truth contained in these exchanges is often sacrificed in the name of school-business partnership” (Larson, 2001, p.12). According to leading experts in the field, there are some corporations that have donated thousands of dollars worth of computer equipment only to receive personal data on students as payment (Larson, 2001). Cases have been reported where children participate in Internet surveys revealing tastes, preferences and personal information. There are marketing schemes that involve a student playing an on-line shopping game to indicate proclivities for different items. Clearly, parents, teachers and school administrators should condemn the use of students as commercial research subjects.

As pressure on schools’ budgets and demand for investments in new technology increase, a new dot.com business model has emerged. This new model involves the offer of “free” technology resources to schools supported by an online advertising program that involves the collection of market-related personal information from students (online profiling) and target marketing of students with banner ads — within the education learning environment (Willard as cited in Larson, 2001, p. 13).

Some corporations base their contributions to education solely on the return on their investment. The attraction to the public school population is undeniable for most corporations. Students have influence on their families' purchases, as well as future brand loyalty as consumers. One marketing firm has a 21-page handbook that explains exactly how to enter into a school contract with the goal being access to students' personal lives. The following is a list of chapter titles that address an alarming collection of marketing topics in this manual: "In-School Marketing: from the Boardroom to Homeroom, The Way to a Kid's Heart is Through His Stomach, Branding in the Classroom: Cable Networks Strike Balance, Curriculum-Hungry Teachers Love Free, Branded Materials" (Larson, 2001, p.2).

Having access to personal information, in addition to intimate details of a child's life is only a small slice of the pie. Soft drinks and foods with little or no nutritional value are widely available and advertised in exchange for funding. The health consequences resulting from the food and beverages that public schools blindly support are shocking. "Over the past three decades the rate of childhood obesity has more than doubled for preschool children aged 2 to 5 years and for adolescents aged 12 to 19 years, and it has more than tripled for children aged 6 to 10 years. Only one percent of American children eat a diet consistent with USDA guidelines" (Molnar, Boninger, & Fogarty, 2011, p.5). It may seem excessive to hold advertising campaigns accountable for a child's unhealthy eating habits; however, experts agree that this type of marketing within such a prominent fixture more readily influences a child's decision-making habits (Molnar, Boninger, & Fogarty, 2011). Our schools, our teachers, our students — they are a unique society and the messages promoted are perceived as a reality for these young people.

The most salient point that critics of commercialism in schools are trying to make is that schools and classrooms are a veritable microcosm of culture for our students. If we accept corporate donations, advertisement and marketing in our schools, we are essentially damaging

our children's ability to think critically for themselves and forcing them to kowtow to sometimes-disreputable business influences. Corporations are focused on increased sales and total revenue, not the fragile, developing minds of our young people trying to grow and understand our complex society. "Promoting critical thinking is the essence of what John Dewey termed an *educative* experience. *Educative* experiences increase students' ability to have fruitful, creative, and enjoyable experiences in the future. *Mis-educative* experiences, according to Dewey, are those that arrest or distort the growth of future experience" (Molnar, Boninger, & Fogarty, 2011, p.8). Immediate results such as state-of-the-art technology, a sparkling gymnasium, or even a generous cash donation may provide temporary relief for administrators and pleasure for the students, but these material advancements do not necessarily enhance a child's ability to engage in academics. In fact, these insincere promises of hope complicate a school's mission to provide a high-quality education by causing psychological, health-related, and academic harm to students (Molnar, Boninger, & Fogarty, 2011).

Types of Partnerships

For-profit organizations are similar to people. There are a few good ones. Good corporations have a solid purpose and they maintain systems that work without harming others. There are businesses that will thrive, but others will certainly fail. Some businesses are inherently bad. These organizations may have been unscrupulous from the beginning but more than likely they have developed dishonest methods as a way to survive in a competitive marketplace. It is true that some corporations are undeniably mean, which is clearly reflected in their conduct (Jasso, 1996).

The reality that needs to be accepted is that each corporation is a giant resource that can be utilized by school districts to reach minor and major goals secured by an ethical contract.

Analogous to a human relationship, it is the choice of the school to make the appropriate decision as to whether a corporation is a valuable asset. It is essential that the person assigned to the job of forging a business partnership has charisma and is skilled in the world of finance, at least to some degree.

The following is a list of 12 corporate resources available: **Events and Fundraisers**, for example, a book fair, a carnival, or an auction; **Human Resources**, such as volunteers or tutors; **Influence**, including political prestige benefitting reform; **Information**, that is economic, demographic, historic research and marketing done by corporations that could aid in curriculum design; **In-Kind Contributions**, that is contributions of a company's products, supplies, resources and services; **Leadership**, for instance, a request from the director for a corporation to fill board positions ensuring representative diversity and necessary management skills; **Mandatory Involvement**, if a corporation is publicly held, such as a bank, the law states that such businesses must be involved in or support the community; **Material Resources**, which could mean use of the executive dining room, lobby, or corporate computers; **Partnerships**, essentially, a collaboration of talent and resources to reach an expected goal; **Programs**, meaning a donation of a speakers bureau member; **Relationships**, offering influential connections and finally, **Money** - "There is only one thing wrong with money. There is never enough of it," (Jasso, 1996, p. 81).

Not every one of these options is feasible or in alignment with a specific school district. It is important for the superintendent, the principal and the teachers to vet the available organizations within a community and establish shared values and goals for both the school and the corporation involved. Securing resources and support from more than one business is a practical approach and aids in diversity and overall connections (Jasso, 1996).

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A typical school mission or vision statement almost invariably encapsulates the notion of good citizenship, a sense of community, and a quality education for all students. A business mission statement normally parallels this concept because they too are concerned with having a positive reputation and being good corporate citizens, as well as developing strong ties within the community. A quality education for all students is also essential to the business model because it serves as a general forecast of a future workforce within the community (The Council for Corporate and School Partnerships, n.d.).

A school-business partnership can only be successful when the school's integrity is recognized and a truly reciprocal relationship exists. A business has to ensure that the school administrators and the parents of students are in accordance with their agreed-on form of sponsorship. Each partner's goals need to be congruent, preliminary plans must be established, systems need to be in place and continuous re-evaluation is required in order to monitor progress. For a sustainable relationship to flourish, there must be a clear understanding of shared values and a willingness to make adjustments. District leaders need to acknowledge that collaboration is a complex process that takes time and commitment. Businesses have a vested interest in school districts that succeed because it reflects well on them and the community as a whole. "A business mindset is hugely advantageous to the partnership, as it offers a clear structure, time frame, and expected results" (Adams, 2012, para. 2). "But you have to be careful about your business partners. You are not there to be at the whim of the business" (Engeln as cited in Hann, 2008, p. 34).

Chapter 3 Method

Introduction

This non-experimental design used interviews to garner information from selected community members who have developed school-business relationships.

Sample and Site

Participants were identified based on their leadership qualities. For the purpose of this research, leadership qualities were defined as head of corporation, community involvement and participation with local schools.

Ethical Standards

This paper adheres to ethical standards in the treatment of human subjects in research as articulated by the American Psychological Association (2010). Additionally, the research proposal was reviewed by the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), approved, and assigned number 9090.

Access and Permissions

I emailed the assistant to the superintendant of schools in this specified community and informed her of the nature of this research. I requested contact with local businesses that maintain partnerships with the designated schools. My next step was to contact these people via email, inform them of the nature of this study and make a request for an interview.

Data Gathering Strategies

Participants were asked to meet at a mutually convenient time. One interview took place over the telephone and via email while the other was an office meeting. They responded to open-ended questions upon request.

Questions for Computer Software Business Executive

1. **What schools do you currently sponsor? How long have you sponsored them?** *Our company provides sponsorship to schools around the world. Our firm is located in eighty different countries. We are originally from the Bay Area and we also have headquarters outside of Portland — so, we definitely give locally — to these schools first. In addition, our software is free to students online. As a firm, we are over thirty years old and we have been sponsoring schools for almost as long.*
2. **Your mission statement communicates that your company believes in being a responsive community partner and fosters sustainable communities through grants, volunteering and corporate citizenship. How does school sponsorship factor into that?** *In so far as volunteerism, employees receive five to seven days per year of paid time to dedicate to schools. We contribute free software instead of giving direct monetary contributions. However, we also provide grants to schools to enhance technology projects and/or research. Collaborations with (secondary and higher education) students help us tailor software to their specific needs.*
3. **In what ways do you feel the relationship has reciprocity, or a give and take?** *The process is completely reciprocal. Bottom line is: we are a business, so, honestly, not everything we do is completely philanthropic. By providing our software and training to students we hope to create a population of young people who are proficient and have an appreciation for the modern world. We want to get them excited about the creative field of technology.*
4. **What does the school sponsorship look like?** *As I mentioned earlier, we allow our employees paid time off to volunteer in the schools — helping teachers, training students, etc. We are always creating new applications for the younger kids and figuring out*

different ways for an artist teacher or an engineering teacher to utilize them in the classroom. We have “design competitions” for high school students. We also have a Facebook page with 900,00 followers and an online student community of five million.

5. **What are the main aspects of the relationship that you find the most beneficial to you, and to the students?** *When they are learning, we are learning. When students test our software and provide feedback, we are gaining further visualization than when a corporate person gives their opinion. Technology is part of their DNA — unlike an executive who didn’t grow up with computers.*

6. **What additional research or resources do you consider as necessary to advance the benefits of reciprocal business partnerships with public school systems, such as a third-party, non-profit organization that monitors the collection and allocation of resources between businesses and schools?** *I think the bigger companies would like to know where their money is going and to which specific programs. Our firm, for example, wants to know that our contributions are being put to good use. I think acknowledgement is key. Companies want the recognition and the knowledge that their products are being used for the betterment of the students.*

Questions for Superintendent

1. **In what ways do you believe corporate sponsorship has a place in the public school system?** *Businesses can play a great role in their community by supporting their schools. We need to work together because eventually everything comes full circle.*

2. **What does the relationship typically look like?** *We look for common interests, first. I normally have the companies “brokered” by a third party, who is helpful in setting up the partnership.*

3. **To what degree is the relationship reciprocal?** *It is very reciprocal. Healthy schools mean a prosperous community. These partnerships help the schools to thrive and be successful and, in turn, people want to move here and live here and spend their money (to support these businesses). The companies know that if they are supporting schools they will eventually have a pool of capable workers. Apple Inc., for example, trains our teachers at a very discounted rate, not because they expect us to buy their equipment, but because they are collaborating with us and making their community better. And friendly businesses get customers.*
4. **What does a successful relationship entail?** *We have certain criteria for what we accept (this includes: monetary donations, in-kind contributions, mentorships). A company buys an advertisement and they receive a sticker to put in their store window to show their support. People will see this sticker and shop there, which then supports our schools. It's that simple.*
5. **What challenges have you encountered?** *The follow through is difficult. After the partnership is established, assigning an employee to manage it is next to impossible.*
6. **What additional research or resources do you consider as necessary to advance the benefits of reciprocal business partnerships with public school systems, such as a third-party, non-profit organization that monitors the collection and allocation of resources between businesses and schools?** *Good idea. I would suggest business training or a business education for that team. Another idea is to utilize local businesses to learn about that business, relevant to the (Common Core State) standards, and then teach that content in a new environment. For example, a teacher takes his or her class on tour of a company's accounting office and then they have a review in their conference room...change the environment...to create meaningful learning experiences.*

Data Analysis Approach

Once data were gathered, I thoughtfully reviewed responses. Similarities and differences were then tabulated and reported in narrative form.

Chapter 4 Findings

Description of Data

The questionnaires were designed to elucidate the perspectives of both parties involved in corporate sponsorship: the business owner and the school administrator. The first interview was with the director of communications who works for a prominent software developer. The intention was to better understand what and how a leading company participates in and contributes to the public school system. Additionally, the second set of questions was intended to gain a clear picture of how a top administrator views corporate sponsorship, as it currently works today and a vision for the future. The corporate executive and the superintendent were asked a series of six questions pertaining to school-business relationships. The data reflects their professional opinions regarding this study.

Overall Findings, Themes

The results of these questionnaires supported the positive findings for the literature review of this project. The superintendent absolutely supported corporate sponsorship and believed that teachers can utilize a company's resources and facilities to better teach their students. The business owner stated that investing in education is crucial to the future of technology. When asked if the participants saw corporate sponsorship as a valuable tool, both individuals agreed that, when used properly, it is extremely effective and mutually beneficial.

Chapter 5 Discussion /Analysis

Summary of Major Findings

The major findings in this study were that both participants were in agreement that corporate sponsorship in schools is favorable and successful when implemented properly, which reflects the above stated “pros” section. The interviews also demonstrated that both schools and businesses advocate these reciprocal relationships as a way of advancing teaching practices.

Comparison of Findings to Previous Research

As stated in the literature, school-business relationships are necessary for the advancement of technology and American enterprise. Without their participation, public schools will flounder in our current economic situation. The results of this study indicate that when corporate sponsorship is actualized it can produce 21st century improvements to the years of educational tumult that has developed.

Limitations/Gaps in the Study

The study was limited due to the fact that the sampling was small. It would be negligent to ignore the opinions and ideas of a varied socioeconomic population, including school administrators, teachers and community businesses. Ostensibly, different populations would have a different perspective on the overall advantages of such relationships.

Implications for Future Research

For future studies, it would be important to compare and contrast improvement and success rates from state to state for school-business relationships. It would be interesting to examine which large companies donate, how they contribute, in addition to where in the nation. Further research

could uncover which schools, from state to state, are supported by local businesses versus large firms and why this is the case.

Overall Significance of the Study

Currently, while there is no national protocol for school-business relationships within the United States, there are plenty of schools and organizations that could serve as prototypes for implementing a regulated contract. The legion of experts in the discipline could research acceptable criterion for positive relationships within partnerships that have existed or currently exist to establish a general set of guidelines. My suggestion is as follows: A proposed organization needs to be created and coordinated by a leading philanthropist in the field of education. It would be a third-party non-profit agency that would act as a liaison between all school districts and their respective corporations in order to maintain a studied, successful and sustainable relationship for a specified period of time. I recommend six locations around the country with the headquarters being in California.

The United States economy is primarily based on commercialism, consumerism and advertisements. It is our responsibility as parents and teachers to instill a foundation for critical thinking, global awareness and consumer discernment for our children. We can recast “schoolhouse commercialism” and teach our students the process of thinking — that questions assumptions to ultimately foster autonomy (Molnar et al., 2010, p.1).

We have been dealing with these same issues for almost 40 years. It is time to make drastic changes in our decision-making processes. Drastic changes are necessary, but they also need to be smart. “It is anticipated that schools in the 21st century will be driven, in large part, by partnerships. Evidence suggests that school-business partnerships are indeed becoming a standard fixture in America’s schools” (Larson, 2001, p.7). The results of this study prove that

the desire, the motivation and certainly, the need for corporate sponsorship in the public schools are there. Now, we just need to realize our potential.

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Appendix

Guidelines for Effective Partnerships

The Council for Corporate and School Partnerships has eight guiding principles, which fall into four categories, for effective partnerships:

THE FOUNDATION

1. Should be built on shared values and philosophies.
2. Should be defined by mutually beneficial goals and objectives.

IMPLEMENTATION

3. Should have activities that are integrated into the school and business cultures.
4. Should be driven by a clear management process and structure.
5. Should define specific, measurable outcomes.

CONTINUITY

6. Should have support at the highest level within the business and school.
7. Should include internal and external communications plans, which clearly illustrate expectations of all parties.

EVALUATION

8. Should be developed with clear definitions of success for all partners.

(Hann, 2008, p. 34)