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# Community/School Partnerships: A National Survey

February 2007



## **About DeHavilland Associates**

DeHavilland Associates is a consulting and communications firm that helps its clients understand and connect with the K-12 community. The company designs, manages, and evaluates outreach campaigns and partnership programs for its corporate and nonprofit clients and creates original initiatives to help educators and education stakeholders establish and strengthen dialogue for the benefit of public education.

For more information, visit [www.dehavillandassociates.com](http://www.dehavillandassociates.com).

## **About the Business/Education Partnership Forum**

Created and managed by DeHavilland Associates, the Business/Education Partnership Forum is an online clearinghouse for anyone interested in learning how to build effective business/education partnerships. This clearinghouse offers news and announcements, links to resources, a directory of organizations involved in business/education partnerships, and a monthly newsletter.

For more information, visit [www.biz4ed.org](http://www.biz4ed.org).

# 2007

## Survey on External Support for K-12 Schools and Districts

Despite the fact that nearly every school and district in the K-12 market experiences some level of support from the surrounding community, very little research has been done in the area of community/school partnerships. This survey, the first in a series from DeHavilland Associates to explore this field, offers insights into how community/school partnerships are structured and what types of relationships schools and districts have established.

Key findings from this survey include:

- When asked to rank the importance of current partners to their efforts, respondents put individual businesses first, parent organizations second, and booster clubs third.
- When asked to rank the partners with whom they'd most like to develop relationships, business coalitions came in first, followed by individual businesses and regional/national foundations.
- Schools and districts are willing to invest time and talent to make partnerships successful, with top officials working collaboratively with partners to design partnerships and set outcomes. However, most have not established systematic procedures to recruit and monitor partnerships.
- Businesses are listed most frequently by schools and districts as supporters (82.2%), with parent organizations mentioned nearly as often (76.1%).
- The total value of partnerships over the previous 12 months was limited, with 43.6% reporting a value of \$25,000 or less, and the vast majority (83.0%) listing the value at less than \$200,000.
- There were clear differences in the responses of suburban, urban, and rural schools and districts. Those in suburban areas note generally higher levels of support from community-based partners; those in urban areas receive greater support from institutional partners (nonprofits, foundations, and postsecondary institutions); and those in rural areas record below-average levels of support from every partner with the exception of booster clubs.

- Rankings of current partners reinforced the importance of local support, with regional/national foundations and nonprofits appearing at the bottom of the list (10 and 12 respectively). However, these organizations are seen as attractive future partners, with regional/national foundations listed third and regional/national nonprofits listed sixth on the ranking of partners with whom respondents would most like to develop a relationship.

**Table 1: Respondent Characteristics**

Survey Item	%
<b>What is your title or role?</b>	
Superintendent	21.3%
District-level administrator	10.7%
Principal/school administrator	39.2%
School board member	8.7%
Education foundation executive director	7.0%
Education foundation board chair	1.5%
Education foundation board member	1.9%
Partnership specialist	1.2%
Staff/secretarial	0.2%
School finance director	0.6%
Other	7.9%
<b>School/district is in the following type of location:</b>	
Urban	25.0%
Suburban	28.7%
Rural	46.3%
<b>If you're with an individual school, type of school:</b>	
Public	86.2%
Charter	7.9%
Private	5.9%

# I. Data Collection Process

DeHavilland Associates collaborated on this effort with the National School Foundation Association (NSFA). Each established a list of questions according to their interests—DeHavilland Associates focusing on community/school partnerships and NSFA on school foundations—and built a single survey containing both sets of questions and a common set of demographic queries. The parties distributed the survey to a combined set of lists, and each will publish the results of their survey components.

DeHavilland Associates and NSFA conducted this survey between January 25 and February 6, 2007. The survey was promoted via email to a list of 31,000 superintendents and principals and the newsletter lists of the National School Foundation Association and the Business/Education Partnership Forum. Notices were sent out on January 25 and February 1. The only incentive offered to respondents was a copy of the survey results.

As a result of this effort, 768 individuals participated in the survey. This report represents only those respondents who are directly involved in community/school partnerships (535 entries, or 69.6% of all respondents); the reader

should remember that this survey represents the experience, practices, and interests only of those involved in such partnerships. Further, this report is limited to questions on community/school partnerships as offered by DeHavilland Associates; one should look to the National School Foundation Association for information on the practices and interests of school foundation professionals.

# II. Respondents

This survey captured information from a diverse group of respondents: there was solid representation from both the school and district levels, and from those in suburban, urban, and rural areas. Table 1 displays a breakdown of respondent characteristics; additional highlights are as follows.

- Superintendents made up a much larger percentage of respondents in rural areas (34.8%) than in urban (9.3%) or suburban (10.5%) areas; principals were more strongly represented in urban areas (46.5%) than in rural (41.0%) or suburban (31.6%) areas.
- Charter and private schools were more strongly represented in urban areas (6.7% private; 24.8% charter) than in suburban (7.4%; 3.7%) or rural (4.9%; 2.2%) areas.

<b>Survey Item</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Who acts as primary liaison with supporters?</b>	
School/district leader	41.8%
Partnership specialist	3.8%
Individual teachers	2.3%
Multiple people	44.3%
Other	7.9%
<b>Who normally takes the lead in defining the structure or objectives of the partnership?</b>	
We design them, then solicit partners	16.8%
Partners come to us with their own ideas	6.9%
We work collaboratively with partners to set objectives and design programs	70.2%
Other	6.1%
<b>Do you have a school foundation?</b>	
Yes	41.9%
No	58.1%

### III. Current Practices in Building Community/School Partnerships

When answering questions about current partnership practices, respondents clearly show that partnerships are taken seriously: partners work with either top administrators or with multiple contacts; further, school and district supporters are treated as true partners, taking part in defining partnership structures and objectives. However, there does seem to be room for improvement: few partnerships leverage all available opportunities to recruit external supporters, and tracking of both inputs and outcomes is not generally consistent.

#### Recruiting Partners

When asked how they solicit partnerships, respondents' answers differed by their position and by their location. While the composite results indicate (Chart 1) that schools and districts have not taken advantage of all opportunities available to them for recruiting, those at the district level and those in suburban locations are more actively pursuing partnerships through multiple means.

- Given the resources available at the district level, it may not be surprising to see that superintendents and other district officials are more active in the search for partners than are school principals. They are more likely to have dedicated staff (32.4% to 27.9%), initiate public communications (45.3% to 26.4%), apply to public grant solicitations (42.4% to 32.7%), work through facilitators (47.1% to 33.7%), and find partners through informal networking (75.3% to 69.2%).
- Schools and districts in suburban locations are more active across all categories than urban sites, and far more active than those in rural areas. The range in scores is greatest in working through facilitators (suburban, 53.3%; urban, 45.5%; rural, 34.3%) but falls within a narrower range of 9% to 12% on other items on the list.

Similarly, those at the district level and those in suburban areas are more likely to have a school foundation to help facilitate partnerships. Superintendents and other district administrators are more likely to report having a foundation than are school principals (44.7% to 25.0%), and those at suburban sites are more likely to have a foundation (65.1%) than are those in urban (38.9%) or rural (28.7%) areas.

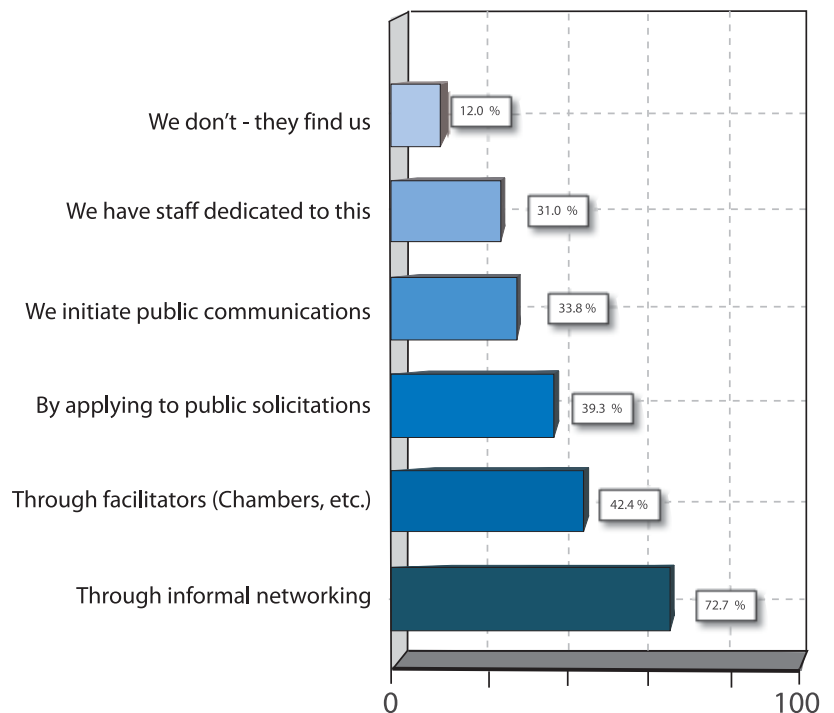
#### Partner Relations

When determining who acts as primary liaison with partners (see Table 2), it should come as no surprise that school principals take more of an active role than do those in district leadership positions: 46.8% of principals state that they act as primary liaison with partners compared with 37.1% of superintendents and other district officials.

Further, when asked who takes the lead in defining partnership structures or objectives, as a rule respondents are clearly interested in a collaborative planning process with their partners, as seen in Table 2. However, principals stated that they were somewhat more likely to design programs and then solicit partners to support them (20.6%) than were superintendents and district officials (12.7%).

**Chart 1: Outreach Efforts**

*Survey Item: How do you solicit partnerships?*



## Tracking

While respondents are clearly interested in working with partners, not all track the scope or outcomes of the resulting partnerships. As seen in Chart 2, only 38.8% always track information on the scope of partnerships and, while schools and districts make more of an effort to track partnership outcomes, 30.0% still report not doing so, as seen in Chart 3.

Responses on tracking the scope of partnerships were uniform across titles and locations, with the exception of those in rural areas, who are less likely than others to always collect such information (32.6%, compared with 43.0% for suburban and 46.2% for urban locales). In addition, rural schools were somewhat less likely to track outcomes, with 35.5% saying they did not do so, versus 26.2% in suburban and 24.4% in urban locations.

## IV. Partners, Present and Future

Respondents were also asked questions about their current partnerships: what types of organizations work with them, the value of current partnerships, what kinds of support those partners provide, who they see as their most important partners, and with whom they'd most like to develop relationships in the future.

Based on survey responses, schools and districts are engaged in partnerships with a variety of organizations in a number

of ways, with businesses and parent organizations playing a key role in supporting K-12 education. However, results indicate room for growth in terms of value gained, and respondents have clear ideas as to the types of partners they'd like to pursue in the future to increase the size and range of external support.

## Scope of Partnerships

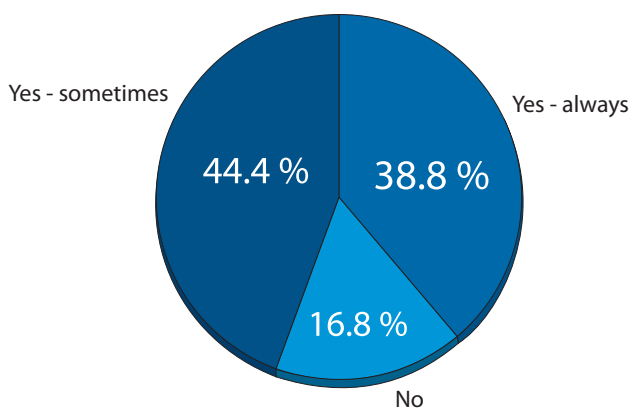
There are many types of organizations that support K-12 education, and respondents indicated that they work with all of them to varying degrees. The most frequent partners are individual businesses (82.2% of respondents), followed closely by parent organizations such as PTAs or PTOs (76.1% of respondents); several others were noted frequently, but none beyond these two broke the 50% threshold.

To paint a more accurate picture of community/school partnerships, Table 3 identifies sources of school support by location. A few points of interest:

- Those at rural sites are consistently less likely to receive support from organizations and institutions: they note less participation from groups including business coalitions, externally-run education foundations, regional/national foundations, local nonprofits, regional/national nonprofits, and postsecondary institutions. They are, however, more likely to receive support from booster clubs.

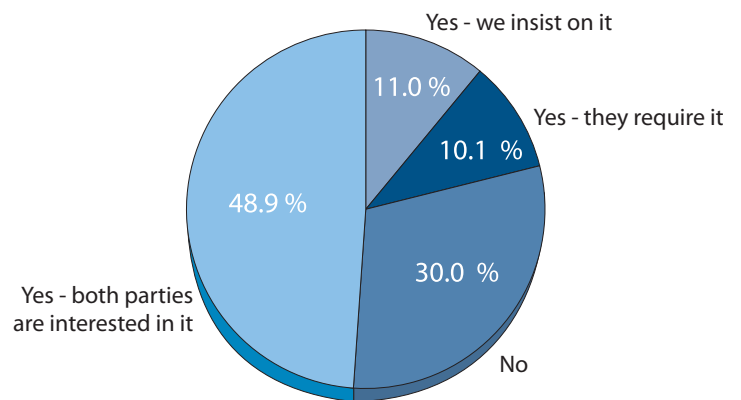
**Chart 2: Tracking Partnerships**

*Survey Item: Are you capturing information on the scope of your partnership efforts (logging donations, volunteer hours, etc.)?*



**Chart 3: Tracking Outcomes**

*Survey Item: Are you capturing information on outcomes?*



- Those in urban locations are more likely to receive organizational and institutional support, with more frequent reports of participation from other local foundations, regional/national foundations, local nonprofits, regional/national nonprofits, and postsecondary institutions.
- Respondents in suburban areas are the most likely to receive parent and community support, logging the highest participation rates among individual businesses, business coalitions, parent organizations, school-run foundations, externally-run foundations, and alumni clubs.

Respondents were also asked to share the total value of all such partnerships over the past 12 months, including not only financial contributions but also the value of volunteer hours, goods and services, and partner expertise (see question

2 of Table 3 for details). Even when factoring in the value of non-financial commitments, more than half of survey respondents (60.8%) report receiving \$50,000 or less in the past year. As might be expected based on partnership levels reported previously, rural schools receive less support than average, with 71.1% reporting less than \$50,000 in contributed value.

## Types of Partnerships

Partners can provide more than donations: they can provide volunteers, goods and services, and expertise, all of which can be used to help schools and districts fulfill their missions. Participants were asked about each of these areas for the twelve partner types addressed in this survey; the results, along with breakouts by type of location, can be found in Tables 4a and 4b.

**Table 3: Sources and Levels of Support, with breakout by location of respondent**

<b>We receive support from the following:</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Suburban</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>
Individual businesses	82.2%	85.5%	81.8%	81.2%
Business coalitions	45.6%	56.6%	50.0%	36.3%
Parent organization	76.1%	84.2%	72.0%	73.9%
School-run foundation	14.2%	19.7%	9.8%	13.1%
Externally-run education foundation	31.8%	45.4%	33.3%	22.9%
Other local foundations	33.1%	32.9%	40.2%	29.4%
Regional/national foundations	20.0%	23.0%	28.8%	13.5%
Local nonprofits	46.4%	48.7%	59.1%	38.4%
Regional/national nonprofits	13.8%	15.1%	25.0%	7.3%
Postsecondary institutions	19.3%	24.3%	26.5%	12.2%
Alumni club	20.0%	27.0%	17.4%	17.1%
Booster club	44.9%	48.0%	22.7%	55.5%
<b>Value of all partnerships over the past 12 months:</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Suburban</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>
Less than \$25,000	43.6%	26.9%	38.5%	56.6%
\$25,000 to \$50,000	17.2%	23.4%	15.4%	14.5%
\$50,000 to \$200,000	22.2%	24.8%	16.2%	23.6%
\$200,000 to \$500,000	6.8%	10.3%	11.5%	2.1%
\$500,000 to \$1 Million	3.3%	4.8%	4.6%	1.7%
\$1 Million to \$2 Million	3.6%	4.1%	6.9%	1.6%
\$2 million to \$5 Million	1.0%	2.8%	0.8%	0.0%
Over \$5 Million	2.3%	2.8%	6.2%	0.0%

## Funding

Funding is a key element of community/school partnerships, with individual businesses (70.3%), parent organizations (63.2%), and booster clubs (42.6%) acting as key sources of donations. As a rule, suburban sites attract a higher number of partners than others across most partner categories. Exceptions can be found in the areas of foundation and nonprofit support, where urban sites record the greatest levels of participation.

## Volunteers

Parenting organizations top the list of partners that provide volunteers at 77.8%, with individual businesses (52.5%) and

booster clubs (40.4%) also cited as frequent contributors. Suburban sites once again note higher participation levels than urban and rural sites; in this case, however, urban sites beat the average not only among foundations and nonprofits, but also with postsecondary institutions.

## Goods and Services

While not as prevalent as the previous two categories, schools and districts receive goods and services from several types of partners. Individual businesses again top the list at 67.9%, with parent organizations (43.0%) and booster clubs (28.2%) rounding out the top three most frequent contributors.

**Table 4a: Types of support by partner, with breakout by location of respondent**

<b>We receive funding from the following:</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Suburban</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>
Individual businesses	70.3%	78.3%	62.1%	70.2%
Business coalitions	25.4%	34.9%	25.8%	19.2%
Parent organization	63.2%	68.4%	56.1%	64.5%
School-run foundation	17.9%	29.6%	9.8%	4.9%
Externally-run education foundation	30.7%	44.7%	31.8%	21.2%
Other local foundations	32.3%	34.2%	40.2%	26.9%
Regional/national foundations	19.6%	23.0%	28.8%	12.7%
Local nonprofits	27.7%	24.3%	30.3%	29.0%
Regional/national nonprofits	10.8%	12.5%	16.7%	6.9%
Postsecondary institutions	6.9%	9.9%	9.1%	3.7%
Alumni club	17.0%	23.7%	14.4%	14.3%
Booster club	42.6%	44.7%	24.2%	51.4%
<b>We receive volunteers from the following:</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Suburban</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>
Individual businesses	52.5%	59.9%	59.8%	44.1%
Business coalitions	25.4%	34.2%	32.6%	16.7%
Parent organization	77.8%	82.2%	80.3%	74.7%
School-run foundation	9.7%	14.5%	4.5%	6.5%
Externally-run education foundation	13.6%	22.4%	15.2%	7.8%
Other local foundations	10.3%	11.2%	15.9%	6.9%
Regional/national foundations	3.7%	3.3%	9.1%	1.2%
Local nonprofits	33.1%	38.2%	43.9%	24.5%
Regional/national nonprofits	6.0%	5.3%	12.9%	2.9%
Postsecondary institutions	12.1%	13.8%	24.2%	4.5%
Alumni club	15.7%	21.1%	16.7%	12.2%
Booster club	40.4%	43.4%	25.0%	47.3%

## Expertise

Once again, individual businesses are cited as a top source of outside expertise (46.0%), with parent organizations (32.7%) and business coalitions (26.9%) also mentioned as top sources. As with the other categories, suburban sites report greater rates of contribution than do other location types.

respondents. What may be surprising, however, is the low ranking of regional and national foundations and nonprofits, which appear at number 10 and 12 on the list respectively. While national organizations play an important role in education, these survey responses serve as a clear reminder that the most important and immediate support for schools and districts is found at the local level.

## Perceived Value of Partners

Based on the frequency and types of partnerships reported in previous sections, it should be no surprise that individual businesses, parent organizations, and booster clubs are considered to be the most important partners by survey

When asked to rank the partners with whom respondents would most like to build relationships in the future, business coalitions topped the list, with individual businesses coming second and regional/national foundations third - a surprise, given their low ranking on the list of current partners.

**Table 4b: Types of support by partner, with breakout by location of respondent**

<b>We receive goods and services from the following:</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Suburban</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>
Individual businesses	67.9%	72.4%	64.4%	67.3%
Business coalitions	23.2%	27.0%	29.5%	17.6%
Parent organization	43.0%	42.1%	40.9%	45.3%
School-run foundation	8.0%	12.5%	6.1%	9.8%
Externally-run education foundation	15.5%	23.0%	19.7%	9.0%
Other local foundations	10.8%	7.9%	18.2%	9.0%
Regional/national foundations	5.4%	3.9%	10.6%	3.3%
Local nonprofits	28.0%	28.3%	37.9%	22.9%
Regional/national nonprofits	7.3%	5.9%	15.9%	3.7%
Postsecondary institutions	14.8%	11.8%	19.7%	13.5%
Alumni club	8.0%	9.9%	7.6%	7.3%
Booster club	28.2%	28.9%	16.7%	34.3%
<b>We receive expertise from the following:</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Suburban</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>
Individual businesses	46.0%	52.6%	47.0%	41.6%
Business coalitions	26.9%	36.8%	37.1%	15.9%
Parent organization	32.7%	40.8%	33.3%	27.8%
School-run foundation	8.0%	14.5%	6.8%	15.1%
Externally-run education foundation	17.4%	26.3%	23.5%	9.0%
Other local foundations	13.1%	15.1%	18.9%	8.6%
Regional/national foundations	8.8%	9.2%	16.7%	4.1%
Local nonprofits	26.5%	30.9%	23.8%	19.6%
Regional/national nonprofits	7.7%	6.6%	18.2%	2.9%
Postsecondary institutions	23.9%	27.0%	28.8%	19.2%
Alumni club	7.7%	11.2%	6.8%	6.1%
Booster club	21.1%	26.3%	13.6%	22.0%

Table 5 has the rankings of current and most desired future partners, along with breakouts by type of location. Rankings of most important partners by those in urban locations are somewhat different from those in suburban and rural sites; however, the low rates of participation by booster clubs and school-run foundations in previous sections explains the variation. In the ranking of most desirable future partners, rural schools place parent organizations in their top three, which may be explained by the lower engagement rates of such groups currently in rural areas, combined with a clear understanding of how those groups are supporting schools and districts in other areas.

## V. Summary

By identifying the wide range of prospective partners in the community and beyond, and by exploring the different ways in which they work with schools and districts, professionals on both sides of the partnership equation can begin to think more broadly about how to establish successful partnerships to benefit both our schools and their contributing partners. This survey lays the groundwork for such explorations - and provides a foundation for future research in this important, but often overlooked, facet of public education.

**Table 5: Importance of current and future partners, with breakout by location of respondent**

<b>Rank the importance of current partners:</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Suburban</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>
Individual businesses	1	1	1	1
Parent organization	2	2	2	2
Booster club	3	5	9	3
Local nonprofits	4	6	3	4
Business coalitions	5	3	4	5
Externally-run education foundation	6	4	6	6
Other local foundations	7	9	5	7
Postsecondary institutions	8	8	7	8 (tie)
School-run foundation	9	7	12	8 (tie)
Regional/national foundations	10	11	8	11
Alumni club	11	10	11	10
Regional/national nonprofits	12	12	10	12
<b>Rank the partners with whom you'd most like to build relationships in the future:</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Suburban</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>
Business coalitions	1	1	1	1
Individual businesses	2	2	2	2
Regional/national foundations	3	3	3	4
Postsecondary institutions	4	4	5	5
Externally-run education foundation	5	5	6	6
Parent organization	6	9	7	3
Other local foundations	7	7	4	8
Alumni club	8	6	9	7
Regional/national nonprofits	9	8	10	10
Local nonprofits	10	10	8	12
Booster club	11	12	11	9
School-run foundation	12	11	12	11

# A1: Questions from Survey on External Support for K-12 Schools and Districts

Thank you for participating in this survey, a joint effort of DeHavilland Associates, the National School Foundation Association, and National University. Your answers will help us understand how external organizations are supporting K-12 schools and districts. You may remain anonymous if you wish; however, if you choose to provide contact information at the end of this survey, we will send you a copy of the results when they are available.

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## I. Demographic Questions

1. What is your title or role?

- Superintendent
- District-level administrator
- Principal/school-level administrator
- School board member
- Education Foundation Executive Director
- Education Foundation Board Member
- Education Foundation Board Chair
- Partnership specialist
- Staff/secretarial
- School finance director
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. School or district name \_\_\_\_\_

3. School/district is in the following type of location

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural

4. If you're with an individual school, type of school:

- Public
- Charter
- Private

5. Size of the school or district

- 499 or fewer
- 500 - 1999
- 2000 - 4999
- 5000 - 9,999
- 10,000 +

6. Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you have a school foundation?

- Yes
- No

8. If your foundation has a website, what is its URL? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Are you involved in some way with:

- A school foundation
- Other school/community partnership activities
- Both

**II. General Questions**

1. I play a direct role in developing/maintaining partnerships

- Yes
- No

2. We receive external support from the following: (check all that apply)

- Individual businesses
- Business coalitions (Chambers, Business Roundtables, NASSMC coalitions, etc.)
- Parent organization (PTA/PTO)
- School-run foundation
- Externally-run education foundation
- Other local foundations
- Regional/national foundations
- Local nonprofits
- Regional/national nonprofits
- Postsecondary institutions
- Alumni club
- Booster club

3. Who acts as primary liaison with these types of supporters?

- School/district leader
- Partnership specialist
- Individual teachers
- Multiple people
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. Are you capturing information on the scope of your partnership efforts (logging donations, volunteer efforts, etc.)?

- Yes – always
- Yes – sometimes
- No

5. Are you capturing information on outcomes?

- Yes – they require it
- Yes – we insist on it
- Yes – both parties are interested in this information
- No

6. Who normally takes the lead in defining the structure or objectives of partnerships?

- We design them, then solicit partners
- Partners come to us with their own ideas
- We work collaboratively with partners to set objectives and design programs
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

7. How do you solicit partnerships? (check all that apply)

- We don't – they find us
- Through informal networking
- Through facilitators (Chambers, school board members, etc.)
- By applying to public solicitations (grants, etc.)
- We initiate public communications soliciting partnerships
- We have staff dedicated to seeking out these relationships

8. Identify the types of support you receive from each organization:

	Funds	Volunteers	Goods/services	Expertise
Individual businesses	___	___	___	___
Business coalitions	___	___	___	___
Parent organization	___	___	___	___
School-run foundation	___	___	___	___
Externally-run education foundation	___	___	___	___
Other local foundations	___	___	___	___
Regional/national foundations	___	___	___	___
Local nonprofits	___	___	___	___
Regional/national nonprofits	___	___	___	___
Postsecondary institutions	___	___	___	___
Alumni club	___	___	___	___
Booster club	___	___	___	___

9. What would you estimate the value of all partnerships to be over the past 12 months?

- Less than \$25,000
- \$25,000 - \$50,000
- \$50,001 - \$200,000
- \$200,001 - \$500,000
- \$500,001 - \$999,999
- \$1M to \$2M
- \$2M to \$5M
- \$5M+

10. Rank the importance of these partners in terms of the value they bring to your school or district:

- Individual businesses
- Business coalitions
- Parent organization
- School-run foundation
- Externally-run education foundation
- Other local foundations
- Regional/national foundations
- Local nonprofits
- Regional/national nonprofits
- Postsecondary institutions
- Alumni club
- Booster club

11. Rank the partners with whom you'd most like to build relationships in the future:

- Individual businesses
- Business coalitions
- Parent organization
- School-run foundation
- Externally-run education foundation
- Other local foundations
- Regional/national foundations
- Local nonprofits
- Regional/national nonprofits
- Postsecondary institutions
- Alumni club
- Booster club

### III. Survey Complete!

Thank you for your participation. You can now register to receive a copy of the results of this survey, as well as emails on building successful school foundations and on establishing business/education partnerships.

Thank you for your participation!



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