

School-Business Partnerships: It's the Schools' Turn to Raise the Grade!

Dianne L. Hoff

Abstract

This article reports on research on school-business partnerships, elucidating how such partnerships have tended to function on the fringe of educational issues, rarely tackling the more gnarly issues of genuine educational improvement. The research focuses on the causes of this phenomenon, including the goals and intentions of businesses in forming partnerships, as well as the schools' role in perpetuating the non-substantive nature of these collaborations.

Introduction

In 1992, Cramer and Landsmann asked whether school-business partnerships were making the grade in terms of educational improvement. The essential answer from a business perspective was that partnerships “deserved an A+ for image and a C+ for effectiveness” (p. 132). That kind of report card, however, did not deter the growth of the partnership movement. From modest beginnings in the 1980's, the number of school districts involved in partnership activities grew to 51% in 1990, and to 69% by the year 2000 (Ferguson, 2001).

Despite this growth, national attention on partnerships has diminished somewhat over the past few years because economic times have been generally good for schools. Now, with a down-turned economy and public expenditures for anti-ter-

rorism and national security, the economic forecast for public school funding has suddenly worsened. Historically, when schools have faced decreases in state and federal support, they have turned to local businesses for help, seeing this as virtually the only way to fill gaps where public money once had been sufficient. They form partnerships for the financial help, but also with the hope that the added support will make a real difference in schools. Donald Clark (1988) expresses this hope for collaborations: “As I see it, substantive change in public education occurs when the power structure of a school system and its community’s employers . . . work together to help reshape the total school program” (p. 33).

Nevertheless, despite over 20 years of experience, many partnership programs are neither substantive nor sustainable, rarely tackling the more gnarly issues of educational improvement. In 1996 Clark found that most business-education partnership activities were “brief and episodic, involving a school here and a classroom there” (p. 60). Some business partners become disillusioned with their partnership efforts because of their inability to transform the system or because they find schools so resistant to change (Smith, 1995). Even in cases where partnerships survive and thrive, the question remains: are they doing enough? Norman Augustine, chairman of the Business Roundtable’s Education Task Force, (1997) says, “The good news from all these efforts is that we have seen some progress. The bad news is that they—and we—are not performing nearly well enough to meet the challenges of the 21st century” (p. 57). It is timely and important, therefore, to examine what has happened to make partnerships receive such low grades before a new round of partnerships begins.

Partnerships: A Brief History

Partnerships took hold in the 1980’s for many reasons. Schools faced new and complex problems including urban decay, public calls for reform and accountability, and significantly higher per-pupil costs. Furthermore, Americans blamed schools for many of our nation’s problems—foreign competition, high unemployment at home, and declining productivity. As Spring (1988) puts it, “Clearly, most education reports in the early 1980’s were using the public schools as a scapegoat for economic problems caused by factors outside the realm of education” (p. 59). Loss of federal funding was also hurting schools, particularly the Reagan administration’s consolidation of federal educational funding into block grants (Spring, 1988). This put pressure on the states to increase general school funding, which for many states was simply not possible. Caught in the squeeze, the schools turned to business partnerships for financial help.

Meanwhile, business was experiencing a dramatic decline in the labor market.

Having been accustomed to the large number of available workers from the baby boom generation, businesses were facing a 14% decline in the number of available workers between the ages of 14 and 24 years old (Timpane, 1982, p. 8). Compounding the problem was the poor quality of entry-level applicants, many of whom had dropped out of school. When these factors combine with the schools' need for additional funding and solutions to tough issues, it is easy to see that the climate was perfect for the development of school-business collaboration. "The urban crisis awakened the business community to the need to do something just as the education community began to seek help" (Chaffee, 1980, p. 37).

This combination of influences led to a growing belief that education was everyone's concern. Professional journals published numerous articles on partnerships, particularly focusing on how to build successful collaborations and the benefits for schools (Chaffee, 1980; Jackson, 1983; Lacey, 1983). One important research study that emerged in the 1980's was done by Dale Mann (1987) who surveyed 85 superintendents for their views on why businesses form partnerships with schools. He found, among other things, that superintendents believe businesses are interested in schools for altruistic reasons, citing "civic pride" twice as often as "better trained labor pool." He concludes that "what (businesses) provide is helpful, and it can certainly be a welcome addition. But it is not reform" (p. 128). For the most part, philosophical questions were left unexamined in these early partnership years, and the result was a great deal of enthusiastic publicity touting short-term gains as significant reform.

By the early 1990's, the partnership movement had grown significantly, with over 200,000 partnerships nationwide (Cramer & Landsmann, 1992). However, as business experience in dealing with schools increased, "harsher tones were emanating from corporate boardrooms" (Cuban, 1992, p. 157). Business leaders were asking for more accountability in student outcomes and were questioning whether their school partnerships were contributing to fundamental educational reform (Blank, 1998). To answer this question, D. L. Roland (1991) surveyed 84 elementary, middle, and high schools from seven states to determine partnership program success rates. The study looked for gains in the areas of student test scores, attendance, retention, and graduation rates. He found that no type of contribution, including money, materials, equipment, manpower, or any combination had a significant effect in any area of desired improvement.

Research studies on partnerships were rare, however, and much of the literature about partnership success in the early 1990's still stressed more superficial benefits for schools. Articles about schools receiving things such as prizes for staff and students, technology equipment, and money for supplies or special projects were common (Hiraoka, 1995; Schonbak, 1992). In fact, some contend that much of what we know about partnerships comes from these descriptive articles on indi-

vidual programs (Caton & Krchniak, 1991). Cramer and Landsmann (1992) believe that the lack of concern shown for partnerships achieving actual school improvement during this period can be attributed to the fact that most believed minor changes could fix educational woes.

This may also explain why accountability was rarely built into partnerships programs, perhaps in fewer than 10% of the cases (Cramer & Landsmann, 1992). Despite the lack of specific feedback, however, some business leaders were beginning to question whether their partnership efforts were leading to school improvement. Reports that as many as sixty percent of high school graduates were still not prepared for entry-level jobs (Cetron & Gayle, 1991) contributed to this concern.

By the second half of the 1990's, it was clear that most partnerships needed to improve. Clark (1997) contends that partners "need to shelve the rhetoric and focus on the mission of industry-education collaboration fostering substantive school improvement" (p. 70). To achieve this, educators and businesses need to work together to build long-lasting relationships based upon shared goals, mutual respect, and accountability (Clarke, 1996; Dageforde, 1995). The literature is full of terminology such as "working together on goals," and "being committed to change," but it then goes on to suggest superficial activities, such as providing career day speakers (Levy, 1998). This is exactly the kind of relationship, however, that Clark (1997) calls "tinkering at the margin" (p. 70), and it illustrates that school-business partnerships are still not about substance.

Furthermore, the literature has focused almost exclusively on partnerships from the schools' perspective. The business half of the partnership, in fact, has generally been ignored. Lacking information from businesses on their motives, expectations, level of satisfaction, and long-term goals for partnerships, it is difficult for schools to develop long-lasting, meaningful partnerships that make a systemic impact on educational success.

Thus, if partnerships are going to revive and survive in the new millennium, schools must ponder fundamental questions in order to strengthen the collaboration. Why are businesses involved in partnerships? What outcomes do they expect? How do they rate their progress? What kind of collaboration do they envision? Based on the small amount of information on the business view of partnerships, it seems that schools need to be asking business many more such questions.

The Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the business view of partnerships, specifically their motives for forming partnerships, the outcomes they expect, their view of the success of the partnership, and the role they see for themselves in reforming

education. Armed with this kind of information, schools have a better chance of establishing long-lasting, meaningful partnerships that can make a systemic impact on educational success.

This descriptive study of businesses involved in partnership relationships with schools was conducted in the fall of 1998. The Atlanta, Georgia metropolitan area was selected for the study because of the large number of partnerships within the twenty-county area, and because it represents in microcosm much of the rest of the country, with rural, suburban, and urban districts all represented. The names of businesses to include in this study were compiled from a variety of sources, including area Chambers of Commerce, partnership agencies, and school districts. This resulted in a master list of 978 potential respondents, and from that list, the population was narrowed by selecting every other name, creating a sample population of 488 businesses. Survey method was selected for the study for efficiency, due to the large number of eligible participants and the wide geographic area. The return rate was 67%, with 327 businesses responding to the survey.

The survey itself begins with a seven-question business profile section, in which the respondents were asked to classify their business according to size, location (rural, suburban, urban), and type of business. Respondents were also asked how long they had been involved in partnerships and the number of partnerships they had sponsored. The information from this section provides an interesting look at the characteristics of business partners and also allows for comparison of survey responses according to class intervals.

Following the profile section are 15 questions, including limited choice, Likert-style (five-point), and scaled responses. These questions attempt to answer the following broad questions:

1. *What are the motives and methods of businesses in forming partnerships with schools?* Six survey questions address this, including questions on how the collaboration was initiated, which school characteristics were important to the business when selecting a school for partnership, the reason a partnership is advantageous for their business, and the type of support they typically provided to the school.
2. *What outcomes do businesses expect for schools as a result of their school partnership?* This is addressed in four survey questions. Businesses were asked about their specific goals for school improvement, whether the goals of the partnership had been made explicit, whether measures of success had been determined, and to what extent the businesses were included in establishing these partnership goals and measures of success.
3. *How successful is the partnership?* Businesses were first asked whether schools had provided them with feedback related to progress on reaching partnership goals. Next, they were asked to rate their overall view of suc-

cess, and finally, they were asked to give the reason if any partnership had lost momentum or failed.

4. *What role, if any, do businesses with partnership experience see for themselves in reforming education?* Two questions address this issue, asking respondents about their views on the most effective roles businesses can play in school reform, and the extent to which business has an obligation to assist public education.

The survey also includes one open-ended question, which gave respondents the opportunity to expand their views on any aspect of partnerships or on the role of business in school reform.

The survey was pilot tested, and the reliability of the instrument was checked during the pilot by repeating questions to the pilot respondents one week later in phone interviews. The survey was revised and refined many times based upon reviews by statisticians, other survey writers, college researchers, and business executives with experience in partnerships.

Data Analysis

Since this study is exploratory rather than confirming research, the statistical procedures only include descriptive statistics and cross tabulations. As the researcher, I used non-parametric tests for analysis, specifically, the Mann-Whitney U-test and Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance. When a comparison was done on data with two ordinal variables, I used the Goodman and Kruskal's Gamma Test. And finally, information gained in the open-ended question was charted for frequency and used to provide depth and richness to the analysis.

Results

The Atlanta area made for a very rich sample, due to the wide range of businesses represented, including many Fortune 500 companies. The results of the survey are drawn from businesses of all sizes: the smallest respondent company employs only one person; the largest employs 8,000. Almost half (47%) of the respondents fell into the small business category (1-100 employees) and the other half were nearly equally divided between mid-sized businesses (27% with 101-700 employees) and large businesses (26% with 701 or more employees). The modal size was 45 employees. Responses also represented businesses located in all areas of the region: urban (43%), suburban (40%), and rural (17%). This makes sense considering that dramatically fewer businesses exist in rural settings.

The type of businesses involved in partnerships was also varied. Service indus-

tries represent 24% of the respondents; finance/real estate, 20%; retail trade, 13%; technology, 10%; hospitality, 10%; manufacturing, 7%; utilities, 6%; the remainder (10%) was divided among mining, construction, and wholesale trade. Over half of the respondents (52%) have had partnerships with just one school; 38% have had partnerships with 2-9 schools; and 10%, all of which were large companies, have had partnerships with over 10 schools. Finally, in terms of longevity, the partnership experience of the companies ranged from 1 year to 16 years. The mean was 6.4 years for partnership involvement, and the mode was 8 years.

Below is a summary of the responses to the broad questions of this study. (See also Tables 1 - 10 for specific responses to key questions.)

Table 1. Importance of Various Characteristics for School Selection

<i>How important were the following characteristics when selecting a school for partnership?</i>	Extremely Important	Somewhat Important	Of Little Importance	Of No Importance
School's proximity to the business	50%	30%	12%	9%
Amount of need at the school	40%	38%	18%	4%
School with dynamic leadership	33%	37%	20%	10%
School where respondent's children attend	7%	8%	13%	72%
School where employees' children attend	7%	11%	15%	66%

Table 2. Reasons for Becoming Involved in Partnership

<i>How important were the following factors for becoming involved in partnership?</i>	Extremely Important	Somewhat Important	Of Little Importance	Of No Importance
Enhancing community good will	60%	34%	4%	2%
Improving skills of future employees	31%	33%	19%	17%
Improving education for your own children	26%	20%	18%	36%
Improving education for employees' children	27%	24%	20%	30%
Develop a more educated citizenry	57%	26%	10%	7%
Reducing tax obligation	3%	7%	26%	64%

Table 3. Extent of Support Provided

<i>Rate the extent to which you typically provide support in the following areas:</i>	Very Much 5	4	3	2	Not at all 1
Management expertise	7%	14%	23%	17%	39%
Incentives/rewards for students	32%	22%	21%	8%	16%
Incentives/rewards for staff, teachers	26%	22%	19%	13%	20%
Coordinated support for school reform	4%	9%	13%	15%	58%
Employees to work with students	29%	21%	22%	9%	18%
Materials/equipment	37%	24%	20%	9%	10%
Support for social/athletic fund raising	22%	24%	19%	15%	20%
Cash for special projects	26%	17%	16%	15%	26%

1. *What are the motives and methods of businesses in forming partnerships with schools?*

Clearly, respondents felt that in selecting a school for partnership, the “school’s proximity to the business” is critical, with 50% of the respondents listing it as *very important*. (Table 1). The Goodman and Kruskal’s gamma test was applied to this question to correlate the strength of the relationship between the two factors, and it revealed a fair to moderate inverse relationship between the size of the business and the importance of the school’s proximity ($=.336$). In other words, the smaller the business, the more important it was for the school to be located nearby. Two other responses that were named as important, but less frequently, include the “amount of need at the school” and a “school with dynamic leadership.” Selecting a school based on “where the respondent’s children attend” or “where employees’ children attend” was listed by most respondents as *of little importance* or *of no importance*.

A central question to the study was determining business’s motives in forming partnerships (Table 2). Across all demographics, building community good will is clearly the most important reason to respondent businesses, with 60% listing it as *very important*. In the open-ended question, several elaborated, saying that partnerships enhance their reputation for being a good community neighbor, allowing them to be seen as involved, caring, future-oriented, and community minded. Next in order of importance is “developing a more educated citizenry,” which ranked well above “developing skills of future employees” or “reducing tax obligation,” which 90% rated as *of little or no importance*. It is also of note that 35 respondents (11%) checked “other,” and then indicated that “improving schools to attract employees” was a *very important* reason to form partnerships.

When asked the specific types of support they provide (Table 3), respondents were fairly evenly spread, with “materials/equipment,” and “incentives/rewards for students” provided the most frequently. Closely following were “employees to work with students,” “incentives for staff/teachers,” “cash for special projects,” and “support for social/athletic fund raising.” It is interesting how rarely “coordinated support for school reform” and lending “management expertise” were provided. In addition, very little difference was found based on demographic characteristics. In fact, business size, location, and partnership experience all showed no significant differences in response to this question.

Table 4. Focus Areas for Improvement

<i>Which specific educational areas do you hope to improve as a result of your partnership?</i>	Area of Focus for Improvement	Not an Area of Focus for Improvement	Don't Know
School equipment/technology	57%	35%	8%
School administration	27%	65%	8%
Student work ethic	65%	27%	7%
Curriculum revision	36%	53%	11%
Quality of teaching	40%	51%	9%
Student attendance/drop-out rate	55%	36%	9%
Academic achievement of students	69%	26%	5%
Vocational skills of students	68%	24%	8%

Table 5. Goals and Measures of Success

<i>Were the goals and measures of success made explicit? Were you involved in determining them?</i>	Yes			No	
Goals for the partnership were explicit	56%			44%	
Measures of success for reaching goals was explicit	37%			63%	
	Very much 5	4	3	2	Not at all 1
Were you involved in determining these?	10%	14%	14%	38%	23%

2. What outcomes do businesses expect for schools as a result of their partnership?

Businesses were asked about the specific educational areas they hoped to improve as a result of the partnership. (Table 4). Many (69%) of the respondents clearly rated improving “academic achievement” as an area they most hoped to affect. This was followed closely by “vocational skills,” “work ethic,” “school equipment/technology,” and “student attendance/drop-out rate.” Trailing behind were “quality of teaching,” “curriculum revision,” and improving “school administration.” When the data was cross-tabulated, no significant difference was found in these areas in relation to years of partnership experience. However, analyzing in terms of business location and size produced some notable findings. Those businesses located in suburban settings were significantly more likely to target “academic achievement” than were businesses located in other settings ($H=10.397, P=0.006$). Furthermore, large businesses were more likely to focus on “equipment/technology” ($\gamma=.298$) and “school attendance/drop-out rate” ($\gamma=.280$)

than their smaller counterparts.

Respondents were also asked whether the goals and the measures of success for the partnership program had been made explicit (Table 5). More than half (56%) said the goals of the program had been made explicit, but only 37% said the measures of success had been. In the subsequent question, businesses were asked to what extent they had been involved in determining those goals and measures of success (also Table 5). Businesses ranked their responses from 1 *not at all*, to 5 *very much*. Only 10% of the businesses responded that they had been involved *very much*, and the mean response for this question was 2.495 (standard deviation of 1.270), indicating that businesses were often not involved in these decisions.

Table 6. Type and Frequency of Feedback from the School

<i>How frequently does the school provide you with feedback about progress made?</i>	Often	Occasionally	Never
Detailed, goal-oriented reports	9%	30%	61%
Generalized progress reports	14%	37%	49%
Informal communications	58%	30%	12%

Table 7. Extent of Partnership Success

<i>To what extent has the partnership been successful?</i>	Very much 5	4	3	2	Not at all 1
Successful partnership?	33%	32%	23%	10%	2%

Table 8. Reasons for Lost Momentum or Failure of Partnership

<i>If your partnership lost momentum or failed, what was the reason?</i>	Yes	No
Cost became prohibitive	7%	93%
Insufficient positive results	10%	90%
Change in key personnel	59%	41%
Resistance from school leadership	17%	83%

*57% indicated they had not had a partnership lose momentum or fail.

3. *How successful is the partnership?*

First, the survey asks whether the business receives information from schools on how the partnership is progressing (Table 6). Only 9% said they often received detailed reports back from the school, and 61% said they never do. A few more received generalized progress reports, but nearly half said they never receive these either. In most cases, informal communication was the most common, and several received no information at all. In response to the open-ended question, 18 businesses wrote additional comments reiterating that they felt the lack of substantive

feedback was impeding the progress of the partnership.

Perhaps most interesting was that although they indicated very little real information on the progress of the partnership, the businesses were generally very positive about the success of their partnership (Table 7). On a scale of 1-5, with 1 representing *not at all* and 5 representing *very much*, the mean response was 3.953 (standard deviation = 1.003), and 88% of the respondents rated this 3, 4, or 5.

When asked the reasons for any partnership to lose momentum or fail, one factor came to the forefront (Table 8). Most often cited was “change in key personnel,” with 59% responding that this was the cause. “Resistance from school leadership,” “insufficient positive results,” and “cost” all were listed much less frequently.

Table 9. Potential Targets for Business Resources

<i>To what extent do you agree with the following ways business should devote their resources and energy toward education?</i>	Agree very much 5	4	3	2	Agree not at all 1
At individual schools	45%	27%	25	3%	1%
At school districts	10%	7%	29%	21%	33%
At the state level	10%	12%	24%	24%	30%
At the national level	11%	10%	23%	20%	36%

Table 10. Extent of Businesses Obligations to Education

<i>To what extent do you believe that business has an obligation to assist education?</i>	Agree very much 5	4	3	2	Agree not at all 1
Business obligation to assist education?	56%	24%	13	3%	4%

4. What role, if any, do businesses with partnership experience see for themselves in reforming education?

Two survey questions address this issue. The first asked businesses about where they should devote their time and resources to help education (Table 9). Again on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 equaling *not at all*, and 5 equaling *very much*, it is clear that many businesses feel the most effective way to help education was to support local schools (97% gave this a 3, 4, or 5). It is important to remember, however, that this is the method of choice for this population, so the response could be quite different if businesses were polled randomly.

In response to whether business has an obligation to assist education (Table 10), 56% said they agreed *very much*, and 93% gave this a 3, 4, or 5. Cross tabulation indicates that there was a fair positive relationship ($= .287$) between the years a business has with partnership experience and their belief in supporting national reform efforts. As businesses gain partnership experience they become more likely to see the importance of providing support at the national level.

Conclusions and Implications

This study gives schools important insights into partnerships by elucidating the viewpoint of the business half of the partnership—a perspective that has been mostly absent in the literature to date. The findings have implications for developing and maintaining relationships with potential business partners and for creating partnership programs that maximize the impact on school achievement. It is evident from the study that there are many things schools can do to strengthen the partnership relationship. Indeed, the first principle that a school must embrace is that by definition “partnership” implies a two-way relationship. Once that philosophy is firmly established, five other important practices emerge from the analysis of data.

First, although goals were sometimes established for the partnership, the businesses did not feel part of the process of establishing them. Nor were they included in determining measures of accountability, if in fact there were any. In earlier literature, it was estimated that fewer than 10% of the partnership programs had accountability measures built into them (Cramer & Landsmann, 1992). In contrast, this study found that 37% had established measures of accountability, an improvement certainly, but not exemplary in terms of monitoring results. This is not to suggest that business be given the lead in establishing academic priorities. In fact, many businesses wrote specific comments that they do not want to do so. However, any successful endeavor has a plan, and school improvement is certainly no exception. And, as with most collaborative efforts, it is necessary for all parties to contribute and take ownership. With school-business partnerships, this planning process could be doubly beneficial because of the management skills and “can-do” attitude many businesses would naturally contribute. Given opportunity and structure, businesses could provide expertise in goal setting, accountability, leadership, and organization that might prove invaluable for school improvement planning.

Second, it is important to remember that what businesses say they hope to improve are academic and vocational skills. Although this may not be an unexpected response, it is interesting to note that businesses are doing very little in terms of partnership activity that would result in this kind of school improvement. This study confirms that partnerships have not moved much beyond episodic projects, confirming the previous literature (Clark, 1996; Dageforde, 1995; Mann, 1987). Schools can learn from this study that businesses desire to be more helpful and substantive in their partnership goals. In other words, it is clearly time to move away from using the partnership for attendance ribbons and fluff, and get business partners involved in programs that are important to them and significant for student success and achievement.

Third, businesses usually indicated that they are not receiving reports from schools on partnership progress; indeed, many wrote comments about their frustration over lack of feedback. The reasons for this could be numerous, but it is a logical leap to assume that if the schools did not first establish clear goals and assessment measures, they will not have much data to report. Schools can and should do better in this regard, for assessment and reporting are certainly strengths most educators possess.

Perhaps most interesting was that although they were not given feedback about the strengths of the partnership, businesses still reported a high overall satisfaction with program. This seemed to be based more on warm, altruistic feelings about the partnership instead of the substantial, data-based assessments that one might expect a business to demand. It also illustrates that businesses are in fact actually getting what they want from partnerships—visibility in the community. Whereas schools may be looking to business to help on complex educational issues, the business partner may just accept with pleasure the positive public relations and be quite satisfied; any benefits the school happens to garner become merely an added bonus.

Fourth, it is important for both schools and businesses to have a number of dedicated people collaborating on the partnership program who develop a clear organizational plan with shared leadership responsibilities. Businesses indicated that the loss of a key person was the reason for most partnerships to lose momentum or fail, which speaks to the fact that partnerships are too project driven, without a systematic plan that will endure beyond one enthusiastic individual. If the partnership is based instead on inclusivity and collaboration, there is less risk that a change in a key player will result in partnership failure.

Fifth and finally, if school-business partnerships are ever to achieve their potential for assisting education, it is evident that schools must take the reins and lead the partnership. Educators have been too casual in their relationship with business, and this is problematic on two fronts. First, when schools do not step forward and establish their leadership and expertise in forming effective partnerships, it feeds the bias that businesses often already have, namely, that schools are not goal-oriented or professionally run. Partnership programs that fail to establish clear objectives, that ignore accountability, and that are more flash than substance perpetuate that impression. Furthermore, when schools don't work closely to develop programs that are mutually beneficial, well-planned, and substantive, they are not taking full advantage of the power of business to support important educational goals. Keep in mind that what businesses indicate they want most from their partnership is community good will. It is easy for businesses to spend a few dollars on local schools, improve their own visibility, and then feel that they have done their part in supporting education. Meanwhile, educators have generally been so pleased

to have the support that they may not have realized the partnership's potential for genuinely great outcomes. Businesses do have the interest and means to become true partners in educational improvement, if educators will just lead the way. And if done well and correctly, the schools will gain far more than just monetary support; they could gain powerful activist partners who will rally behind schools and become prominent advocates for education.

In 1992, Cramer and Landsmann gave partnerships an A+ for image and a C+ for effectiveness. The results of this study show that a decade later, little has changed. But if a revitalization of partnerships is likely, perhaps even inevitable in these harsh economic times, we educators must learn from previous experience. Relying on our strengths in organization and assessment, our creativity in designing innovative programs, and our basic belief in the power of collaboration, we can and must lead the partnership effort. When it comes to school-business partnerships, it's the schools' turn to raise the grade!

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Dianne L. Hoff is an assistant professor of educational leadership at the University of Maine, Orono. She has more than twenty years experience as a teacher, principal, and central office administrator in public schools across the United States.

