



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SCHOOL-BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

Case Studies

These case studies illustrate how the guiding principles for school-business relationships can appear in practice. While the selected relationships feature many of the guiding principles, each case study has been written to highlight two to three principles.

Case Study	Principles Highlighted						
	Enhance student learning and outcomes	Benefit both schools and businesses	Are built on strong foundations including shared goals, accountability & evaluation	Have the support of the school community	Are embedded in school and business cultures	Have the support of school and business leadership	Are adequately resourced by both schools and businesses
001 Stimulating rural activity through a Learning Region							
002 Exchanging letters for mutual benefit							
003 Directly engaging leaders							
004 Doing more by helping students to explore career opportunities							
005 Increasing opportunities in a remote town							
006 Addressing student disengagement by building connections							

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007 Creating a legacy with marketing skills							
008 Enhancing student learning while developing teaching skills							
009 Drawing on student knowledge while increasing their skills							
010 Promoting interest in manufacturing through a solar car competition							
011 Expanding from student mentoring to leadership support							
012 Developing students as learners and leaders							
013 Partnering to embed IT in teaching and learning							
014 Bringing corporate volunteers together with students to read							
015 Supporting refugee students to tell their stories							

CASE STUDY 001

STIMULATING RURAL ACTIVITY THROUGH A LEARNING REGION

A rural area of New South Wales was concerned about low levels of attainment among its young people, a lack of post-school options and a declining population. In response, the local council, the two high schools and various businesses formed a relationship to improve the educational, social and economic outcomes for local students and keep them in the shire.

The central concept of the relationship is a 'Learning Region' involving schools, businesses, service providers and local government. Learning is seen to benefit students, schools, business and the community by stimulating social cohesion and economic development for the revitalisation of the local community. The relationship has the strong support of the school community.

The venture has secured \$3.2 million in government funding to establish three Trade Training Centres focusing on local industry opportunities. The centres, due to open in 2012, aim to increase the retention of students through to year 12 by enabling students to pursue a Certificate III qualification whilst remaining at school.

- The hospitality centre will be both a training facility and a fully operating commercial kitchen. Located at the back of a historically protected theatre, it will be able to provide catering facilities for functions at the theatre.
- The primary industry centre will provide training facilities for students wishing to pursue careers such as grazing and horticulture. The facilities will include classrooms, workshop and conference rooms, kitchens and bunkhouses for students who may need to stay on site.
- The automotive centre will provide training facilities to enable students to pursue a career in the automotive industry. It will be constructed on land owned by the local council adjacent to the one of the high schools.

The actions of the Learning Region have seen a high level of student engagement in VET programs at the two high schools compared with the rest of the state. The new Trade Training Centres will help to ensure that younger residents remain in the shire, delivering a wide range of benefits to the broader community.

The partners commissioned an independent evaluation to identify the key factors influencing the outcomes, as well as changes needed to apply this concept to other regions. This found that a key factor in the success of this school-business relationship has been strong leadership at the highest levels. In 2004, the Learning Region formally became a sub-committee of the local council chaired by the mayor, with membership including the principals of the two schools.

'The unique component of the Region is the close co-operation that exists within the management structure of the controlling Committee. The relationships that exist between the participants are based upon trust and an intense commitment to achieve improvement through action.'

Highlighted Principles

- Enhance student **learning** and outcomes
- Have the support of the school **community**
- Have the support of school and business **leadership**

CASE STUDY 002

EXCHANGING LETTERS FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT

A national not-for-profit organisation runs a letter-exchange program between students and business volunteers designed to improve the learning and wellbeing of students and volunteers alike.

Over the course of a school year, students and volunteers exchange around eight handwritten letters and meet face-to-face twice. The program has operated since 2009 and been successfully implemented in over 40 schools and 25 business organisations.

An evaluation found that the program benefits students, volunteers and their businesses. Students develop their literacy, social and life skills and connect with people who share their personal experiences of school-study-work pathways. The businesses report a greater connection to the community and the workplace among their employees, and an increased level of work satisfaction.

The not-for-profit organisation developed the program and links schools and businesses together. This facilitating role is helping to break down barriers and create lasting connections that make a difference to student learning and wellbeing, while also providing business volunteers with the personal and professional benefits that flow from their engagement with the students.

Highlighted Principles

- Enhance student **learning** and outcomes
- **Benefit** both schools and businesses

CASE STUDY 003

DIRECTLY ENGAGING LEADERS TO FOSTER ENTERPRISE



In a program developed by a not-for-profit organisation, senior business managers, school principals and senior teachers work together to promote a culture of enterprise in schools and local communities. This program fosters a new level of interaction between classroom learning and workplace learning.

The program builds on informal partnerships by putting in place a formal partnership model of interaction. A range of government and non-government schools are involved with businesses from banking and finance, tourism, building and manufacturing.

School and business leaders are personally involved in the program, with time being the major resource provided:

- senior personnel from both schools and business visit each other's workplaces
- roundtable discussions are held to exchange ideas around issues such as leadership, strategic planning and change management
- principals and senior business partners 'shadow' each other to build awareness of each other's roles and challenges.

These activities may lead to others, such as coaching sessions around a professional development issue; business partners providing enrichment placements for vocational courses; or business mentors working with student teams to run a simulated business in competition with other teams.

Through enterprise education activities such as these, students have learned to be enterprising, creative and resilient. Senior managers have gained fresh insights into leadership, management and community relations, while broadening their networks and raising the profile of their business in the community.

An evaluation of the program in the initial phase found that business partners were generally optimistic about continuing their partnerships, and had a better understanding about the constraints that operate in schools. Overall, business partners held high expectations of how, in time, the relationships between the school and the business community could be expanded. As one participant commented:

'Regardless of how busy I am, I will continue to be involved in this program because I can see the benefits for students, for teachers and for businesses.'

- **Benefit** both schools and businesses
- Are **embedded** in school and business cultures
- Have the support of school and business **leadership**

CASE STUDY 004

DOING MORE BY HELPING STUDENTS TO EXPLORE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Employees of a global financial services company wanted the bank to do more for the community. The company took up the idea and created a financial academy to provide leadership in banking education for senior secondary school students. The academy introduces participants to a wide range of career opportunities in banking.

Fifty Year 11 students are selected each year from a broadly based cross-section of public schools in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria. Students spend a week in student accommodation at a Sydney university and attend lectures at the company's Australian headquarters. These are delivered by high-profile employees on topics such as mergers and acquisitions, company funding, wealth management, equity research and legal compliance. Students also take part in case studies based around a current financial acquisition. The company covers the costs to students.

Now in its ninth year, the academy offers students a chance to explore a previously unknown career opportunity and develop new relationships with their peer group from other schools. The ideal outcome for the company is that students return to their final year of study with an interest in pursuing a career in the world of banking. For the students, the program also provides an opportunity for academic and social development.

According to the CEO of the financial services company:

'It's not always fashionable to be positive about business, particularly among schools, so this is one way we can preach the virtues.'

Highlighted Principles

- **Benefit** both schools and businesses
- Have the support of school and business **leadership**
- Are adequately **resourced** by both schools and businesses

CASE STUDY 005

INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES IN A REMOTE TOWN

In a small isolated community in Queensland there are limited opportunities for the 200 local high school students to access training providers and work experience. The school is addressing this through a relationship with a mining company which aims to significantly increase employment opportunities for the town's students.

The relationship has been developed over a long period of time and is supported by the general manager of the mine and the school principal. The mine provides funding and expertise, while the school provides time, commitment and dedicated support to underpin the relationship. Students benefit from access to mine personnel and their skills; training in mine-related curriculum; access to VET courses in mining; financial assistance with external training and extracurricular activities; and physical resources to enhance curriculum delivery.

An evaluation using data from the school's Year 12 School Leavers Survey showed that Year 12 school leavers from 2004 – 2007 reported zero unemployment and a zero dropout rate among those who went on to an apprenticeship in the mining industry. All students who complete the program go on to undertake a traineeship in the mining industry. Sixty-four percent of the students exiting the school in 2007 were awarded a VET qualification, compared to the average of 20% across all secondary schools in Central and Western Queensland. To ensure that these outcomes are sustainable the school continues to collect and analyse student data, meets regularly with key stakeholders to obtain feedback, and evaluates and adapts programs developed under the relationship to meet current needs.

The program has generated a high level of community confidence in the education and training opportunities being offered at the school. It also addresses the current skills shortage within the mining industry and contributes to the sustainability of the community.

Highlighted Principles

- Enhance student **learning** and outcomes
- Are built on strong **foundations**
- Have the support of school and business **leadership**
- Are adequately **resourced** by both schools and businesses

CASE STUDY 006

ADDRESSING STUDENT DISENGAGEMENT BY BUILDING CONNECTIONS



A Victorian Secondary College faced a cluster of challenges, including student dissatisfaction with their school experience; low teacher motivation and morale; and local government concern that inadequate employment opportunities were forcing large numbers of school leavers to leave the region. The school responded by adopting a whole-of-school approach to project based learning, and initiating a partnership program with local businesses and the community.

To begin the school invited representatives from the community to three two-hour 'conversations' to discuss the situation. This resulted in a shared vision amongst the school and its initial community partners:

'To create a community of enterprising students, teachers, business, industry and community groups...to develop the town as an international leader of enterprising communities.'

The highly active school board and school leadership team set the agenda for change and facilitated a shared understanding of the unique role and talent of each partner organisation in bringing the project to life. The school also emphasised the importance of formal commitment to the vision from the outset. It provided support for teachers through the change process, assisting them to understand the need for the project and buy in to the new approach.

The school developed a pilot program to trial the significance of enterprise education and secured funds from government to develop and document the work with local community partners. The program was embedded in the organisational structure of the school, including by creating the position of 'Assistant Principal Community Partnerships'.

Some of the businesses have also strongly embedded the relationship in their operations. For example, one business (involved with developing students' automotive mechanical skills and general life competencies) has completed a regional partnership program and engaged a full-time employee to oversee its work with schools in the region.

The school and its business and community partners regularly evaluate the extent to which their various projects are achieving the objectives of the partnership. Students have now worked in partnership with 31 businesses, non-profit organisations and government agencies, and school level data demonstrates that the partnership strategy has improved student motivation. It has also developed new employment pathways into the local food, wine and hospitality industry.

- Are built on strong **foundations**
- Have the support of the school **community**
- Are **embedded** in school and business cultures

CASE STUDY 007

CREATING A LEGACY WITH MARKETING SKILLS



In a disadvantaged area of western Melbourne, a large global company offered its marketing expertise to assist a primary school facing declining enrolments. The business viewed the partnership as a way to provide sustainable assistance to the primary school, leaving a legacy that would benefit the school into the future.

A third party facilitated the initial meeting of the partners, which allowed them to build rapport and discuss their expectations and roles within the partnership. The business partner then attended a number of school council meetings to gain a better appreciation of the school's culture and governance as well as its strengths and challenges.

The relationship relied for its success on the direct involvement of the school principal and senior staff in the company's planning and marketing department. An agreement was forged to use the relationship to promote the school to its local community, build its profile and increase enrolments. A team of marketing and promotions staff from the company worked with students and staff to develop a communications plan and produce a school promotion kit which was distributed at an information evening for local parents and to local kindergartens.

The school subsequently received 40 new enrolments for the following year's intake of prep students and has significantly raised its community profile. The school and company have continued their partnership and are planning future joint projects.

- Are built on strong **foundations**
- Have the support of **school and business leadership**

CASE STUDY 008

ENHANCING STUDENT LEARNING WHILE DEVELOPING TEACHING SKILLS

Universities are businesses too, and often involved in relationships with schools. One example has developed in Perth, where a three-way partnership between a primary school, a university and a not-for-profit organisation is enhancing student learning while developing the teaching and research skills of educators and pre-service teachers.

The partnership has created a research classroom and observation room facility at the school. The facility enables pre-service and in-service teachers to observe and research classroom teaching methods and behaviour management techniques without imposing on normal classroom operations.

As part of literacy coaching units in the university's primary and early childhood programs, teaching students also assist primary students with their reading. The teaching students work with individual children over many weeks to assess their literacy needs and plan, implement and evaluate a reading support program.

All three partners provide ongoing resources to the relationship. The school provides the observation room, while the university brings its expertise and its pre-service teaching program to assist in the development of targeted programs to improve outcomes for the students. The relationship enables students and staff to gain first-hand knowledge of current educational issues and practices in the classroom.

Highlighted Principles

- Enhance student **learning** and outcomes
- **Benefit** both schools and businesses
- Are adequately **resourced** by both schools and businesses

CASE STUDY 009

DRAWING ON STUDENT KNOWLEDGE WHILE INCREASING THEIR SKILLS

In the Northern Territory, a Catholic college has formed a relationship with the city's botanical gardens which benefits the students, the botanical gardens and its visitors.

Under the relationship, students undertake a Certificate II in Horticulture with the assistance of staff at the gardens. Indigenous students who board at school contribute to the knowledge of the gardens by assisting with naming plants and providing details of their nutritional and medicinal value. This is recorded and displayed for the information of visitors to the gardens. The college also uses the botanical gardens as a teaching resource.

For the city, the relationship enables the botanical gardens to draw on the knowledge of Indigenous students and connect and draw on the expertise of a range of Indigenous communities across the Northern Territory. For the school, the program provides a tangible means of connecting school programs with the students' cultural and community backgrounds.

Highlighted Principles

- Enhance student **learning** and outcomes
- **Benefit** both schools and businesses

CASE STUDY 010

PROMOTING INTEREST IN MANUFACTURING THROUGH A SOLAR CAR COMPETITION

An engineering company which manufactures industrial, commercial and military products has created a Solar Powered Cars Project for students of two local high schools in the Riverina area of New South Wales and Victoria.

Teams of up to ten Year 8 or 9 students who are interested in manufacturing develop a remote control solar car that is raced at a competition race day, with industry, school and community partners as spectators.

Engineers from the company mentor the students throughout the project, helping to train them using a curriculum covering the elements needed to build a solar car. Several hands-on training days for skills such as soldering are also included.

The project offers students a meaningful learning experience and an opportunity to develop direct links with local industry. Expected outcomes include greater satisfaction, participation and engagement at school, greater awareness of opportunities in manufacturing, and the development of problem solving skills and their application to industry.

Company mentors enjoy finding ways to teach practical skills that would keep students interested and find that watching student's attitudes change over the period of the project is very satisfying.

'Being able to try different motivational methods on young students and observing reactions is most pleasing. I think we all learn something from each other.'

Highlighted Principles

- Enhance student **learning** and outcomes
- **Benefit** both schools and businesses

CASE STUDY 011

EXPANDING FROM STUDENT MENTORING TO LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

In south western Sydney, a community-based comprehensive secondary school has developed a strong relationship with an international law firm to support both students and staff.

The relationship began in 2003 as part of a state government mentoring program which provides young people in disadvantaged areas with the opportunity to be mentored by staff from large city law firms. The program brings students into the workplace to show them the types of jobs that exist in large businesses. Volunteers from the law firm are trained to mentor each student, and students are trained in workplace behaviour.

Before they are matched, the mentors visit the school to meet the students and their families. Once matched, both mentors and students sign commitment statements. Over terms two and three the students travel by train to the law firm each fortnight to work with their mentor on a structured program. Topics covered include career planning, learning styles, study skills, goal setting and life skills. The students also have the opportunity to shadow their mentor in their field of work, see unique workplace settings and understand expectations about work ethic. The emphasis of the mentoring program is on sharing skills and encouraging students to set career and life goals.

Resources are provided in the form of training. Staff from the law firm are trained prior to their mentoring of students, while the students also receive training relating to being mentored. There are stringent child protection procedures in place and at all times the students are supervised by staff from the school. Mentors provide their time pro bono.

The program has become part of the overall operations of the school and the law firm. The relationship has grown beyond the mentoring program, with the law firm now also providing leadership support to students and school staff.



Highlighted Principles

- Are **embedded** in school and business cultures
- Are adequately **resourced** by both schools and businesses

CASE STUDY 012

DEVELOPING STUDENTS AS LEARNERS AND LEADERS



An inner city primary school identified the relatively limited life and career aspirations of its students and community as a significant issue.

The school is located in a low socio-economic area with students from diverse cultural backgrounds, most of whom speak English as a second language. Through a program facilitated by a third party, the school developed a relationship with a management consulting company that has a strong culture of volunteering.

The relationship began in 2007 with the support of both the principal and a senior executive of the company. It is focused on a leadership program to encourage and enable grade 5 and 6 students to develop a deeper understanding of themselves as learners and future leaders. As the school principal notes:

'In the beginning we talked about an option that would include and involve students and how they might be mentored and supported. We were excited about that because it's about the future of our community and inspiring leadership at the student level.'

The program centres on developing habits of mind, speech writing and public speaking skills to prepare primary school students for leadership in the school community, and to assist their transition to secondary school. Students form committees, prepare agendas and meet on a regular basis. They unpack the skills they have developed with the company volunteers and reflect on their abilities and their personal growth. The management consulting firm plays a major part in exposing students to the possibilities of professional life and motivating them to strive for high performance.

A highlight of the program is a visit to the company's office in term three so that students can see at first-hand how the corporate world works. This is particularly valuable for children who do not have parents working in the business sector, and has the potential to shape their aspirations.

Key steps taken by the school and business to build the relationship included developing a shared vision of a program with clear outcomes; working collaboratively on a detailed program; integrating the program into the curriculum from the outset; establishing clear roles and responsibilities for program sponsorship and management; and organising regular meetings and communications.

Mutual benefits are derived from the relationship. Students get to see how large corporations work, an experience they are unlikely to get otherwise. For the management consulting firm, the impact on the volunteer staff is significant:

'We all learn skills from each other and it helps us build up our own leadership skills. We all get something out of it ... it is really rewarding for everybody involved.'

The program has been such a success that there is talk of extending it to run for the whole year, ensuring that all students get an opportunity to develop leadership skills.

- **Benefit** both schools and businesses
- Are built on strong **foundations**
- Have the support of school and business **leadership**

CASE STUDY 013

PARTNERING TO EMBED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

A suburban high school took the opportunity of a major refurbishment to embed information technology in its approach to teaching and learning by partnering with a multinational technology company.

The relationship with the company emerged in parallel with the refurbishment of the school site. While school personnel, state education department representatives, consultants, university and TAFE personnel, local government representatives, architects and builders engaged in detailed discussion and planning around the design for the new school, there was an equally thorough parallel process around the nature of teaching and learning. Out of these conversations came a desire to work closely with a major IT company to fully embed technology into every aspect of the school's day-to-day operations.

The company enriches the school's IT environment by providing professional learning to teaching and support staff in how to use the technology to complement the school's approach to embedding highly effective teaching and learning across the school. It also contributes to the efficient operation of the school, with podcasts, wikis and blogs enabling information access, data transfer and communication in a paperless and streamlined manner.

In return, the company receives feedback on the ways in which the software applications are being used by students and staff. The school positions this as a form of action research, with teachers and company representatives collaborating on the development, refinement and integration of educational software.

These mutual benefits are considered to be one of the critical success factors of the partnership.

Highlighted Principles

- **Benefit** both schools and businesses
- Are **embedded** in school and business cultures

CASE STUDY 014

BRINGING CORPORATE VOLUNTEERS TOGETHER WITH STUDENTS TO READ

A national not-for-profit organisation has enabled volunteers from over 30 businesses to mentor primary schools students in weekly reading sessions. The program gives students the opportunity to have a relationship with someone outside their social network and engage in critical literacy skills development. It provides corporate volunteers with a personally rewarding opportunity to engage with their local community.

The facilitation role of the not-for-profit organisation has been critical to bringing the businesses and schools together in an efficient manner. The value of this is evidenced by the willingness of the businesses to pay membership fees which fully fund the operations of the not-for-profit organisation. Since its establishment in 2006, the reading mentoring program has been successfully implemented in over 100 public schools and now involves over 1,000 mentors each year.

The reading mentoring program is designed to improve the communication and literacy skills of primary school students through weekly one-on-one sessions at schools. A group of mentors from a business is matched with students from a local school who are falling behind in their reading. The mentors attend sessions at the same time each week and work one-on-one with their student during the 45-minute session. Programs are of variable duration, by mutual agreement between the not-for-profit, business and school, and typically run for 8-16 weeks.

A program launch is held at the school to ensure mentors are familiar with the school environment and basic reading strategies. The completion ceremony is an important opportunity for the students to be recognised for their participation, and mentors present them with a book as a gift.

Teachers, mentors and parents evaluate the program annually. Program outcomes include increased confidence and improved communication skills as well as improved reading levels. Teachers report that 98% of participating students are more positive about reading.

Highlighted Principles

- Enhance student **learning** and outcomes
- Are built on strong **foundations**
- Are adequately **resourced** by both schools and businesses

CASE STUDY 015

SUPPORTING REFUGEE STUDENTS TO TELL THEIR STORIES

The CEO of a large retail bank and the principal of a high school in a disadvantaged area of Sydney were already in a mentoring partnership, and discussing the challenges faced by the refugee students in the school's Intensive English Centre. Many of the students had been through traumatic journeys to reach Australia, and were socially isolated and lacking in confidence.

The partners decided to explore ways in which to help the students to tell their stories. The school had more than 40 different language groups within the student body, so the project was called "40 Faces, 40 Stories".

The marketing team from the bank was already seeking a community project and immediately engaged with the idea of assisting the students to write their stories and produce an artwork which described their journey to Australia. They saw the project as a perfect way to give their time and expertise to the school community in a way that would benefit the students involved.

The not-for-profit organisation that had originally brought the partners together facilitated four sessions in which marketing team members helped students to tell their story and produce a publishable piece of writing. An excursion to the NSW Art Gallery provided inspiration and guidance, and the school art department also assisted with the development of the artwork.

Once complete, the stories were sent to graphic design, the artworks photographed, and the final pieces printed and bound into a high quality glossy book. During the design process, the printers read the content and were so moved by the stories of the students that they waived all costs and produced a much larger print run than originally intended. This allowed students to have multiple copies of their work to share with friends and family. The project has had a lasting impact, with the book still being used as a learning resource by many other Intensive English Centres.

The bank held an exhibition of the student artworks and stories in foyer of their CBD branch, and hosted an event to recognise the input of the staff and students involved. Students were proud to see their work in print and astonished to find that people were fascinated by their stories.

The relationship relied for its success on the direct involvement of the CEO and the head of the marketing team. The school and company continue their rich and deep partnership, a mix of facilitated programs and direct partnership which continues to inspire other schools and businesses.

Highlighted Principles

- Are **embedded** in school and business cultures
- Have the support of school and business **leadership**