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# An Introduction to Education Outreach Campaign Models

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## **About DeHavilland Associates**

DeHavilland Associates is a consulting and communications firm that helps its corporate, nonprofit, and association clients understand and connect with the K-12 community. The company designs, manages, and evaluates outreach campaigns and partnership programs for its 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).

## **About the Effective Education Partnerships Conference**

The Effective Education Partnerships Conference (EEPC) is an annual two-day meeting for the practitioners of business/education partnerships, including chambers, business coalitions, individual businesses, school and district leaders, and others interested in hearing case studies and effective practices from others in the field. EEPC will be held July 10-11, 2008 in Fairfax, VA.

For more information, visit [www.eepc2008.com](http://www.eepc2008.com).

# Education Outreach Campaign Models

*Introducing a variety of program models to help you find the right one for your campaign*

Marketing and community relations considerations have encouraged businesses to make a more prominent and strategic investment in education. While many business leaders can still be found on school boards and at PTA meetings as they were in the early to mid-20th century, the need for visibility and community goodwill have splintered the traditional business-education relationship into a myriad of forms.

This paper outlines a number of program models in practice today, which will help business leaders new to education outreach identify the most appropriate ways for their companies to fulfill their business obligations and commitment to education.

## Financial Support

Financial support has been one of the most common ways in which business has contributed to education systems at a local and national level. There are many ways of providing monetary support to schools, such as:

- Sponsoring school-related programs, including uniforms, scoreboards, field trips, yearbooks, and capital drives
- Underwriting new capital or operational expenses, ranging from the purchase of new computers to covering the cost of teacher training
- Offering grants, scholarships, or stipends to students or teachers
- Providing financial support as a portion of product sales

Financial support of education requires very little investment beyond the actual funds being donated, and can yield a fair amount of recognition. Support can be provided directly to individuals or organizations, as in the case of scholarships or buying new band uniforms, or it can be provided through organizations such as education foundations, local or national associations such as the local or national PTA, or through other organizations (such as your Chamber of Commerce) that may be managing their own education

support programs. As with any program, the participating business must take the lead in driving program visibility; not only will this benefit the company, but often enhanced visibility will help the recipient school as well.

## Volunteering/Mentoring

Volunteer initiatives are another common form of education outreach. The structure of such programs varies, with some companies simply giving employees time off to volunteer, and others establishing school relationships, structuring programs, and training employees. There are also many nonprofit organizations (Junior Achievement is a prominent example) that offer ready-made volunteer opportunities as an integral component of their service to education.

One variation on the volunteer program is a mentoring initiative, whereby volunteers develop stronger relationships with students through an extended engagement and more interaction during the time spent together. The Actuarial Foundation, for example, funds mentor-based programs in schools, with local actuaries helping to set up these programs and committing to weekly sessions with the same group of children. Another option, as recently announced by IBM, is to encourage interested and qualified employees to become full-time teachers, paying for required university credits and building a support network to help them make the transition.

Based on surveys, volunteering and mentoring programs are popular with employees; further, companies have found that they present an opportunity to build employee skills, making such programs valuable employee relations and development tools.

## Curriculum or Supplemental Content

Distributing free instructional resources offers a twofold benefit: It allows educators to receive new teaching resources at no cost while providing sponsoring companies the opportunity to develop relationships with schools and align their brand with a specific content area.

Two examples:

- Texas Instruments and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) teamed up to create a free series of lesson units based on episodes of “NUMB3RS,” a popular show featuring a crime-solving mathematician. The lessons highlight real-world applications of math, making math more interesting to students, to the benefit of all parties.
- VISA has developed Practical Money Skills, a financial education resource with integrated lessons for all grade levels and some non-K12 audiences. The program supports multiple initiatives, including national contests and prominent partnerships with respected organizations.

To build effective curriculum content, experienced developers must be hired and managed; beyond that, however, little manpower is needed to develop good content. Marketing, of course, will require an ongoing investment to ensure continued exposure, and this should be considered prior to selecting content development as a primary mode of outreach.

## Contests

Why would you host a contest? By deciding on the focus of the contest, you can not only highlight what you see as an area of importance in education, but you can make a clear connection between your brand and your chosen concept or position (new uses of technology, innovation, dedication, etc.). Two current examples:

Dell’s annual FutureReady program has three parts: A search for America’s top K-12 education visionaries; a mobile computer lab contest; and the Dell Intelligent Classroom Sweepstakes. The three programs together offer more than \$1 million in awards, and all reinforce the concept of innovation and the intelligent use of technology in teaching.

Best Buy’s annual Te@ch program funnels \$3.5 million to 1,200 classrooms, and is fueled by the promise of increased student engagement through technology. Best Buy reports that some employees involved in the program have gone on to become regular volunteers.

Contests require more hands-on involvement than other financial support programs, since entries must often be judged and the program must be actively promoted.

However, they do not require the same level of manpower as do volunteer or other hands-on initiatives.

## Contributions of Goods, Services, or Intellectual Capital

Donations of products and services can help schools greatly, as long as the donations are of real value and they allow the sponsoring company to highlight the importance of the materials being donated to their stakeholders. Examples include:

- Cable in the Classroom is a consortium of cable operators and networks joined together to provide free resources to the education market. Cable operators provide free cable hookups to the majority of schools in the country, while networks offer commercial-free educational programming that teachers can tape and use in the classroom, often coupled with free lesson plans and other content made available on their websites.
- Dole Foods recently announced its donation of 50 full-service salad bars to schools in California, where Governor Schwarzenegger has taken on childhood obesity as a key issue. Their program also involves introducing fruit baskets as fundraising alternatives and establishing “edible gardens” at sponsored schools.

These programs work because the sponsors are providing materials and services of real value, in their areas of expertise, and leveraging these donations in their communications to stakeholders. Programs range from simple, one-time donations to multi-year initiatives.

## Political Support

Some businesses have elected to leverage their political voice and corresponding relationships to lobby on behalf of education. While this may not be a particularly visible form of education support, it can be very effective in driving change.

Political support can happen at the local, state, or national level. The more visible efforts come through organizations such as The Business Roundtable, which is made up of CEOs of major corporations, and which focus on key issues of the day. One major focus for these CEOs is the state of

education, and they are focusing on improving education in part by using their governmental relationships to drive change. Similar work is being done at the state level by organizations such as The NC Forum, a North Carolina nonprofit that brings together business leaders and uses government lobbying as one of its tools in advancing issues such as improvement in math/science instruction and workforce preparedness.

## Grassroots Activity

Businesses can leverage their existing customer relationships to drive change for schools. This can be done through outreach to the customer base and/or the use of in-store signage and materials to share information. Grassroots activity is a common component of political initiatives, such as drumming up support for bond initiatives, or to spur donations of money or materials within a community. One example is Sleep Country USA, a mattress retailer in the Northwest, which collects thousands of school supplies for foster children every year through in-store promotions and customer communications. This instills significant exposure and goodwill among a key audience and also offers support to children who need such resources.

With so many outreach options, how can you choose which program model to adopt? The answer will come from a review of your community relations goals, structure and geographic reach of your organization, assets you're willing to contribute to your program, organizational focus and strengths, and the educational needs you've identified at the local or national level (depending on the scope of your program). Once you have a clear picture of what you're willing to put into education outreach and what outcomes you expect as a result, you should have a good indication of which program model can connect those two dots.

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