

University of California at Berkeley



# Partnership Guide

*for Career Academies*

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## Introduction

A California Partnership Academy (CPA) is not just a high school program. Built into its DNA is the notion that high school students need to learn more than what they can get from their academic classes. They need to be prepared for what comes after high school, both additional education and a potential career.

Students enter high school having had everything in their life pretty much planned for them. They leave having virtually nothing planned for them. In four short years they need to learn how to take over running their lives. This requires an immense period of growth and an immense change in perspective.

Since almost all students will eventually wind up working, whether or not they go to college, they need to begin preparing for this in high school. Given current patterns, only about a third of each class will finish a four-year college degree. Even for these students, these four years will be followed by a period of about 40 years of working. Which is the more important objective, college or career?

For those who *will* complete college, exploring what interests they have in high school can help them focus on where they'd like to go and what they'd like to major in. Postsecondary partners can be valuable in this regard, showing students what the options are in their community and four-year colleges. Work-based learning can be valuable also, illustrating to students the vertical range of career possibilities in the field of their academy.

For the two-thirds who won't finish a baccalaureate degree, their work future is even closer. While many, and hopefully most, will go on for some form of post-secondary training, this typically takes the form of a year or two of a mix of academic and career related training. Thus that work future is not far beyond high school graduation. And for many, roughly a third of current cohorts, it arrives on graduation day.

In fact, for many it arrives before high school graduation. Large percentages of high school students work part-time while they are in high school. If this work can be related to their high school experiences, these jobs will usually be more interesting and better paying. And they will typically lead to better options after high school.

Then there are the millions of students who won't even graduate each year, nationally an average of about 30% of each cohort in terms of on-time graduation, and about 15% who will never earn a high school diploma or equivalency degree. The single biggest reason these students give for dropping out of high school is that they're bored, they don't see the relevancy of what they're being asked to study in high school. Learning how it relates to some future endeavor of possible interest is perhaps the most effective way there is to add relevancy.

Thus for pretty much all high school students, at least beginning to prepare themselves for a career needs to be part of their high school experience. For many, it needs to be a central part of high school. And the role employers and college representatives can play in this is particularly important.

The majority of such support comes usually in the form of volunteered time: for committees, guest speakers, field trip hosts, mentors, and internship supervisors. In addition, businesses may contribute curricular input and materials, externships for academy teachers, equipment, supplies, facilities for meetings and other functions, and loaned employees to assist with workplace learning.

The California state law that defines Partnership Academies, passed originally in 1984 and since updated several times, and now part of the State Education Code, contains provisions related to partner involvement in academies. This law can be found at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/cpalaw.asp>. The sections related to CPAs are 54690-54697. Within these the clauses relating to partner involvement are as follows:

*54692. In order to be eligible to receive funding pursuant to this article, a district shall provide all of the following:*

*(b) An amount equal to a 100 percent match of all funds received pursuant to this article in the form of direct and in-kind support provided by participating companies or other private sector organizations.*

*(e) Assurance that each academy student will be provided with the following:*

- A mentor from the business community during the pupil's 11th grade year.*
- An internship or paid job related to the academy's occupational field or work experience to improve employment skills, during the summer following the 11th grade.*
- Additional motivational activities with private sector involvement to encourage academic and occupational preparation.*

So there's the rational and there's the law regarding CPA partnerships. What follows is how to go about meeting these objectives and requirements.

## **Forms of Employer and Higher Education Support**

Here's a quick list of the roles employer and college representatives usually play in a California Partnership Academy:

- **Advisory Board (aka Steering Committee) member**
- **Input on technical curriculum**
- **Donations of equipment, curricular materials**
- **Teacher externships**
- **Host for meetings, activities, graduation ceremony**
- **Speakers, field trips for sophomores**
- **Job shadowing for sophomores &/or juniors**
- **Mentors for juniors**
- **Work internships/ community service for junior grads, seniors**

## **Academy Advisory Boards**

The Advisory Board (aka Steering Committee) is the hub for all these roles. This is generally comprised of at least one district and high school administrator, the Academy Lead Teacher and perhaps the whole teacher team, a counselor, representatives from local companies in the academy career field, representatives from local community/ four-year/ technical colleges, perhaps a community-based organization that plays a role as an intermediary in bringing the high school and community together (e.g., a Chamber of Commerce, service organization, or business-education alliance) and perhaps a parent and/or student or two.

Some Boards have Executive Committees that meet periodically, generally a couple times per year. This Board has corporate leaders, post secondary chancellors or deans, presidents of local community-based organizations, government representatives, and the superintendent or his or her representative. In the fall they review plans for the academy; in the spring they review progress and student achievement.

If there is no Executive Committee, the general Board acts in this role, generally meeting quarterly or so and forming smaller task forces to work on components needing attention between the general meetings. For example, one task force might work on lining up speakers and field trip sites for sophomores, another on finding job shadowing positions and mentors for juniors, another on needed equipment and curricular materials, and so on.

If a high school has more than one academy, there is generally one Advisory Board for each career field, and should there be academies in the same career field in other high schools in the district, it plays this role for them as well. This is so that one academy doesn't find itself competing with another from the same district for support from employers or colleges. Such competition makes it difficult for these organizations to know where to place their support and can erode their involvement.



If there is more than one Academy/ Advisory Board in the district, there is often a district-wide Board that brings representatives of them together. This allows academies to learn from each other and opportunities for joint support at the district level. Superintendents can often be quite effective if they play a role in these efforts.

Although the first meeting usually takes place on the high school campus, later meetings are often held at the members' facilities, perhaps rotating through the roster of members. The first meeting may be chaired by the principal or lead teacher, but subsequent meetings are often chaired by one of the partners, with agendas developed jointly by the committee at the conclusion of each meeting. A survey at the first meeting can determine the most convenient time for meetings for the majority of the group.

Although there is a natural inclination for academies to seek financial support from their community, this can be counter productive and is usually not the greatest need. Rather what is most needed is peoples' time and expertise. Since 80% of school budgets is generally spent on personnel anyway, even if funds are provided they usually go primarily toward staffing. Volunteers who provide their time as Board members, speakers, field trip hosts, mentors, and internship supervisors, and who share their expertise on needed career field training, equipment, and instructional materials are a gold mine. And many enjoy serving in this role. It can be disarming for a company to be told the academy is not seeking funding from it.

Good communication is essential to forming and maintaining effective advisory boards. Someone at the high school, often an administrator or the lead teacher or a secretary who takes on this role, needs to be made the liaison and consistent point of contact. Likewise it is often possible to establish consistent contacts at companies and colleges. Since there are often differences in cultures and terminology between educators and business people, and related mistrust, establishing dependable communication and allowing learning to go on over time is essential.

It is also important for an academy to find ways to say thank you for the support of its partners. This can be done at academy events, but also via newsletters or other media that recognize the contributions of employers and colleges. Often the most effective form of appreciation is letters written by students themselves. Helping students is something almost everyone identifies with and the core of what motivates partners to become involved in academies.

Here's a quick summary re. Advisory Boards:

- Committee Membership
  - Employers, higher ed., community/ government, parent(s), teachers, administrators, counselor(s)
  - Chair: Employer; or co-led, school leader/ partner
- Roles and Responsibilities
  - Joint decision-making, with school/ district
  - Variety of resources, meeting the 100% match
  - People's volunteer time and expertise
- Meetings
  - Frequency—bi-monthly, quarterly
  - Where—high school, company, college, rotating
  - Agendas—in advance, with outcomes & times
- Between meeting task forces (2-4 members)
  - Technical Curriculum
  - Teacher Externships
  - Facilities/ Equipment/ Materials
  - Speakers/ Field Trips
  - Additional Resources
- Maintain communication & say thanks
  - An established academy liaison
  - Thank-you notes (especially from students)
  - Academy events
  - Newsletter/ other media

**Nine Principles  
for Sustaining Partner Support  
in a Career Academy**  
(A quick checklist)

1. Individualize. Involve them in the way most appropriate for the particular employer. There are lots of roles employees can play: advisory board members, speakers, field trip hosts, mentors, internship supervisors, teacher externship coordinators, curriculum advisors, liaisons to other employers. Match your needs with their resources.
2. Establish communication channels. Identify specific points of contact for the employer and high school so there is an established channel of communication to plan activities and work out problems. Employers often become frustrated that they can't find anyone to talk to at a high school. Personal relationships help. So does email.
3. Value their time. Where meetings are involved, have an agenda and time limit and stick to them. Identify needed actions and next steps. Employers often complain about the lack of focus and time urgency in school meetings.
4. Give them jobs. They are task-oriented people. Their strongest motivator is the sense they are contributing. Make the jobs appropriate to their skills and time availability, but expect them to do things for the academy.
5. Treat them as colleagues. Teachers are sometimes awed by business people, or contrastingly, quietly disdainful of them. They're just people, working in a different industry. Ask them questions. Learn from their expertise and share yours. Work with them as fellow professionals.
6. Expose them to students. Many industry volunteers are people who love kids and may even have wanted to be a teacher (or perhaps were in the past). Their primary motivation is often to help kids. Structure activities so they have contact with kids.
7. Expect change. Be adaptable. Employers experience staff turnovers and industry adjustments, sometimes at an alarming rate. The people you work with may leave; the company's resources may change. Nothing is permanent. But often you can make adjustments and keep partnerships alive.
8. Anticipate trends. Read about developments in your career field, learn what jobs are growing and shrinking. Stay ahead of the curve. This helps you to locate new employers to work with and adapt to changes in current ones.
9. Say thanks. There are many ways to do this: thank-you notes (especially from students), food, recognition at academy events, certificates, social events, and publicity for the company.

## **Speakers and Field Trips**

Speakers and field trips are the main partner activities for sophomores. As such, they are particularly important for new academies to organize and implement. As with other partner activities, the Advisory Board can play a helpful role. Members from both the high school and employers/ higher education need to be involved to identify speakers and field trip sites and organize students to participate in these activities.

Most high school students have thought little about what comes after high school. Exposing them to partners from higher education and who are working in the academy career field can open their eyes to the possibilities that lie before them and what they need to do to get ready. For example, employers can show students the vertical range of jobs in their company or career field, the advantages and disadvantages of each, and the training needed to achieve each. College representatives can describe the postsecondary programs open to academy graduates and what careers they may lead to. Such exposure can infuse students with new motivation to take high school seriously.

Preparation is needed for both partners and students to make such experiences productive. Employees may have forgotten what high school is like, what kinds of interests and questions students are likely to have. Likewise, students need to be prepared to know what kinds of questions to ask. Classroom time spent helping them research companies and colleges in advance and thinking about what they need to learn will make these experiences more productive.

Such instruction need not be limited to career-technical classes. One of the real values of the teacher team in an academy is that students can be shown the applications of their academic subjects to possible future careers. Work-based learning via speakers and field trips, as well as more elaborate connections such as mentorships and internships, can illustrate to students just how important good language and math skills are in the work place, not to mention science, social studies, foreign language, and so on.

Such events require careful logistical planning. Speakers need to know exactly when and where to show up, how long they should speak, and what topics to cover. Field trips require arrangement of transportation, parent chaperones, what departments to visit at the employer or college, and perhaps lunch.

Both speakers and field trips are more productive if they involve not only advance preparation for follow-up activities as well. Students can discuss what they learned, questions they may want to follow-up with via email or letters, and can write reports on the experience. They can also send thank-you notes to the speakers and field trip hosts. Feedback can be gathered from both the adults and students involved to learn what was most or least useful, helping to refine these activities over time. To summarize:

- Objectives
  - Information on the company/ field
  - Exposure to a business or college campus (field trip)
  - Range of jobs, related training
  - Role model(s) for students
  - Suggested numbers: 5-10 speakers, 1-2 field trips per school year
  
- Prep the students and employer/ college presenter/ field trip host
  - Research company or college
  - Identify good topics to cover/ questions to ask
  - The length of presentation or visit
  - Departments to discuss/visit
  - Questions to expect
  
- Logistics
  - Established liaisons on both sides (partner and high school)
  - Scheduling and preparation
  - Transportation (field trip)
  - Food (field trip)
  
- Follow-ups
  - Student follow-up report
  - Thank-you note to speaker/ field trip host
  - Gather feedback from students and speaker/host
  - Refine procedures over time

## **Job Shadowing, Mentorships, and Internships**

In eleventh grade students usually have a job shadowing experience, typically for a half day or so. This is not a requirement for a California Partnership Academy, but it is often included and usually a positive experience. This provides a student with in-depth look at what occurs in a business related to the student's career interest. Partners help plan the job shadowing and pair students, often in groups of two or three, with colleagues in the community. Students usually have a written assignment related to both their academic and career focus curriculum.

Just as with speakers and field trips, preparation is needed for both students and job shadowing providers to make this a positive experience. Students need to learn about appropriate dress and speech, and about what questions to ask and operations to observe. Likewise, hosts need to provide a real learning experience for students. Follow-up activities are also important. Students should write thank-you notes and be prepared to give presentations describing what they learned.

Academy juniors also usually have a mentor, another role for partners. Academy mentors are not "big brothers" or "big sisters" in a general sense, but rather base the relationship on professional interests. Activities usually include a matching event at the high school in which all the mentors come and meeting their protégés, led by teachers and perhaps with snacks provided by parents. Mentors should then meet the students' parents, if not face-to-face via phone call and email. The year is then comprised of a series of events that lets the students learn more about the mentor's company and career, such as tours of the company (or college), visits to other companies in the field, attendance at job fairs, and providing the student with a role model in the field.

There are certain safety issues to take into consideration with mentor programs. Schools meet these in different ways. Often a background check is required of mentors, and local police departments often help with this. One academy uses email mentors so

that contact is not face-to-face. With the help of her Advisory Board the lead teacher contacts possible mentors to get approval and an email address.

Regardless, mentors and students need preparation, and since this is a more in-depth experience than earlier ones, it needs more in-depth preparation. For example, students need to learn what questions to ask, what they should gain from the experience. Mentors need to learn what information needs to be shared with students. Dos and don'ts on both sides need to be defined. To provide such information CASN has developed a guide entitled the *Mentor Handbook for Career Academies*. As with its other guides, this is available free in the Resources section of our website, [casn.berkeley.edu](http://casn.berkeley.edu).

Either during the summer between eleventh and twelfth grade or part-time during the twelfth grade academy students have an internship. Summer internships usually last at least six weeks. While these are usually most productive if paid, providing a real work experience, often this is impossible, so unpaid options can be used. Sometimes these take the form of community service, an increasingly common requirement for high school graduation. If these can be arranged in the career field they are most useful, but sometimes this is difficult as well. Whatever the arrangement, internships may offer credit toward graduation.

All academy work-based learning experiences require that students be carefully prepared to enter the world beyond school and participate successfully in these opportunities. Teachers and counselors assume a new role in working with students on issues that are not curriculum based: appropriate attire, shaking hands, eye contact, courtesy, asking questions, and dealing with adults outside of school. Students need to understand that participating in work-based learning experiences is a privilege; they represent their academy and their school.

Finding meaningful internships is a challenge for partners and the teaching team, especially in areas with multiple academies. The key is to find opportunities for meaningful, professional experiences that truly give young people an understanding

about the career field. As with the other academy activities involving partners, Advisory Boards can play an important role. Because internships, like mentorships, represent an in-depth experience for students, CASN has developed a detailed guide on this topic, entitled the *Internship Handbook for Career Academies*, which like the Mentor Handbook is available at CASN's website.



## **15 Steps To Building And Maintaining A Large Partner Base For A Career Academy\***

The following was originally developed by Anne Scott, Principal, and Larry Stewart, Academy Director, Highland Energy/ Environmental Technology Academy, in Bakersfield, CA. It has been adapted by CASN staff and provides a more in-depth discussion of how to build partnerships in an academy.

- Step 1: Define your potential partners
- Step 2: Recruit your first few partners
- Step 3: Organize and use your advisory board
- Step 4: Define the partners' roles and responsibilities
- Step 5: Develop an activities calendar for the semester/year
- Step 6: Recruit classroom speakers
- Step 7: Recruit field trip sites
- Step 8: Recruit mentors
- Step 9: Develop formal partnerships
- Step 10: Make your local college a partner
- Step 11: View companies and colleges, not individuals, as partners
- Step 12: Respond to partner concerns
- Step 13: Publicize partner activities
- Step 14: Continually expand partner contacts
- Step 15: Value your partners

\* The terms “advisory board” and “steering committee” are used interchangeably.

## **STEP 1: DEFINE YOUR POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

Assemble your academy team (teachers, counselors, administrators) and develop answers to the questions below. This will take some research.

*How do you define your industry? Keep your definition as broad as possible to include lots of business partners.*

*What are the types of companies/agencies that are part of this industry?*

*What are some leading companies in your city/county associated with this industry?*

*What associations serve these companies/agencies?*

*What local college programs are associated with this industry?*

*Who do you know who is associated with this industry (parents, friends, school board members, current school business partners in other fields)?*

## **STEP 2: RECRUIT YOUR FIRST FEW PARTNERS**

Before a business or college commits itself to providing assistance to an academy it is often necessary to obtain the approval of a high-ranking executive. This individual will then, more than likely, assign another person to assume primary responsibility for the program, who may in turn select others or request volunteers for particular assignments (e.g., advisory committee members, mentors, speakers, coordinators of internships).

Organize an academy team that includes administrators, faculty and counselors to recruit partners. Hopefully some will have been identified in the grant application, but begin from wherever you are.

It is important that administrators, including the principal and even the superintendent, be involved with partner recruitment. The higher the level of contact from the school the likelier you will be taken seriously. Provide release time for faculty to help plan the recruitment process and to make visits to industry sites. If this activity occurs during the summer, provide faculty stipends.

Design and produce printed materials that describe your academy. Print lots of these brochures so that you can distribute them wherever and whenever you talk to people about your academy. Develop a plan that assigns recruitment of specific potential business partners to members of your academy team. Many hands make light work.

Define the partner as a company or college, not an individual. Pick the top ten partners you would like to have. Ask each member of the team if they have a personal contact that they can make in any of these. Make phone contacts and set up appointments to

personally explain your academy. CEOs and other industry representatives expect to be contacted by an administrator if you are calling cold.

Invite the potential partner to be a member of the academy's advisory committee that will make the decisions regarding curriculum, budget, calendar, activities, and so on. Stress how your academy will provide students with knowledge about the industry and encouragement to enter the industry.

### **STEP 3: ORGANIZE AND USE YOUR ADVISORY BOARD**

You need to include academy faculty, counselors, administrators, secretary, business partners and college representatives. The business partner determines the employee(s) who will represent it on the steering committee.

Hold an organizational meeting to determine place, time and frequency of meetings and who will serve as chair. Set up a steering committee calendar for the year. *Example:* quarterly meetings, rotating among the high school, supporting companies, and the local community college, 7-9 a.m., with a continental breakfast and the host serving as chair.

Develop a process to keep the steering committee members informed. One option is to buy secretarial time out of your grant or have the school provide secretarial time. The secretary can take minutes and mail them to members, send reminder notices, develop the agenda in consultation with the academy director and meeting host, handle phone calls and emails from members.

Define the responsibilities to be handled by the steering committee. The steering committee members will be busy people. Make sure that steering committee meetings are productive. Use the expertise of your steering committee members where it best applies. For example, don't focus on small decisions better left to administrators or teachers. Establish the topics that will be brought before the committee for review and approval.

*Example:* Review technical course sequence, identify possible dual enrollment subjects, identify/ provide needed equipment, plan speakers and field trips, identify mentors, approve the annual budget, recruit additional partners, evaluate completed activities (e.g., speaker program, summer internships), solve problems that develop.

Provide time for brainstorming during your steering committee meeting.

### **STEP 4: DEFINE THE PARTNERS' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Partners include companies, public agencies, colleges and individuals employed in the industry. The advisory board needs to define what you need from employers and colleges beyond those serving on the steering committee. As your academy develops, your goal should be to expand the partner base to include a variety of resource people who can assist in all aspects of the program.

We quickly learned that individuals who volunteer as partners have varied talents to share with students. Our job is to match those talents with our needs. One partner may be willing to come to the classroom one day and talk about his job. Another partner may volunteer to set up a field trip at her business. A trio of business partners may agree to work together and mentor some students.

We ask our partners to provide us with one field trip site each year which will give 50 sophomore or junior students a half or whole day tour/ experience. If that is difficult to do, we ask that they take a smaller group of students. If that is impossible, we ask that they provide a classroom speaker.

We ask that our company partners provide us with opportunities to recruit mentors and that the mentors be able to use work time to work with our students.

We never ask for money. In our initial presentation, we explain that we are asking for a more valuable contribution: the time and talents of individuals. However, we do get contributions of money and meals while on field trips. This occurs when a partner wants to do something with our academy students and realizes that the school doesn't have the resources to accomplish the task.

### **STEP 5: DEVELOP AN ACTIVITIES CALENDAR**

Partners are wonderful, but if you recruit lots of talented individuals who want to work with your students, you need to develop a calendar to organize all the academy activities. We develop and print a calendar each semester. We schedule monthly field trips, classroom activities, mentor activities, due dates for semester projects, parent meetings, student celebrations, and industry events.

The academy calendar is developed by the academy faculty. Much of the work on it is done during the summer when the teachers contact partners and set up field trips and classroom activities for the coming year. Our academy teachers are each paid a \$1,000 summer stipend for academy work. They also schedule evening meetings with parents and quarterly celebrations of student achievement.

Work on the calendar is continuous because dates get changed and new opportunities emerge. It is on the computer and updated and printed frequently to reflect the changes.

### **STEP 6: RECRUIT CLASSROOM SPEAKERS**

Partners can bring the industry and higher education to the classroom. We block our academy classes so that all sophomores or all juniors may come together for a presentation. Our academy headquarters is in one building with a large classroom that can hold 50 students. All our math classes are conducted here. The classroom is adjacent to two large science labs that are also used by the academy for the academy technology and applied physics classes. The academy also has access to computer labs. This classroom complex has evolved in response to the varied activities we pursue in the academy.

*What types of classroom activities do partners provide?* They may provide general information about their industry, support for the academic disciplines taught within the academy, or offer specialized training. Ideas for classroom presentations frequently come from the steering committee's partners. Academy team members are always alert to new possibilities, and we find that ideas often emerge when we're having informal discussions at industry functions or on field trips or working with mentors. Often, a partner will recommend that we contact a colleague who has particular expertise that can be shared.

*How often do you schedule business partners in the classroom?* We began by trying to schedule a classroom presentation every two weeks. This schedule, coupled with a monthly field trip, quarterly celebration of student accomplishments, group research projects, and the need to teach a college prep curriculum in English, math, and biology to students who had previously been general level, exhausted our teachers. We are now more flexible about classroom presentations, and schedule them whenever they seem appropriate.

### **STEP 7: RECRUIT FIELD TRIP SITES**

The monthly field trip experience has been a major component in the success of our academy. Approximately seven field trips are provided for students each year.

*How do you organize the field trips?* During the summer academy teachers meet and outline a tentative calendar of field trips related to topics that the students will be studying during the year. Each teacher volunteers to organize specific trips. That teacher is responsible for contacting the business partner and arranging the date, place, and time of a trip. Our academy secretary schedules school buses to transport the students. Transportation costs are funded through the CPA grant. A majority of our students are on the free/reduced lunch program, and the school cafeteria provides free sack lunches for those students. The grant pays for sack lunches for the other students. Two academy teachers or one teacher and an administrator or counselor go on each field trip. Because of block scheduling, only one substitute has to be hired to cover two academy teachers. Substitute costs are budgeted through the grant. All counselors and administrators are encouraged to participate in one field trip each year.

The school has obtained signed parent permission forms that cover all academy activities during the school year. Students must wear their academy white polo shirts on the field trip. To participate in a field trip students must be in good standing in the class which means no recent attendance cuts or discipline referrals.

*What is the partner's role for a field trip?* Business or college partners provide activities for students at the site. This may include presentations, tours, demonstrations, and hands on opportunities. We go with what the partner wants to provide. Last year we provided eight field trips for our sophomores.

## **STEP 8: RECRUIT MENTORS**

The Career Academy guidelines call for adult mentors at the junior year. Recruiting partners as mentors has been our greatest challenge. The academy team used the mentor materials presented at the state Career Academy conference and found them extremely helpful. However, convincing a business partner that he wanted to mentor a student has been much more difficult than organizing classroom presentations or field trips.

*How do you recruit business partners as mentors?* The team adapted materials from the *CASN Mentor Handbook for Career Academies*. An academy mentor information package was developed and printed. The teachers tried to set up mentor presentations during the summer; however, companies were reluctant to schedule such presentations then because of vacations.

We solved our mentor recruitment problem by enlisting the services of a retired district administrator who took on the activity as a 30-day post retirement project. The district approved the project for funding as a \$9,000 district matching investment. This administrator had served at the adult school and had extensive industry contacts. He set up appointments for both himself and the teachers and administrators to present the mentor program. He brought out prospective mentors to view the academy classes and meet academy students. He made personal contacts with industry public relations officials and left mentor materials for distribution to all employees.

*What does a business partner do as a mentor?* Mentors are asked to meet with their mentees once each month. An information session and lunch activity at the high school was provided to introduce the mentors to their students. A schedule of monthly mentor activities has been developed; however, mentors do not have to participate in these. Mentors are asked to provide a February job shadow experience for their student.

On their mentor information/application forms most of the mentors wrote that they wanted to assist the students with their academic work, and tutoring sessions have been scheduled. Some mentors volunteered to work with two mentees, and some work as teams sharing a group of students.

## **STEP 9: DEVELOP FORMAL PARTNERSHIPS**

A great way to gain business partners and financial support is for your academy to be formally partnered with a company or related organization. This is particularly important if your school is located in a large city and competes with other schools for support.

*How do you establish formal partnerships?* They may be developed with a specific business, an industry association, an intermediary organization such as a school-business alliance or Chamber of Commerce, or any other group that interfaces with that industry. Your job is to convince the organization that your academy has unique ties to them that makes a formal partnership logical and productive. The business or organization needs to see some value for them as a result of partnering with you.

*What do you get from a formal partnership?* There are a number of potential advantages:

1. Access to all the employees and/or the roster of members so that you can then recruit individual business partners
2. Specified annual commitments of personnel time and talent
3. Grants, used equipment, instructional materials, and attendance at industry functions
4. Status, as your partnership is publicized by the company

Affiliate memberships in organizations may assist your academy's growth also. You may want to become an affiliate member of an organization that can provide your academy with specialized knowledge of assistance.

### **STEP 10: MAKE YOUR LOCAL COLLEGES PARTNERS**

A local community college or a four-year state university can be a great partner. Many of your academy students will be attending one of these, and you need to be working closely together. You need to include the college from the beginning in your academy planning.

*What roles does a college play as partner?* The college should have representatives on the academy steering committee. These representatives should come from appropriate departments and programs.

The college partners can offer advice on curriculum development, particularly in the technical academy classes. They may provide college courses for academy students to take through dual enrollment arrangements, providing both high school and college credit. The college faculty can also introduce the academy faculty to other sources of information related to the industry.

The college should be the site of a field trip each year to learn about college programs related to the industry, how to access the college library to do research, and the college application process. It may also have funding sources to augment the academy program budget.

### **STEP 11: VIEW COMPANIES AND COLLEGES. NOT INDIVIDUALS, AS YOUR PARTNERS**

Change happens. Individuals are transferred, get new responsibilities, develop new community interests, and the academy may no longer be a high priority. We've struggled with this situation in several instances and have learned to seek a company or college commitment with the understanding that individuals may vary from year to year.

*Example 1:* We had an individual who served as a business partner when we became a model Tech Prep school. She then became a member of our steering committee. Through her efforts the academy received a grant of \$5,000 and was provided a field trip site. However, this partner was transferred to the mid-west and her successor has not answered any of our phone calls.

*Example 2:* Another business was an original partner that formally supported our grant application. For the planning year and first year of implementation the individual who wrote that letter served on our steering committee. However, she involved a variety of other employees in academy projects. When her company merged with another our steering committee member assumed new responsibilities. However, she arranged for the high school to become a formal partner with that new company and had a successor named to the academy steering committee.

## **STEP 12: RESPOND TO PARTNER CONCERNS**

One of your major academy goals should be to keep your partners happy with their roles in your academy. To succeed you need to be aware of any concerns and be ready to respond.

*How do you respond to individual partner concerns?* Business partners may be uncertain about working with teenagers. They will have questions about how to successfully handle their academy responsibilities. You need to have a process to handle their questions and reduce their anxiety. Academy faculty need to understand that part of their task is to guide business partners participating in an activity.

*Example:* Each teacher is responsible for working with specific business partners who are serving as mentors. If a mentor has a question, she calls that teacher. Alternatively, you could assign one teacher the responsibility of the mentor program, and that teacher would then handle all mentor concerns.

Concerns often focus on the scheduling. That is why it is important that every activity be assigned to a specific teacher who will organize it, contact the partner, and maintain contact until the activity is completed. An academy secretary can play an important role in handling scheduling concerns and other minor problems. She needs to know what is going on with partners so she can respond to calls or emails and provide the needed information. She can also find answers to concerns and relay them back to the partner.

*Example:* Our academy uses two hours of a full time school secretary who also handles other responsibilities. Our understanding is that her time is flexible so that she may respond to academy calls throughout the day. However, the academy Lead Teacher and administrators need to handle concerns that affect the company or school. If it's a serious concern, the principal needs to become involved because the partner may work with the school in other areas beyond the academy. Sometimes a major concern is beyond the school's ability to solve because the industry is experiencing problems. In this case you just adjust and move on.



### **STEP 13: PUBLICIZE PARTNER ACTIVITIES**

Business partners volunteer to assist an academy for a number of reasons. These include wanting to assist young people to succeed, wanting to recruit young people to enter the industry, wanting to give back to the community, wanting approval from their company, or the company wanting approval from the community and/or its national headquarters.

You need to provide your business partners with positive publicity about the support they are providing your academy. This gives strokes to individual partners while encouraging other employees to volunteer to work with your academy. It enhances the company image in the community. If the company is national, it helps the local office to impress national headquarters with their volunteer spirit and industry promotional efforts.

*Example:* The energy industry gains mixed reactions from the general public. When we first proposed an energy/environmental technology academy, potential energy industry partners worried that the students might attack the industry. We explained that it gave the industry an opportunity to present its operations in a positive way. Newspaper articles about our field trips present the industry favorably, quoting positive student reactions while explaining what the students have seen and learned.

*What types of publicity can you provide?* One goal is to keep the academy visible in the school and community. Each edition of the school newspaper can have an academy story, and the parent newsletter an academy update. The public relations representatives of our business partners keep in contact with the school and write frequent articles for the company newsletters. The community newspaper and television stations accompany students on field trips to interesting business sites. These stories provide human interest, showing students interacting with industry representatives.

If the school has a career day or partner's day this can generate positive publicity. It can become an opportunity to host your business partners or recruit potential partners. It may give them a picture of the school generally or focus on the role of the academy within the school.

*Example 1:* The district holds an annual Principal Partners Day, and each school hosts 15 to 20 business leaders. This year we invited all the members of the educational subcommittee of the Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce and concentrated on presenting the academy. Some who attended had not been active in the academy previously, but three signed up to be mentors the next day.

*Example 2:* The district always invites representatives from the local offices of the state senator and assemblyman to attend Principal Partners Day. This year we hosted the local representative of an assemblyman, who seemed very impressed with the academy. We have subsequently heard that this assemblyman will support the state budget increase in the Partnership Academy allocation.

## **STEP 14: CONTINUALLY EXPAND EMPLOYER CONTACTS**

*Why do you need to keep adding business partner contacts?* Change happens: companies dissolve or change their community focus, and individuals leave the company, or grow tired. You need to view each business partner as a potential long-term connection who is really only certain for the short-term.

National corporations move their employees. We have assigned mentors to students and then had the mentors call and say they were being transferred next month or having to go out of the country for an extended assignment. The academy tries to develop mentor clusters with several mentors from one company working with several students. If one employee is transferred, the other mentors agree to mentor the student assigned to that employee.

New business partners bring in new ideas and activities. You may begin your academy with ten business partners that you already know. As your academy grows and you add students, you need to expand your academy partners to answer needs that you didn't know existed when you began.

*Example:* Our academy began with an emphasis on the energy industry because we had contacts in that field. Our only environmental technology contacts were with the local community college and waste management organization. By our second year we had established business partner connections with the local Parks and Recreation Department, the Bureau of Land Management, and other environmental groups. When the industry encountered a cyclical downturn the environmental business partners stepped in and provided increased field trip sites, mentors, and service learning opportunities.

## **STEP 15: VALUE YOUR PARTNERS**

Without business partners your academy can't survive. You need to show your companies, your individual partners, the associations that support you, and your local colleges that you value their association with your academy.

*How do you value your business partners?* Provide opportunities for your business partners to be thanked by the students, staff, parents and school. This can be an end-of-year celebration, a formal certificate of appreciation, thank you letters from the students following a field trip experience, letters of appreciation sent to employers who have provided employee support, or formal commendations to employers from your school board. Thank your partners for every activity they provide in support of your academy.

*Example:* Our academy students write thank you letters in their English academy class after field trips. This is both a writing assignment and a lesson in how you respond appropriately when someone has provided a service for you.

Provide opportunities for your business partners to learn about student success. The goal of your academy is to guide your students to graduation, higher education, and successful

careers. Your partners support these goals. Without violating student privacy, devise ways to highlight student improvement in grades, attendance and attitude and share this information with your partners. They want to know that their efforts are producing positive results.

The greatest compliment that you can give to your business partners is to use the information that they provide you. Value what your business partners recommend, offer in assistance, and report back to you after an activity is completed. They see what is happening in your academy in different ways than the faculty or administration may. Sometimes partners are more positive about an event than the faculty, and sometimes they have concerns. Value this information and adjust your next activity to reflect them. When partners see that the school respects their input, they feel a vital part of the academy operation.

# **CASN Tool Kit**

The Career Academy Support Network has assembled a host of guides and related materials in the “Resources” section its website: <http://casn.berkeley.edu>, which also has a section specifically devoted to the California Partnership Academies. Among these materials is a *Tool Kit* of short documents useful for implementing various components of an academy. Many of these are related to involving partners in the kinds of activities discussed in this guide. All are available free electronically, in .doc or html versions, and may be downloaded and adapted for local use.

To put it another way, go steal this stuff! It is all in the public domain and there for precisely this purpose.

A partner we worked with over several years in Seattle, Washington developed one guide of particular interest. That city developed a series of career academies in several of its high schools in cooperation with a school-business alliance there called The Alliance for Education. Based on what it learned over the course of this work this business-led group assembled a guide entitled the *Seattle Alliance for Education Toolkit: Career Academy/ Small School Advisory Groups*. It provides additional information on many of the topics covered here. Following is a quick overview of its contents.

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