

# FROM PARTNERSHIP TO THE LEARNING COMMUNITY

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In this short paper, I propose a future agenda for partnerships between education and business by which they may develop as brokers in learning and develop a prospectus for education and training from within the community.

## **The proposition is based on the following assumptions:**

- Any organization which is still developing is a learning organization, whether it is a company, a school or the community in general.
- There is an aging workforce. This is not a reference to the demographic time bomb which, in a time of recession has become something of a damp squib, but a recognition that the number of people retired will represent a significantly higher proportion of the population. Many will pursue learning as a form of leisure.
- The number of people in work will still require training because technologic development will gather pace.
- The cost of training for small companies is roughly equivalent to the profit margin.
- There is no evidence that central government can manage complex local problems, i.e. the inner city.
- Communities will need to develop and demonstrate increasingly sophisticated training and education infrastructures to attract inward investment from government e.g. City Challenge: from industry. e.g. the Raleigh triangle, North Carolina or major media events, e.g. the Olympics.
- Different groups in the community live in separate enclosed ghettos of experience and understanding.
- The beginnings of such an approach can be seen in Education Business Partnerships.

## **Certain issues**

- Partnership is an approach to solving problems which seeks to make things better, not more complicated, more costly or to build hierarchies or bureaucracies.

**Problems will not be solved if:**

- one partner decides to impose the agenda on the other, either by inflicting a brutalist model (doing something to), or a patronizing model (doing something for) the other partner;
- partnerships exist to absorb government funding;
- partnership processes are ignored to concentrate simplistically on outcomes;
- there is no agenda for the future
- all partner groups, including schools, are not learning organizations committed to the development of staff

**An effective partnership will need to:**

- exemplify respect for the education experience and expertise of all partners
- recognize that all partners are stakeholders in partnerships with rights as well as responsibilities.
- put learning at the heart of the partnership

**An agenda for the future:**

- sees learning as the oxygen of partnership and community development and the school as the focus
- uses the community as a learning resource
- respects teachers and trainers as the managers of learning and uses their skills as facilitators in community development
- encourages all members of the community to make their expertise, experience and knowledge available as 'associate teachers'
- creates a network of understanding within a community and encourages a richer interchange of ideas

Partnerships should create a community prospectus by listing all the local training and learning opportunities and by acting as a broker to put those in need of expertise in touch with those who have the necessary skills to offer. There should be no system of payment, but the creation of a local training economy based on the exchange of training and skills. Everyone will know what's in it for them. The community will target its funding at what it cannot provide from its own resources.

If everyone contributes to such a scheme, resources will grow out of synergy. People will be able to explore beyond the understanding of the culture they inhabit at home, at work or in their schools to a more complete education.

Facilitation is the key to community change.

The future will require a wider agenda, but time is beginning to press.

### **THE TEACHER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

The Teacher Internship Program (TIP) seeks to bring into the total education/life experience of the teacher encounters with some of the discontinuities of change and shifts in the workplace. This, the school extends into the community, and the community provides an essential blurring of the boundaries of what constitutes school.

Internships are an extremely effective form of personal and professional development and have a positive impact on the curriculum and delivery of programs to students and staff in provincial schools. The Internship experience also ensures that teaching in our schools is based on a view of life as an integrated whole, in which people, things, events, processes and ideas are interrelated. The initiative involves primary, formative and transition year teachers being placed in their community (i.e. business, industry, service agencies, etc.) for up to five days.

The experience gained from internships provide teachers and administrators with a range of opportunities that:

- enhance and/or reshape Ontario's Common (Grades 1-9) and Secondary School Curriculum - including guidance and career counseling policies and programs.
- develop relevant and active learning experiences for students of all abilities.
- broaden their understanding of the role of business/industry within the community.
- evaluate present practice in the light of the actualities of the workplace and discover new possibilities for program and management.
- develop stronger, more vital relationships between education and community.
- inform community-based organizations about existing and future directions in education.
- enlarge and enrich the context(s) for learning.

This workshop will guide both teachers and administrators through the four key stages of a community-based internship.