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Revised November 2013

Community Partner Handbook



**A Program of the Cobb Chamber of Commerce
for Cobb County and Marietta City Schools**

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Introduction

The quality of a community is defined by the strength of its public schools. While the most important “stakeholders” in our schools are the students, Cobb County businesses and organizations also have a vested interest in the success of schools. In order to enhance the quality of education, overcome obstacles such as the school systems’ challenging budget limitations, and recognize the benefits to schools and the community, businesses and community groups began establishing partnerships with local schools through the Cobb Chamber of Commerce in 1986. The Cobb Chamber Partners in Education Program (CCPIE) has grown and strengthened exponentially over the years as an increasing number of businesses and community groups understand and appreciate the impact that their involvement has on our educational systems.

This handbook was designed as a guide for effectively establishing and maintaining school-community partnerships. The Cobb Chamber encourages community partners and schools to learn from the success of others by reviewing and replicating the models provided in this handbook. A sampling of partnership activities and best practices were contributed by community partners and school partner liaisons to share with those who are exploring the program for the first time, those who are just getting started, and those who may be searching for ways to enhance their current partnerships.

Cobb Chamber Partners in Education Program

Cobb Chamber Partners in Education (CCPIE) is a program of the **Cobb Chamber of Commerce Education Department (CCED)** and **Cobb County and Marietta City Public School Systems**. A partnership is a voluntary relationship that is formed between a business or organization (**community partner**) and a school or school system. These relationships create support systems designed to meet the needs of the schools through the resources of the community partners to the benefit of both.

Then and Now

The Partners in Education Program is national in scope. CCPIE was established by the CCED in 1986 with five partners. Today the program has grown to almost 1,300 partnerships, representing a total estimated value of more than **\$8.1 million** of time, money, goods, and services given back to our schools during the 2011-2012 school year.

CCPIE Mission

To establish and support partnerships that will utilize community resources to enrich and extend the educational opportunities for Cobb County and Marietta City students.

CCPIE Goals

- Strengthen Cobb County's commitment to education
- Foster relationships between businesses and community groups and our educational systems
- Stimulate academic achievement and life-long learning

CCPIE Program Benefits

To the school

- Assistance in meeting school needs beyond available resources and in light of budget constraints
- Collaboration from the community in accomplishing the goals of annual school improvement plans
- Business expertise and technical support, providing a more complete education

To the business

- Presenting firsthand the requirements and expectations of the business world
- Heightening awareness of present and future job needs
- Understanding the quality and needs of the public school systems, whose health is vital to the community's economic well-being
- Building support for schools among employees and simultaneously boosting company morale
- Being recognized as a community-involved company, which adds to your public relations efforts
- Improved education of future employees and customers
- Donations may be considered charitable contributions

To the students


- Higher self-esteem
- Association with successful role models and mentors from the community
- Increased motivation to achieve success in the areas of academics, attendance, and character
- Enriched curriculum
- Individualized help with subjects outside of the classroom
- Education on the types of jobs in the workplace and how their academic skills apply

To the teachers

- Instructional support
- Improved morale
- Recognition for achievement
- Assistance in the classroom, allowing more time for planning and instructional activities
- Additional resources not provided for in the budget
- More contact with community members

To the community

- Increased communication among citizens
- Strengthened school systems
- Educated citizenry
- Well-prepared work force
- Improved economic development; i.e., lower dropout rates are tied to lower crime rates, less unemployment and fewer welfare recipients
- Ability to draw new businesses to the community



“We must have strong schools and families to be a strong nation. There are a lot of organizations trying a variety of things to improve the educational system in Georgia.”

Two Levels of Participation

Partner in Education:


A **Partner in Education (PIE)** is a business or an organization that partners with **one school** and commits to participate in at least one activity per quarter with that school. A business may become a PIE with up to three schools a calendar year as long as they meet the one activity per quarter requirement.

Partner at Large:

A **Partner at Large (PAL)** is a business or an organization that desires to form partnerships with **three or more schools within a school system** but *does not meet the one activity per quarter requirement*. The purpose of such a partnership is to allow a business or an organization to offer its resources for the benefit of Cobb County education systems in its entirety or multiple schools within one or both of the school systems.

Consideration Points

- Review this handbook to determine whether the program would benefit you and a school or school system.
- Consider the number of employees who can participate, the amount of time that can be given, the resources your organization has to offer, the interest level of employees in the needs of public education and the degree of commitment at all levels of your organization.
- Decide which level of participation is appropriate for your business or organization.



“The key component to a successful partnership is first a desire to guide children and assist them in their years of growing as much as possible.”

How PIE Partnerships are Formed

1. A business or organization contacts the CCED sharing a desire to work with a Cobb County or Marietta City school.
2. The CCED supplies the business/organization with a community handbook, checklist and Partnership Plan. The school may also provide the business/organization with a Partnership Plan.
3. The business/organization contacts the school to discuss the needs of the school and the resources it can provide. The CCED can help the business/organization select a school and provide them with contact information for the school, if necessary.

Note: PIE must commit to at least one activity a quarter with their partner school.

Quarters are Aug-Sept, Oct-Dec, Jan-Mar, Apr-May.

4. If the business/organization *and* the school believe the partnership is mutually beneficial, the Partnership Plan should be completed at this time (see PIE Partnership Plan on page 6). *If the partnership is not mutually beneficial, the CCED can help the business/organization select a new school.*
5. The Business/organization and school should keep a copy of the Partnership Plan and fax a copy to the Cobb Chamber of Commerce.
6. The Partnership Plan will be reviewed by the CCED once it is received. If the Partnership Plan is approved, the business/organization and the school will receive a confirmation e-mail from the CCED.
7. Once approved, the business/organization and school should schedule a Signing Ceremony to formalize and publicize the partnership.



The Cobb Chamber Partners in Education Program is coordinated by the Cobb Chamber of Commerce's Education Department for the Cobb County and Marietta City Schools. Our mission is to establish and support partnerships that utilize community resources to enrich and extend the education opportunities for Cobb County and Marietta City students.

Community Partner Contact Information

Business/Organization Name: _____

Contact Name: _____

Title: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zipcode: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

Type of Business: _____

Website Address: _____

Partnership Activities (to be completed collaboratively by community partner and school representative)

The plan should highlight the most significant activities/contributions planned as a result of the partnership. This document is a starting point for planning partnership activities and should not limit the activities of the partnership. Both parties should be aware that additional needs may arise. Please remember to include activities that the school can do for their partner. Feel free to add additional pages if necessary. Complete all information.

This plan represents partnership activities for the following school(s):

1st Quarter (August-September) Significant Activities •
2nd Quarter (October-December) Significant Activities •
3rd Quarter (January-March) Significant Activities •
4th Quarter (April – May) Significant Activities •

Authorizing individual: _____

Name

School

Phone Number

Authorizing individual: _____

Name

Business

Phone Number

Please email a copy of the completed form to partners@cobbchamber.org; fax to 770-690-4028 or mail to Cobb Chamber Education Department · P.O. Box 671868 · Marietta, GA 30006

Things to Keep in Mind When Completing a PIE Partnership Plan

- PIE are required to commit to at least **one activity per quarter** with their partner school. If any given activity occurs consistently throughout the school year, you may indicate “ongoing” in the first activity section or rewrite the activity in each section.
- Please give thought to specific activities and document one per quarter on your plan. Avoid generalizations such as “whatever we can do to help” and “we will assist in various ways.”
- Incomplete Partnership Plans will not be processed. To ensure that your plan is complete on the first turn-in, please check the following:
 1. Every section is filled out, including the sections in which you must check boxes
 2. The plan is signed by an authorizing party from the school **and** the business/organization

Partnership Recommitments

In the spring of each school year, each school will be contacted by a member of the Cobb Chamber Partner in Education committee and receive a list of their current Partners in Education. The schools will be asked to contact their Partners in Education to verify that the business/organization wants to continue the partnership for the next school year and to confirm who the PIE representative for that business is. Changes will be made to the Partners in Education database as reported by the schools. Notification of any changes will be sent to the school and the business/organization. Each school will also receive a verification form for their PIE coordinator's and principal's contact information to complete.

Recommitments prevent partnerships from becoming inactive with time, provide opportunities to strengthen relationships and create “an out” for either party if there is no longer a desire to continue the relationship. Recommitments provide the school and the Cobb Chamber of Commerce with the most up-to-date partner contact information and offer insight into which schools are in the greatest need of additional partners.

The Importance of Formalizing Partnerships

- To receive a Partners in Education Program handbook that offers insight and guidance on establishing and maintaining healthy and mutually beneficial partnerships.
- To have a point of contact at the Cobb Chamber to call with program questions, to discuss any concerns or challenges with the partnership and receive feedback on solutions, and to share partnership success stories for potential publication.
- To participate in a Signing Ceremony to publicize your partnership. The Signing Ceremony is an opportunity to be introduced to the school faculty, students and parents, and make them aware of your participation in the school.
- To receive a Declaration of Partnership certificate to display at your place of work to inform your staff, clients, members and the community-at-large of your commitment to your partner school.
- To be notified of when the Partners in Education Program training sessions take place. These sessions provide environments for new and long-standing partners to learn about ways to enhance their partnerships, to share best practices and success stories with other program participants, and to ask questions to seasoned coordinators.
- To be eligible for the Outstanding Partner Awards which are presented to the top partners in Cobb County every year.
- To be recognized as new or active participants in the CCPIE Program through Cobb Chamber publications, events, etc.
- To be informed and invited to participate in other programs that the CCED coordinates for the school systems (i.e. Principal for a Day, Give Our Schools a Hand, etc).
- To be acknowledged before the Cobb County and Marietta City Boards of Education for the contributions that your business/organization provides to our schools every year.

How PAL Partnerships are Formed

1. A business or organization contacts the CCED sharing a desire to be involved with Cobb County school systems.
2. The CCED supplies the business/organization with a community handbook, checklist and Partnership Plan to be completed by the business/organization (see PAL Partnership Plan on page 9). The business/organization provides in writing what they intend to offer in the activity section of the Partnership Plan.
3. The business/organization makes a copy of the Partnership Plan for its records and then faxes a copy to the Cobb Chamber, wherein it will be reviewed and then sent to the appropriate school system(s).
4. The school system(s) will approve or deny the business' proposal to become a Partner at Large. The school systems' contacts inform the CCED of the decision.
5. The CCED will send an e-mail to the business/organization informing them of the decision. *Upon approval only* will the CCED send an e-mail to the appropriate school system(s) informing them of the new Partner at Large. All schools within the appropriate school system(s) will be notified of the new Partner at Large's contact information and details on proposed activities.

Note: Some partnerships may or may not serve to fill a need at a school or be beneficial to both parties, therefore each school has the opportunity to accept or decline participation.

6. The business/organization then contacts and markets to the schools within the appropriate school system(s) as they see fit. Businesses/organizations are responsible for contacting and marketing to schools in order to give support and provide resources. The CCED is only responsible for e-mailing the appropriate school system(s) of the new Partner at Large, thus has no part in marketing or further contacting schools for Partners at Large.
7. Upon approval of the partnership, the new PAL will receive a Declaration of Partnership certificate that can be displayed at their office. Due to the nature of the Partner at Large level, Signing Ceremonies are generally not held for Partners at Large. Signing Ceremonies held for Partners at Large are at the sole discretion of the partner school(s).



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Community Partner Contact Information

Business/Organization Name: _____

Contact Name: _____

Title: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zipcode: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

Type of Business: _____

Website Address: _____

Partnership Activities Section

(to be completed by community partner for approval by the Cobb Chamber and Cobb County Public School Systems)

This plan signifies a commitment to the partnership for a period of **one school year**. The plan should highlight the most significant activities/contributions planned as a result of the partnership. This document is a starting point for planning partnership activities and should not limit the activities of the partnership. All parties should be aware that additional needs may arise. Please remember to include activities that the school can do for their partner. Complete all information.

Have you ever been a Partner in Education with Cobb County or Marietta City Schools?

☐ **No** ☐ **Yes** If so, specify which school(s) and for how long: _____

Would you like to work with: ☐ **Cobb County Schools** ☐ **Marietta City Schools** ☐ **Both**

In detail list activities you plan to do with your partner schools (use the back or the form or add additional pages as needed):

Authorizing individual: _____

Name

Business

Phone Number

Please email a copy of the completed form to partners@cobbchamber.org; fax to 770-690-4028 or mail to Cobb Chamber Education Department · P.O. Box 671868 · Marietta, GA 30006

Things to Keep in Mind When Completing a PAL Partnership Plan

- Fill out the PAL Partnership Plan in its entirety.
- Please give thought to specific activities and document within the activities section. Avoid generalizations such as “whatever we can do to help” and “we will assist in various ways.”
- Incomplete Partnership Plans will not be processed. To ensure that your plan is complete on the first turn-in, please check the following:
 1. Every section is filled out, including the sections in which you must check boxes
 2. The plan is signed by an authorizing party from the business/organization

Partnership Recommitments

At the beginning of each school year the school districts will receive a list of their current Partners at Large. The school districts will be asked to contact their Partners at Large to verify that the business/organization wants to continue the partnership for the next school year. Changes will be made to the Partners in Education database as reported by the school districts. Notification of any changes will be sent to the school and the business/organization. Each Partner at Large will also receive a contact information verification form to complete.

Recommitments prevent partnerships from becoming inactive with time, provide opportunities to strengthen relationships and create “an out” for either party if there is no longer a desire to continue the relationship. Recommitments provide the school district and the Cobb Chamber of Commerce with the most up-to-date partner contact information and offer insight into which schools are in the greatest need of additional partners.

The Importance of Formalizing Partnerships

- To receive a Partners in Education Program handbook that offers insight and guidance on establishing and maintaining healthy and mutually beneficial partnerships.
- To have a point of contact at the Cobb Chamber to call with program questions, to discuss any concerns or challenges with the partnership and receive feedback on solutions, and to share partnership success stories for potential publication.
- To receive a Declaration of Partnership certificate to display at your place of work to inform your staff, clients, members and the community-at-large of your commitment to your partner school.
- To be notified of when the Partners in Education Program training sessions take place. These sessions provide environments for new and long-standing partners to learn about ways to enhance their partnerships, to share best practices and success stories with other program participants, and to ask questions to seasoned coordinators.
- To be eligible for the Outstanding Partner Awards which are presented to the top partners in Cobb County every year.
- To be recognized as new or active participants in the CCPIE Program through Cobb Chamber publications, events, etc.
- To be recognized as new or active participants in the CCPIE Program through Cobb Chamber publications, events, etc.
- To be informed and invited to participate in other programs that the CCED coordinates for the school systems (i.e. Principal for a Day, Give Our Schools a Hand, etc).
- To be acknowledged before the Cobb County and Marietta City Boards of Education for the contributions that your business/organization provides to our schools every year.

Partnership Activities

The community partner, school principal and/or school partner liaison will discuss goals and activities for the year at the initial meeting. At this time the Partnership Plan will be completed. **Partners in Education are required to commit to a minimum of one activity per quarter.** The following lists provide a sampling of the partnership activities that exist in our schools and that Partners in Education and Partners at Large are currently undertaking.

Support student achievement

- Volunteer for tutoring, reading, or mentoring
- Award good attendance, character, academic or extracurricular achievement with recognition, prizes, scholarships, etc.
- Provide food and refreshments for school events and programs
- Donate “Honor Student” bumper stickers
- Be an e-mail buddy
- Be a lunch buddy

School-to-Career

- Share a special skill with a class
- Share information specific to your vocation
- Speak at Career Day
- Create a mock business in a classroom
- Review applications and resumes and conduct mock interviews
- Offer job shadowing experiences for students and teachers
- Employ students in summer months or on a part-time basis

“There are children that never get talked to while they are at home. If a teacher doesn’t talk to them directly during the day they may go all day without hearing their own name.”

Encourage student performance and learning

- Display student artwork at your facility
- Display listings of student accomplishments at your facility (i.e. Reader of the Month)
- Host motivational programs and activities
- Invite students to perform for employees and customers
- Provide peppermints to students during testing periods
- Offer demonstrations and presentations on various topics. Suggested topics include, but are not limited to, drug awareness, health and nutrition, understanding of money and how to handle it, self-esteem, goal setting, problem solving, interviewing techniques, resume writing, backpack safety, etc.


Donate supplies and resources

- Basic school supplies
- Books for the school library
- Books for students to take home and keep to promote reading outside the classroom
- Copying equipment and paper for large projects
- Use of your facility for staff/PTA meetings, student activities
- Use of your facility for school nights and donate a portion of proceeds to school
- Use of your facility for community-based instruction for special education students
- Transportation, use of company vans
- Departmental supplies
- Printing services
- Funding to cover the cost of field trips for low-income students
- Purchase school uniforms
- Supply a classroom with newspapers (AJC News for Kids) or relevant trade publications
- Funding for a homework center to benefit ASP students

Partnership Activities *(continued)*

Support teachers and faculty

- Recognize and thank teachers during appreciation week and Give Our Schools a Hand Month (October)
- Donate teacher incentives, such as gift certificates or coupons for products and services
- Supply food and refreshments for appreciation events, meetings, and in-service workdays
- Offer teacher scholarships
- Provide staff development opportunities
- Host a best practices luncheon for school staff where they can discuss challenges they are facing and collaborate to find solutions
- Work with classroom teachers to develop lesson plans
- Be a Give Our Schools a Hand sponsor (Call the CCED for more information)



“Yes, we have an absenteeism problem. Our teachers are missing too many days.”

Support school programs

- School fundraisers - book drives, bake sales, fun runs, auctions, canned food drives, etc.
- Join the PTA
- Student performances
- Welcome program, orientation for new students & families
- Special school activities - Career Day, Field Day, Red Ribbon Week, fairs/carnivals, etc.
- Holiday celebrations
- Extracurricular activities; sponsor a club or sports team

Volunteer time

- Serve on the school council
- Translate or provide translators for parent/teacher meetings
- Serve as a school judge
- Assist with school newsletter, yearbook or other publications
- Work in classrooms, front office, media center, lunchroom or on bus duty
- Be a fieldtrip chaperone
- Work with students on community service projects

Assist with school improvement projects

- Landscaping
- Renovations
- Painting
- Playground needs
- Nature trails
- Outdoor classroom construction
- Furniture and décor donations

Partnership Activities by Business Category

Apartments

- Provide use of facilities for meetings

Attorneys

- Guest speaker for classes
- Stage mock trial or historical reenactment

Auto Dealers/Auto Services

- Internships, job shadow or field trips for auto tech classes

Bookstores/Booksellers

- Start a book club
- Guest reader for Read Across America
- Donate books to schools

Business Associations

- Present on entrepreneurship and other business related topics
- Produce a student created commercial with a business focus

Catering

- Help prepare students for culinary competitions
- Teach demos

Chiropractors

- Give spinal screenings, chair massages or massage gift certificates for teachers
- Establish a stretching program or fitness challenge
- Workshops on nutrition, stress management and relaxation

Churches

- Help maintain school grounds and plant flowers
- Volunteer to support teaching staff
- Provide use of facility/performance space for meetings and performances

Civic Groups/Organizations

- Create a program to recognize student or teacher achievement
- Internships and job shadows
- Start writing, reading or leadership programs

Community Groups/Organizations

- Workshops on study skills, goal setting and test taking
- Establish environmental awareness or recycling classes

Dentistry/Orthodontics

- Speak at Health Fair
- Give goody bags for Dental Health Month

Education/Educational Services

- Establish after school program
- Set up an information booth at Open House
- Offer study skills or SAT prep classes

Engineering

- Internships or career workshops
- Judge science fairs and other projects

Financial Institutions

- Start school bank, banking days or school savings program
- Provide tax and financial seminars to parents and teachers
- Support field trips (i.e. Capital or Federal Reserve)

Florists

- Donate flowers for school events
- Give Teacher of the Month a bouquet of flowers

Partnership Activities by Business Category *(continued)*

Government

- Police, fire and public safety presentations
- Speak at PTA meetings
- Serve on school council

Grocery

- Providing use of facilities for meetings and performances
- Cake decorating with students for events (i.e. Mother's Day)

Healthcare/Health & Wellness

- Develop programs that promote healthy habits
- Speak at Career Fair on related topics (i.e. Cancer Awareness)
- Donate medical or first aid supplies

Insurance

- Provide banking and money management kit
- Workshops for parents on related topics (i.e. money management)

Jeweler

- Be a guest speaker in a science class
- Implement a jewelry design contest

Landscaping

- Help clean up the school grounds
- Provide hanging baskets for school entrances
- Workshops on how to maintain plants and flowers

Martial Arts

- Demonstrations for Physical Education classes
- Create an anti-bullying program
- Self-defense classes for parents and teachers

Non-Profit

- Start an international pen pal program
- Job shadows and apprenticeships

Printing/Graphic Services

- Print copies of school newsletters
- Drawing, printing or graphics demos for students
- Provide event signage

Public Safety

- Establish youth development programs
- Safety presentations
- Provide crossing guards for school events (i.e. Open House)

Real Estate

- Workshops for parents on related topics (i.e. mortgages)
- Guest speaker in Math classes

Recreation

- Participate in environmental programs
- Establish a Fine Arts program (i.e. Young Rembrandts)
- Volunteer with leadership and team building programs

Restaurant

- Create a "Partner in Education" discount for students and staff
- Send mascot to read to students or participate in school events
- Host or cater a faculty breakfast or School Spirit Night

Partnership Activities by Business Category *(continued)*

Retail

- Present to Business classes
- Host field trips by topics (i.e. merchandising)

Retirement Home/Assisted Living

- Establish pen pal program
- Help decorate holiday cards with students

Salon & Spa Services

- Help with Prom fashion shows and expos
- Hair painting for festivals and other events

Technology

- Educational workshops on computers and new technology
- Presentation for Robotics teams and computer clubs
- Host field trips and job shadows

Theater/Performing Arts

- Start a drama club or a Performing Arts program
- Help produce school plays or provide playwrighting and workshops
- Host field trips to performances and venues

What Can Our School Do for Us?

Partnerships should be a two-way street. Your school may ask you if there is anything that they can do for you. This is a hard question for some businesses/organizations to answer. To help, we have provided a list of things that some schools do for their partners.

- Offer student artwork for them to display in their offices
- Have students submit entries/ art work to design the business's holiday card
- Have student leaders volunteer and serve customers at various business events
- Provide students to perform for their clients/customers
- Allow your partners to hold workshops/seminars at the school
- Provide complimentary tickets to school events ("Partner Passes")
- Allow your partners to speak at PTA meetings, booster club gatherings, or foundation meetings
- Invite them to eat lunch at your school or cater lunch at their facility
- Allow them to use the school facility
- Place partner logos on school t-shirts or list partners on school paper products
- Invite them to an annual Partners in Education appreciation/recommitment luncheon
- Participate in company events
- Give them small gifts, goodies, holiday cards
- Provide special recognition for partner employees (i.e. birthdays, special events, etc.)
- Assist partners with community service projects
- Offer opportunities to send fliers home with students
- Allow your partners to display materials in information centers at your school (i.e. front office, teacher lounge)
- Allow your partners to set up a "partner showcase" at school events (i.e. Meet & Greet, Sneak a Peak, Open House, Fall Festivals) to distribute business information and promotional items


Best Practices

Preparing for your new partnership

- Identify and understand the difference between business and education as institutions and the variances in cultures.
- Understand that the **true purpose** of your involvement should be to help **enhance the education of students**.
- At the initial meeting **talk openly** about what you can and cannot do for the school, enlighten them on what they can do for you.
- Determine if **partnership goals are appropriate and achievable**. Every partnership activity should have **clear objectives** and **on-going evaluation**.
- Make sure the partnership **represents the interests of all** involved.
- Add your school partner and the CCPIE staff to your “**safe sender list**” to avoid losing their messages to spam filters.

Establishing a relationship

- Get to know your school partner. Build rapport with teachers and administrators. **Get involved**. Visit your school and attend events.
- Invite school staff to participate in company or organization activities.
- Create a display highlighting partnership events for an employee or member gathering area to **generate awareness and increase participation**.
- Compose a story describing your involvement with your partner school for your employee newsletter.
- Display the Partners in Education decal at your company or organization’s location.
- Make sure your company has the **interest and enthusiastic commitment** to build a long-term relationship.



“I have found that the most successful partnerships are with businesses who are consistent with their involvement with the school.”

Best Practices (*continued*)

Communication

- **Employ a system of exchanging information** between the school and the community partner to ensure direct communications. Designate one person to be your partner liaison.
- **Stay in touch!** Direct and consistent communication is a big contributor to successful partnerships.
- Schedule **regular meeting dates** with your school partner (i.e. the second Tuesday of every month, 8 a.m. at the school). Meet several times a year at integral periods during the school year.

Obstacles to Avoid

- Placing too much emphasis on advertising and marketing products and services
- Over committing your resources
- Using the program as a public relations stunt or method of scrutinizing the school
- Not utilizing the time, resources and expertise that the Cobb Chamber offers, demonstrated by:
 - Acting as an “unofficial” partner
 - Not returning phone calls from the CCED or its committee/volunteers
 - Not notifying the Cobb Chamber when there are problems with partnerships
- Not maintaining consistent contact with your partner school throughout the year
- Not viewing partnerships as a two-way street
- Not notifying the Cobb Chamber of changes to your contact information

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can participate in the CCPIE program?

Businesses (small and large), civic groups, government agencies, churches, colleges and university organizations, non-profit agencies

Does a business/organization have to be located in Cobb County to participate in the CCPIE program?

No, as long as the business is partnering with a Cobb County or Marietta City School they can participate in the CCPIE program.

Is a Cobb Chamber membership needed to participate in CCPIE?

No, but the Cobb Chamber welcomes all interested businesses and community organizations.

Is there a minimum financial investment for partners?

There is **no cost** associated with establishing a partnership. Financial and in-kind donations are made at the discretion of the community partner.

What are the requirements for becoming an official Partner in Education (PIE) through the Cobb Chamber?

Every PIE should **complete a PIE Partnership Plan** with their partner school and commit to a **minimum of one activity per quarter to their partner school**. Quarterly interaction helps build a relationship and contribute to sustainability, thus enhancing the quality of partnership. Partnership activities range from volunteering to donating goods and services (see pages 11-15 for ideas).

What are the requirements for becoming an official Partner at Large (PAL) through the Cobb Chamber?

Every PAL should **complete a PAL Partnership Plan** for the appropriate school system(s) and submit it to the Cobb Chamber. **Every PAL commits to partnering with three or more schools within a specific school system.**

Can community partners join more than one school in partnership?

The Cobb Chamber strongly encourages new **PIE** to only partner with one school at a time. This allows a community partner the opportunity to establish a strong relationship with one school before acquiring a partnership with an additional school. It also prevents time and resources from being spread too thinly among several schools, sacrificing the quality of all partnerships. However, **community partners may partner with up to three schools within one calendar year** as long as they meet the one activity per quarter requirement. Exceptions will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

The PAL category is designed for businesses that desire to work with three or more schools within a school system but do not meet the one activity per quarter requirement. The purpose of such a partnership is to allow a business to offer its resources for the benefit of Cobb County education systems in its entirety or multiple schools within one or both of the school systems. (Please refer to pages 4 and 8 for details)

Is there a bad time of year to enter into a partnership?

No; in fact, partnerships that begin late in the school year get the advantage of a “test drive” before planning their activities for the next year.

How long do partnerships last?

Most partnerships continue for as long as the relationship is beneficial and effective for all involved. The Cobb Chamber encourages community partners and schools to reevaluate their partnerships at the beginning of every school year.

Frequently Asked Questions (*continued*)

Do we have to renew our partnerships? How often?

In the spring of each school year, each school will be contacted by a member of the Cobb Chamber Partner in Education committee and receive a list of their current Partners in Education. The schools will be asked to contact their Partners in Education to verify that the business/organization wants to continue the partnership for the next school year and to confirm who the PIE representative for that business is. Changes will be made to the Partners in Education database as reported by the schools. Notification of any changes will be sent to the school and the business/organization. Each school will also receive a verification form for their PIE coordinator's and principal's contact information to complete.

Recommitments prevent partnerships from becoming inactive with time, provide opportunities to strengthen relationships and create "an out" for either party if there is no longer a desire to continue the relationship. Recommitments provide the school and the Cobb Chamber of Commerce with the most up-to-date partner contact information and offer insight into which schools are in the greatest need of additional partners.

What are the benefits to completing the Partnership Plan?

Partners who complete the Partnership Plans are considered "official" Cobb Chamber Partners in Education or Partners at Large, and receive added recognition and exposure from the Cobb Chamber for their involvement in the program. For partners that are reluctant to complete the plan, we encourage them to read the "Importance of Formalizing Partnerships" section of the handbook (page 10).

I have a small business; how can I help?

Many small businesses have successful partnerships with schools. The key is to know your limitations going into the relationship and committing to attainable activities that support student achievement. Partnership activities need to help students reach higher levels of achievement whether you provide volunteer time or financial (cash or in-kind) support. Many activities don't require an inordinate amount of time or, if time intensive, don't require many people. For example, programs requiring little time on the part of the community partner include: donating prizes to school incentive programs, participating in Career Day, judging. Other activities may require time, but don't necessarily require many people to which one volunteer is welcome. Many schools have an active mentoring program. While the program asks for a commitment of one hour per week for the school year, there are no requirements on the number of employees participating. Some partners engage in job shadows at their work sites. Employees who might not otherwise be able to leave work to volunteer are often able to host students at their office and provide them with a unique exposure to the business world.

How does a PIE choose a partner school?

The CCPIE staff will assist in identifying the school that is the best for your organization. Community partners are generally paired with a school that is located near the place of business or convenient to the members of an organization. The objective of partnership matching is meeting the interests, needs and resources of the organization and the school. If a business/organization has a specific school in mind, the match can be explored.

Should we track our donations and time spent with our partner schools?

Yes. It is important to keep record of your monetary donations, scholarships, value of donated goods and services, number volunteers and volunteer hours to your partner schools over the course of the year. We will ask for a copy of your contributions each May. Your responses will be used to generate a report detailing the actual value of the Partners in Education program to the Cobb County and Marietta City Boards of Education. Your information is *confidential* and will only be factored into totals for this report.

What should I do if my partner school isn't responsive?

Don't lose faith in your partnership if your partner school does not return your phone call or e-mail immediately or does not honor every request you may ask of them. Please be patient and keep in mind that principals and partner liaisons are frequently away from their desks. In the meantime, reevaluate the partnership to make sure that it represents the best interest of all involved. Examine the frequency and scope of your requests to determine whether they coincide with the commitments that were originally agreed upon in your Partnership Plan.

Frequently Asked Questions (*continued*)

What should I do if my partnership becomes stagnant?

First try to determine the source of the problem and schedule an in-person meeting with your school to share your concerns and discuss solutions. If outside counsel is needed, the CCPIE staff will help you evaluate the situation and recommend a course of action, in light of the circumstances.

What should I do if my partnership cannot be revitalized and needs to be dropped?

Notify the CCPIE staff and your partner school.

What should I do if the principal or partner liaison is no longer at the school?

Contact the CCPIE staff for assistance facilitating a meeting between the new parties.

The CCED's Role in the Partners Program

- To match schools and organizations in partnership
- To recruit new partners
- To provide information to prospective partners
- To serve as the liaison between community partners and schools
- To oversee a systematic process for establishing partnerships
- To prepare materials for establishing partnerships
- To educate new community partners and lay the foundation for successful partnerships
- To provide training sessions for community partners and schools
- To prepare Declarations of Partnership for new partners
- To recognize outstanding partners
- To recognize partners in our publications
- To recognize all partners before the Cobb County and Marietta City Boards of Education
- To promote the CCPIE program and recruit new community partners at Chamber events and out in the community

When to Contact the CCED

- To receive a Partners in Education Program handbook
- To report changes in your contact information
- To receive school contact information
- To share your success stories and pictures for possible publication
- To inquire about school needs

- To report changes in your partnership
- To discuss concerns or challenges

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