

DEVELOPING WORK AND EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS: A CASE STUDY

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Work and education programs are essential to a comprehensive training and human resource development effort. These programs are based on organizational development theory, and the training, management development and employee development needs of a company.

The program described in this article features some of the major ingredients of a work and education partnership. In this program, educators are given work experiences in the private sector that are meaningful both to themselves and the companies for which they work. This serves as a basis for common understandings that may be translated into specific education programs in school systems, with the continued cooperation of the participating industries.

Project ACCESS

Called Project ACCESS, this program was initiated in March of 1977 by the Raytheon Data Systems Co. (RDS) in Norwood, Mass. with the help of the Boston Uni-

versity School of Education, and approximately 12 school systems in the geographic region surrounding RDS. RDS was concerned about meeting its current and continuing needs for human resources in the data communications industry through the end of the twentieth century, and about the lack of economic education in the public schools. This author was concerned with developing school-based programs that would help youth successfully make the transition from school to work. These related interests came together in collaboration for the development of a work and education program.

This program was designed to achieve several objectives. First, it provided work experience for teachers to help them understand how a free enterprise economy actually works. Second, it led to the development of programs in schools that will help youth make a better choice regarding the kinds of careers that interest them, and the opportunities available within these fields. Third, it served as the base for the establishment of specific programs in schools to pre-

pare youth better for the transition from school to work.

Just as important, perhaps, is the fact that these programs lead to a better understanding and appreciation by educators and students regarding the contributions made by the private sector.

As a beginning, RDS employed eight teachers during the summer of 1977 to work in its plant in various capacities. In the placement process, an attempt was made to match each teacher's competencies and areas of interest to jobs in the company that could use those particular skills and talents. The teachers were each employed for eight weeks, and represented five different school systems. They represented also different teaching assignments including counselors, and teachers of English, industrial arts, physical education, distributive education, social studies, and science.

In addition to their work assignments, weekly seminars were held each Friday for these teachers, new employees in the RDS management trainee program, and selected managers from industrial

relations and training and development. At each seminar one of the functional vice presidents or managers made a presentation about his/her area of responsibility, so that a good representation of all the different facets of the company's operation would be provided. The project was evaluated at the end of the summer, revealing that the teachers were satisfied with the experience and, indeed, no longer held a negative attitude toward the free enterprise sector of our economy.

As a follow-up to the summer employment experience, each teacher participated in a graduate course entitled "School-Business-Community Cooperation," offered by the Boston University School of Education, held at the RDS training and development center. The purpose of this course was to explore further the relationships that should exist between work and education, and provide a base for the development of specific school-based programs.

The greatest frustration experienced by the teachers after the summer was their relative impotence in establishing and implementing programs within their school systems. They had no difficulty in modifying their courses, and adjusting the way in which they provided instruction to their students. They were experiencing problems, however, in attempting to impact upon their school systems in a broader fashion. Clearly, a more comprehensive approach was needed.

Building Commitment

The first steps were encouraging. The receptivity on the part of the teachers, and the interest on the part of RDS was strong. In order to impact upon the school systems and build true collaborative and partnership programs between work and education, however, top management of the school systems must be involved, as well as top management from industry. Consequently, the superintendents of schools from 15 school systems surrounding RDS were invited to a luncheon in

January, 1978 to define subsequent stages of this effort. The progress of the project to date was described, and an invitation was distributed to each of the school systems for further participation. The goals of the program were expressed as follows:

1. To establish and maintain permanent, ongoing relationships between Raytheon Data Systems (RDS), the School of Education at Boston University, and school systems in the communities surrounding RDS.

2. To examine the continuing appropriate roles of business, industry, and school personnel regarding the preparation of youth for work.

3. To train a cadre of educational and industrial personnel from each school system and from RDS in designing and implementing programs that will foster positive school-business-community cooperation.

4. To design specific high-school level training programs that may be implemented in schools and at RDS.

5. To continue to provide summer employment for teachers in industry that will broaden their experiential base and help them prepare youth for work.

6. To use these school systems as the pool for high school students who will work for RDS as part-time employees in a cooperative education program.

7. To use this program to identify alumni of these school systems to participate in college intern and management trainee programs.

8. To provide teachers with the background, skills, and commitment to integrate components of career education in their classrooms.

The proposed activity for the spring of 1978 was a symposium series that would bring together representatives from both work and education to discuss the relationships that should exist between schools and future employers; identify specific programs that might be developed; and deter-

mine how these programs might be designed and implemented. For a school system to be eligible for participation, it was responsible for sending a team of at least five educators representing one junior high school teacher; one senior high school teacher; one counselor; one special education teacher; and one administrator.

This team would participate in the symposium series and develop specific proposals for programs that might be instituted between their school systems and RDS (or other industries in the community). A number of representatives from both the work and education sector were invited to speak at the symposium series, including major corporate officers from four "Fortune 500" companies.

The Format

Ten sessions were scheduled for this series, subdivided into three major categories. The first four sessions included speakers from both work and education, who presented the broad framework and rationale for this partnership. The next three sessions were used to invite individuals, again from work and education, to talk about specific programs being implemented either in their school systems or in their corporations. The final three sessions were established for the development of specific proposals from the school systems to RDS, identifying programs they would like to implement in their schools.

During each session, speakers were asked to provide a formal presentation for one-half hour, followed by a 15-minute question-and-answer period from the floor. The large group was then divided into small groups, each representing a particular school system. Each small group had a team leader identified by the superintendent. Each group also had a "facilitator" to help examine the implications of that speaker's presentation for each individual school system. Each small group also became the writing team to design and develop specific proposals for their school systems.

As the sessions progressed,

anxiety developed within the groups regarding specific proposals to be written. What topics would be appropriate? What format should the proposals use? How much funding was available? What were the potential funding sources? How do educators, who have not had experience in developing proposals, begin to approach this task? To assist in this process, a facilitator's training session and a set of guidelines were developed for participants.

It was interesting to note two general impressions that developed from the proposal-writing activity. The initial response from the teachers was *"Tell me how much money I will receive and I will tell you what I would like to do with it."* The second comment, also from the teachers, was *"I would like to do this but I tried it several years ago and was rejected. I'm sure my school system won't allow me to implement this kind of a program, so why should I bother to write a proposal?"*

Regarding the first question, RDS refused to place a fixed dollar amount or direct allocation to a school system. Rather, each school system was encouraged to design the program that would best meet its needs. RDS would then help assess these proposals, and either provide direct support for their implementation, or work with them to find support and funding from other agencies and institutions. In response to the second question, RDS offered its services, if needed, to help obtain the necessary commitment from each school system for the implementation of its proposal.

Several interesting outcomes developed from this proposal-writing activity. First, of the approximately 40 proposals that were written by these 12 school systems, more than 30 did *not* ask for any direct cash outlays. There were requests for field trips, internships, cooperative work stations, guest speakers, media services, facilities, equipment, and the like. This was a very encouraging sign that the school systems were thinking in terms of *programs*, and the resources of the private sector that

might most appropriately be applied to those programs.

Regarding the second question of *commitment*, a similar and equally positive outcome was found. Educators were encouraged to ask their superintendents for help if additional time was needed for the development of their proposals. If they wanted in-service workshops next year, they were encouraged to ask their superintendents to provide substitute teachers so they might be released from classroom assignments. Every one of these requests were honored. Superintendents, despite budgetary crises facing public education, saw and valued this project to the extent that they were willing to support their staff in both the design and implementation of work and education programs.

Some Initial Outcomes

Although the long-term benefits of this program will not be seen for several years, there are some indices of success that have already been achieved.

- Thirty-four educators have received private-sector work experience.

- Twelve school systems are currently working in close cooperation with a major high-technology company for the development of work and education programs.

- Of the 120 educators who initially registered for the symposium series, approximately 100 maintained an attendance for more than 80 per cent of the sessions.

- Forty specific proposals have been developed for potential implementation in their respective school systems.

- Significant interest has been expressed by the Education, Labor, and Commerce Departments of government at both the state and national levels.

- More than 1,000 students have received additional exposure to the private sector through planned tours, guest speakers, career days, etc.

- A number of high school students are currently being placed in cooperative education programs as an outgrowth of this project.

- A specific computer science program is being developed be-

tween RDS and four of these school systems.

Summer Internship Program

In keeping with its commitment to the project, RDS provided 24 summer-employment positions for educators from 10 of the 12 school systems that participated in the Spring symposium series. A particular attempt was made to develop jobs that would meet three goals. The first of these objectives was the design of an employment experience that would be personally meaningful to each educator, related in some manner to his/her area of expertise and interest. The second criterion was that the work performed must be both meaningful and productive for the company. The third criterion was that the work performed by the teacher must in some way relate to the proposal developed by that teacher and his/her team in the symposium.

This arrangement called for careful job development, and the creative use of personnel. In each instance, however, a satisfactory arrangement was made. Following are several examples of these assignments.

1. A high school business teacher worked in the Industrial Relations Department providing a wide range of clerical, specialized secretarial, and project responsibilities.

2. An elementary school reading specialist developed a special "glossary of technical terms" to be used by the company in orienting its nontechnical employees. This teacher will also use the technical glossary for teaching reading in her school system.

3. An elementary school principal worked in production control in manufacturing, applying his educational management experience to that area.

4. Several guidance counselors researched educational opportunities in the surrounding area, so that they might be used by RDS in counseling and career development for their own employees.

In addition to the work experience, weekly seminars were held to provide the teachers with a broad-based exposure to the plant.

Various functional vice presidents and managers met with the teachers and described the nature of their particular duties. An external evaluation of the summer program concluded that:

There is no question that Project Access proved to be an exciting experiment in which an industry-based teacher education in-service program was developed. It proved to be flexible and meet the needs of its participants. But more importantly, the teacher participants in this program gained a considerable amount both professionally and personally. . . . This project proved that two major institutions — industry and education, in our society can successfully work together.

Next Steps

As a result of the relationships established, specific computer-science programs are being developed cooperatively between RDS and four of these school systems. RDS is consigning its equipment to the schools, and helping to train the

teachers and design the program. The schools will offer a senior-level course in application-level programming, with an industry-based cooperative education component.

The results will provide students with a better understanding and knowledge of the data communications field, as well as salable skills as a potential source of applications level programmers for RDS. Everyone — the schools, the company, the students, and the taxpayer — will benefit from the results.

Project ACCESS is a beginning. It is one initial thrust toward a comprehensive work and education model that will help alleviate the structural unemployment problems in our society, build bridges across the gaps between work and education, and form part of a total human resources development model.

It is a long-term investment by the public and private sector alike. The outcomes, however, hold far greater promise than the con-

tinuation of short-term curative, knee-jerk responses to the economic demands and human potential of our society.

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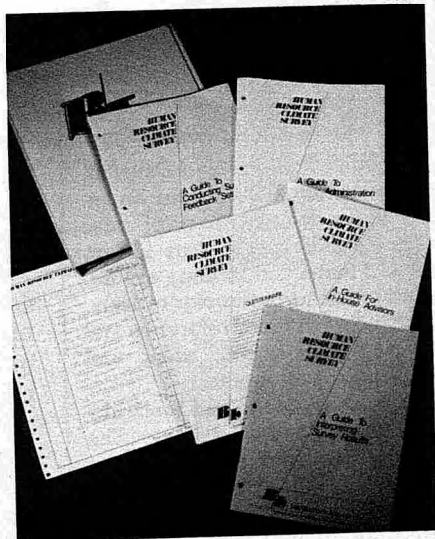
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