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Introduction

The quality of a community is interlinked with the strength of its public schools. While the most important “stakeholders” in our schools are the students, Fayette County businesses and organizations have a vested interest in the success of schools as well. Coming from a desire to enhance the quality of education and to be good citizens, businesses have made charitable contributions to Fayette County schools for years. Focusing on the link between strong schools, student achievement and a thriving economy, schools and businesses are becoming even more involved and innovative in their efforts to work in concert.

This handbook was created as a guide for effectively establishing and maintaining school-community partnerships. The Fayette Chamber encourages community partners and schools to learn from the success of others by reviewing, replicating and enhancing the models provided in this handbook. A sampling of partnership activities and best practices have been 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.

Key Contacts:

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Partners in Education (PIE)

Partners in Education (PIE) is a joint program of the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce and the Fayette County Board of Education.

PIE Mission

To establish and support partnerships that will utilize community resources to enrich and extend the education opportunities for Fayette County students.

PIE Goals

- Continue to strengthen Fayette County's commitment to education
- Foster relationships between businesses and community groups and our educational system
- Stimulate academic achievement and life-long learning

PIE Partnerships

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.

Two Levels of Participation –

School-Level Partner in Education

A School-level Partner in Education (PIE) is a business or an organization that partners with one specific 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 year as long as they meet the one activity per quarter requirement with each school.

District Level Partner in Education

A District Level Partner in Education is a business or an organization that desires to form partnerships with three or more schools 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 the Fayette County education system in its entirety, or multiple schools in the district.

Partners in Education Program Benefits

To the school

- Assistance in meeting school needs beyond available system resources
- Collaboration from the community to help accomplish the goals of annual school improvement plans
- Business expertise and technical support to provide 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 system, 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 public relations efforts
- Improved education of future employees and customers

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 regarding 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 and stakeholders
- Strengthened school systems
- Educated citizenry
- Well-prepared work force
- Improved economic development because lower dropout rates are tied to lower crime rates,
- Less unemployment and fewer welfare recipients
- Ability to draw new businesses to the community

How School Level PIE Partnerships are Formed

A business or organization contacts the Chamber or Fayette County Board of Education sharing a desire to be involved with the Fayette County school system. The PIE Coordinator interviews the prospective partner over the phone, offering a list of school contacts that may prove to be a good fit. The business then contacts the school directly. Alternately, a school may call the PIE Coordinator asking for businesses that are looking for new school partners. Once a telephone or email contact has been made:

1. Schedule an in-person meeting with your prospective partner.
 - Community partners are encouraged to contact schools with whom they would like to form a relationship.
2. Prior to the meeting, send your prospective partner your school “wish list.”
 - Involve the faculty and staff in formulating the wish list.
 - Try to send the list two weeks before the meeting to allow your prospective partner time to review and discuss it with decision-makers and program participants.
3. Prepare a school packet for your prospective partner and bring it to the meeting.
 - The packet may be similar to a visitor’s packet. Contents may include a school calendar, what makes your school unique, school mission, school improvement plan, curriculum, special programs, clubs and organizations, school demographics, class sizes, faculty list, etc.
 - Make it easy on yourself by assembling several packets at once and replenishing when supply is low.
4. Prepare an agenda so that the meeting runs efficiently and productively. Example:
 - Welcome and introductions
 - Exchange of contact information/Identification of one school contact
 - Scheduling of partner meeting dates for the school year
 - Discussion of school and partner needs
 - Completion of Partnership Plan
 - Thank you
5. Conduct your meeting.
 - Bring a blank copy of the Partnership Plan to the meeting to complete with your partner.
 - **Remember that every partner needs to commit to *at least one* partnership activity per quarter.**
6. Make a copy of the Partnership Plan for your partner and fax a copy to the PIE Coordinator. (Fax: 770-460-7236 or through internal mail.)
 - Your agreement will be reviewed and you will receive approval from the PIE Coordinator, along with a framed certificate to present to your Partner at an official ceremony.
7. Plan a PIE Ceremony

- A Ceremony is scheduled for partners to formalize and publicize partnerships. Ceremonies should be well-planned and occur during a time mutually agreed upon by the community partner and the school. See section notes below on how to plan a Ceremony-it's not necessary to serve pie at the PIE ceremony, but it is important to honor your new relationship!

How to Plan a School Level PIE Ceremony

1. Partner and school should meet and plan together a time, date and program (Ceremonies have been held during student assemblies and PTA meetings or in the principal's office). **The school is responsible for inviting their community partners to the ceremony.**
2. School administration should conduct the Ceremony. Remember, the purpose of a Ceremony is for the school to let their community partner(s) know that they are wanted, needed and appreciated. It is also an opportunity for the community partner to become acquainted with the school faculty, students, and parents.
3. Present the framed certificate to the Community Partner during the ceremony, and forward a photo and press release to the Chamber and Melinda Berry-Dreisbach so they can send it to local media for publication. You can also include these photos in your school newsletter and or website. Tip: Some schools hold an annual appreciation/new PIE breakfast or luncheon and can meet with all of their Partners at the same time.

How District Level Partnerships are Formed

1. A business or organization contacts the Chamber or FCBOE sharing a desire to be involved with the Fayette County school system. The FCBOE PIE Coordinator supplies the business/organization with a Partnership Plan to be completed by the business/organization (see Partnership Plan on page 17). The business/organization provides in writing what they intend to offer in the activity section of the Partnership Plan. A prospective District Level Partner fills out the same Partnership Plan as the School Level PIE denoting "District Level Partner" above the activity section of the form and in the school authorizing signature space.
2. The business/organization makes a copy of the Partnership Plan for its records; then faxes a copy to the PIE Coordinator at 770-460-7236.
3. The PIE Coordinator will approve or deny the business' proposal to become a District Level Partner in Education.
4. The PIE Coordinator will notify the business/organization informing them of the decision. Upon approval only will the PIE Coordinator send an e-mail to the schools informing them of the new District Level Partner in Education.
5. The businesses/organizations are responsible for contacting schools to initiate partnership activities. The FCBOE is only responsible for e-mailing schools approval of a new District Level Partner, thus has no part in marketing or further contacting schools for a District Level Partner, Marketing materials must be approved by the Superintendent as well as each school principal.

6. Upon approval of the partnership, the new District Level PIE will receive a Declaration of Partnership certificate with their confirmation letter that can be displayed at their office. Due to the nature of District Level PIE, ceremonies are generally not held. Ceremonies held for District Level Partners are at the sole discretion of the partner school(s).

Things to Keep in Mind When Completing a Partnership Plan

A PIE is 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.”

District Level Partners fill out the same Partnership Plan as School Level Partners, denoting “District Level Partner” above the activity section of the form.

Incomplete Partnership Plans will not be processed. To ensure that your plan is complete on the first turn-in, please check the following:

- ✓ Every section is filled out
- ✓ The plan is signed by all authorizing parties.

When a copy of the plan is submitted to the PIE Coordinator, partners and schools will receive confirmation notice.

Partnership Recommitments

Partners will be asked to reevaluate their partnerships at the end of **two school years** and to complete a new Partnership Plan as a renewal.

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, school system, and the Fayette Chamber 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 have well-informed partners who are educated on the program: what constitutes a partnership, consideration points for new partners, best practices, obstacles to avoid, examples of partnerships activities, etc.

To reduce the work and time required by the school to familiarize prospective and new partners to the program, train new partners, process paperwork, maintain records, etc.

To allow your new partner to participate in a Ceremony to publicize your partnership. New partners really appreciate the opportunity to be recognized and introduced to the school faculty, students and parents.

To receive a Certificate of Partnership to publicly display at the school to inform the school staff, students, parents, visitors and community-at-large of your partnership.
To present your partner with a Certificate of Partnership to display at their place of work to inform staff, clients, members, and the community-at-large of their commitment to your school.

To allow your partner to be recognized as new or active participants in the PIE Program through Fayette Chamber publications, events, etc.

To nominate your school's outstanding partners for the distinguished Outstanding Partners in Education Awards that are presented to the top partners in Fayette County at the annual Partners in Education Awards Breakfast.

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. **Every School Level PIE is required to commit to a minimum of one activity per quarter.** The following list provides a sampling of the partnership activities that exist in our schools.

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
- 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

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
- 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
- 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
- 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; stand alone or through the Fayette County Education Foundation
- 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
- Provide school employee discounts for your goods and/or services

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
- Provide translators for parent/teacher meetings
- Serve as a school or science fair judge
- Assist with school newsletter, yearbook or other publications
- Work in classrooms, front office, media center, and lunchroom or on bus duty
- 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

Best Practices

Preparing for new community partners

- Add all community partners to your “safe sender list” to avoid losing their messages to spam filters. Add your community partners to school and PTSA newsletter mailing lists to keep them informed of what is going on at the school.
- Determine if partnership goals are appropriate and achievable. Every partnership activity should have clear objectives and on-going evaluation.
- Match partners to areas of interest within the school.
- Make sure the partnership represents the interests of all involved.
- Send e-mails to your school staff, making them aware of who your community partners are and what they are doing in and for the school.
- Invite partners to a faculty meeting for a brief introduction to your staff.

Establishing a relationship

- Create a climate conducive to community involvement, making it easy for your partner to feel at home in your school. **Involve your partners.** Invite them to school events and school council meetings.
 - Community partners should be viewed as an integral part of the school and included in the school’s program planning.
 - Make your partners feel welcome; prior to an event, prepare a welcome sign so that your partners know that you are expecting them and are excited about their visit.
 - Never overlook an opportunity to recognize and publicize your partnerships.
- **Thank your partners often.** Appreciation from students and teachers is a big hit with partners!
- **Make sure the partnership is reciprocal.** Brainstorm ways to thank your partners (see page 14 for ideas).
- Schools should focus on utilizing the human resources of the business: time, talents and expertise, not just their monetary contributions. Be willing to accept whatever partners can offer and understand that it may not always be monetary.
- Schools should be sensitive about overburdening community partners with requests that would jeopardize the relationship. This is the number one cause of dissatisfaction and could ultimately lead to a loss of that partnership. To avoid this pitfall, spend time discussing and developing your Partnership Plan for the year and commit to it.

Communication

- Employ a system of exchanging information between the school and the community partner to ensure direct communications. If not the principal, a school representative should be designated as the one point of contact (school partner liaison) and the community partner should be informed of who that person is and how to reach him/her. All communication and correspondence to the community partner should stem from this one source. A school partner liaison may be an administrator, counselor, PTA leader, or teacher. Design a communication strategy and discuss it with your community partners.
- Schedule **regular meeting dates** with your partners (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. Planning group meetings with all of your community partners allow needs and solutions to be discussed as a team.
- **Stay in touch!** Direct and consistent communication is a big contributor to successful partnerships.
 - Develop a group message board as a way to communicate with all your community partners simultaneously.
 - Send e-mail reminders to your community partners about upcoming events.
 - Make a PIE space on your website

“Communicate! Keep your Partners ‘plugged in’ to what is happening at the school.”

Obstacles to Avoid

- Placing too much emphasis on the monetary and material aspects of the partnership
- Using the program as a public relations vehicle only
- Not seeing the value that community partners bring to the schools
- Not initiating conversations and or scheduling meetings with new partners, or maintaining consistent contact throughout the year
- Not identifying areas where partners could assist and failing to communicate those needs in a timely manner to your community partners
- Not viewing partnerships as a two-way street
- Not letting your partners know how much they are wanted needed and appreciated

- Not notifying the PIE Coordinator of changes to your partner's roster (i.e. when businesses close, when changes in management or contacts occur, when partners drop or become inactive at the school, etc.)

Ways to Welcome and Say “Thank You” to Your Partners

- Nominate them for outstanding partner recognition
- Thank them in person, by phone, by letter, or by e-mail
- Write a “Welcome Back” letter to each partner at the beginning of the school year
- Recognize them at faculty and PTA meetings and at school assemblies or events
- Display their names in PTO newsletters, on school websites, on school bulletin boards, banners, marquees, and murals
- Provide them with a special certificate to display at their business and display one at your school
- If a partner’s contribution directly impacts a class or program, encourage the students who were effected to write letters of appreciation
- Offer student artwork for them to display in their offices
- Provide students to perform for their clients/customers or office gatherings
- Invite them to participate in special school activities and recognize their attendance
- Provide complimentary tickets to school events (“Partner Passes”)
- Invite them to eat lunch at your school or cater lunch at their facility
- Assign them a class or homeroom that they can visit
- Place partner logos on school t-shirts or list partners on school lunch menus
- Invite them to an annual Partners in Education appreciation/recommitment luncheon
- Ask them to serve on the school council
- 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
- Be tuned into publicity regarding your partners and offer them congratulations
- Do business with your partners whenever feasible
- Allow your partners to set up a “partner showcase” at school events to distribute business information and promotional items
- Add your partners on the school mailing list to inform them of school news and events

- Provide a positive school climate and keep them informed on issues facing the education system
- Spotlight a “Partner of the Month” on your website

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can participate in the PIE program?

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

Is a Fayette Chamber membership needed to participate in PIE?

No, but the Fayette Chamber welcomes all interested businesses and community organizations. Only Chamber members are eligible for the Chamber sponsored Outstanding PIE awards.

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)?

Every School Level PIE should complete a 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 contributes to sustainability, thus enhancing the quality of partnership. Partnership activities range from volunteering to donating goods and services (see pages 10-11 for ideas).

What are the requirements for becoming an official District Level PIE?

Every District Level PIE should complete a Partnership Plan for the appropriate school system(s) and submit it to the PIE Coordinator.

Can community partners join more than one school in partnership?

We strongly encourage new PIE to partner with only 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.

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. We encourage community partners and schools to reevaluate their partnerships at the end of two school years.

Do we have to renew our partnerships? How often?

Partners will be asked to complete a Partnership Plan at the end of two school years as a renewal.

Frequently Asked Questions Cont'd

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, the FCBOE, and the Fayette Chamber with the most up-to-date partner contact information and offer insight into which schools are in the greatest need of additional partners. Partners who complete the Recommitment Partnership Plans are considered “official Fayette County Partners in Education” and receive added recognition and exposure for their involvement in the program.

How can small businesses participate in the program?

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.

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

Don't lose faith in your partnership if your partner 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 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.

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 partner to share your concerns and discuss solutions. If outside counsel is needed, your PIE Chamber Direct link 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 PIE Coordinator and your partner.

What should I do if my partner won't complete the Recommitment Partnership Plan?

We hope the schools and partners recommit to one another every two years. If partners are reluctant to complete the plan, we encourage you to read the “Importance of

Formalizing Partnerships” section of the handbook (page 8) and use the talking points to motivate them to recommitment. If your partner(s) do not want to complete the plan for a reason other than time constraints, then we respect their decision and are sorry that they cannot be recognized through the PIE Program.

Partnership Commitment Form [\(Click her to Print this Form\)](#)

The Fayette County Partners in Education Program is coordinated by the PIE Steering Committee and the Fayette County Board of Education. Our mission is to establish and support partnerships that utilize community resources to enrich and extend the education opportunities for Fayette County students.

Community Partner Contact Information

Business/Organization Name:

Contact Name: _____ **Title:**

Email: _____ **Fax:**

Mailing Address:

Phone: _____ **Cell:**

Website Address:

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

This plan signifies a commitment to the partnership for a period of **two school years**. 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 or delete items as needed.

This plan represents partnership activities for the following school:

Recommitment or New Partnership (circle one)

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 individuals:

_____ Name	School
Date	

_____ Name	Partner
Date	

_____ Name	FCBOE	Date
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Please submit a copy of the completed form to PIE Coordinator Ruth West: Fax: 770-460-7236