

*Corporations are now demanding
accountability from their educational partners. Here's
what they are doing and how to get involved.*

Schooled *for* Success

LAST YEAR, WHEN CHEVRON USA CREATED 30 NEW JOBS AT ONE OF ITS REFINERIES, about 1,000 people applied—and 75 percent of them flunked the basic education screening test. “That was a rather rude wake-up call,” says Willis J. Price, Chevron’s president, “a graphic example of today’s education crisis.”

As companies like Chevron realize the extent of the gap between what students are learning and what they need to know to function as employees, they’re launching a sweeping reassessment of two decades of corporate aid to public schools and refocusing their efforts. It’s not that companies haven’t been involved. Today there are some 120,000 partnerships between businesses and schools. Corporations give scholarships and

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Illustrations by Warren Gebert*

S c h o o l e d f o r S u c c e s s

other incentives, donate equipment, bring busloads of kids to visit plants and offices and send employees to schools to talk about careers or to serve as mentors. But while many of these partnerships have been good for individual children and schools, they have not produced measurable gains in the overall performance of American students on achievement tests—nor have they noticeably improved the quality of the “product” entering the work force.

One of the most recent assessments, last summer’s “What Work Requires of Schools,” a pamphlet produced by the [Labor] Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), took business to task for not effectively communicating its needs to educators. Whoever is at fault, both kids and businesses are paying the price. Companies are shelling out more than \$20 billion a year on remedial training for a work force that lacks the most basic skills—and that investment applies only to applicants who were skilled enough to get hired.

Former labor secretary William Brock, who chaired SCANS, recently noted that 700,000 young people drop out of U.S. schools each year. “If we were killing 700,000 buffalo a year, we’d have a national revolution,” he says. “When are we going to say, ‘We’ve had enough. There are specific things that need to be done?’”

Many companies are now coming to feel that the old high-visibility/low-impact partnerships have simply supported the status quo. On the national level, business leaders seeking to “break the mold,” in President Bush’s phrase, have gathered in powerful, change-oriented coalitions. In 1990 the Business Roundtable, an organization of chief executives of big corporations, named a CEO in each state to stir public interest and lobby for reform. Another group of CEOs, led by Paul O’Neill of Alcoa, has pledged to raise \$150 million for President Bush’s America 2000 plan, which aims to establish

seven research-and-development centers and, from them, 535 experimental schools to serve as models for a new type of American school. One of the main goals is to have students leave the fourth, eighth and twelfth grades “competent” in mathematics, science, history and geography.

There’s debate within the business community about whether the political pressure of America 2000 will force corporate sponsors to choose between their own school partnerships and the President’s plan. And in Washington, D.C., some lawmakers are questioning the propriety of a

develop plans to double the number of their students who go on to college through enrichment programs. The RJR Nabisco Foundation is laying out \$30 million over three years to award to radically innovative institutions it identifies as Next Century Schools. Meanwhile, Chevron is giving \$1.4 million over three years to implement a sophisticated new method of educating at-risk primary-school kids that includes getting parents and educators to help design the new program.

Many fine established programs thrive, of course. American Express’s highly successful Academy of Finance and Academy of

Travel and Tourism, two-year schools that teach career-related skills as well as academic subjects, are now established in 15 city high schools. But the future may lie with projects such as the Public School Academy, which the General Mills Foundation established in 1988 in inner-city Minneapolis. To test the idea that student achievement levels can be improved without spending additional tax dollars, the academy, which operates within the Bethune elementary school, replaced specialty teachers (art, music and phys. ed.) with more teachers in the academic subjects. The

academy is already producing dramatic results, with fewer kids scoring in the bottom 40 percent for reading and math on a standard achievement test.

Reatha Clark King, executive director of the foundation, reports that the job has proved to be very demanding for the academy’s 13 teachers, who must do more planning than they’re accustomed to and fill in for the missing specialty teachers. But the taxing jobs have their rewards. “They’re identified as stars by their colleagues—and that’s good,” observes King.

The General Mills experiment is part of the drive for “site-based management,” one of four major emphases of the new corporate-education push. Also hot: a focus on early intervention in the kinder-



private entity’s doing research for the public schools when the federal government already spends \$200 million annually for that purpose. But there’s virtually no disagreement that schools need to change the way they teach. To succeed today, students need to be trained to think for themselves, learn quickly, work well with others and adapt to technology. With these needs in mind, companies are revising their educational strategies. No longer content to donate a few computers or write a check, they want to see improvement in the dropout rate and gains in test scores. And they’re tying their aid to specific goals.

As part of its College Bound scholarship program, General Electric gives grants to inner-city high schools that

garten to fifth-grade years, the use of technology as a tool for restructuring, and sophisticated coalition-building at state and community levels. Here are some effective models of each—plus ways to get involved if your company is still on the sidelines.

Technological Innovation

Autodesk Creates Change

EMPLOYEES OF AUTODESK, INC., MAKERS of multimedia software, are mostly creative young computer types who want to make a difference. Because the \$238 million Sausalito, Calif.-based company sells software to schools, the talk at their occasional brown-bag lunches often gets around to education. Many employees have delivered monologues about their own painful school experiences. But it actually was an older computer type, former educational-sales manager Joe Oakey, who found a way to turn those feelings into action. In 1990 Autodesk set up a foundation with Oakey, then near 70, at its head. Not long after, the foundation joined in a partnership with the Tamalpais Union High School District to create the Marin School for Integrated Studies (MSIS), an experimental high-tech program in San Anselmo. The company assisted teachers and administrators in designing the program and contributed \$100,000 worth of equipment—20 computers, plus software.

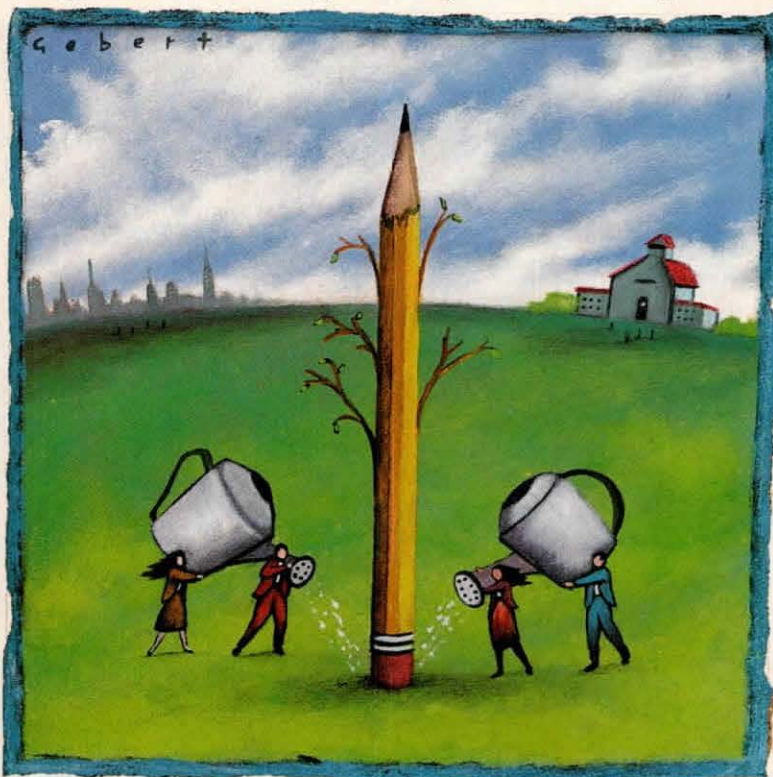
Like many hardware and software companies eager to establish a presence in schools, Autodesk has given its share of software (\$2.25 million worth to date) to school districts around the country. But the MSIS project goes one step further, addressing what educators see as a missed opportunity in computer education: integrating the technology into regular classroom work instead of teaching it as a separate subject, so its full power is exploited and it can become an effective

lever for changing the way teachers teach and schools are organized.

"The aim of MSIS is to show how all disciplines are integrated in the real world," says Elizabeth Share, vice president of the Autodesk Foundation. Typical was a project last year in which teams of students studied the problems of drought in Marin County from a variety of angles. In English class they read *Dune*, the science-fiction novel that discusses the philosophical ramifications of a society's lack of water. In biology they studied drought-resistant plants and used

lecture style but more often serve as coaches or collaborators.

The MSIS experiment is imbued with a wholly different attitude toward learning—and toward authority. Early in the program one parent expressed disappointment after her child went to a teacher with a question about computing and was told, "Let's go look it up in the manual and figure it out." Says Share, "What the parent didn't understand is that teachers in the information age can't know everything anymore. They have to show students how to get information themselves."



It's too soon to weigh the results of the project on student performance, but the school principal, Barbara Granicher, says that many MSIS students now seem to be "more outspoken problem solvers." The Autodesk Foundation is also beginning partnerships with two other school districts in the area. Last year its innovative approach earned MSIS an award of \$700,000 from the RJR Nabisco Foundation as a Next Century School.

Autodesk's 638 California employees seem to be delighted to be part of the exciting experiment. Toward the end of the 1990-91 school year many came to MSIS for a brown-bag lunch with students and

teachers, where they swapped stories and ideas about schooling and career paths.

Site-Based Management

GTE Tutors a Turnaround

LIKE OTHER TELECOMMUNICATIONS companies, GTE has school partnerships in many of the communities where its employees are concentrated. So when the Business Roundtable challenged the Stamford, Conn.-based company to make a more sustained impact in just one city, GTE chose Hillsborough County, Fla., which has the 12th-largest school district in the country and is home to 7,000 GTE employees. In 1989 Nancy Dinkel, coordi-

graphics software to diagram the plants' DNA on computers. One team, equipped with tools donated by Smith & Hawken, grew these plants in a garden they designed on a computer with Autodesk software. Other teams measured water usage in the area and surveyed residents' attitudes toward water conservation.

Now in its second year, MSIS employs five full-time and two part-time teachers. Their 75 students, who are part of the 700-student body at Sir Francis Drake High, spend about half their day working on MSIS projects. Freshmen, sophomores and juniors (there are no MSIS seniors yet) work in the two classrooms in staggered periods. Share says teachers sometimes deliver instruction in the old

nator of health services and cost containment for GTE, was tapped as the manager of GTE's educational initiative. After investigating, she discovered that the county's new school district superintendent, Walter Sickles, had already decided to embark on a site-based-management program. Encouraging site-based programs also happened to be a goal of the Business Roundtable. GTE agreed to help.

Businesses in Miami, Chicago and other cities are supporting this reform, which can radically change the way schools are run. Under site-based management, teachers and principals have more power to make their own rules, devise their own curricula and plan their own budgets.

Typically these programs work more with teachers and administrators than with individual students to bring about reform. Sickles and Dinkel, having decided that the biggest need at first was to train educators in management skills, first devised a program whereby GTE facilitators trained teachers, principals and administrators in such skills as how to set goals, work in groups, achieve consensus and resolve conflict. They, in turn, trained 300 teachers. Then Dinkel had each GTE business unit in the Hillsborough area

appoint a coordinator to match employees with requests from teachers. At first the teachers asked for traditional kinds of volunteer support—career advice, tutors. Then Dinkel, who has a PhD in educational research, started prodding employees to think about managerial and administrative skills they might offer. Volunteers described these skills on forms that were circulated throughout the school district, and soon GTE employees were helping faculty and staff manage their records more efficiently on computers and set up systems for tracking textbooks. A total of about 150 employees volunteered in 39 pilot schools last year—some during the workday but many on their own time—for a total of 1,500 hours.

One GTE executive worked with the chamber of commerce to help the district develop a better way to report its finances. They produced a brochure to inform the community of inequities in the state funding formula, which allots some \$16 million less to Hillsborough County than the average of the five largest districts in the state.

GTE is spending about \$800,000 over three years for the program, which in 1990 received an award as the Distinguished Business-Education Partnership of the Year from the National Alliance of Business, an organization dedicated to school reform.

need to increase the pool of science and math talent in the city, particularly among women and minorities. PRIS²M, a council of local business organizations and corporations, has been trying for over a decade to do just that. As part of the council and program, Eastman Kodak has matched its scientists with kids to act as mentors, sent them into schools to talk about their work and brought kids to their plants to "shadow" the scientists' activities.

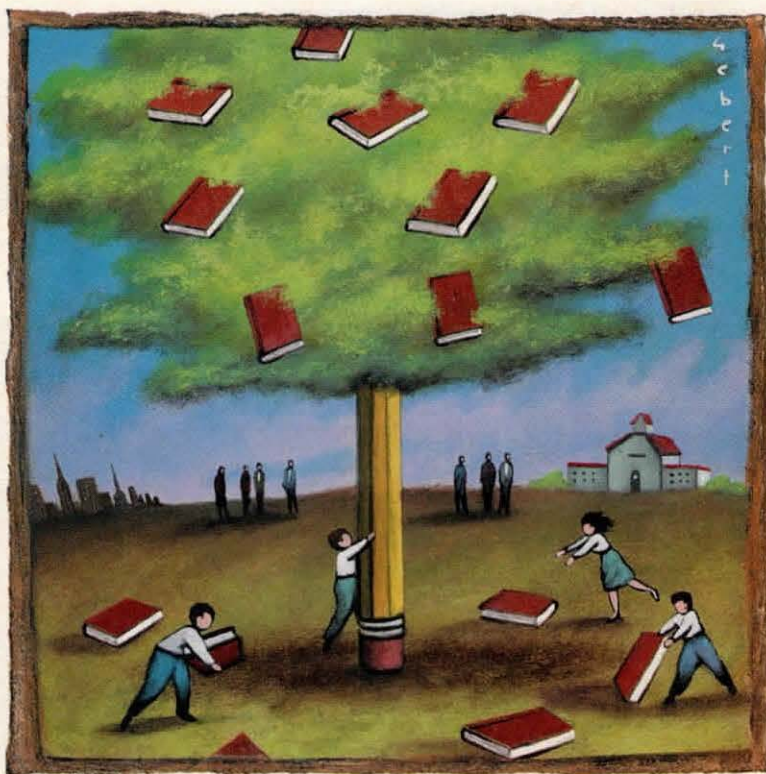
While continuing to work with high school students in PRIS²M, Kodak decided in 1989 to go all out to turn kids on to science in the lower grades. The company has budgeted \$1 million for the first year of the Kodak 21st Century Learning Challenge, a 10-year partnership with the Rochester school district.

"Frankly, the PRIS²M program is a 'skimming' activity," says Dorothy Luebke, director of educational initiatives at Kodak. "We were working with a self-selected group of high school students who were already interested in science. We realized that we were never going to increase the talent pool unless we reached down lower."

Shirley Orrego, the project coordinator for Learning Challenge, which is now in its third

year, says, "We don't have enough science taught at the elementary school level." Orrego, who has a master's degree in education as well as a certificate in medical technology, explains that many teachers in the lower grades are not comfortable teaching science. "Our people can bring knowledge to the schools," she says. "The teachers can show us how to relate that knowledge to the curriculum and manage the classroom."

In visits to classrooms, Kodak scientists help children learn how to observe, to make hypotheses, to record results and reach conclusions—and to have fun while doing it. Last year about 750 volunteers went into elementary schools twice a week during work hours. In one school Kodak volun-



Early Intervention

Kodak Develops Scientists

EASTMAN KODAK DECIDED THAT WAITING until high school to get kids fired up about math and science was too late. Even the best U.S. students rank last in algebraic skills among accomplished students in 13 countries taking comparable tests. America's ninth graders rank sixth in science proficiency, behind students from such economically underdeveloped countries as Hungary and Poland.

Science programs in schools aren't new for Kodak, but the early emphasis is. Businesses in Rochester, N.Y., a manufacturing center of 230,000, long ago realized the



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teers got students to jump up and down and then measure how long it took for their heartbeats to return to normal.

How will Kodak know if it is getting results? The kids' progress will be measured midway in their school careers with assessment tests, says Orrego, "so we can know whether we're headed in the right direction." But the real test will not come until later, in high school, when they take standard science and math exams also given in other countries. Kodak's goal is to ensure that Rochester students will eventually equal—or better—the average scores of students in the five top-scoring industrial nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which includes Japan and Canada.

Building Coalitions

The Travelers Ensures Action

THE TRAVELERS, THE Hartford-based insurer, was one of the first companies in America to realize that doing something about the city's schools was not only good PR but also a business issue: It was vital to ensuring a supply of qualified employees. Starting about 20 years ago, Travelers' support was focused on Bulkely High, one of the three high schools in Hartford, a city in which 60 percent of the students come from welfare homes. The company organized work-study programs, funded computer purchasing and helped supply tutors and mentors for students.

Like Kodak, Travelers began by working with high school kids and then realized that it needed to start in the lower grades. Nancy Van Doren, director of national and community affairs for Travelers, recalls, "Our tutors were coming to us and saying, 'God, these kids are in fifth grade and they don't even know the multiplication tables yet.'"

Travelers also realized it couldn't do the job alone. Van Doren began looking

for allies. In 1986 she called a meeting of school-district officials and educators at the University of Hartford that resulted in the Hartford Early Learning Partnership, a pilot program in two kindergartens, funded by Travelers.

It soon became clear that kids coming into kindergarten were lagging developmentally by as much as two years, in large measure because of health and nutritional needs. Travelers helped fund a major study in Hartford that galvanized the community around a plan to raise health standards for children.



But by 1986 Travelers had begun to feel that, in Van Doren's words, most of its school aid consisted of "add-on programs that tweaked the edges of the problem and served only a few kids." How could the company have a more systematic impact? How could it ensure that programs would be carried on even when money from Travelers ran out?

The answer was a program, based on something called the Comer Model, that regularly brings together—on the school premises—a management team of 9 or 10 people, usually the principals, teachers, school staff and parent representatives. Named for its developer, James P. Comer, director of the School Development Program at Yale University's Child Study Cen-

ter, the model has been adopted by some 16 urban school districts across the country.

Comer's program in New Haven trains teams to determine what is best for the children. The teams have the power to intervene in academic matters and school procedures that affect the children's behavior and ability to learn. They are supported by a team of mental-health professionals and a team of parents.

The program was introduced in 1969 in two New Haven schools, where the students scored lowest on achievement tests among children in 33 elementary schools in the city. By 1980 academic performance at these two schools had exceeded the national average.

In 1990, after months of deliberation, local school board and city officials agreed to participate in the Comer Model. Travelers and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving pledged close to a half-million dollars over three years to bring Comer trainers into six Hartford elementary schools. By committing her funds, Van Doren also got the school district to sign an agreement that will ultimately extend the model to all 25 elementary schools in Hartford.

Along with its efforts in Hartford, Travelers is active in a Business

Roundtable-initiated statewide effort to create public support for educational reforms. And to keep the Hartford Board of Education up to date on school reform, Van Doren flew all nine members to Washington, D.C., for a three-day cram course at the Institute for Educational Leadership last year.

All this has involved negotiations of the utmost delicacy, at which Van Doren is now a practiced hand. "You have to treat each other as equal players," she says. "We have helped our school system with the changes they are responsible for bringing about. We know what our role is; they know what their role is." ■

HOWARD MUSON is writing a book about the role of technology in education.

Taking Action

What You Can Do

“OUR PEOPLE GET SO EXCITED ABOUT having a project they can really develop at a school,” says Nancy Dinkel of GTE. “There’s such a sense of accomplishment.” But what do you do if your company hasn’t signed on? Here are some thoughts on starting a program for your company—or volunteering yourself.

- INQUIRE ABOUT EXISTING PROGRAMS. If you want to volunteer and your company does not have a program, find out if other groups in your community do. The obvious places to begin are the school district office itself and local organizations, such as the chamber of commerce. Many larger cities have business alliances that can suggest where you or your company might fit in. Some examples: Leadership for Quality Education in Chicago, the Boston Private Industry Council, the Greater Milwaukee Educational Trust.
- GET TOP MANAGEMENT’S ATTENTION. To interest management in starting a partnership, point out the business as well as

the public-relations advantages. Some of the biggest partnerships promise long-range gains to the corporation, such as saving on a business’s costly remedial programs or a larger skilled-labor pool.

- PLAN A STRATEGY. First, find out how you might help by talking with school officials and people in the community. Second, determine the problem that the company should address and what it can contribute.
- DESIGN A PROGRAM AND DEVELOP AN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE TO MANAGE IT. The Conference Board, a business-research group, puts out an excellent guide to developing kindergarten through 12th-grade partnerships, *Corporate Strategies for Improving Public Education*.
- GET DEPARTMENTS TO TAKE ON RESPONSIBILITY. As at Kodak and GTE, programs often work best when each department is responsible for specific tasks and the scheduling of its own volunteers. This not only assures continuity in the program but builds teamwork and pride as well.
- EVALUATE, EVALUATE, EVALUATE. If you want to make sure you are doing some good, especially if your CEO is out telling

everybody about your wonderful program, think about how to measure results. Set up yardsticks and make sure school officials know you want periodic reports on how company resources are being used. For guidance you can consult two books co-edited by Susan D. Otterbourg, president of Delman Educational Communications: *Partnerships in Education: Measuring Their Success* and *How to Monitor and Evaluate Partnerships in Education*. (Order from InfoMedia, Inc., P.O. Box 210, Ellenston, FL 34222-0210. The cost: \$30.95 per book; two-volume set, \$55; check payable to InfoMedia, Inc. Price includes shipping.)

- ABOVE ALL, BE TACTFUL. There are obvious sensitivities when dealing with teachers and school officials. GTE’s Dinkel says that in frank conversations with friends she has made in the schools, they sometimes admit, “We resent it when businesses indicate they think we aren’t able to manage or have done a poor job.” Educators have their own professional standards and pride—and considerably less control over their environment than most people who work for corporations. —H.M.

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For More Information

The following are excellent resources:

- THE BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE, 200 Park Ave., New York, NY 10166; 212-682-6370. This group of CEOs has developed several how-to guides for companies that want to start educational programs.
- THE CONFERENCE BOARD, 845 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022; 212-759-0900. This group does research and runs conferences on educational issues for the business community.
- THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF BUSINESS, Center for Excellence in Education, 1201 New York Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20005; 202-289-2900. The center tracks and promotes programs for school reform. NAB also has offices in Los Angeles, Dallas, Chicago, Boston, Atlanta and New Brunswick, N.J.
- THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PARTNERS IN EDUCATION, INC., 209 Madison St., Suite 401, Alexandria, VA 22314; 703-836-4880. NAPE is an information clearinghouse for business-school partnerships and individual volunteers. It has 21 affiliated state organizations and provides a wide range of services, including publications, conferences and training. —H.M.