



Business & Education Partnerships- Summary

Business & Education Partnerships aims to engage workplaces with schools to improve learning opportunities for inner city students. The initiative is delivered jointly by the Winnipeg School Division and the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council (WPRC).

Background

In 2009, the WPRC met with some inner-city principals to ask what they could do to support schools and students. One suggestion was that educators would benefit from additional volunteers and resources to enhance student experiences in their schools. Many schools in Winnipeg benefit from volunteers and relationships with local business, but these resources are more challenging to obtain in low-income neighbourhoods. After this meeting, the WPRC decided to work with various sectors to be more purposeful in creating these beneficial relationships and resources for *all* students. In 2011, WPRC formally launched Business & Education Partnerships with the Winnipeg School Division.

Overview

Students, schools, parents, partners, and our community will reap the lasting benefits from having an on-going initiative which connects students to the world of work, demonstrates the reward of a continued education, and enhances their academic experiences.

The WPRC acts as a conduit to connect the business community with select schools in the Winnipeg School Division. A business and school partnership can be formed and developed in many ways, but most importantly it is a mutual relationship that is built between the partners. The WPRC will provide support at the onset of the partnership by: recruiting potential business partners and gaining an understanding of how they define community involvement, working with the Winnipeg School Division to identify schools and learn about their needs, facilitating matches, addressing questions/concerns, and handling organizational matters.

Business involvement with a school can take a variety of forms. Our primary focus is to engage a pool of volunteers from a workplace who can share their time and talents to support school activities and events. Workplaces may also choose to provide in-kind resources and financial support. Typical school activities that business volunteers enrich include: family-school events, literacy projects, nutrition programs, vocational/career development, extra-curricular activities, and more! The time commitment for partnership activities can be adjusted to fit the business and school's schedules and will vary depending on the activities they plan together.

Goals

Our goal for the 2011/2012 school year is to engage at least 8 workplaces. Business & Education Partnerships enrich the lives of students socially, physically and academically. The partnerships also provide businesses with the opportunity to positively impact the future workforce, improve the engagement and team morale of their current employees, and demonstrate the workplace's commitment to community. Please consider joining this initiative and current partners like Lafarge Canada, The North West Company, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, Manitoba Public Insurance, Tribal Wi-Chi-Way-Win Capital Corporation, and Healthy Child Manitoba.

CASE STUDY: LAFARGE CANADA INC. & NORQUAY SCHOOL

During the 2006-2007 school year, the leadership team at Lafarge Canada Inc. had a simple plan: they wanted to commit staff time and resources towards making a positive difference in the lives of inner city students. Lafarge called Winnipeg School Division and asked to be partnered with a school in the inner city, and it was suggested they contact the principal at Norquay School.

Knowing they wanted to partner with a school in a long-term capacity, Lafarge began building a relationship in what they would call a small partnership with Norquay school: Lafarge provided Norquay with an initial sponsorship of \$10,000, offered their staff to volunteer weekly during work hours for the Families and Schools Together nutrition program, and provided students with an all expenses paid school trip to the Fort Whyte Centre.

Over time, the relationship with the school grew to the point where Lafarge Canada is considered more than just a business partner. Each year the school creates a wish list including dates of events that require volunteer resources, equipment items that need purchasing, or repairs that require attention. Each year Lafarge goes further than the school wish list and meets all of these diverse needs. Lafarge employees are a valued community partner with whom the school calls on to assist with any situation that arises. Whether it is connecting the school to one of Lafarge's business contacts, or assisting a Norquay school family when they lost their house to a fire, Lafarge is at the table. The company constantly looks for innovative ways in which they can support the school

Lafarge Canada now includes community involvement in their workplace policies and procedures. Lafarge staff use a portion of their work hours to volunteer, but also contribute their own time and resources. There are approximately 25 staff who regularly take part in activities including: celebrating the school's Earth Day activities, administering art contests with prizes, volunteering with the annual community feast and pow wow, track and field days, health fair, as well as the breakfast with Santa where they bring gifts for all the students and staff and serve the feast. Lafarge employees participate with school activities that are already established, therefore assisting in empowering the school to execute their activities successfully.

Lafarge does not seek out recognition for their efforts nor do they rely on a thank you to drive their involvement with the school. However, Norquay school students and staff ensure that Lafarge is recognized for their efforts by their handmade thank you cards and a staff/student made thank you video. The motivation for Lafarge Canada's involvement is simple: they want to make a difference in their community and be a part of a positive learning experience for students and teachers at Norquay School.