

Stakeholder Group Summit Outcomes and Plans

Business Stakeholder Group

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Pre-Summit Stakeholder Group Assumption Targets and Proposed Activities

Will address all assumptions, 1–8

- Gather and inform the community on what credentials and skills are needed from area graduates at all levels
- Determine how the business community can assist the other ten stakeholder groups
- Determine what the business community can do to assist with early childhood education initiatives
- Determine what the business community can do to encourage volunteering and mentoring, both in and out of schools

Summit Report in Brief

Who attended?

Attendees included approximately 40 business persons representing many business sectors.

What the stakeholder group considered.

We learned we have a need to define, as a business community, what we expect education institutions to produce for our workforce, and we spent time specifically defining it.

What will be our success?

We will be successful when we can hire people with the skills needed by businesses.

Discussion

Prior to the summit, the Business Stakeholder Group formed a focus for its work, and considered five questions:

1. What would we like graduates to look like?
2. What can the business community do to help the other stakeholder groups?
3. What can the business community do to help early childhood efforts?
4. How can we encourage volunteering, mentoring, and spending time in the schools?
5. How can we encourage the sharing of business-involvement with education best practices among local businesses?

In support of the summit assumptions, the group identified workplace- and life-readiness characteristics of high school, associate degree, and college four-year degree graduates. Beyond the need to see graduates with the proper on-grade-level academic skills in place, the group listed the interpersonal and behavioral skills needed for success.

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The business group considered its pervasive nature within the community; i.e., typical businesspersons are members of many other stakeholder groups, as parents, extracurricular volunteers, and members of churches and community organizations. All determine points of support. As such, the group discussed how it might engage and support the initiatives of other stakeholder groups. It developed examples and is intent on working with the other groups to enhance their effectiveness.

The group felt it could, as employers, work to bring attention to early childhood programs and needs. Examples include: helping business owners to understand the importance of, and to support, employee participation in parent-teacher conferences; assembling orientation programs for employees on early childhood issues; and assisting businesses in providing employees with community resource information.

"This initiative is more important than the economy because if we succeed in this . . . we'll have the people who are educated enough to get good jobs, good paying jobs."
– Gerald Villarrial, Lawyer
Zimmerman Law Firm

As businesses are currently engaged in the schools in numerous ways, such as on technical advisory committees, providing student mentoring and job shadowing, and donating goods and services, the group considered how it could support and encourage the expansion of engagement with the schools. Consideration was given to multiplying the impact of its current work by bringing in more businesses to participate in the schools.

The business group identified many outstanding programs that exist in the region and discussed ways to uncover additional pockets of excellence and increase awareness and replication of them.

Taking input on its work prior to the summit, the business group considered assumptions 2 through 5 and how it might support the work of the other stakeholder groups. Specific ideas included assisting with orientation programs, participation in the TSTC Skills USA program, and leading an effort to connect and coordinate community programs and services. Focusing intently on assumptions 4 and 5, the group considered efforts to locate resources to extend educational services, address dropout prevention, and market community programs and services for youth.

First-Year Action Items and Assumption Targets

- Develop "best practices" of business needs as they relate to the type of employees and students they are likely to employ. This information would be shared with all stakeholder partners and community partners including students.
- Develop an employee educational awareness packet for businesses and their employees that inform them of community programs and services that exist in the community. The programs should outline organizations that employees can be involved with and that need support.
- Support mentoring programs for employees and business leaders that assist students and educational institutions.
- Initiate a process to research collaborative daycare support for working parents and business owners.

Long-Range Proposals

- Develop a business-shared daycare collaboration that allows employees to reduce their daycare costs to provide them more flexibility and freedom to support school activities.
- Develop training programs for principals and business leaders that raise and support education awareness.
- Develop business and student readiness classes.

Other Ideas Being Considered

- Network and partner with other stakeholder groups.