



MAKING EDUCATION WORK FOR MANUKAU

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## Connecting Schools and Business in Manukau

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In February 2002, COMET released the results of a 'stock-take report' prepared by the University of Auckland about the connections between businesses and schools in Manukau<sup>1</sup>. The most common "link" was in the form of sponsorship.

While sponsorships may be valuable for both parties, a sponsorship does not usually focus on effective learning outcomes for students, or meet the needs for skills in the labour market.

A key question arising from the research was:

***How can schools and businesses establish working relationships that contribute to better education outcomes in Manukau?***

That research was undertaken more than five years ago. Has anything changed? A recent focus group with business representatives suggested that the labour market shortage has required businesses to think harder about how to connect into their future labour market. There has been a growing awareness in the business community of social responsibility. And there is a growing interest from schools in connecting to their community and

businesses, perhaps through programmes such as Principal For A Day or the Young Enterprise Scheme (see boxes below). However, a review of the original stock-take could be a useful tool to support building purposeful connections between schools and businesses.

### **Business social investment**

Business social investment has been the subject of recent analysis and research commissioned by the Tindall Foundation from Auckland University of Technology (AUT).<sup>2</sup> The report provides a rationale for business social investment in the community and highlights that there are two kinds of businesses, and each of these approach social investment differently.

Where businesses are managed separately on behalf of shareholders, social investment is generally justified by its *long-term shareholder value*. Called "separated" businesses, they are usually larger businesses, perhaps owned and managed overseas.

Where businesses are both owned and managed together (eg. through a family business), there is a greater freedom to determine what should be done with the company's resources. The motivating

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<sup>1</sup> University of Auckland [?] [City of Manukau Education Trust] (2002). *Business and Schools in Manukau*. Manukau, COMET. [www.comet.org.nz](http://www.comet.org.nz) ??

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<sup>2</sup> Institute of Public Policy. (2006). *Business Social Investment Activity in New Zealand*. Auckland: Auckland University of Technology,

factor for investment is more complex, but there is a strong sense of 'giving back' to one's community.

There are many examples of the way businesses choose to engage with their community, and especially schools. Some local businesses have defined particular themes for their engagement. For example, a business may wish to make its contribution to community through literacy and learning. However, finding suitable projects is often an *ad hoc* process. The key challenge highlighted by the AUT report is creating a facilitation mechanism so that businesses can more effectively contribute to social wellbeing.

### Pathways: Facilitating the link between school and work

A number of Manukau initiatives over recent years have focused on the transition of young people from school to work. The *Pathways to Employment* project (see separate box) has focused on the need to pathway young people into trades and other areas of labour market need. The **Gateway Programme**, managed by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), offers senior secondary students structured workplace learning across a number of businesses. At least 13 secondary schools in Manukau are part of the Gateway Programme. The programme allows schools to employ a co-ordinator. According to a TEC evaluation of Gateway Pilots,<sup>3</sup> this resource has enhanced the connections between schools and businesses. Evidence for this includes the enlarged scope of schools' employer databases; and more positive working relationships with Industry Training Organisations (ITOs), Modern Apprenticeship co-ordinators and industry assessors. From an employer perspective, participation in this programme gave them exposure to possible new employees, extra help for particular projects, goodwill and publicity, and youth input into their business. It also

gave them personal satisfaction to be doing something that 'contributed' to a young person's future.

The report noted that a key element in the success of the Gateway Programme pilots was the role of the co-ordinator. While not all links between schools and businesses need to be focused on senior students and immediate post-school pathways, the Gateway Programme's connection to qualifications for young people requires a dedicated co-ordinating resource. The presence of this resource can account for the programme's successful acceptance by schools. However, the co-ordination model generally adopted in Manukau is that co-ordinators are each employed by individual schools, and consequently the task of relationship development with the business community is not shared. Each school co-ordinator must individually develop relationships with businesses, and compete with other schools to place students in workplaces.

The **Young Enterprise Scheme** also works with secondary students to teach enterprise skills. This programme is generally targeted in schools to students who are involved in business studies programmes, which are options. The **Student Enterprise Learning Link (SELL)** programme – formerly the Lion Nathan Business Experience – provides a seminar approach to enterprise skills development. Both of these programmes are available through the Enterprise NZ Trust.

### Other partnerships

While student achievement is clearly an economic development priority in Manukau, effective partnerships do not always have to be focused directly on the students themselves, or on the transition between school and work. The Committee for Auckland has taken a 'good governance' approach in the development of its **Building Better Schools through Business Partnerships** programme.

<sup>3</sup> Tertiary Education Commission. (2003). *Evaluation of the Gateway Pilot. Final Report*. Wellington: Tertiary Education Commission. [??]

A new project being developed in Manukau in secondary schools (**Manukau Educating for Enterprise Project**) will apply a business mentor programme model to teacher professional development. Joint school-based action projects will be designed to build the school's capacity to connect the whole curriculum to business and enterprise in the community.

### Creating relationships

The importance of creating relationships is evident in much research about school-business connections. Relationships can be driven by close geographic proximity. For example, Auckland International Airport Ltd has a "good neighbour" engagement with some schools in the Mangere area.

Other relationships in Manukau have been the result of brokered connections, initiated by the **COMET Principal For A Day** event (see separate box), which matches school principals and community and business leaders for a day; or the **COMET Executive For A Day** programme, which places small groups of school leaders inside a business for day. These activities are sponsored by Manukau City Council, and are designed to facilitate connections and relationships.

Other partnership development programmes can sometimes arise through the activities of Lions or Rotary Clubs, or other community organisations.

Relationships, however they are established, can result in contributions to school careers evenings, marketing plans, and student mentoring programmes, outdoor education visits, financial advice, human resources expertise, sponsorship of motivational speakers, and other innovative ideas for sharing cultural and professional expertise. While these activities can contribute to student achievement, the important starting point for all of these is the establishment of a

relationship based on understanding and mutual respect.

### A strategy for connection

While there are many projects operating on many different levels that involve businesses and schools, a key element for sustainable, effective and focused action to meet business, community, and education sector goals will be to connect these initiatives so that *together* they achieved desired outcomes.

What should the strategy contain?

### Key Questions

- ***How important do you think school-business connections are to a Manukau Education Strategy?***
- ***What programmes are you aware of that connect schools and businesses? (Brainstorm the different levels and kinds of relationships possible.)***
- ***What community structures could be developed to encourage business connections with schools?***

### School Business Partnerships

Partnerships give value to both business and schools. A very good example is the partnership between Manurewa West Primary School and New Zealand Post. Originally established through a facilitation process, the partnership has now been in place for a number of years. Projects have included the preparation of art works for the South Auckland Mail Centre (SAMC), and the upskilling of mail centre staff through attendance at student-led courses. In addition, the SAMC supports literacy in the school by offering book vouchers as achievement incentives to be disbursed at a special assembly held at the school each term.

Principal Dave Wallis describes one of the curriculum outcomes as the development of values education through art. Students learn to discuss and value diversity, and explore through the art activity different heritages. These heritages are reflected in both the school and the workplace.

Fundamental to a good partnership, according to Dave Wallis and the Manager of the South Auckland Mail Centre, Colin Pritchard, is the shared identification of interests and goals at the outset. Goals are reviewed through regular meetings and ongoing communication. The “steering” mechanism for the partnership is shared planning which takes place each year, and project milestones are celebrated annually.

### Young Enterprise Scheme

This programme is focused on building enterprise skills among senior students, usually from the business studies departments of secondary schools. Students have a chance to work as a team to establish a business, develop a start-up plan, trade and wind it up at the end of the year. In the process they learn about financial management, leadership, marketing and sales skills, communications, human resources and production.

Each team is coached and mentored by a local business person who volunteers their time. Students invest money, produce real products, pay taxes, and keep the profits.

The scheme is managed in Manukau through Enterprising Manukau, on behalf of Enterprise NZ Trust.

### **COMET Principal For A Day (PFAD)**

Over the last five years, business and community leaders have been offered an opportunity to spend a day with a Principal in a Manukau City school during August. The purpose of the day is to build understanding about the leadership challenges facing schools; and to provide a catalyst for engagement between a business and a school. The match happens on one day, and the day concludes with a Civic Reception hosted by the Mayor. The reception provides an opportunity to share experiences and learnings. This programme has received extensive media coverage and support from the business community, resulting in the development of the COMET Executive For A Day (EFAD) programme.

### **COMET Executive For A Day (EFAD)**

EFAD invites selected small groups of school principals into a business to look at particular aspects of business functioning, including discussion of labour market skill needs. Also included have been explorations of human resources management practices, business planning, marketing, etc., as well as site visits that help principals to see particular aspects of the business.

### **Manukau Educating for Enterprise Project**

Funded by New Zealand Trade and Enterprise from the Enterprise Culture and Skills Activities (ECSA) Fund, this project begins in 2007, is to be led by COMET, and will employ a co-ordinator to work with a cluster of six schools in Counties-Manukau. The project will apply a developmental process for incorporating enterprise development skills in the curriculum in schools in Counties-Manukau by working alongside teachers. It is planned to team teachers with mentors from the business community, who will also be offered participation in professional development.

## **Building Better Schools through Business Partnerships Programme**

This programme is an initiative of participants on the 2005 Future Auckland Leaders programme run by the **Committee for Auckland**, a future-focused 'whole of city region' leadership organisation.

The project vision is to establish a model for successful relationships between schools – including their communities – and businesses, offering something of value to both. The main focus of the programme is on capacity-building at school governance and managerial level.

*Research tells us that greater capacity in the school principal's ability to manage and lead, and in the board of trustees to govern is a key means of achieving improved education outcomes.*

To date, three pilot schools are participating in the programme: Rongomai Primary (Westpac); Penrose High School (Deloitte); and Papakura High School (McConnell International, and Telecom NZ). A memorandum of understanding, lasting for three years, has been signed by each business and school involved in a partnership. The pilot is being accompanied by an evaluation.

Over time, the offer to participate in such a programme may be extended to more schools.