

Phil Jacobs Talking Points

1a. What has been the experience in Georgia of business involvement with regard to the leadership crisis?

- It goes without saying that it is the obligation of businesses to become in efforts to improve education and specifically educational leadership.
- Recently, the governor invited the business community to be part of a state task force to look at the need for better-prepared superintendents and principals in our schools. The task force included educators from K-12 and higher education as well as representatives from the business community.
- The discussion about program content, approach to professional development, appropriate leadership for the new Institute often reflected the real differences between business and education. The business representatives felt that education background/credentials was not necessary to lead the Institute; educators used that as a starting point.
- In the past years, more local needs also commanded out attention. Through a local advocacy group, the Atlanta Committee for Public Education, the need for principal development in Atlanta Public Schools was identified and BellSouth agreed to work with the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education to develop and implement a program for current principals in the system.
- Way back in 1986 BellSouth developed a program of leadership development of principals from across the South. We used the exact model that we used for our own executives: an outdoor program that focused on basic leadership skills where the playing field was “level” and behaviors could be observed and examined (RAMBO); followed by a Socratic discussion of various readings on leadership received personal feedback and coaching.
- We integrated the principles with our own executives or mid level managers in order to broaden the discussion and learning by everyone.
- This was a major departure from our company’s traditional approach to supporting education for a number of reasons including:
 - It was the first program directed at individuals, not institutions.
 - It was the first operating partnership that demanded not just our funds but our personal involvement and managementAnd most importantly:
 - It was the first time we engaged company executives in a product rather than just our products and services.
- In our minds this original investment has paid off and we are proud of the Superintendents Leadership Network that has resulted from our

decision to embark on this type of an effort – one we believed and believe to be critical to assuring the educational leadership improvements in education.

1b. Why did the business community become involved?

- BellSouth and other businesses in the South have a vested interest in assuring that quality education remains a top priority for our states.
- Simply put, we need a better-educated workforce in order to remain competitive both nationally and internationally.
- The support we provide to improvements in education and educational leadership are investments that we expect to provide ample returns in the form of high school and college graduates that enter the workforce prepared to contribute.

2. What does the private sector bring (both politically and substantively) in efforts designed to improve educational leadership?

- Business brings the benefit of broader thinking about leadership; thinking that is compelled by the very latest research; informed by multiple industries under a variety of pressures; derived from the environments they are graduating out of. The private sector leads in the creation of tools, such as simulations, feedback instruments, technology use, etc.
- The private sector also brings its perspective as a stakeholder of education, both as a large tax funder and as employers. Their beliefs and expectations about schools must inform education leaders about what is expected of them and how their behavior is interpreted.
- The private sector also brings its own programs. As BellSouth did in years past, companies can offer slots in their own leadership programs if the content is generic enough. Even when it is more relevant to an industry, educators can learn a lot by transferring the learnings to their own industry and by engaging in discussions about the similarities and differences.
- Engaging educators with other industry leaders has some interesting benefits.
- In the BellSouth program of 1996, our outside evaluation revealed
 - That principals developed an awareness of the need for the local school to have its own mission and strategic plan; adopting the district plan was not enough; it did not create ownership among the school-based staff;
 - It was really okay to delegate responsibility to teachers—it was a way to diversify their assignments and more importantly to develop their leadership to move up;
 - Principals' self esteem was enhanced as they learned that their challenges and successes were equal to or greater than the business executive and as business executives marveled at the demands and capabilities of educators.

- The answer to this may seem obvious but its importance cannot be underestimated.
- Business involvement also allows a view into best practices in technology, business development and organization development, strategic planning and change management.
- These are practices that we deal with on a daily basis and while all are not fully transferable into educational leadership development, many certainly are.

3. What are the deterrents to business involvement in state efforts to improve educational leadership?

- Business involvement can be deterred by the constant changeover in leadership at the state level, based on the political processes that control not only appointed/elected leadership but also budgets.
- Also, as referenced above, if educators want to remain in their academic silos and claim that education is different, business reps will become weary trying to contribute their experience to the development of new programs. Likewise, the private sector knows that leadership is both successful and retained based on many factors—pay incentives, professional treatment, perks, opportunity to grow; engagement with leadership peers from education AND from the community—it's not just a matter of courses and instates. The state must deal with all of it.
- Business may not get involved if they think the state wants only our money. Money is tight and it is NOT the greatest resource we have to offer. Also, our value of leadership development is such that we expect it to be part of the routine budget, not something you do IF you have the money. Education should think the same way.

4. What strategies might be suggested to encourage more meaningful and sustained business involvement in state efforts to improve educational leadership?

- Think outside the box –Ask business executives, as in Atlanta, to form a very small advisory committee to the superintendent where they truly meet peer-to-peer as CEOs.
- The superintendent has few peers so it's a pretty lonely job; he/she needs CEO friends/allies to share management and leadership challenges with.
- The same might be done for principals with other officers/general managers. This also will help the business community begin to appreciate the needs of education leadership as well as the challenges of our schools in general.

Conclusion

- In conclusion, I liken the issues related to educational leadership with the way that my company mobilizes to respond to hurricane situations.
- When this occurs, our company has a history of performing very well.
- There are no excuses, the roadblocks disappear and we restore services in a very expeditious manner.

- We try to adopt this same approach in addressing these matters.