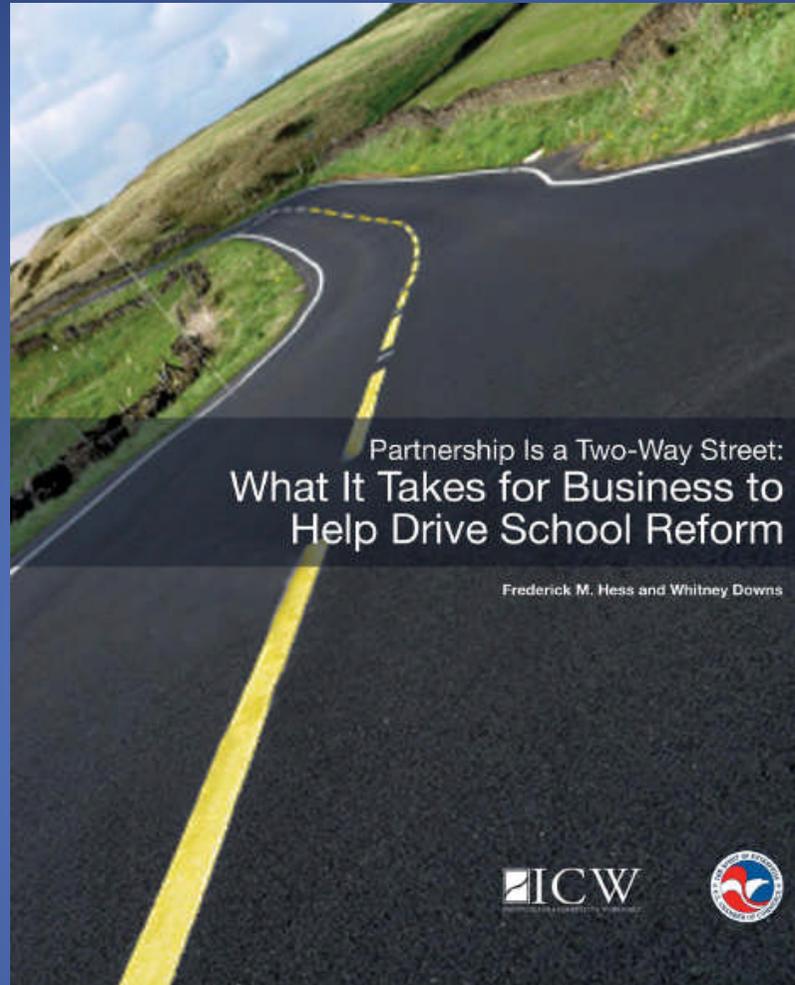


Partnership is a  
Two-Way Street:  
What It Takes for Business to Help Drive  
School Reform

# Today's Speakers:



- Frederick Hess  
Resident Scholar and Director of Education Policy Studies  
American Enterprise Institute
- Whitney Downs  
Research Assistant, Education Policy  
American Enterprise Institute
- *Moderator*: Domenic Giandomenico  
Director, Education and Workforce Programs  
Institute for a Competitive Workforce



# Partnership Is a Two-Way Street: What It Takes for Business to Help Drive School Reform

Frederick M. Hess and Whitney Downs

# Good Intentions Aren't Enough

Too often, **business takes a back seat**, putting its good intentions to work in the service of ineffectual systems. Business leaders serious about school improvement **must play a more forceful role and drive harder bargains** with state officials and school district educators.

# Context for the Three Cases

- Austin, TX:
  - Austin ISD serves **85,000 students**; 74 percent are nonwhite and almost **two thirds are economically disadvantaged**. The district spent **\$8,300 per pupil** in 2010-11.
- Nashville, TN:
  - The Metro Nashville Public Schools system (MNPS) serves **76,000 students**; 62 percent are nonwhite and nearly **70 percent are economically disadvantaged**. The district spent **\$10,777 per pupil** in 2009-10.
- Massachusetts
  - The state enrolls more than **955,000 students in 392 school districts**; 60 percent are white, 15 percent are Hispanic, and 8 percent are African American. The state spent **\$13,248 per pupil** in 2008-09.

# Austin, TX: “Critical Customers”

Goal: Create a homegrown, better educated work force by helping boost the number of students **applying for financial aid** and **enrolling in postsecondary institutions**.

“[We had to] translate [our] advocacy cheerleading role **into something more goal-focused and measurable**... I don’t want to slight the importance of that cheerleading role, but we wanted to really affect outcomes.”

-Mike Rollins, president, Austin Chamber

# Austin, TX: “Critical Customers”

Strategy: Use **transparent data** to hold districts’ feet to the fire and track outcomes while overseeing a **strategic provision of resources** targeted towards the districts’ and business’ joint goals. **Weigh in on political issues** and questions of funding when necessary.

“If a business hires a person to do a job, we want to **talk about outcomes** to determine whether the job is being performed effectively. As taxpayers, we deserve to know if **our money is being used to achieve a set of outcomes.**”

- Drew Scheberle, senior vice president of education and talent development, Austin Chamber

# Austin, TX: “Critical Customers”

Strategy: Use **transparent data** to hold districts' feet to the fire and track outcomes while overseeing a **strategic provision of resources** targeted towards the districts' and business' joint goals. **Weigh in on political issues** and questions of funding when necessary.

“Business support gave us leverage. **It made college enrollment a community-wide issue** for economic survival.”

-Rosemary Kelly, director of guidance and counseling, Round Rock ISD

# Austin, TX: "Critical Customers"

Strategy: Use **transparent data** to hold districts' feet to the fire and track outcomes while overseeing a **strategic provision of resources** targeted towards the districts' and business' joint goals. **Weigh in on political issues** and questions of funding when necessary.

"If the Chamber wasn't pushing superintendents...while at the same time listening to their concerns, [it] wouldn't be the same. It's the **power of transparency**. Drew [Scheberle] has said, '**You guys don't have to do what you signed up to do, but [if you don't] everyone's going to know it.**'"

-Lee Holcombe, director of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's policy institute

# Austin, TX: “Critical Customers”

## Results:

- The Chamber exceeded its five-year goal to enroll 20,000 more Central Texas residents in higher education, **an overall increase of more than 30%**.
- Texas Common Application rates among Austin-area high school **seniors increased from 47% in 2006 to 64% in 2009**.
- FAFSA submissions **were up 85% in quarter one of 2010 from quarter one of 2006** – resulting in **an additional \$43 million in financial aid** to the central Texas region.

# Nashville, TN: Partners

Goal: Support the district's high school academy model **to help make school more like "real life,"** thereby **increasing the motivation and interest of students** and helping them gain the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills necessary to succeed in today's economy.

"We were able to hire engineers and scientists, but we had to send them off to learn how to think critically and solve problems. **They didn't possess the 21st century skills they needed** to be successful in our company."

-Cheryl Carrier, program director, Ford Motor Company Fund's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education programs

# Nashville, TN: Partners

Strategy: Nashville businesses has **taken the point** in a partnership with MNPS. Business leaders **have cultivated substantial business-school partnerships**, helped the district **recruit key talent**, and **kept the district focused** on its strategy.

“[T]he CEOs and the mayor had a big role in **making sure [the new superintendent did not] abandon the academy pathway**... It would have been a very strange thing [for him] to pick a different strategic course than the one that had community support.”

-Jeff Yarbrow, Nashville lawyer and chair, Human Services Partnership Council

# Nashville, TN: Partners

Strategy: Nashville businesses has **taken the point** in a partnership with MNPS. Business leaders **have cultivated substantial business-school partnerships**, helped the district **recruit key talent**, and **kept the district focused** on its strategy.

“I believe [the SLCs] **would have died if we hadn't had business pushing** from the outside.”

-Starr Herrman, SLC director, MNPS

# Nashville, TN: Partners

Strategy: Nashville businesses has **taken the point** in a partnership with MNPS. Business leaders **have cultivated substantial business-school partnerships**, helped the district **recruit key talent**, and **kept the district focused** on its strategy.

“In 2009, [the Chamber] said to the district, ‘It’s time to decide whether you’re going to support the academy models or not.’ It’s an example of **‘We’re watching you; you said you’re going to do it; so, are you going to do it?’**”

-Marc Hill, chief education officer, Nashville Chamber

# Nashville, TN: Partners

## Results:

- The city's graduation rate rose from 68.8% in 2006 to 82.9% in 2010. In the two schools with the lowest graduation rates at the start of the SLC project, graduation rates rose 109% and 104%, respectively.
- The suspension rate declined more than 25% from 2006 to 2010.
- Today, there are 46 academies at the 12 high schools, and a total of 117 business-academy partnerships.

# Massachusetts Business Alliance: “Policy Advocates”

Goal: Evaluate and **weigh in on Common Core adoption, a critical and politically-charged policy debate**, while **maintaining credibility** and ensuring Massachusetts remained committed to strong educational standards.

“[Adopting] the Common Core was seen by some as a risky proposition. There **was fear that we would be giving up ground** to be a part of the group.”

-Jim McManus, principal partner,  
Slowey/McManus Communications

# Massachusetts Business Alliance: “Policy Advocates”

Strategy: Commission an **independent report** comparing the Common Core standards to the recently revised Massachusetts state standards , **upon which the MBAE could base its recommendations** .

“It was important for everyone to know that **if there were any strings attached** [to the report’s findings], MBAE was **more than willing to walk away** and not take a position.”

-Linda Noonan, executive director, MBAE

# Massachusetts Business Alliance: “Policy Advocates”

Strategy: Commission an **independent report** comparing the Common Core standards to the recently revised Massachusetts state standards , **upon which the MBAE could base its recommendations** .

“If a **business group doesn't rely on data, they are going to get marginalized** and more easily dismissed. People are going to say, ‘Well, you're just anti-teacher’ or ‘You want to privatize everything.’”

-Henry Dinger, MBAE board member and co-drafter,  
Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993

# Massachusetts: “Policy Advocates”

## Results:

- The final 152-page study found that the two sets of **math standards were 96% aligned** and the **language arts standards were 74% aligned**.
- MBAE’s **board voted to recommend adoption** of the Common Core; by the end of the next day, four other major business groups had recommended adoption.
- On July 21, 2010, Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education **voted unanimously to adopt the Common Core standards** in English and math.
- Massachusetts **was announced as the round two winner** of the Race to the Top Competition in August 2010.

# Five Elements of **Bold** Business Leadership

1. **Be a partner, not a pawn.** Working with school districts or policymakers doesn't mean carrying their water; it means settling on shared objectives and pursuing them jointly.

"We had to have the moment when [Austin Independent School District] knew we were willing to walk away. **We gave them a list of non-negotiables** [and] said, 'If you want [our support], then you have to do these things. If you don't, we're out.'"

-Drew Scheberle, senior vice president of education and talent development, Austin Chamber

# Five Elements of **Bold** Business Leadership

## 2. **Leverage the unique assets business brings.**

When business leaders work with state and school district officials on K–12 schooling, they need to keep in mind that they are negotiating not as claimants but as valued partners.

“[Businesses] are organizing their lobbyists around things we have asked. **They can get a lot of things done as business people that I can't.**”

-Jay Steele, associate superintendent of high schools, Metro Nashville Public Schools

# Five Elements of **Bold** Business Leadership

3. **Get in for the long haul.** Businesses often have other priorities besides K–12 education, so it is vital to structure a role that allows business to sustain its involvement and not permit the effort to be an enthusiasm that comes and goes.

“There’s a tendency of business folks to say, ‘Didn’t we already do that?’ The fact that **MBAE would bring us all together and keep us focused** is very important.”

-Alan Macdonald, executive director, Massachusetts Business Roundtable

# Five Elements of **Bold** Business Leadership

4. **Learn the issues and hire an expert point person.** Effective engagement requires that local business leaders invest time and energy to become acquainted with the issues and local stakeholders.

“Sometimes chambers sit on the side and [occasionally] jump in. When it comes to school districts, **you have to have a relationship.** You can’t weigh in [periodically].”

-Mark Williams, school board chair, Austin ISD and former Dell executive

# Five Elements of **Bold** Business Leadership

## 5. **Don't shy away from policy and politics.**

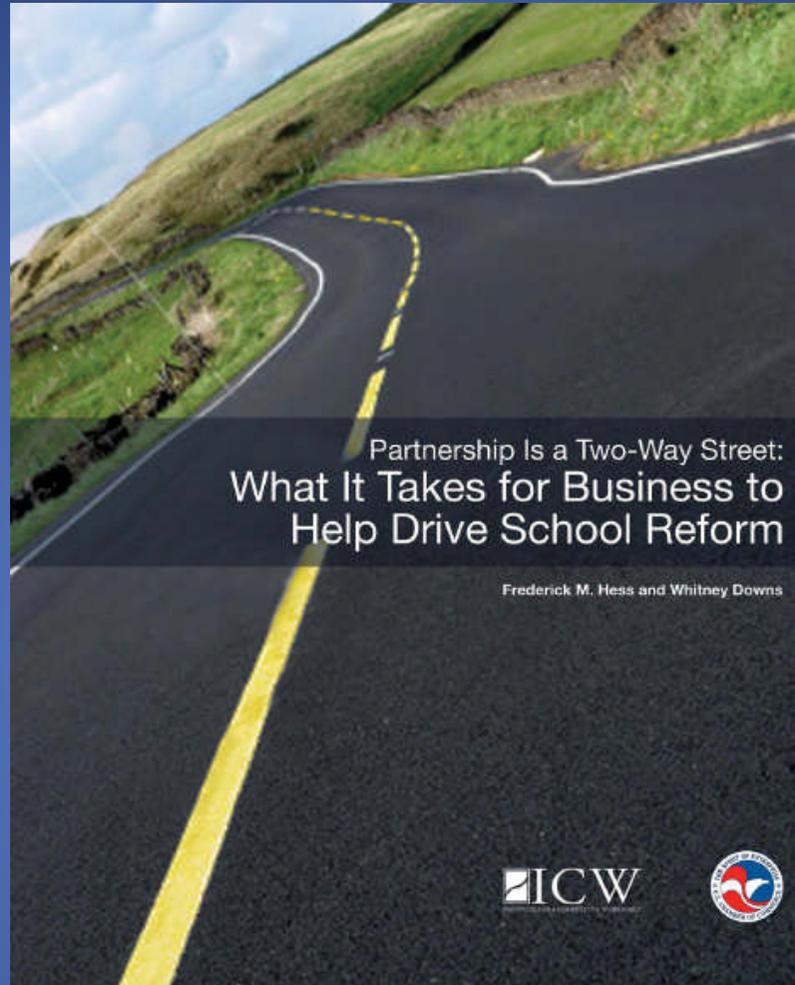
Business leaders have a natural inclination to stay out of heated education debates. But serious reform requires changing policy, and that means political debate.

"[Our school board political action committee] **is a lightning rod, no question about it.** But the business community is adamant about the **need to be in this game.** It gets nasty sometimes."

- Ralph Schulz, president, Nashville Chamber

In communities across America, business leaders recognize that K–12 schooling can and must do better. Yet, too often, their reform efforts have been scattershot. It is clearly possible to chart a new course towards transformational change.

**Business leaders who are serious about school reform need to roll up their sleeves and get to it.**



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# Q&A



- There are two ways to ask a question:
  - If you are using the telephone for audio, click the “raise your hand” icon in the right hand corner of your computer and we will call on your name and unmute your line so you can ask the question yourself.
  - If you are using the computer for audio, please press the red arrow in the right hand corner, and then type your question into the Questions box.

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