

# balance sheets

A series of information sheets for employers interested in helping employees balance their work, family, and personal responsibilities

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# balance

# Xsheets™

A series of information sheets for employers interested in helping employees balance their work, family, and personal responsibilities

The Center for  
**Work & Family**  
BOSTON COLLEGE  
CARROLL SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

**One Small Step** 

MIDWESTERN  
WORK-FAMILY  
ASSOCIATION  CENTER FOR  
FAMILIES  
PURDUE  
UNIVERSITY

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***“ . . . upheavals in the American family aren't self-contained—they intersect with business and economic circles and loop into the social fabric of this nation. As a society, we assume a larger affiliation—one that implies, not just family ties, but added obligations.”***

Robert E. Allen  
CEO  
AT&T

***“No program, law, or regulation can equal the power we have as parents and concerned adults. Together we can mend the fabric of our society, but we must each do something more. And we must do it now.”***

Gary Tooker  
Vice Chairman and CEO  
Motorola

***“Every child deserves the best opportunity to develop and thrive. As a society, we must invest in our children if we hope to successfully address the critical issues facing our future.”***

Chad Gifford  
CEO  
BankBoston

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## The Corporate Role in Parental Involvement in School

Family-friendly employers' policies allow time for employee-parents to get involved in with schools; provide resources on how to become more involved in children's education; and support programs in the community that promote family involvement in education.

*(Employers for Learning, 1995)*

### A CRITICAL LINK:

Education in America is in crisis, and it is going to take a joint effort among families, communities and businesses to reverse these trends and create the best learning environment for our children.

- Only 53% of employed parents of children ages 5 - 18 regularly attend school activities and events. (The National Study of the Changing Workforce, 1993)
- Parental involvement is a key indicator of academic success. Children whose parents are involved in their learning earn higher test scores, earn higher grades, and stay in school longer. (Strong Families, Strong Schools, 1994)
- Teachers ranked strengthening parents' role in their children's learning as the highest priority in public education policy over the next few years. (Louis Harris and Associates, 1993)
- A 1994 study by the Center for Work and Family revealed that a majority of companies surveyed have a workforce which includes parents with school-age children. In these same companies, however, dinner meetings, expectations for weekend work, and/or unplanned changes in schedule remain the norm, and are barriers to parental involvement in schools.

### FAMILY-FRIENDLY EMPLOYERS COMMITTED TO LEARNING:

- Expect dedicated students to be better employees.
- Enable employee parents to attend school activities and participate in the lives of their children through the design and promotion of family friendly policies.
- Empower employee parents with the skills they need to take an active role in school reform and curriculum.
- Provide students, their parents, and teachers with opportunities to visit the workplace and get actual work experience.

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## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Corporate interest in school reform has long been spurred by a vested interest in securing a talented/prepared future workforce. Business efforts have traditionally fallen within four broad categories: donations of money and resources, programmatic initiatives, collaborative efforts and policy changes in which corporate leaders are involved in endorsing legislative change. These endeavors are usually focused on community schools—not necessarily the schools of employee parents.

**Chevron**, in Concord, CA, has established partnerships with four school districts in Contra Costa County through the Concord/Walnut Creek Education Partnership Program. Chevron provides schools in these districts with volunteers, grants and supplies. Chevron offers its employees up to four hours a month for volunteerism on company time. Volunteer programs offered include: Project PC, a basic PC skills tutoring program, Project R.E.A.D., a lunch hour where volunteers read with a first- or second-grade student, and Transitions, high school workshops which focus on goal setting, work ethics and teamwork/accountability. Chevron notes that although it is not a requirement of the program, many employee parents choose to volunteer in the schools of their own children.

**John Hancock Financial Services**, in Boston, MA, supports education through financial and in-kind contributions, local public school programs, and executive involvement. In 1974, John Hancock began a school-to-work program with Boston English High School. Select high school juniors and seniors are brought to Hancock to attend classes where they learn valuable business skills and have the opportunity to work after school and during school vacations. Another aspect of the program brings Hancock employees to schools to mentor and tutor students. Hancock also supports its own employees' parental involvement efforts through education seminars.

**Lotus Development Corporation** in Cambridge, MA, makes Lotus software and technology available to any school an employee wishes to sponsor. Lotus employees also participate in "key-pal" programs

with local school children. The adults and children communicate weekly via e-mail and share information about themselves and their school and work activities. Flextime is available on an informal basis for parents to attend school conferences.

**McKesson Corporation** in San Francisco, CA, partnered with local schools in the early 80's to create a Career Perspectives Program. Designed to equip high school juniors and seniors with skills to enter and work successfully in the business world, the program involves weekly sessions held at McKesson where employees present on Personal Development, Communication Skills, Job and Employment Readiness, and Maximizing Options. McKesson is presently designing a program where employees can tutor ninth graders at a nearby charter high school during their lunch hours or after work.

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## EMPLOYER AND PARENT PARTNERSHIPS

Family-friendly businesses recognize the need for parents to be involved in education. In addition being active in overall school reform, these employers enable and empower their employee parents to be involved in their children's education. Existing work/family initiatives can be expanded to include education concerns. "Flextime" can give employees the opportunity to attend parent-teacher conferences, or accompany their child to the first day of school. Time-off programs can be designed to promote volunteerism. Other employers are offering support to their employees through on-site resource libraries, counseling, and workshops.

**IBM**, headquartered in Armonk, NY, offers its employees a variety of flexible work arrangements that can be used for personal activities such as attending a child's school function or doctor's appointment. Meal break flexibility allows employees to vary their break from 30 minutes up to two hours. Employees may also vary their daily arrival time within two hours before to two hours after normal start time.

**Hewlett-Packard**, a worldwide manufacturer of measurement and computation products, created the first work site public school on the West Coast at its

site in Santa Rosa, CA, in 1993. The school offers K-3 classes and approximately 85 percent of the students' parents are currently Hewlett-Packard employees. The company's flextime policy enables employees to visit their children during the day, and parents also volunteer in the classroom.

**Millipore Corporation**, in Bedford, MA, encourages and assists the volunteer efforts of its employees through the Millipore Foundation. Through the Volunteer Service Grant Program established in 1986, employees (parent and non-parent) receive financial support for local community organizations in which they have an ongoing role. Employee volunteers have provided services such as tutoring, mentoring, guest speaking, and coaching. The Foundation also assists schools directly with donation of computer equipment, supplies, and furniture.

**MIT**, in Cambridge, MA, encourages its supervisors to acknowledge and respect all employee life needs. MIT's Family Resource Center supports their employees with education, workshops, referrals and consultations to help them manage through the maze of children's services. Workshops offered include: Helping Your Child to be Successful in School, Girls, Math, and Science: Breaking the Barriers, and Gifted Children: Myths and Realities. MIT also offers its employees Educational Outreach Programs for Pre-K through grade 12; these programs include visits by MIT personnel to schools, on campus tours, and short programs.

## CONSIDERATIONS

- Parental Involvement Programs can be perceived as "too" family oriented; care should be taken to include non-parent employees as well. Time off for volunteerism programs can be positioned for community service and not limited to only school activities.
- Government is taking a stronger role in the support of parental involvement in education. Existing California law allows a parent to take off up to 40 hours each school year to participate in K-12 activities. Pending Massachusetts legislation would mandate employee leave for certain family obligations—including parent teacher conferences.

- The impact of culture on employee behavior can not be underestimated. Participants in a series of focus groups conducted by the Center for Work and Family in 1995 reported that they were uncomfortable using flex-time for school activities. They added that written policies should explicitly state that parental involvement is sanctioned and supported by the CEO.

***"Parental involvement remains the best predictor of educational success. If corporations and communities can facilitate and support high rates of parental involvement, we should see far greater progress in education reform."***

*Bradley Googins, Ph.D.,  
Director,*

*The Center for Corporate Community Relations  
at Boston College*

***"The bottom line in business depends on an education system whose bottom line is family involvement. Being family friendly is one of the best investments a company can make. It can help recruit and keep top workers, improve productivity, and increase employee motivation and loyalty."***

*Richard Riley  
Secretary,*

*US Department of Education*