



# BRINGING BUSINESS TO THE CLASSROOM

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BRASS BRIEFS: a series of white papers on the latest trends and best practices

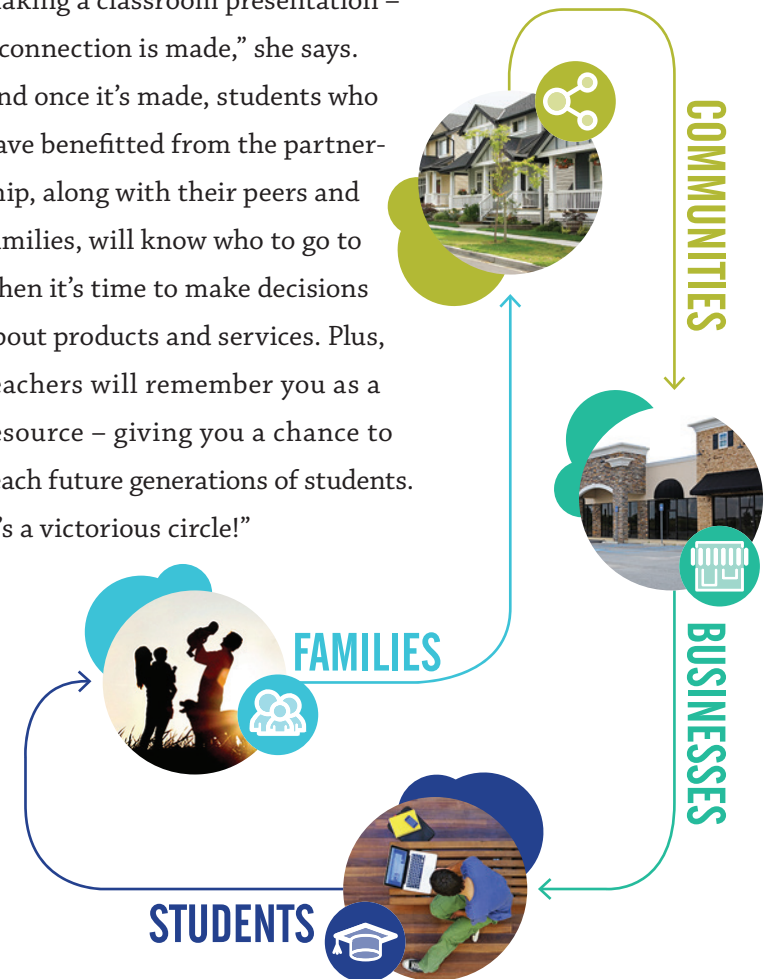
# WHY YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS TO GET INVOLVED

WE'VE ALL READ THE ARTICLES: American teenagers aren't financially literate, which means "they do not understand much about finance beyond discerning between 'needs' and 'wants.'" Our future workforce isn't good with money, and this means their financial decisions could have negative consequences for themselves and their communities.

Financial literacy is more important than ever, but it's often not an option in high schools. With school budgets continuously cut, local business involvement in schools is an excellent, viable way to teach the next generation about budgeting, workplace expectations, and other important life skills.

brass Media's Director of Education, Laura Edmonston, believes in the power of businesses helping schools. "When a business reaches out to a school to build a partnership –

whether by sponsoring a program or teaching materials, opening in-school branches, offering internships or scholarships, or even just making a classroom presentation – a connection is made," she says. "And once it's made, students who have benefitted from the partnership, along with their peers and families, will know who to go to when it's time to make decisions about products and services. Plus, teachers will remember you as a resource – giving you a chance to reach future generations of students. It's a victorious circle!"



# STUDENTS & TEACHERS BENEFIT DRAMATICALLY

Graduating from high school or college and trying to find a job should not be a student's introduction to how adult life works. Young adults need real-life connections to subjects they're learning about in the classroom, and your involvement brings that real-world relevance to them.

Here's an example: a 2013 brass Student Program impact report shows that 55% of students surveyed wanted to learn more about money management, which is arguably one of the most important life skills. But personal finance often isn't a graduation requirement, and, though many students and teachers believe personal finance should be taught in schools, many of them feel unqualified to teach financial subjects like credit, investing, budgeting, or insurance.

This is where you come in. You have the practical experience and perspective that students need and that teachers want to incorporate into their curriculum.

Amy Sorensen, a Marketing and Recruiting Coordinator for accounting firm Moss Adams LLP, sums it up this way: "We reached out to a younger demographic to encourage college attendance and help the students understand the professional world. We often see college students who don't understand the basics of how to dress or how to write a resume and cover letter." She explains that she keeps her high school presentations general and relevant to students but aims to give students a look into practical application of these skills.

LESS THAN  
**20%**  
OF TEACHERS  
FEEL VERY  
COMPETENT  
TO TEACH  
PERSONAL  
FINANCE  
SUBJECTS.

[NEFE.ORG](http://NEFE.ORG)

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"The benefit to the students is that **they are learning real-life skills.**"

*Amy Sorensen, Marketing and Recruiting Coordinator,  
Moss Adams LLP*



# WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU



## 63%

OF CEOs ARE WORRIED ABOUT FINDING JOB CANDIDATES WITH KEY SKILLS.

[PwC.com](http://PwC.com)

## H.S. students are your future workforce.

Help shape students into model employees early on. The presence of a business in the classroom will allow you to let students and counselors see the kind of skills you'll be looking for down the road. It also might help you identify good candidates for summer jobs or internship positions.

## Invest in the future of your community by helping students.

Don't assume corporate social responsibility is only for big, multinational companies – your business can make a big impact on your local community. Offering time or money to local high schools improves the quality of student education, which can open up doors that might otherwise be closed.

Moss Adams' Sorensen sums it up this way: “[We] believe very strongly in service to community, and helping mentor young people is just one of the many ways we live up to that ideal. Anything that strengthens our local communities also strengthens us.”

## And there's icing on the cake.

You can wrangle some excellent attention from local news stations, parents, and prospective customers by giving back to your community. People like doing business with those who give back: a 2013 Cone Communications study on corporate social responsibility found that 9 in 10 American consumers feel they have a more positive impression of companies that support a good cause and are more likely to trust these companies.

# WHAT DOES CLASSROOM INVOLVEMENT LOOK LIKE?

Getting involved with local schools can mean many different things, but the end result should always be beneficial for the student. It can be as simple as guest speaking about your workplace culture or as intricate as partnering with a school to work on service learning projects. These are just a few ways you can partner with local classrooms.

## Guest speakers

An expert, real-world voice on a subject that teachers already need to cover is a great way to give students the biggest return with the least amount of money and time. Pitch your expertise and time to local teachers or group advisors.



“I [presented about budgeting] in a class six months ago, and six months later, I went back and a gal goes, ‘Oh, because of you, I’m able to have my own apartment and my own checking account.’ **That just makes everything worthwhile, to be able to help people.**”

Anissa Arthenayake, Director of Community Education,  
Oregon State Credit Union



## Sponsorships

Sponsoring a class trip or classroom materials may cost you, but you know that money will be put directly to work for the students' education. Having your brand associated with helping students get a financial education is a great way to illustrate your company's commitment to the well-being of the community.

For Maria Peifer, the Business and Community Development Representative at Delta Community Credit Union, sponsoring the brass Student Program in local high schools "provides us with a turnkey program for financial literacy. It helps provide new materials to sustain our involvement with schools over the long term. It gives us the ability to help kids develop smart

habits and make informed decisions as they begin their financial lives."



## In-school stores or branches

In-school stores or branches are great ways to give students hands-on experience while getting your brand directly in front of students. If you're a local ice cream shop, consider opening a cart outside the cafeteria during lunchtime.

If you're a financial institution, you could open a branch or two at local high schools. According to a 2014 study by CFED, students with [access to banking in their school](#) are more likely to have savings accounts than students who don't. An in-school branch is just the nudge necessary to get students interested in managing their finances and also provides some on-the-job training.

## Mentoring

Mentoring is possibly the most rewarding partnership between your business and schools, and it will require a serious time commitment. Helping an extracurricular group or an individual student is a wonderful way to build close relationships that can lead to internships, new hires, or potential contacts.

## Be a success story

Your time is important, and so is the teachers' and students'. Make sure [your involvement is beneficial for all involved](#): teachers don't want to use their classrooms as ad platforms, and you don't want to give money to initiatives that you don't believe in.

Teachers have standards to meet, so make sure you're helping them move toward that goal. The beauty of financial education is that it correlates with many different possible standards (math, writing, or reading common core, or perhaps a state-specific financial education requirement) and can be imparted through discussions, activities, and role-playing scenarios instead of flat textbook lessons.

To make sure your endeavors are successful and beneficial for everyone, form a team that consists of school personnel, community organization members, and students. It's important that your business, faculty, and students work together to come up with a partnership that works for everyone.

# HOW YOUR BUSINESS CAN GET INVOLVED

## Reach out

Not sure who to talk to about getting in the classroom? Call your local school office and inquire about business teachers. If there are no business classes, consider social studies, home economics, or health classes – these are all great venues.

Email is usually the best way to connect with teachers. Touch base with the teacher first to determine what they need covered in the classroom. Prepare an easy-to-understand proposal that outlines what you want to cover. If a teacher likes what they see, they'll let you know. Keep in mind that teachers' work days are longer and more packed than you may realize, so don't be shy about following up.

Laura Edmonston spent several years teaching before she joined brass Media. She has some excellent advice to keep in mind:

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“Sales pitches are pretty frowned upon in the education space, so don't plan on rolling out your latest credit card offer in front of students. Instead, give a presentation about credit and let students know where to reach you if they have questions about applying for a loan. Or, talk to them about scholarship or internship opportunities available at your institution.”

*Laura Edmonston, Director of Education,  
brass Student Program*





# YOUR MISSION, SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT IT

Prior to your presentation, send an email to the teacher to find out the following information about the class.

- **Number of students.** If the class is large, it's a good idea to take an additional representative with you. During the question and answer period, divide the students into two groups and send a representative to one group while you answer questions from the other. After a set period of time, switch groups. Having enough representatives ensures students get more individualized attention.
- **Classroom personality.** Is the class talkative or are they shy?
- **Current topics being covered in class.** This is a great way to tailor your presentation and establish a rapport with the class.
- **Current projects or assignments.** What have the students completed that corresponds to your topic?

Edmonston has some more advice to keep you on track: "Schools are also bound by mandates and teachers want to know how what you're providing is going to help them meet required teaching standards. Let the teacher know the expected learning outcomes of your presentation. Also let them know in advance how long you'll be presenting, if you have handouts, and anything you'll need for the presentation, such as available technology."

Send the teacher your bio and a brief outline of what you'll be talking about, handing out, or having the students do. At least one week prior to your presentation, confirm the date and time with the teacher. Be sure to also ask the teacher the best time to arrive for set up and any school rules for checking in.



# NAIL IT!

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## REALLY GREAT PRESENTATIONS:

- RELATE TO STUDENTS AT THEIR LEVEL
  - REQUIRE STUDENTS TO GET OUT OF THEIR CHAIRS
  - HAVE STUDENTS COLLABORATE WITH OTHERS
  - INCLUDE HANDS-ON LEARNING
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We put together a few examples of activities that can keep students awake and engaged.

**Offer to teach a lesson.** Students want to know how to save and pay for things like new cars and college. So why not help them figure out how to budget for these? Have students determine expenses for something that interests them, like a new car or prom night. Don't shy away from using tech they have access to – get creative!

**Turn a real-life scenario into a problem solving project for students.** Give students a financial problem that they can tackle as a group. For example, one lesson in our [Student Program](#) features statistics about Detroit's youth unemployment and struggling economy, along with examples of young adults who've created positive change. Students are challenged to come up with their own strategies to help solve the problem.

**Hold a debate.** Introduce a relevant financial topic or news item to students and have them debate it. The key to success for this activity is to capture the advantages of debating while minimizing the disadvantages. Once the initial debate is over, have the two sides switch views for a different perspective. Include multimedia elements (video, skit, charts) to help them support their position in an engaging manner.

**Get your game on.** Who doesn't love a game? Game show and trivia formats are a great way to get students interested and attentive, especially if there are prizes to win (like swag with your logo on it or gift certificates). Try having the students create the game and questions to challenge each other; you don't have to do all the work and they retain more ownership of the process.

# WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

In order to connect with students, you need to get them up and involved in what's relevant to them during this stage of their lives.

There's no time like the present to start forming a relationship with your local high schools. With all types of subjects and activities in which to lend a hand, there's no excuse for not getting started. Help shape the next generation into a money-savvy one.



## How brass can help

At brass, we believe providing students with the information and experience to make choices with confidence helps make them more stable and successful in the future.

The brass Student Program provides sponsors with engaging presentation tools and resources to help connect you directly with your local students and teachers. To learn more about how the [brass Student Program](#) can help you make in a difference in your community, contact us today at 541-753-8546 or [sales@brassmedia.com](mailto:sales@brassmedia.com).

## Authors

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