Guide to School—Community Relationships

VOLUME 3 | COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Thank you for your interest in the Wichita Public Schools! Every day, our teachers and students benefit from the generosity of partners and supporters who take the time to interact with our schools.

Please take some time to review this guide. It will give you an understanding of the volunteer and partner program, our district as a whole and some helpful information to get you started. If you have any questions please feel free to contact the Division of Strategic Communications at 316-973-4515.

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Questions or concerns? Let us know!

As we continue to move forward with improvements to our volunteer and partner program, please feel free to share your feedback and experiences so we can better prepare materials and procedures for our volunteers. If you have questions, comments, feedback or concerns, please contact Suzy Finn in the Division of Strategic Communications at 316-973-4630 or by email at sfinn@usd259.net.

WHAT'S YOUR WHY?

Why do you want to partner with or support Wichita Public Schools? Take some time to reflect on this with any team members involved in developing your partnership to ensure you know what success looks like before starting the journey with us.

Some questions to ask may include:

- What are our organization's goals? How will partnering with a school/district help us meet them?

- What is our vision/mission, and how would a partnership help us achieve those?

- What are the strengths of existing partnerships with other schools or similar organizations? What challenges have we encountered? Are we ready to address those?

- Do we have someone who can be the key representative for organizing partnership programs and activities?

- Does the organization leadership fully support this idea, including the human and financial resources needed to execute it?

- What are our assumptions about what a school should do as a partner? Are we prepared to clearly communicate those expectations?

- Do we have a structure in place to routinely check in with the school or department?

Benefits may include some or all of the following:

- Visibility and recognition for valued community services, enhanced image in the community

- Increased understanding of schools and local education among employees

- Enhancement and expansion of a future well-educated job applicant pool

- An opportunity to affect the quality of the public schools and ultimately, the community

- Professional development for employees through community involvement opportunities

- Give students a better understanding of business and the community and how they work

- Creative outlets for employees

- Workplace team building

- Increased employee morale and employee retention

School leaders have a variety of tools available to them to plan for new partnerships and programs. In this guide book, you'll receive some of the same tools along with some just for our partner organizations. The Strategic Partnership team at Wichita Public Schools is also available to help you work through these tools or conversations about potential partnerships. Contact Suzy Finn at sfinn@usd259.net or 316-973-4630.

Existing Opportunities

We have a few established opportunities that organizations can sign up to join with little prep work needed. Before developing a new program idea, check these opportunities to see if any align with your intended outcomes. Contact Suzy Finn to pursue additional information on these opportunities.

All Grade Levels

- Conduct school supply drives to make donations in August or January

- Join a school Site Council to provide the business and/or community perspective

- Volunteer as a tutor to help students achieve academic progress in literacy and math

- Speak to classes about your work; encourage employees and friends to do the same

- Participate in district and school career fairs to provide awareness of the myriad of career options

- Provide financial resources to support program success (Holly Wilson, hwilson@usd259.net), including sponsoring our annual Legacy Fund golf tournament or giving to the Legacy Fund to support funding for student credentials and college credits

- Become a mentor with one of our six area mentoring programs

Elementary Schools

- Provide volunteers for United Way's Read to Succeed program

- Host a book drive or collect books for schools or programs

Secondary Schools

- Provide speakers to motivate members of BAASE (Better Academics And Social Excellence), a club for young men of color to promote academic excellence

- Join a Career and Technical Education Advisory Council

- Create summer jobs for youth with the HYPE network

- Provide volunteers for the Dream Keepers program (automotive, aviation/manufacturing, construction and public utilities)

- Provide summer externships for teachers to learn about your industry

Administrative Support

- Promote discounts for all district employees

- Donate materials or equipment that are in good condition

New School-Community Relationships or Opportunities

The tools on the next few pages will help you plan a variety of opportunities to partner with schools, from one-time service projects to ongoing programs. You may use more than one of the tools or none if you and the school already have something in mind. Always think back to your "why" and whether the opportunities you're discussing align with that.

Types of Activities Partners Might Support

☐ Provide technical assistance or services _____

☐ Volunteer as a consultant in the area of _____

☐ Encourage employees to work with students as volunteer mentors or tutors

☐ Provide speaker(s) to a class (on careers, arts & crafts, science demonstrations, travel, etc.); Topics(s) _____

☐ Offer field trips of your facility; consider appropriate and preferred grade level(s)

☐ Participate in Career Day or Job Fair activities

☐ Participate on a Site Council or Career and Technical Education Advisory Committee

☐ Provide display space for student work

☐ Host meetings or special events

☐ Sponsor incentive or recognition programs for students and/or employees

☐ Allow short-term career shadowing opportunity for students or teachers

☐ Judge science fairs, social studies fairs, speech contests, etc.

☐ Sponsor an extracurricular club for students

☐ Provide financial support to classroom/ department/ special projects

☐ Serve as a mentor to help students with a variety of social or emotional support needs

Preparing for an Initial Partner Meeting

This checklist compiles tips and questions for both school sites and partner agencies to consider during the initial meeting(s). Take time to review the questions beforehand and come prepared to share your answers.

Shared Vision and Leadership

"We know where we are going, and we share the responsibility for getting there."

Share with each other your vision and mission for the agency, school and district.

- Do they align, enhance and support each other?
- What type of relationship is the organization pursuing at the school? (Strategic Partner, Community Supporter, Friend of the School)

Aligned, Responsive Implementation

"We row in the same direction and continuously adjust to changing conditions."

Share with each other your goals and priorities. Be specific.

- What are the expected measurable outcomes of the organization's event, program or service? How do those align with the school's goals and expected outcomes?
- What specific need or service gap will this partnership be meeting?
- What are the shared goals and measurable outcomes (if any) for this partnership?

Shared Accountability for Success

"We manage for impact and sustainability and keep each other accountable."

- What specific program or service is the organization offering? What strategies do they use in implementing this event, program or service? Do they align with the school's strategies?
- What are the costs of this program to the school? To the partner?
- What staff and resources will the organization provide? What direct or in-kind resources does the school provide?
- What does the partner organization need or expect from the school? What does the school need or expect from the partner? What are our roles and responsibilities with this potential partnership?
- How will the partner organization ensure that the services they provide are high quality and in alignment with the school's goal and desired culture? What can the school do to help with this goal?
- How and when will we know if this partnership is successful?
- How will we measure progress?

Communicating Interest to Schools and District

Some school-community relationships can be created directly with the school or schools involved. Others should start the conversation with the Strategic Partnership Office so that there is awareness of the project, program or relationship from the beginning at the district level.

Contact School Principal(s)

Find the most up-to-date list of principals here: https://www.usd259.org/domain/871

- You are one organization interested in working with one school

- You are one organization interested in working with multiple schools for one-time opportunities (i.e., speaking to a class, participating in career day)

- You are one organization offering field trip opportunities to schools

Contact Strategic Partnership Office

Suzy Finn, 316-973-4630, sfinn@usd259.net

- You have multiple partners creating a program for a single school

- You are one organization interested in creating an ongoing program at one or more schools

- You have an idea for a program or project that would be at a department or district scale

Business Partner Interest Form

For any new relationships or program opportunities that fall under "Contact Strategic Partnership Office," **please complete the Business Partner Interest Form, available here.** After you have completed the form, a member of the Strategic Partnership team will be in touch to connect you with the best person or team to bring your ideas to life.

- Preferred scope of partnership

    o Open to a match with a school where most needed

    o Have a specific school in mind

    o Have multiple, specific schools in mind

    o Have idea for large-scale opportunity

- Names of specific schools or departments, if applicable

- Interest areas

    o **Ensure Success for All Learners -** tutoring, incentives for academic excellence, reading

    o **Prepare for College and Career -** career speakers, internship, job shadowing, apprenticeship, awareness programs/activities

    o **Support the Whole Child -** supply drives (food, clothing, school supplies, hygiene items), mentors, mental health support

    o **Invest in Staff -** employee discounts, teacher recognition incentives, meals for teachers

    o **Engage Families and Community -** volunteer in classrooms, support family engagement events, encourage other business/org involvement

    o **Align Resources and Infrastructure -** advocate for public schools, support school beautification, donate technology

Adopt-a-School Planning

Organizations may choose to adopt a specific school or schools to conduct activities with throughout the year. This type of relationship is ongoing, but may not have specific outcomes to measure. If this is the type of school-community relationship that is the best fit for you and the school(s), then the below tool should be used to plan and agree to that work. Responsibility for completing the form and reporting to the district level falls with the school.

Complete a separate form for each adopter. You may fill in this form on your computer by tabbing to each field (indicated with gray shading) and typing your response. Save a copy to your computer by using the "File, Save As" command, and e-mail a copy to the Strategic Partner Council (cmoeder@usd259.net) as an attachment.

Report Due Date(s): New School Year Plan – 1st Monday in October and **Year-End Report** – last week of school.

School: _____   Phone: _____

Campus Contact: _____   Date: _____

Adopter: _____   _____

When using this form to submit your **New School Year Plan**, fill in the "Description of Activity" section and place an "X" in the applicable column under Program Areas. When using this form for **End-of-Year Report**, type a date (mm/dd/yy) in the appropriate Program Areas box.

Description of Activity	Program Areas						
	Required	Choose 3 or more					
	Success for All Learners	Prepare for College and Career	Support the Whole Child	Invest in Staff	Engage Families & Community	Communicate to Build Trust	Align Resources and Infrastructure
Ongoing Activities During Year							
August – September							
October							
November							
December							
January							
February							

Description of Activity	Program Areas						
	Required	Choose 3 or more					
	Success for All Learners	Prepare for College and Career	Support the Whole Child	Invest in Staff	Engage Families & Community	Communicate to Build Trust	Align Resources and Infrastructure
March							
April							
May							

Program Planning

If you and the school or department you are working with determine that a new, ongoing program is where you can add value, the group will want to use the tool below to plan that work. This intended to be a shared accountability tool for all parties involved; it is not a contract or memorandum of understanding. Responsibility for ensuring the program is outlined and reported to the district office falls with the school.

Title of Partnership/Program

1. **School Name:**

2. **Partner Name:**

3. **Background Information: Why is the project being undertaken?**
   Include a short paragraph explanation of why/how this partnership came to be.

4. **How do the school/division/district and students benefit from the partnership?**

5. **How does the partner organization benefit from the partnership?**

6. **What are the school/division/district's major goals and priorities for this school year related to the district's long-term goals and/or strategic theme objectives?**

7. **How does this partnership align with those goals?**

8. **How will the partner and school measure success for this partnership? Include 2-5 key outcomes for the project, as identified by all stakeholders.**

   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.

9. **Logistics Information**
   a. Day(s) of the Week:
   b. Time of Day(s):
   c. Duration of program:
      i. Exceptions to schedule:
   d. Location:
      i. Exceptions to location:
         1.

The information reflected in the planning grid below should be used to ensure that all parties participating in this partnership have common expectations of responsibility and accountability for the program's implementation.

Partner Role/Responsibility	Community Organization	Business	School Site	School District
Partner Organization(s)				
Designate partnership lead representative				
Identify frequency with which partners meets, who organizes				
Deliver services to students (specify what services providing)				
Provide space for program				
Collect data (consider the type of data each party will collect)				
Share data (consider the type of data each party will share)				
Evaluate program and communicate evaluation results				
Provide transportation for students				
Provide training for volunteers				
Communicate with students				
Communicate with parents				
Communicate with volunteers				
Provide ongoing feedback				
Recognize partners				
Publicize partnership to outside organizations				
Additional responsibilities or actions required				

Partnership Proposal Planning Worksheet for Partners

Identified student-level need(s):

Example: *increase attendance rates of English-Language Learner students.*

Identified school-level need(s):

Example: *Shared professional development between Organization staff and school staff.*

Target population(s):

Strategies and resources we (the organization) have to address the needs of this population:

Resources the school or district would need to commit to the partnership:

Ways we can work with school staff in order to integrate school-day activities with our program:

How we intend to measure progress:

Suggested Timeline for Action

School representatives should initiate some of the evaluation steps in the timeline below. Expect to hear from schools in this timeline, and if you don't, feel free to take the initiative to ensure the conversations and steps below happen annually.

May–August

- Evaluate how well the partnership is accomplishing the goals it set out to accomplish.

- Evaluate how well the partnership is benefiting the participants it set out to serve.

- Use evaluation results to plan future activities.

- Meet with or plan a phone call with school representatives to review evaluation results and discuss preliminary plans for next academic year (May-June).

- Meet with or plan a phone call with schools to confirm plans for upcoming academic year (July-August).

August–November

- Identify your resources being used for a partnership and determine whether that can continue. (Your fiscal year may differ from the district's. You may want to review your resource allocations for schools further in advance so that, for example, you can identify resources from your 2020 budget that will be used for activities in the 2020-21 academic year.)

- Confirm details and begin executing on activities identified for current school year.

December–January

- Conduct an informal, mid-year check-in with as any schools or departments you are working with.

January-May

- Identify opportunities for improvement from your perspective for future academic years. If financial resources are required or requested by the schools or district, make those requests no later than May for the next academic year.

Required steps for community partners

- *Background checks:* All guests in Wichita Public Schools are scanned through the HallPass Visitor Management system when entering the building. This completes a basic background check for sexual offenders. All volunteers are required to submit a volunteer registration form that is then submitted for a more thorough, national background screening. For more information on this, please refer to Volunteer and Parent Guide.

- *Donation reporting:* Schools are able to easily accept donations of small in-kind items, including school supplies, food for teachers/students, etc. For donations that require a tax receipt, please work with Holly Wilson in the grants department (hwilson@usd259.net or 973-4461). Significant in-kind donations, including of technology or furniture, should also filter through the grants department for appropriate reporting.

- *Contract or Memorandum of Understanding:* Depending on the type and extent of a partnership, a contract or Memorandum of Understanding may be required or highly suggested. A contract will typically be expected when there is a financial exchange from the district to a partner or when facility usage is involved. An MOU will be recommended in other settings to set expectations for both sides of a partnership and hold all parties accountable to agreements. In other situations, an informal agreement like the Adopt-a-School or Program Plan worksheets may be all that is necessary. Talk with your partner school or department to identify which is recommended for you.

- *Training:* Wichita Public Schools expects all schools and departments inviting volunteers into their buildings to conduct a school- and role-specific training prior to volunteers starting their work. If you wish to have a district-level training for your organization's volunteers in addition to that, contact Alicia Allen at 316-973-4515 or aallen4@usd259.net to arrange it.

Expectations for a successful school-community relationship

Business and Organization Volunteers Should:

- Express a genuine interest in helping students.

- Assist only those teachers who request their help, and work only with pupils referred to them by teachers.

- Attend training sessions if offered.

- Commit themselves to a regular schedule of service; be prompt and dependable, notifying the school when unable to be present.

- Serve under the supervision and direction of the teacher; never substitute for the teacher.

- Not be responsible for discipline, diagnosis, prescription, or evaluation of students.

- Maintain a professional attitude; respect the confidentiality of all information and activities related to students.

- Be willing and able to comply with school rules, and work within the school program.

- Understand and use appropriate channels of communication for comments and suggestions.

HOW WILL YOU EVALUATE THE WORK?

Ongoing informal and formal evaluation of school–community relationships is important to making sure that human and financial resources of both organizations are being used in the most productive ways. While we recommend a mid-year and end-of-year formal check in, we strongly encourage the main contacts for any school-community relationship to have ongoing conversations with partners. Providing in-the-moment feedback is much more effective for reinforcing positive behaviors/programs and allowing time to correct less desirable ones. Our guidance to schools is: *You should never wait until the end of the year to tell a partner that the relationship is not working as desired if you haven't given them opportunities to address and correct concerns throughout the year.*

You are and the school representatives are encouraged to determine what type of evaluation or check in is most effective for your relationships. In the following section, we have provided a few examples of evaluation options that schools have access to use.

Mid-Year Partner Check-In

This simple form can be used to check in with partners of any type as you move into the winter/spring semester to ensure that the relationship is on a good trajectory and will finish the year strong.

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MID-YEAR CHECK-IN

Have there been any updates to the provided services? ☐ Yes   ☐ No

If yes, what were the changes? _____

Have there been any updates to the assigned contacts? ☐ Yes   ☐ No

If yes, what were the changes? _____
_____

Is this partnership meeting the needs of the school?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

If no, why? _____
_____

Is this partnership meeting the needs of the partner?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

If no, why? _____
_____

What can be done to improve the partnership? _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

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End-of-Year Check In

This form can be used with any partnership type to review how the year went and confirm the organization's and school's intent to continue with the partnership the following academic year.

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END-OF-YEAR CHECK-IN

Have there been any updates to the provided services?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

If yes, what were the changes? _____

Have there been any updates to the assigned contacts?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

If yes, what were the changes? _____

_____

Has this partnership met the needs of the school?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

If no, why? _____

_____

Has this partnership met the needs of the partner?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

If no, why? _____

_____

Will this partnership be renewed for the next school year?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

If yes, what can be done to improve the partnership? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

If no, why? _____

_____

_____

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Inquiry-Based Evaluation

This evaluation option may be best for the volunteer and partner site coordinator to complete and then share with school leadership and partner contacts. Another option would be to have a member of Strategic Communications work with you on the evaluation as a neutral, third-party and review the results with both school and partner staff.

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PARTNERSHIP EVALUATION

Questions to ask the partner

- Was your experience as a partner positive and satisfying? If yes, what made it so? If no, what could have been done better on the school's side?

- Were the principal and building staff appreciative of your organization's efforts? How did they demonstrate that?

- Was the partnership well-defined? What was missing once planning moved into implementation?

- Did the school provide value to your organization? How so?

- Did the partnership achieve the education objectives established? Your organizational objectives?

- Would you continue this partnership?

Questions to ask school stakeholders

- How did students benefit from this program?

- How do students in this program compare with others not in the program?

- Does the program align with the school curriculum? Where are there gaps?

- Can this program survive without outside funding and volunteers?

- What short-term gains does the program offer?

- Does the program respond to objectives set in the beginning?

- Would you continue this partnership?

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WHAT MAKES SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS UNIQUE?

Businesses and organizations that are interested in partnering with Wichita Public Schools should be aware of some key aspects of the school world that make working with us unique. These aspects may first appear to be barriers to partnering, but most can be addressed when both parties understand each other's needs. The items listed below are some that you'll encounter when first having conversations with a school or district representative.

Logistical

School schedules

- Students are required to be in the classroom for a specific number of days and hours each year, impacting the number of field trips that can be accommodated each year.

- School schedules are set to best accommodate student and transportation needs. You can find the start and end times for each school on the [district's website](#). Opportunities to volunteer with students through the district will generally be limited to those school hours. (We can recommend partner after school programs to volunteer with if those times don't work for you and your employees.)

- Within the school day, schools have master schedules that determine which grade levels are in which classes at certain times of day. These schedules are set to accommodate all the "specials" students participate in (PE, Library, Music, Art), as well as lunch and other school-based activities. Schools may request that certain programs or volunteer activities coincide with the time for the most closely-related block of learning. These master schedules may be different at every school.

Transportation

- District transportation is operated on a three-tier system, serving schools that start at 7 a.m., 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. A certain number of buses is set aside for charter trips, or school field trips.

- Due to ongoing shortages in bus drivers, the availability of buses for field trips is limited. Therefore, field trips can only be arranged during limited hours. The students will be picked up no earlier than 9:30 a.m. and must be dropped off no later than 1:30 p.m. Most field trips must take place between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. for that reason.

- Some students with special needs will require special accommodations for transportation to be able to join in any off-site activities.

- Many students rely on bus transportation to get to and from school. To create and plan before or after-school activities, partners should be aware of what time the last bus leaves the school so that students don't miss their ride.

Food for students

If an off-site activity is being planned during a school's lunch period, there are a few items that partners need to be aware of:

- ***Allergies:*** Students may have a variety of allergies or other dietary concerns that make lunch or snacks more complicated. Some to take note of include allergies to peanuts/nuts, gluten (wheat, rye, barley and oats) and dairy.

- ***Health:*** Some students may have health conditions that require food to be provided on a specific schedule and in certain quantities or types. Can your planned activity allow chaperones to accommodate those needs for students?

- **Free/Reduced Eligibility:** Almost 75% of WPS students qualify for free or reduced lunch. That means that if they are at school during their lunch period, they'll receive food according to that plan. If an off-site activity requires students to purchase lunch, is it affordable for all or most families? Do they have an option to bring their own?

Financial guidelines and budgets
- The district's budget is approved annually in August for a July 1-June 30 fiscal year. However, the budget development process begins in the spring. Partnerships that require a significant financial contribution by the district to implement should be started early in the spring to be given priority consideration.

- Similarly, schools set their preliminary budgets in the spring for the next academic year. This includes setting aside dollars for field trips, classroom materials, technology or anything else that might be needed to support partnership work.

- Guidelines exist for what funds can be used on purchasing food through district accounts. If food or snacks need to be part of a partnership, always talk with the school or department before making assumptions about what can or cannot be purchased by the school versus by a partner.

Academic
- **Curriculum planning:** The district has a Curriculum & Instruction team that works to provide a guaranteed, viable curriculum for all students; targeted, innovative and rigorous professional learning; and leadership capacity in the district. This team adopts and provides focus to state standards for learning, and then individual schools and teachers work to implement that in their classrooms. Any partnership or program activity that utilizes classroom time should be planned as far in advance as possible so that the schools and teachers can adjust their curriculum plan appropriately to still move students toward proficiency in their grade level by year end.

- **Accreditation:** The Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA) is the state's K-12 accrediting model. KESA accredits at the System (district) level to create systemic change within and among school buildings across the district. The Kansas State Board of Education identified five goal areas believed to have direct impact on producing successful high school graduates. These goals are: Social-Emotional Factors Measured Locally, Kindergarten Readiness, Individual Plans of Study, High School Graduation and Postsecondary Success. The KESA model focuses Systems on meeting these goals. For more information, visit the [KSDE website](#) for a fact sheet on accreditation.

- **Licensure:** Teachers from Pre-kindergarten through 12th grade must have a license to educate. There are many types of licenses depending on the situation presented (i.e., emergency substitute licenses for immediate needs). Teachers, counselors, social workers, school psychologists and administrators all have a minimum of a bachelor's degree and often more education to prepare them to lead the work of educating the future generations.

Religious

Wichita Public Schools seeks to maintain and develop partnerships with faith-based and community organizations. We know that partnerships with a public school can bring many benefits and feelings of accomplishment to both parties.

However, this relationship must be handled with great care in order to stay within the parameters of what the law says can or cannot be done. The Constitution requires that public schools remain neutral in all matters involving religion, refraining from conduct that, in the eyes of a reasonable observer, promotes or disparages religion in general or any particular religion.

The following points are adapted from "Public Schools and Religious Communities: A First Amendment Guide," published by the American Jewish Congress, Christian Legal Society and the First Amendment Center. More detailed information is available at www.freedomforum.org.

- Under the First Amendment, public schools must be neutral concerning religion in all activities. All partnerships and partnership activities must remain secular and be related to the public purpose of the activity served by the partnership.

- Any written notices or messaging regarding a partnership activity must remain secular in content.

- School volunteers should be reminded that all conversation with students should remain secular.

- Do not pray with students or encourage prayer.

- Do not preach about faith while participating in a partnership activity.

- Do not prohibit a student from speaking about religion.

- Participation in programs is not limited to religious groups. Schools must be open to participation by all responsible community groups.

- A student's grades, class ranking or participation in school programs cannot be affected by the student's willingness or unwillingness to participate in faith-based partnership activities.

- A student's religious beliefs will not prohibit that student from being part of a faith-based partnership activity.

- To the extent reasonably possible, partnership activities conducted at a faith-based facility should be performed in rooms without overt religious icons or symbols. However, neither public school nor church staff should cover icons or remove them from the room. Rooms containing proselytizing imagery or materials should be avoided.

- Faith-based and community partnerships should be detailed in writing.

- Any products or items distributed to students or citizens (such as T-shirts, pens, etc.) should not possess any wording or logo identifying either USD 259 or the faith-based organization.

- Any questions concerning the application of these guidelines to any particular situation should be addressed to Suzy Finn at 316-973-4630 or sfinn@usd259.net.

Thank you!

Updated January 22, 2024