

Employers Can Support Education

Two groups of people exercise the greatest influence over the lives of adults in American culture: their children, and their employers. As parents, adults manage their schedules with their children themselves. As employees, however, their employment controls their schedules.

Even the smallest employers can be “**patrons of education**” by encouraging and supporting employee/parents to attend school-related events. The cost of allowing an employee to leave the job to meet with a child’s teacher is as much a donation to higher education as a cash gift to a state university. Posting a notice of a financial aid workshop on the company bulletin board can reach parents who never see notices sent home in student backpacks.

As **Maine’s Compact for Higher Education** (www.collegeforme.com) illustrates, business and industry in Maine are recognizing the need for educated workers by investing time and resources to promote college access for adult employees. By recognizing employees as **parents** and parents as their children’s **first teachers**, employers can encourage more Maine parents to pursue higher education goals for their children.

GEAR UP can join with employers to recognize higher education goals and develop affordable strategies to encourage employees-as-parents to support their children by participating in their education and higher education plans.

Patrons of Education

Here are some ideas for employers to consider:

- ◆ Display college promotion materials on company walls and windows.
- ◆ Offer flexible scheduling for attendance at school events and college tours.
- ◆ Invite guidance counselors, college admissions staff, financial aid experts, or **GEAR UP** staff to answer questions at lunchtimes, breaks or other employer sponsored events.
- ◆ Announce financial aid workshops on paycheck stubs and in newsletters.
- ◆ Place **GEAR UP** information displays in employee lounges or break areas.
- ◆ Invite employees to use company computers to complete financial aid applications. Those who are computer-savvy can help those who aren’t.
- ◆ Explore Life-long Learning Accounts (LILAs) and college loan repayment plans as employee benefits.



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