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BCC: Employer engagement in education boosts students' job prospects

As business and education leaders come together (Thursday) at the British Chambers of Commerce's (BCC) first Business and Education Summit*, the BCC has published findings from a major UK-wide survey of over 3,500 businesses and educators highlighting the significant benefits of partnerships between schools and businesses.

The vast majority of educational establishments (88%) partnering with businesses said the most important benefit was improved outcomes for their pupils.

The education leaders surveyed also stated that employer engagement has a clear benefit for their pupils, including: greater awareness of the soft skills that businesses value (74%); increased motivation in lessons (73%); better careers information (52%); and lessons which are more relevant and connected to the world of work (46%).

Business leaders reported that the main reasons for partnering with a school were to demonstrate Corporate Social Responsibility (43%), to identify future employees (38%), and to increase awareness of different jobs and career paths (35%).

However, both business and education leaders reported a number of barriers preventing them from building lasting and effective partnerships. For businesses and educators respectively, this included staff time (53% / 64%), and administrative burdens (36% / 41%). Businesses also cited cost as a factor (38%) while some educators identified a lack of interest from business (42%).

Commenting, John Longworth, BCC Director General, said:

"Long-lasting and effective partnerships between schools and employers improve young people's job prospects and provide businesses with the skills they need.

"Our survey highlights the many benefits of employer engagement for businesses, educators and pupils, and there are already some great examples of effective school and business partnerships across the country**.

"However, successive governments have focused too narrowly on academic outcomes alone, allowing the gap between education and business to widen in the name of testing. We must overcome the perceived hurdles,

such as staff time constraints and a lack of interest from business, to encourage more schools and firms to bridge the gap.

“We are proud to bring together leaders from the world of education and business to discuss how we can overcome the obstacles and promote partnerships at our first Business and Education Summit. It’s time for business and education to stand together and make skills shortages a thing of the past.”

Further findings from the survey:

- Just over eight in ten (81%) educational establishments surveyed partner with businesses to provide workplace activities.
- Educational establishments partner with different types of businesses but local small businesses are most popular (76%), with local larger businesses just behind (66%). This is closely followed by charities and not-for-profits (66%), public sector bodies (60%) and national businesses (52%).
- Just over half of businesses surveyed (54%) partner with educational establishments. 85% of businesses that say they partner with schools and colleges have a relationship with two or more.
- Of those businesses surveyed we found that a greater proportion of large firms currently have links with schools. 82% of large businesses partner with an education establishment, in comparison to 68% of medium firms, 55% of small businesses and 39% of micros.
- Business and education partnerships tend to be with institutions for older students. Secondary schools (70%), FE colleges (55%) and universities (48%) account for the majority of partnerships. Only 18% of primary schools and 4% of nurseries partner with a business.

Ends

Notes to editors:

*The BCC Business and Education Summit, taking place at the BT Centre in London, brings together leaders from the world of business and education to debate how schools and businesses can build lasting and effective partnerships. Speakers include Chief Inspector at OFSTED Sir Michael Wilshaw, Kings College London Professor Alison Wolf, former Secretary of State for Education Lord Baker, General Secretary of the National Association of Headteachers Russell Hobby and many more.

More information: <http://www.britishchambers.org.uk/business/events/business-and-education-summit.html>

**In November 2015, Mark Rutherford School in Bedfordshire picked up the prize for best Business and Education Partnership at the BCC Chamber Awards. The school has a partnership programme comprising 160 local businesses and community organisations aimed at preparing young people for work.

More info: <http://www.markrutherford.beds.sch.uk/>

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