

Partner Profile: *S. Grove and Associates*

Perhaps the biggest advantage of the Partners in Education program is that people volunteering in New Haven schools through the program are supported by their employers.

At Jepson Magnet School, for example, among their volunteers last school year were five who showed up every week for one hour each and were especially consistent about it.

The difference? They all were employees at S. Grove and Associates accounting firm, all went to Jepson during the workday while they were on the clock, and all were encouraged and supported by their boss, Steve Grove.

S. Grove and Associates is typical of the nearly 100 businesses and other organizations who partner with New Haven schools through the Public Education Fund's Partners In Education program. Instead of making a financial contribution to schools as a faceless business, it supports employees at the business who take time out of the workday to have an effect at the partner school.

"Some people make a lot of promises, but I've been pleasantly surprised," says Terri Santillo, curriculum coordinator at Jepson.

"That has a real impact on kids. If you say you're going to be here next week, they look forward to that. Here you have an adult having shown an interest in a kid, and they thrive on that."

Dori Link, a marketing assistant at S. Grove and Associates, who coordinated the partnership, said she saw something similar when she went to help with reading lessons every week: "It's great that they get so excited when they see you. They wave to you, even if they're in circle time. They get disappointed if you don't come."

Mostly what the S. Grove and Associates employee volunteers do is assist in existing classroom plans-tutoring and reading aloud, for example. They are the extra pair of hands filling in the cracks says Santillo.

Link says, "Whatever they need me to do, I'll do it."

But the most exciting school/business partnerships bring a little bit of expertise from the adult world into the classroom for something extra. For example, Steve Grove taught some accounting classes for Jepson students last year. The company also hosted a luncheon for the 15 graduating eighth-grade students at the Quinnipiac Club on June 15.

And there are partnerships that work the other way, bringing students into the adult working world to gain a larger understanding of what their studies are about. If you think New Haven public school students would benefit from studying with employees at your business or organization, telephone Beverly Chevalier, the Partners In Education Program Associate, at 865-3255.