

THE WEIGH IN

Should local business leaders be more involved and vocal about various issues concerning Memphis City Schools?

THIS FEATURE CONTAINS RESPONSES

from industry professionals to questions posed by Memphis Business Journal. **To weigh in**, contact sections editor Jane Donahoe at jdonahoe@bizjournals.com. Comments may be edited for content and length.



Kristee Bell

Director, Powerlines Community Network
Agape Child & Family Services

Yes. It's imperative that business leaders offer "positive" involvement in Memphis City Schools. The future of our city, including corporations, rests in the hands of our young people. For us to compete globally, it's going to take a commitment, from the community at large, to support MCS.

One way that every business leader can get involved is through mentoring. With a mentor, students are 73 percent more likely to achieve their goals and 59 percent more likely to get better grades. One of the most important partnerships we have in our organization is with the MCS Connect mentoring program. Our volunteers, including business leaders, are stepping in to mentor students at their schools. We always need more business leaders to take this opportunity to truly make a difference in a child's life.



Larry Colbert

President
Junior Achievement of Memphis and the Mid-South

Absolutely. These represent the most urgent issues for our area's largest school system. Local business leaders of both large and small organizations need to get involved and voice concerns because today's youth will be their future employees and business leaders. They also need to keep in mind that the leadership of Memphis City Schools needs encouragement too, not just complaints.

It's simple: A business, regardless of the type or size, is only as good as its surrounding community and education system, which will translate into an ill-prepared workforce if not properly supported. Not having quality workers means increased unemployment, government subsidies and crime rates and an overall poorly performing community.

Additionally, a poor education system is unattractive to companies looking to relocate to Memphis.



Rajiv Grover

Dean, Fogelman College of Business & Economics
University of Memphis

If the community is not taking care of the schools, who else will take care of them? For some reason, our situation is such that we definitely need to be more involved than any city I can think of. We need to come together and resolve problems rather than hoping somebody else will, or complaining and blaming some other party for not doing their job. Not only do parents need to be involved, but the entire community needs to be involved because everyone can bring something different to the table.

Parents and teachers should work together in educating students. Teachers are wary that parents will complain about a teacher being too strict. Both should be involved to educate and discipline their child and see eye-to-eye instead of shifting burdens to each other. Other communities like U of M's education school can provide continuing education to teachers.



Harold Wingood

Executive director
Memphis Academy of Science and Engineering

At the end of the day, what we're all working toward is workforce development. If Memphis is going to be a vital and viable city down the road, we need highly skilled and intelligent college graduates. If business leaders can engage in meaningful dialogue, provide input and drive student achievement, everyone benefits.

Everything has to be student centered and driven by the bottom line. We can gain a lot from people who do this on a day-to-day basis and do it successfully. But it's important to remember that we're all stakeholders in successful education outcomes. That's just as true for captains of industry and business leaders as it is for the parents of our children. Everyone needs to be at the table and engaged in that conversation to derive meaningful and positive outcomes.