

# METRO

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## Coalition brings businesses to schools' aid

■ Hand-in-Hand opens a campaign to provide public education with new sources of volunteer time and money

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A funding cutback here, a rise in education costs there, and Oregon schools are in an increasingly painful pinch.

So what's a school to do when staffing gets cut while student numbers increase and its needs become more diverse? One traditional answer is to get parents more involved, whether as volunteers or simply taking more notice of their children's education.

In the fallout from Measure 5, schools created legions of active parent volunteers. But with more cutbacks coming, schools need to find a new source of assistance.

Enter local businesses. Although business communities have long been partners with schools, a recently formed organization is trying to make business participation in schools the rule rather than the exception.

The Hand-in-Hand Coalition, created in eight cities across the country in 1985, brings a new idea to the world of education service organizations such as Junior Achievement and Start Making a Reader Today.

Through a program called 8 for Kids, Hand-in-Hand is trying to serve as a matchmaker between businesses and volunteer organizations.

"We're trying to send a message to businesses that this is something they can, and should, do," said Rosemary Yusca, the Portland director for Hand-in-Hand. "We try to encourage businesses to give their employees eight hours of paid leave time per year, and then we introduce those employees to appropriate programs."

The 8 for Kids campaign kicked off with the National Take Our Par-



KATHRIN SCOTT/The Oregonian  
Jason Pompel (second from left), a process engineer for Wacker Siltronic Corp. and a volunteer with the Hand-in-Hand Coalition, directs a Benson High School class. Students (from left) Aaron Johnson, Tran Pham, Joseph Bradley Forrest and Ira Knapp are working on advertising for a basketball tournament.

ents to School week in November. One of the program's main goals is to prompt small- and medium-size businesses to give their employees time off to be in schools.

Yusca said 8 for Kids works the other way around, too — encouraging schools to reach out and engage the business communities. This fall Hand-in-Hand gave 14 schools \$500 grants, designed to increase community activity in schools.

Some school officials say they can already see Hand-in-Hand making a difference.

"Hand-in-Hand increases the visibility of our needs, which is an invaluable service," said Thomas Kalle, the school-community program director for North Clackamas School District.

"Businesses of all sizes need to get the message that it's easy to be a good corporate citizen these days.

and Hand-in-Hand is getting that message out."

"A lot of times it's the little things that make the biggest difference," Kalle said. "Like donating some old equipment, or allowing a couple of students to do job shadows. Kids need to see the world outside of school walls, and businesses can provide that."

For the next couple of months, 8

for Kids will evaluate surveys of area businesses and decide how best to increase business activity in schools.

"Once we do that, we hope to be the one that makes businesses wake up and realize they can do a lot for schools," Yusca said. "Next year, we'd like to give out twice as many grants and have them paid for by businesses and not out of our pocket."

### HAND-IN-HAND

The Hand-in-Hand Coalition is a national coalition working to strengthen community involvement in education. The 8 for Kids campaign is designed to increase business involvement in schools.

■ **IN PORTLAND:** The Portland site sponsors for Hand-in-Hand are Children First for Oregon and the Urban League of Portland.

■ **FOR MORE INFORMATION:** Call Children First at 294-1456 or the Urban League at 280-2611.