

District Record

Canton City Sustains All Schools' Connections to the National Network

Several studies from researchers at the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University have confirmed that "schools that have been in the National Network of Partnership Schools longer reported higher quality partnership programs." District leaders can play a major role in whether or not schools remain active in the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) and to what extent schools develop their partnership programs over time.

One Ohio school district, Canton City Schools, has actively supported all of its schools to sustain connections with the National Network of Partnership Schools and is beginning to see results for students and families. "There is no doubt that student achievement has increased as parents have been encouraged to get more involved," stated James Irvin, Director of Government Programs for Canton City Schools.

Canton City Schools' approach to develop excellent and permanent partnership programs in all 25 elementary, middle, and high schools can be summarized in three words: knowledge, leadership, and resources.

Knowledge

Prior to each school year, new employees of the district have the opportunity to attend two staff development sessions: one on the six types of involvement and one on Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) interactive homework. The district's Title I Family Involvement Coordinator, Suzanne Katusin, has distributed to all school leaders and staff a Home/School Partnership folder that con-

tains the district policy on family involvement that used NNPS research as a guide, copies of NNPS research studies, and the framework of six types of involvement. To spread the word districtwide, the local cable network broadcast a segment featuring Katusin and Irvin discussing the six types of involvement. This segment integrated clips from the NNPS video throughout the discussion.

Leadership

With broad-based awareness, the district has focused on building sustainable leadership on partnerships. A district-level Home/School Partnership Action Team was formed in 2001. A teacher, parent, administrator, or community representative from each school serves on this district leadership team to plan, implement, and evaluate partnership activities. The team's monthly meetings help team members develop a greater understanding of the six types of involvement, learn about TIPS interactive homework, and develop action plans for partnerships linked to student outcomes. According to Katusin, this district leadership team has "developed a cohesive program and improved the quality of practices throughout the district."

Resources

Canton City Schools has consistently linked its partnership program to the research-based resources available from NNPS. Each school Action Team for Partnerships writes a one-year goal-oriented action plan (Form G in the Network's *Handbook*) linked to the school's Continuous Improvement Plan. In addition, school action teams are required to submit a copy of the annual NNPS *UPDATE* survey and the End-of-Year Evaluation to the district office, which analyzes the surveys for evidence of change.

The district has also sent a team of leaders to the NNPS Leadership Development Conference in Baltimore. The team consisted of two district office leaders, an elementary school principal, a middle school principal, and a high school representative. Empowered by the conference, two of the principals returned to their Action Teams for Partnerships to create a transition program between their schools.

Canton City Schools strives to attain high levels of excellence for its students. By sustaining connections with all of its schools and the National Network of Partnership Schools, the district provides an important layer of support for student success.



Canton City Schools District Leaders for Partnerships
Row 1: Darleen Moss, and Nadine McIlwain. Row 2: James Irvin, Dianne Talarico (Superintendent), Suzanne Katusin (NNPS Key Contact), Deidre K. Stokes-Davis, Patricia Milam, Alice Sloneker, and Cindy Mayle.