

Create Awareness: How Districts Promote their Partnership Programs

It was summer 2003. A new superintendent arrived to the Naperville Community School District 203 in Naperville, IL. The burning question: How would the NNPS district facilitator and her team convince this new leader to embrace the district's existing partnership program?

Whether sparked by a new leader or a new school year, it is so common in education for programs to come and go. However, a number of NNPS district facilitators have shown that promoting their partnership programs can help grow and sustain viable local networks of partnership schools using the NNPS research-based approach.

Among its many promotional strategies, the Family and Community Engagement division in Cleveland, OH stresses the importance of making presentations on its partnership program to the school board, the CEO executive cabinet, and other administrators. By generating awareness among these key stakeholders, more administrators can emphasize to

schools the need to develop partnership programs. As Cleveland's Chief Executive Officer Barbara Byrd-Bennett explained in a letter of support for the division's efforts, "we know that we must help our schools change the way they think of school, family, and community partnerships."

Seattle Public Schools uses its Web site to spread the word about its partnership program. From the school district's main Web site, you are never more than two clicks away from learning about family involvement, including the district's membership and its recent NNPS Partnership Award. The site offers partnership information and resources for educators and parents. Visit www.seattleschools.org/area/fam to learn more.

Back to the burning question in Naperville. The district facilitator and her Core Team used a multi-pronged approach to promote the district's partnership program to the new Superintendent. In meetings with the Superintendent, the district facilitator and parent leaders outlined the

program's history, current mission, key goals, and future events. These meetings were supplemented with program documentation organized in a binder for easy reference. The Core Team also invited the Superintendent to the annual district-wide orientation for new and returning Action Teams for Partnerships, and accompanied him to the NNPS Leadership Development Conference in Baltimore. Additional awareness strategies continued throughout the school year.

Cleveland, Seattle, and Naperville are three examples of NNPS districts creating awareness about their partnership programs through the use of technology, printed materials, and personal connections. For more strategies, read an excerpt from the *NNPS District Inventory of Leadership & Facilitation Strategies* (see below), which is part of the newly launched District Leadership Campaign (see page 1). Look through the items to identify strategies to create awareness of your partnership program.

NNPS Inventory of Leadership and Facilitation Strategies

Objective: Create awareness. Actively promote the partnership program to all key stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, families, and community groups.

- Convene a one-on-one meeting with the district superintendent to discuss the goals for the partnership program.
- Conduct presentations about the district's goals for its partnership program to the school board, parent advisory council, and/or other key leadership groups.
- Conduct awareness sessions for school principals on the partnership program, including the assistance that will be provided to all schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATP).
- Distribute an informational packet about the district's program and its affiliation with the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University (NNPS).
- Accompany school principals and/or key district-level stakeholders to conferences related to program initiatives (e.g., NNPS Leadership Development Conference in Baltimore).
- Announce the district's program on the school district Web site.
- Conduct presentations in schools for school improvement teams, PTAs, faculties, and/or others to inform them of the district's program.
- Meet individually with each school principal at the start of the school year to clarify the work of the district facilitator(s) and how the principal will support the program in their school.

Source: Jansorn, N.R. & Epstein, J.L. (2005). *District Program of Partnerships: Inventory of Leadership & Facilitation Strategies*. National Network of Partnership Schools' District Leadership Campaign.