

## Leadership Line

### The Power of Hope and the Need for Change: How District Leaders Help Schools Improve their Partnership Programs

Talk across the country – regardless of political preferences – has been about the power of hope and the need for change. Many schools are eager for changes that produce active and successful students and families who are hopeful about their children's futures. NNPS is learning that district leaders are important change agents for transforming schools, engaging parents, and increasing student success. District leaders for partnerships are making a difference by guiding and encouraging school principals, teachers, and families to work together on school-based Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) to enrich and enliven school programs focused on academic growth for all children.

It is not a coincidence that all of the NNPS 2008 Partnership School Award winners are located in districts that also won NNPS 2008 Partnership District Awards (see p. 1 of this issue). The “nested” support system of district leaders who assist their schools makes it more likely that policies for parental involvement are implemented in all schools and that all families are informed and engaged in improving schools and student learning.

In *Promising Partnership Practices 2008*, twenty districts described useful and adaptable activities that strengthen leadership at the district level and that assist schools with their work on partnerships. Leaders reported ways to work with colleagues across departments, find resources to help schools improve partnerships, and strengthen relationships with many stakeholders who care about education in their communities. Here are a few examples.

#### Conduct District-Level Partnership Activities

**St. Paul Public School District** in Minnesota partnered with the public library, Mayor's Office, and United Way to help get children ready for kindergarten. As part of the Blast Off to Kindergarten program, a team of district and city officials developed and distributed about 5,000 information-filled backpacks to families whose children were scheduled to enter kindergarten in the fall.

Partnership leaders from **Naperville Community Unit District 203** in Illinois helped budding entrepre-

#### St. Paul Public School District



Row 1: Joe Munnich (NNPS Key Contact), Betty Gerlach, and Abdisalam Adam.

Row 2: Bee Lee, Mary Guerra, Elizabeth Hoodecheck, Yusef Mgeni, Donald Sysyn, Pablo Matamoros, and Pierre Cejudo.

neurs envision their futures at a conference with business partners. The district's Business Partnership Forum on Entrepreneurship brought 65 high school students and 55 small business owners together to discuss finance, marketing, and how to turn a business plan into a reality.

A refresher course on the social graces helped employees of **Virginia**

*(Continued on page 10)*

#### Naperville Community School District 203



Row 1: Chuck Freundt, Dr. Alan Leis (Superintendent), Patrick Gaskin, Kitty Murphy, and Kitty Ryan. Row 2: Kathy Meyers, Erin Anderson, Theresa Tinker, Jessica Jozwiak, Nanette Awe, Nina Menis (NNPS Key Contact), Peggy Kulling, Yvonne Janvrin, Jeannie Matula, Julie Kassen, and Dr. Melanie Raczkiwicz.

#### Virginia Beach City Public Schools



Melissa T. McQuarrie (NNPS Key Contact) and Karen L. Clevinger (NNPS Key Contact).

NOTE: Photos are of Partnership District Award Winners.

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**Beach City Public Schools** communicate better with parents, including those who may feel unwelcome at school. The district's First Impression Training gave more than 500 district employees ideas and reminders about telephone and e-mail etiquette, as well as tips for working with distressed parents who have concerns about their children.

In **Lowndes County School District** in Valdosta, Georgia, parents were invited to Lunch & Learn sessions at their workplaces as part of the district's Helping Your Child Succeed initiative. Last year, at least fifty parents gained a better understanding of how important they are to their children's educational success and how to stay involved, even when their children go to middle and high school.

### Lowndes County School District



Left to Right: Greg Justice, LaVerne Rome (NNPS Key Contact), and Diana McAhroy.

In the **Tacoma Public School District**, more than 150 businesses in Washington opened their doors to middle school students to prove that math is important. Show Me the Math encouraged students to visit different businesses in their community to see how mathematics is used outside the classroom in real-world situations.

### Facilitate Schools' ATPs to Improve School-Based Partnership Programs

District leaders in NNPS are expected to assist all elementary, middle, and high school to strengthen their own program, plans, and goal-linked practices so that all families remain involved in their children's education every year. Here are a few examples.

New chairs and co-chairs of schools' Action Teams for Partnerships in **Pasco School District** in Washington received a primer on effective team leadership last August during the annual, summer ATP Chair Retreat. Pasco's leaders also helped schools improve their plans and practices of partnership by providing One Year Plan Support for ATPs. This included a short outline of the elements of a solid One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships.

In **St. Charles Parish** in Louisiana, where 8 schools are NNPS members, district leaders for partnerships helped school teams focus on Connecting Parent Involvement to

School Improvement and school goals for student achievement. They provided data and creative activities for team members to take other people's perspectives to improve communications with families.

**Naperville School District's** leaders for partnerships conducted a Parent/Principal Networking Session Focus on Diversity. The goal was to consider how to close achievement gaps between groups of minority and majority students. Based on data, schools' partnership teams spent time thinking and planning ways to communicate better with African American and Hispanic parents about how to support their children's success.

District leaders are helping to change partnership programs and practices for the better. Read more about these and other leadership activities on the NNPS website [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org) in Success Stories and the collections of *Promising Partnership Practices*. ♦

Marsha D. Greenfeld  
[mgreenfeld@csos.jhu.edu](mailto:mgreenfeld@csos.jhu.edu)

### Pasco School District



Row 1: Jessica Wallace (NNPS Key Contact), Liz Flynn (Executive Director of Student Achievement), and Lorraine Landon (NNPS Key Contact).  
Row 2: Dr. Dennis Maguire (Associate Superintendent), Bill Leggett (School Board President), Saul Martinez (School Board Member), Sergio Jara (School Board Student Representative), Sherry Lancon (School Board Member), Saundra Hill (Superintendent), John Hergert (School Board Member), and Pete Felsted (School Board Member).

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