

District Leaders Communicate with Schools to Improve their Partnership Programs

District leaders not only need a vision and policy on school, family, and community partnerships, but also must communicate—intentionally, consistently, and effectively—with school-based Action Teams for Partnerships. The professional development and on-going technical assistance that District Leaders for Partnerships provide can help all schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) plan and implement activities that engage families and community partners in ways that contribute to students' success in school.

District Leaders Become Experts on Partnerships

Research shows that strong district-level leadership for partnerships adds significantly to the quality of schools' programs of family and community involvement—over and above what a school may do on its own (Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon, 2011). When expert district leaders prepare ATPs and facilitate their work and progress, the schools conduct more outreach activities, address more challenges to involve all families, and have higher quality partnership programs.

The strongest district leaders communicate in various ways to advance the work of their schools' ATPs. They may start by communicating with all schools about the importance of using research-based approaches in practice to strengthen family and community involvement. They may continue by providing NNPS-based team training workshops, helping school teams understand the functions of the six types of involvement, and communicating with each principal about his/her support for the work of school's

ATP. On-going connections and advanced training workshops help schools' ATPs to strengthen their capacities to work effectively with their own students' families.

Good Communications by District Leaders

Here are a few of many examples of district leaders' communications with schools' ATPs to help them improve their partnership programs.

Help ATP Co-Chairs Build Leadership Skills

District Leaders for Partnerships in **Pasco School District** in Washington work together to provide on-going professional development to all schools' ATPs. The district leaders recognize that the Co-Chairs of ATPs have important responsibilities and need on-going guidance and encouragement to lead their school teams. In 2011, the district leaders selected the theme of *Empowering and Developing Leaders*.

At quarterly cluster meetings, the district leaders not only asked school leaders to share best practices, but also conducted engaging activities that helped the ATP Co-Chairs learn new approaches to communicate clearly with team members and to delegate tasks to share leadership with other team members for activities at their schools.

Customize Technical Assistance to Meet Schools' Needs

Leaders for Partnerships in **Naper-ville Community District 203** in Illinois noticed that after the initial

team training workshops, the school-based partnership teams began to move forward at different rates. Some teams made swifter progress than others. The variation in the schools' work and progress meant that District Leaders for Partnerships needed to provide small group workshops to help schools meet specific challenges or address questions they were facing at the time. This makes the guidance to schools more meaningful, as the school teams or chairpersons are spending time on issues that matter to them. The content of customized workshops should help each school take next steps in strengthening teamwork, reaching out to more families, and connecting involvement activities with results for students.

Communicate in Multi-Languages

Today, many if not most schools serve families who speak many languages other than English at home. According to the latest UPDATE survey, an average of 4.7 languages are spoken by students and families in NNPS schools, and many schools have even more diverse populations. Federal, state, and local policies require schools to communicate with all students' families in languages they understand. This remains a challenge in many places.

Madison Metropolitan School District in Wisconsin serves culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students. There, District Leaders for Partnerships are working with others to strengthen connections with the families of English Language Learners through the *Intercambio Language and Cultural Exchange Program*.

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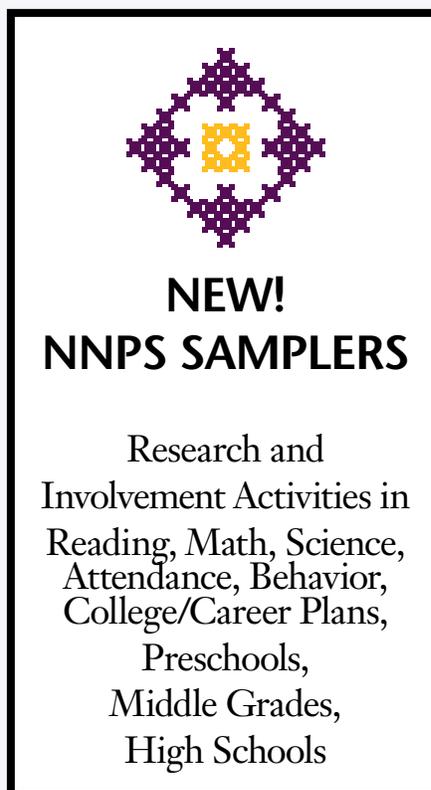
Two New NNPS Resources Give Ideas for School Programs

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ferent families (indeed, all families) in their children's education. Each chapter provides step-by-step descriptions for conducting the activities and handouts or communications in English and in Spanish. Many of these are "downloadable" for easy printing at no cost from the publisher's website with the purchase of the book. To review the book, go to: www.eyeneducation.com. NNPS members receive a 10% discount if they use the code MULTIFAM with their orders.

New Samplers. Nine booklets of research and practical ideas for improving partnership programs and for focusing on goals for student success are posted on the NNPS website and are available in print form. The *Samplers* (by Marsha Greenfeld and colleagues, NNPS, March 2012) present ways to engage families and the community to help students improve *Reading, Math, and Science* skills, *Attendance, Behavior, and College/Career Plans*, and to help *Preschools, Middle Level Schools, and High Schools* improve their partnership programs.

Each *Sampler* describes the importance of family and community involvement for the selected topic or goal and includes a summary of related research. Each booklet features ten basic and creative activities—such as family nights, workshops, volunteer activities, and student work—that have been implemented by members of NNPS and reported over the years in annual collections of *Promising Partnership Practices*. Because there are, now, over 1200 activities in the annual books, it should help school and district leaders to have a sample of ten activities to adopt or adapt for their diverse communities. The nine booklets of research and involvement activities are posted at [NNPS Samplers](#). Packets of print copies also are available (see order form on the website).



Leadership Line

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Madison's goals are three-fold: (1) To improve communications among parents and teachers; (2) to help educators learn about families' cultures so that culturally-responsive teaching practices will make classwork more meaningful, and (3) to increase students' literacy achievement.

See these and other district and organization leadership activities to communicate with district colleagues and with school teams are in each edition of *Promising Partnership Practices* at www.partnershipschoools.org in the section Success Stories.

References

Epstein, J. L., Galindo, C. & Sheldon, S. B. (2011). Levels of leadership: Effects of district and school leaders on the quality of school programs of family and community involvement. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 47, 462-495.

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Meeting the Challenge

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an NNPS facilitator or researcher to discuss their school's *UPDATE* data, the year's progress, and next steps for improving their program of family and community involvement.

References

Epstein, J. L., & Sheldon, S. B. (2009). Evaluate your partnership program. Chapter 9, pp. 330-341, in *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action, third edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

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