
District Record

District Members Discuss Evaluation Issues at Special-Topics Workshop

The first special-topics meeting for districts in the National Network of Partnership Schools was held at Johns Hopkins University in October 1998, with 20 districts represented. Districts attending the meeting on evaluation issues were: Allegany County, MD; Baltimore City: Central Administration, Northeast, Northern, Northwest, Southeast, and Southwest Areas, MD; Canton, OH; Covington, KY; Howard County, MD; Los Angeles County, CA; Los Angeles Unified; Polytechnic/North Hollywood, Lincoln/Wilson Clusters, and Annenberg Metropolitan Project, CA; Monongalia, WV; Naperville, IL; Rush-Henrietta, NY; San Antonio, TX; Taunton, MA; and Ypsilanti, MI.

The meeting focused on issues and concerns about the evaluation of school and district partnership programs and other topics of interest. District members and Network staff discussed the districts' goals and requirements for evaluating partnership programs. Two common goals crossed district boundaries. These were to measure (1) whether and how much partnership programs helped schools reach specific school improvement goals, including higher student achievement; and (2) whether and how much partnerships with families and communities improved or increased over time.

Districts reported that they evaluate their partnership programs by using school surveys, teacher and principal evaluations, schools' One-Year Action Plans, standardized tests, attendance records, and sign-in sheets for volunteers and for parents

attending events. Most stated they need help in using these and other tools more effectively.

In another session, district members reviewed Network evaluation tools and shared ideas about how these might help them with their evaluation goals. The tools included: Starting Points, End-of-Year Evaluation Forms A and B, the Focus on Results cross-site studies, and UPDATE surveys. Participants generally agreed that they could use these tools more extensively in evaluating the implementation and results of partnerships. For example, one district reported using Starting Points at the beginning of each school year to chart progress. Another reported using the End-of-Year Evaluation Form at mid-year to reflect on what needed to be done by the end of the school year.

Other topics included a discussion of the Network's expectations of district leaders, and Key Contacts' expectations of the Network. It was agreed that districts could help their schools better understand their direct link to the National Network in order to facilitate greater use of Network services. In turn, district leaders expressed a need for more communication with the Network and with each other. They also want more information on grants, funding, and research results, and more workshops on special topics, such as the TIPS interactive homework process.

A meeting was held in November, 1998 for State Key Contacts on similar evaluation topics, with

attention to state-level interests in assessing the implementation and results of partnerships. Attending were state members from California, Connecticut, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, Utah, and Wisconsin.

Another special-topics workshop for districts and states will be conducted November 4, 1999 to continue to develop leadership skills and high quality programs of school, family, and community partnerships. District and State Key Contacts may suggest workshop topics (e-mail nmps@csos.jhu.edu or call Karen Salinas at 410-516-8818).

Bulletin Board on Web

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"Members are eager to exchange ideas about their successes and challenges," said Communications Director, Karen Clark Salinas. "We hope that members will use the Bulletin Board to ask each other questions about partnership activities and materials."

Over the past two years, members' visits to the Network's web site have increased from 42% to 87% of states, from 22% to 42% of districts, and from 5% to 19% of schools. According to Key Contacts' reports on the '98 UPDATE surveys, most now have access to the Internet. The Network expects that over the next few years its web site will be an important tool for timely and frequent communications among members. For members who do not have access to the Internet yet, selected questions and answers from the Bulletin Board will be shared in each issue of *Type 2*.