

type 2

Communicating to improve partnerships for student success



NATIONAL NETWORK OF
Partnership Schools
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

Please make copies of *Type 2*
for all members of your
Action Team, Leadership Team,
Improvement Team, and
other interested partners!

Spring, 2001 No. 10

In This Issue

Issues and Insights	2
Improved Website	3
Meeting the Challenge	4
State Line	5
New Members	6
Elementary School Report	7
Partnership Awards	7
Research Brief-TIPS	8
Research Brief-High Schools	9
District Record	10
Middle & High School Report	11
UPDATE	12
Calendar	12

Evaluations Help Districts and Schools Improve the Quality of Partnerships

Longitudinal *UPDATE* data from over 80 districts and over 500 schools in the National Network of Partnership Schools indicate that when districts and schools evaluate their partnership programs, they improve the quality of their work from one year to the next. The findings confirm that evaluation is one *essential element* of successful program development.

Network researchers Joyce Epstein, Laurel Clark, and Frances Van Voorhis analyzed 1999 *UPDATE* data from school districts. Leaders who evaluated their work reported that their districts experienced fewer obstacles to developing their partnership programs, more collegial support, and higher quality partnership programs, overall. After accounting for the districts' 1998 measures, districts that evaluated their programs significantly increased the number and quality of district-level leadership activities, and more actively facilitated their schools' Action Teams for Partnerships.

Network researchers Steven Sheldon and Frances Van Voorhis found that elementary, middle, and high schools that evaluated their work improved the quality of their partnership programs from 1999 to 2000. The analyses accounted for the influential variables of school level (elementary or secondary), the extent of collegial support, and the prior year's program quality—all of which affect program

quality over time. Even with these variables statistically controlled, leaders in schools that evaluated their programs reported more parent volunteers, more parent representatives on school committees, and more teachers who assigned homework that encouraged parent-child interactions.

(Continued on page 10)

Disney Learning Partnership Continues as NNPS Partner

Disney Learning Partnership renewed its grant to the National Network of Partnership Schools to support the work of schools, districts, and states across the country. "We are pleased with the growth of the Network. Its products are helping education leaders 'think new' about family and community involvement for student success," said Laurie Lang, Senior Vice President of Disney Learning Partnership.

The grant supports the Network's staff and the development and dissemination of tools, materials, and services that guide the work of all members. These include *Type 2*, the *Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork* (TIPS) interactive homework program, an ever-expanding website, the annual collection of *Promising Partnership Practices*, the Partnership Awards program, leadership development workshops for new mem-

(Continued on page 5)

Joyce L. Epstein
Director

State and District Alert! Time to “Scale Up” Partnership Programs

All states and school districts in the National Network of Partnership Schools agree to a few research-based requirements to ensure successful programs of school, family, and community partnerships. Two major responsibilities must be fulfilled.

State and district leaders are expected to develop and improve their own leadership on partnerships. Policies should show that partnerships are *important* in mission statements, priorities, and explicit declarations from the superintendent and other leaders. Actions should show that partnerships are *supported* by an excellent staff, collegial connections, adequate resources, and annual written leadership plans for implementing state-wide or district-wide partnership activities.

All states and large districts are expected to name an office or department for school, family, and community partnerships so that everyone knows where leadership and assistance are located. For example, Connecticut created an active Bureau of School-Family-Community Partnerships. Leadership may include awarding competitive grants, conducting training workshops, spotlighting good partnerships, disseminating newsletters, and other activities, as Wisconsin has done for several years.

State and district leaders are expected to facilitate all schools’ development of effective programs of partnership. State leaders may work with regional staff development offices (as Texas and Louisiana do), collaborate with colleagues across departments (as Utah and Washington do), and assist school district leaders (as Maryland does) to determine the best ways to help all schools organize family and community involvement.

District leaders must plan how they will *facilitate* the work of *each* elementary, middle, and high school. This includes helping every school assemble a well-functioning Action Team for Partnerships,

and assisting every team to plan, implement, evaluate, and continually improve the quality of its program of partnerships. For example, Saint Paul, MN and Wichita, KS have dramatically scaled up the number of schools that are assisted by district facilitators. Leaders in Taunton, MA; Naperville, IL; Local District B in Los Angeles, CA; Grand Blanc, MI; and other districts are helping *all* schools improve their partnership programs. When all schools in a district join the National Network together, partnerships come alive as a district priority, and schools gain ideas and support from each other.

Expectations to Scale Up

The National Network of Partnership Schools expects all state and district members to scale up the quantity and quality of programs over time. For example, the next annual, detailed Leadership Plan for Partnerships (LTP) should specify and schedule state or district activities that will be implemented to improve the quality and quantity of partnership programs in the 2001-2001 school year.

In turn, states and districts should expect the National Network to help them scale up successfully. Contact *State and District Facilitator*, Mary Nesbitt, to discuss your next steps; *Middle and High School Facilitator*, Natalie Jansorn, for tools to help secondary schools develop better partnership programs; *Network Coordinator*, Kenyatta Williams, to add your state or district name to the heading of the NNPS membership forms; or visit the Network’s website (www.partnershipschools.org) for many ideas in all issues of *Type 2* and in the collections of *Promising Partnership Practices*. Finally, state, district, and organization leaders should plan to attend the Network’s next Leadership Development Meeting on October 24-25, 2001 to gain more ideas on how to scale up the quantity and quality of their partnership programs for student success.

www.partnershipschools.org = Improved National Network Website



Have you visited the Network's website lately? The National Network of Partnership School's website, www.partnershipschools.org, offers many exciting new resources. The homepage has a fresh new look to make site navigation easier. You may visit "Q & A" to read and share ideas about meeting important challenges with good partnership practices. At the top of the page, "Search" for topics that interest you, or check "What's New" on the website. Three sections have been added to help schools, districts, and states strengthen their leadership and partnership programs.

TIPS Interactive Homework

Network members across the country are beginning to use *Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork* (TIPS) to design interactive homework in math, science, language arts, and other subjects. Link to the TIPS section on the website to learn how interactive homework promotes student success. Review new guidelines, goals, and strategies for organizing a TIPS

program. Download sample TIPS activities and blank templates to begin designing assignments that match your curriculum. Find information for ordering TIPS manuals, prototype activities, and training materials. Also see information on *TIPS Volunteers in Social Studies and Art* to learn how to integrate art appreciation in social studies classes in the middle grades with the help of parent volunteers.

Middle and High School Partnership Programs

The website offers new resources for developing partnership programs in middle and high schools. Read about creative and successful family and community involvement activities submitted by Network members from middle and high schools across the country. Learn how your middle or high school can develop a goal-oriented partnership program to improve students' performance in reading and math, increase attendance, assure successful transitions across school levels, and

help students plan for college or careers.

District and State Leadership

Another new website section, "Districts and States," focuses on important topics for district, state, and organization leaders. Review promising practices from district and state members, post a message for other district and state leaders, and get information about leadership development opportunities from the National Network of Partnership Schools.

Bookmark the Network's website, www.partnershipschools.org, and visit often for updated information and useful resources to strengthen your programs of school, family, and community partnerships for student success. If you would like to establish a reciprocal link with the Network's website, contact Beth Simon at bsimon@csos.jhu.edu or 410-516-8887. Then, visitors to the National Network website will also be able to learn about your program of school, family, and community partnerships.

Meeting the Challenge

Steven B. Sheldon
Postdoctoral Research
Scientist

Getting the Word Out About Your School, Family, and Community Partnership Activities

Communicating with others about the work that you are doing on school, family, and community partnerships is a significant challenge for schools, school districts, and state departments of education. How well are you sharing information about your partnership program with your colleagues, families, and community? Elementary and middle schools that received a Network Partnership School Award last year reported how they work to increase and improve communications with other faculty, staff, parents, the media, and the community. Some of their activities are noteworthy and may give you ideas about how to “get the word out” about your partnership program.

Communicating with Colleagues

An important responsibility of the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) is to communicate with other teachers, administrators, and staff who are *not* on the Action Team to inform and involve them in planning, implementing, and evaluating school-wide partnership activities. Several Partnership Award schools discuss partnership plans and upcoming activities in faculty, grade level, in-service, school council, PTA/PTO, and other school meetings to gain the support and assistance of other teachers and staff. For example, Mount Logan Middle School in Utah organizes its Action Team through its Community Council, which includes members of the PTSA. According to the principal, Dan Johnson, the linked structures of Community Council, Action Team, and PTSA create a powerful connection because of the strong lines of communication they have developed among these groups. It also is important to give copies of *Type 2* to colleagues on and off the Action Team to help see how your work in partnerships is part of a national agenda.

Communicating with Families

Almost every Partnership School Award winner uses parent surveys and

frequent two-way communications, such as tear-offs in newsletters and flyers, to learn about parents' views and reactions to important topics and issues. Bouquet Canyon Elementary School in California spreads the word with notices of dates to remember, full calendars, a school bulletin board, and a billboard outside the building. Some schools publish a draft of their One-Year Action Plan in the spring newsletter to get input from parents and faculty. Then, they publish the final Action Plan for Partnerships in the first newsletter of the next school year, so that all parents, teachers, and others know the scheduled activities for the year and who to contact if they can help.

In some schools, newsletters and other communications may be needed in more than one language, or may need to be written for easy reading. Park Avenue Elementary School in Connecticut posted welcome signs in several languages so that all families knew they were valued members of the school community. Another Network school, Westlake Elementary School in Ohio, uses Parent-Grams, phone systems, voice-mail, and telephone trees for voice-to-voice communications. These schools and many others implement practices to increase the number of parents with whom they communicate effectively.

Communicating with the Whole Community

Many families and others in the community learn about school programs and opportunities for involvement through local TV or radio broadcasts, or news articles. Franklin-York Elementary School in Ohio spotlights “students of the month” for improved attendance, grades, or other successes in the city newspaper. Mount Logan Middle School sent a press release to the local city paper, which resulted in a detailed news story about the school's Partnership School Award and program of

(Continued on page 11)

State Line

North Carolina Plans Strong State Program in School, Family, and Community Partnerships

North Carolina joined the National Network in the fall of 2000, after the State Board of Education designated strong family, community, and business involvement as one of its five priorities. In January 2001, Susan Brown was named Involvement Specialist for the Department of Public Instruction and the Key Contact to the National Network. She will draw on her previous experiences with school, family, and community partnerships as the Director of Community Development for Community in Schools of North Carolina.

Working with Businesses

Working closely with others in the Department of Public Instruction, Ms. Brown is involved in a number of team efforts that will promote successful partnerships with the districts, schools, and community organizations in the state. She will continue the Department's high level of involvement with the North Carolina Business Committee for Education (NCBCE) and North Carolina Citizens for Business and Industry (NCCBI).

Gaining Principals' Support

In February and March, she collaborated with the Principal Executive Program at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. School, family, and community partnerships is a new and important focus for principals' training. Ms. Brown introduced the concept of partnerships as a way to garner support from principals and district leaders to develop strong programs of school, family, and community partnerships in districts

and schools throughout North Carolina. Ms. Brown also worked with the North Carolina Association of Community Educators to foster connections between partnership programs and community advocates.

Strengthening District and School Programs

Ms. Brown will assist leaders in school districts that join the North Carolina and National Network to conduct training workshops for schools' Action Teams for Partnerships. The district leaders will work with administrators, teachers, and other school and family representatives to help them plan, implement, and evaluate their programs of partnership.

"The National Network provides a way to organize programs that are essential to students' success," says Ms. Brown. She plans to work with other colleagues and organizations, such as the state's chapter of the national PTA, to help schools and districts improve their partnership programs. Under Ms. Brown's leadership and with the strong support of State Superintendent Dr. Michael E. Ward and Chairman of the State Board of Education Phillip J. Kirk, Jr., North Carolina aims to affirm the importance of partnerships and promote collaboration among schools, families, and communities.

For more information about North Carolina's plans for school, family, and community partnerships, contact Susan Brown, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, at sbrown@dpi.state.nc.us or (919) 807-3477.

Disney Supports NNPS

(Continued from page 1)

bers, extra assistance for state and district leaders, and for middle and high schools, evaluation activities, upcoming videos, and more.

"Disney Learning Partnership is very important to the success of the National Network," Director Joyce Epstein explained. "It enables us to develop research-based approaches for use by a growing number of schools, districts, and states. Our work with Disney is helping hundreds of thousands of educators, families, and students work better together."



Raise Your Hand to Nominate a Great Teacher

The Walt Disney Company honors excellence in teaching each year in its *American Teacher Awards* program. Disney Learning Partnership, which organizes ATA, asks educators, parents, students, and others to recognize and thank an amazing, dynamic, and creative teacher who leads students to the highest levels of learning.

ATA honorees receive monetary awards and participate in a nationally televised awards show and leadership development opportunities. In 2000, the ATA winners included over 30 superior teachers from across the country who teach different grade levels and subjects. To nominate a great teacher, call 1-877-ATA-TEACH (toll free), or visit www.disneylearning.org. The deadline for nominations is March 31.

Our Growing Network

New Members in NNPS since September 2000

SCHOOLS (165 new members) ★ A.B. Green Middle School (St. Louis, MO) ★ Academy of Americas (Detroit, MI) ★ Adair County R-II Elementary School (Brashear, MO) ★ Allen School (Canton, OH) ★ Anthony Wayne Elementary School (Detroit, MI) ★ Banks Elementary School (Baton Rouge, LA) ★ Beard Elementary (Detroit, MI) ★ Beaubien Middle School (Detroit, MI) ★ Bethune Duffield (Detroit, MI) ★ Beulah Cain Brewer Elementary School (Detroit, MI) ★ Bloomfield R-XIV Middle School (Bloomfield, MO) ★ Blue Springs South High School (Blue Springs, MO) ★ Booth Early Childhood (Wichita, KS) ★ Bridgeway Elementary (Bridgeton, MO) ★ Bryant Elementary School (Superior, WI) ★ Bryant The Education Center for Renewal of Teaching & Learning (Independence, MO) ★ Bunche Middle School (Compton, CA) ★ C.F. Yeokum Middle School (Belton, MO) ★ Caldwell Elementary School (Wichita, KS) ★ Campbell Accelerated Elementary School (Campbell, MO) ★ Carstens Elementary School (Detroit, MI) ★ Cesar Chavez/Harriett Tubman Teen Mother Akterbative (Compton, CA) ★ Chaffee Elementary School (Chaffee, MO) ★ Clara E. Westropp (Cleveland, OH) ★ Clarence A. Dickison Elementary School (Compton, CA) ★ Clarence Accelerated School (Clarence, MO) ★ Clark Accelerated Academy (St. Louis, MO) ★ Clark Elementary (Wichita, KS) ★ Clermont Northeastern High School (Batavia, OH) ★ Columbian Elementary (Carthage, MO) ★ Colvin Elementary School (Wichita, KS) ★ Compton High School (Compton, CA) ★ De Anza Junior High School (Calexico, CA) ★ Deep Run Elementary School (Elkridge, MD) ★ Denby Tech Prep High School (Detroit, MI) ★ Dent-Phelps R-3 Accelerated School (Salem, MO) ★ Dodge-Edison Partnership School (Wichita, KS) ★ Dowell Elementary School (Lusby, MD) ★ E.C. Meservey Visual & Performing Arts Accelerated (Kansas City, MO) ★ Early Childhood Kindergarten Center (Canton, OH) ★ East Carter County R-II (Ellsinore, MO) ★ East Elementary Accelerated School (Waynesville, MO) ★ Eastview Elementary School (Lake Geneva, WI) ★ Ecole Providence School (Alberta, Canada) ★ Elkridge Elementary (Elkridge, MD) ★ Ella Fitzgerald Elementary School (Detroit, MI) ★ Eminence Elementary School (Eminence, MO) ★ Enterprise Middle School (Compton, CA) ★ Ernest J. Dossin Elementary School (Detroit, MI) ★ Farnsworth Elementary School (St. Paul, MN) ★ Florian Elementary (Florien, LA) ★ Foch Middle School (Detroit, MI) ★ Franklin Elementary School (La Crosse, WI) ★ Franklin Elementary School (Wichita, KS) ★ Frederick W. Higgins Elementary School (Detroit, MI) ★ Fredericktown Accelerated Intermediate School (Fredericktown, MO) ★ General Mitchell Elementary School (Cudahy, WI) ★ Germantown High School (Philadelphia, PA) ★ Gibbs Elementary School (Canton, OH) ★ Gibson Accelerated (St. Louis, MO) ★ Glasgow Elementary School (St. Louis, MO) ★ Glen Oaks Park Elementary Magnet School (Baton Rouge, LA) ★ Glenmary School (Alberta, Canada) ★ Good Shepard School (Alberta, Canada) ★ Grant (Wausaw, WI) ★ Grantsburg Elementary School (Grantsburg, WI) ★ Grayling (Detroit, MI) ★ Green Meadow Elementary School (Oshkosh, WI) ★ Greenville Elementary School (Greenville, MO) ★ Hale Cook Accelerated Magnet School (Kansas City, MO) ★ Hamilton Middle School (Wichita, KS) ★ Hannibal Accelerated Middle School (Hannibal, MO) ★ Harleton Elementary School (Harleton, TX) ★ Hilliard Memorial Middle School (Hilliard, OH) ★ Holy Family Cyber High (Alberta, Canada) ★ Holy Family School (Alberta, Canada) ★ Honey Creek Continuous Progress School (Milwaukee, WI) ★ Hubble Elementary, An Accelerated Schools (Marshfield, MO) ★ Humboldt Accelerated Elementary (St. Joseph, MO) ★ Iroquois Middle School (Grand Rapids, MI) ★ James E. Vernor Elementary (Detroit, MI) ★ James F. Byrnes High School (Duncan, SC) ★ Jamestown Accelerated Elementary School (Florissant, MO) ★ Jardine-Edison Junior Academy (Wichita, KS) ★ Jefferson Junior High School (Columbia, MO) ★ Joel E. Barber (Lebanon, MO) ★ John Logan Elementary (Detroit, MI) ★ Johnson Park Middle School (Columbus, OH) ★ Kellogg Science & Technology Magnet Elementary (Wichita, KS) ★ Kelly Elementary (Compton, CA) ★ Kenny Community School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Koch Accelerated School (St. Louis, MO) ★ La Escuela Fratney (Milwaukee, WI) ★ Lake Harriet Community School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Lake Shore Middle School (Mequon, WI) ★ Lakeside Elementary School (Oshkosh, WI) ★ Laurel Street Elementary (Compton, CA) ★ Lawrence Elementary (Wichita, KS) ★ Lemasters Accelerated Elementary School (St. Louis, MO) ★ Liberty Elementary School (Ponca City, OK) ★ Little Early Childhood Education Center (Wichita, KS) ★ Lloyd C. Byrd High School (Chesterfield, VA) ★ Long Lane Elementary School (Long Lane, MO) ★ Longfellow Community School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Longfellow Elementary (Sheboygan, WI) ★ Los Medanos Elementary School (Pittsburgh, CA) ★ Lowell Academy (Lorain, OH) ★ Lowery Middle School (Donaldsonville, LA) ★ Mann Accelerated School (St. Louis, MO) ★ Maple Grove Accelerated (House Springs, MO) ★ Marion Elementary School (St. Louis, MO) ★ Mark Twain Elementary School (Carthage, MO) ★ Marquand-Zion Accelerated Elementary School (Marquand, MO) ★ Marvin Accelerated Elementary School (St. John, MO) ★ Mary Church Terrell (New Orleans, LA) ★ Mason Elementary School (Canton, OH) ★ McLenegan Elementary (Beloit, WI) ★ Miller Elementary Schools (Miller, MO) ★ Milliken Middle School (Sherman, CA) ★ Moline Elementary School (St. Louis, MO) ★ Oran R-III Accelerated School (Oran, MO) ★ Park Hill Plaza Middle School (Kansas City, MO) ★ Park West High School (New York, NY) ★ Parkview Middle School (Green Bay, WI) ★ Pasteur Elementary (Detroit, MI) ★ Patagonia Union High School (Patagonia, AZ) ★ Payne Elementary School (Wichita, KS) ★ Pewaukee Lake Elementary School (Pewaukee, WI) ★ Pickett Accelerated School (St. Joseph, MO) ★ Portageville Elementary Accelerated School (Portageville, MO) ★ Puxico Accelerated Elementary School (Puxico, MO) ★ Ralph Waldo Emerson Elementary (Compton, CA) ★ Rock Bridge High School (Columbia, MO) ★ Roosevelt Elementary School (La Crosse, WI) ★ Rosary (Alberta, Canada) ★ Royce Elementary School (Beloit, WI) ★ Sappington Elementary School (St. Louis, MO) ★ Saturn Riverfront Academy (St. Paul, MN) ★ Sherman Accelerated Community Education Center (St. Louis, MO) ★ Sherwood Middle School (Memphis, TN) ★ Sikeston Middle School (Sikeston, MO) ★ Smith Elementary School (Oshkosh, WI) ★ Sophie B. Wright Middle School (New Orleans, LA) ★ Sorrento Springs Elementary (Manchester, MO) ★ Southwest Elementary School (Jefferson City, MO) ★ St. Andrew's School (Alberta, Canada) ★ St. Stephen's Catholic School (Alberta, Canada) ★ Stanley Elementary School (Wichita, KS) ★ Stella Worley Jr. High (Westwego, LA) ★ Summit Elementary (Canton, OH) ★ Symington Accelerated School (Kansas City, MO) ★ The New Roberto Clemente Middle School (Philadelphia, PA) ★ The Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (Philadelphia, PA) ★ Thomas Jefferson Elementary (Wausau, WI) ★ Trailwoods Accelerated School (Kansas City, MO) ★ Trautwein Accelerated School (St. Louis, MO) ★ Union Chapel Accelerated Elementary (Kansas City, MO) ★ Walton Middle School (Compton, CA) ★ Warren E. Hearnes Elementary & Charleston Kindergarten Center Accelerated Schools (Charleston, MO) ★ Waubesa Intermediate School (McFarland, WI) ★ Wendell Phillips Elementary School (K.C., MO) ★ Western International High School (Detroit, MI) ★ Whitchurch Highlands Public School (Ontario, Canada) ★ Willard Central Elementary...An Accelerated School (Springfield, MO) ★ Willard North Elementary (Willard, MO) ★ Williamsville Elementary School (Greenville, MO) ★ Willson-Bearshear Early Childhood Center (Ames, IA) ★ Winston Educational Center (Washington, DC) ★ Zina Pitcher (Detroit, MI) ★

DISTRICTS (9 new members) ★ Austin Independent School District (TX) ★ Belle Reynolds Elementary School (Oakfield, WI) ★ Broaddus ISD (TX) ★ Bullard Independent School District (TX) ★ Compton Unified School District (CA) ★ Holy Family Catholic Regional Division #37 (Alberta, Canada) ★ Memphis City Schools (TN) ★ Pine Tree Independent School District (TX) ★ Winter School District (WI) ★

STATES (1 new member) ★ Florida Department of Education ★

UNIVERSITY/ORGANIZATION PARTNERS (9 new members) ★ California Parent Center—a project of the June Burnett Institute, San Diego State University ★ CESA 2 (Cooperative Educational Service Agency 2) (WI) ★ Community Connections (CA) ★ Indiana Center for Family School & Community Partnerships ★ Institute for Responsive Education (MA) ★ Mall & Associates Educational Consulting Inc. (OH) ★ Montana Parent Information and Resource Center Network ★ Nevada's Parent Information and Resource Center ★ The After-School Corporation (NY) ★

Current Membership in the National Network of Partnership Schools as of February 1, 2001

Schools: 1415 Districts: 142 States: 18

Elementary School Report

Potluck PTO Meetings Involve Families in School Improvement Process

When the Antigo School District established a School Effectiveness Team, composed of parents, teachers, administrators, and other school staff, it asked each school to form its own building-level team. We wondered how we were going to get parents to come to these meetings, recognizing that most PTO meetings attracted only the PTO officers and a few school staff members.

Whole Family Invited

The meetings with the greatest attendance were our occasional school potluck dinners. We decided to incorporate school effectiveness goals into parent-teacher organization meetings, and invite the whole family to come along. The 3-4 annual PTO Potlucks have been a great way to motivate parents to come to meetings, talk with teachers and other parents in a relaxed setting, and help all parents—especially those new to our school—feel that they belong. We publicize the potlucks in our

monthly school newsletter and in the school calendar. The children really love to come, and they make sure their parents know it!

School staff and families eat together from 6 to 7 p.m. At 7 p.m., children play in the gym under the supervision of a volunteer who receives a small stipend from the PTO. Parents move to the school library for the night's program. We wrap up the meeting no later than 8:30 p.m.

Topics Discussed and Student Work Featured

Some of the topics we addressed include discussing district and school goals, ideas for age-appropriate learning activities at home, child discipline, and what families and teachers could do together to improve student reading and writing.

We try to make the meetings fun. Each spring, students receive a packet of seeds to plant at home. We kick off the first potluck of the school year by inviting students to bring their

produce back to school and show off their gardening efforts. We award prizes for the most creative, biggest, roundest produce, and other categories. We also used one potluck to have students exhibit and demonstrate their science fair projects to parents. This was a learning experience for everyone.

The potluck dinners cost virtually nothing because everyone brings a dish based on the "food theme" for the meeting. Occasionally, the PTO contributes funds for a special menu item in addition to the stipend for the volunteer who supervises students while parents meet. A local fast food restaurant also donated juice for some of the potlucks.

Our PTO meetings combine potluck dinners, important discussions, and celebrations of students. This agenda helps to build a strong school community.

Adapted from: Promising Partnership Practices—2000, National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University.

Excellent Partnership Programs May Apply for Network's Annual Awards

Schools, districts, and states with excellent and permanent programs of school, family, and community partnerships are invited to apply for the National Network's Partnership Awards for the 2000-2001 school year. Applicants must provide evidence of excellence for at least two years on six major criteria: Teamwork, Leadership, Plans for Action, Implementation/Facilitation, Evaluation, and Network Connections. These are the Network's research-based "essential elements" of excellent partnership

programs that members are guided to design, implement, improve, and sustain over time.

Recipients of the *Partnership School Awards*, *Partnership District Awards*, and *Partnership State Awards* will be announced in August, 2001. The winners will be publicized in the fall issue of *Type 2*, on the Network's website, and in local and national education media.

Partnership Awards applications were mailed to all members of the National Network in February,

and are due by May 31. Extra copies may be obtained on request, or downloaded from the Network's website at www.partnershipschools.org. Click on "In the Spotlight" and "Partnership Awards Criteria." Information on the thirteen award winners for 2000 also is posted on the website. Click on "In the Spotlight" to read about Network members' excellent and permanent school, family, and community partnership programs at the school, district, and state levels.

Research Brief

Interactive Science Homework Promotes Student Success

Homework is an everyday part of school life. Studies show that middle and high school students who spend more time on homework and complete their assignments tend to earn higher grades. Despite this fact, all parties involved express concerns. Students complain that they are assigned too much homework. Parents report that they want to help their children with homework, but feel unprepared to do so and need more guidance from the school. Teachers say that many students do not complete homework assignments.

TIPS Science Homework Developed and Tested

Science teachers at Pikesville Middle School in Baltimore County, Maryland, developed weekly science TIPS (Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork) assignments to address these concerns. TIPS differs from traditional homework because assignments require students to conduct interactions with a family partner.

TIPS activities are assigned weekly or twice monthly, and students have several days to complete the assignments. Students are guided in how to involve family partners in conversations, experiments, or discussions that take students about 30 minutes to complete. Parents provide feedback to teachers in a section for home-to-school communications.

To assess the effectiveness of TIPS science, a study of 253 sixth and eighth grade students in 10 classrooms was conducted during the first two marking periods of the 1999-2000 school year. Six classes received weekly TIPS activities with specific guidelines for students to interact with family partners. The remaining classes received the same weekly homework, but without guidelines for family involvement (ATIPS).

Involvement and Skills Improved

TIPS students reported higher family involvement in science homework than students in ATIPS

classes. Specifically, 80% of TIPS students reported that families were sometimes, frequently, or always involved in science homework, while about 80% of ATIPS students reported that families were never, rarely, or sometimes involved. TIPS students also earned higher science report card grades, even after taking into account students' prior science abilities, family background, and the amount of homework completed.

Over 85% of TIPS students and families reported on surveys that TIPS homework helped parents see what students were learning in science, and that students were able to talk about their work in science with a family partner. One TIPS parent commented, "They are a great way for us to work together and stay informed about what is going on in science class."

TIPS Resources Available

Visit the NNPS website, www.partnershipschoools.org, for more information and materials on the TIPS interactive homework process.

Pikesville Middle School is featured on a 15-minute video about the TIPS process, produced by ASCD. To order, go to www.ascd.org. Click on the "Online Store," choose "Videos," and look for "How to Make Homework More Meaningful by Involving Parents."

From: Van Voorhis, F. L. (2000). *The effects of TIPS interactive and non-interactive homework on science achievement and family involvement of middle grade students*. Dissertation in Developmental Psychology, University of Florida, Gainesville.



Chris McChesney, science teacher at Pikesville Middle School, gives his students directions for their weekly TIPS interactive homework assignment.

Research Brief

High School Partnership Programs Increase Family Involvement and Student Success

Although researchers have conducted many studies to understand school, family, and community partnerships in the elementary and middle grades, less is known about partnerships in high school. What do high school, family, and community partnerships look like? How do partnerships influence high school student success? Can high schools reach out to involve families? To address these questions, this study looked at longitudinal data from over 11,000 high school students, their parents, and more than 1,000 high school principals in the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988. Partnership activities from the six types of involvement were analyzed.

Partnerships Affect Academic and Behavioral Results

The bottom line in most education reform is student achievement. We all want to know: How do partnerships affect student success? This study showed that, after taking into account teens' socioeconomic status, family structure, gender, race/ethnicity, and the powerful influence of students' prior achievement, various parenting, volunteering, learning at home, and decision making activities positively influenced students' English and math report card grades, course credits completed, attendance, good behavior, and how well-prepared students were when they came to class.

When parents attended college-planning workshops or when parents and teens talked about college, teens earned higher grades and completed more course credits. When parents attended school activities with their teens, students had better atten-

dance and behavior. Additionally, the more time that parents and teens spent together, the better behaved students were and the more prepared students were for class.

High School Outreach Increases Family Involvement

This study also tested how high schools' outreach influenced fourteen different family-school partnership indicators. According to parents of high school seniors, when high schools reached out, parents were more involved. For example:

- When high school staff contacted parents about teens' plans after high school, parents were more likely to attend postsecondary planning workshops *and* talked more frequently with their teens about college.
- When high school staff gave information to parents about how to help teens study, parents worked more often with their teens on homework.
- When high school staff contacted parents about teens' academic programs, course selections, and plans after high school, parents talked with their teens more often about school.

High schools have the *capacity* to change the way that families support teens' school success. When high schools reach out to involve families, families are more likely to be involved in ways that support teens' success through the last year of high school.

From: Simon, B. S. (2000). *Predictors of high school and family partnerships and the influence of partnerships on student success*. Dissertation in Sociology, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD.

Call for Promising Practices for Network's 2001 Collection

Do you have a promising practice to share with other schools, districts, states, or organizations in the National Network of Partnership Schools? Contribute your creative and successful activities to the Network's annual collection, *Promising Partnership Practices*.

Members of the Network are invited to submit a detailed description of a successful activity by May 31, for consideration for this year's collection. The Network is particularly interested in goal-oriented involvement activities; activities that schools, districts, states, and organizations have evaluated; effective activities from middle and high schools; and creative approaches that meet important challenges to reach all families. States and districts are encouraged to gather best practices from their member schools, create their own collections, and submit them to the Network for the 2001 collection.

The Rewards of Sharing

The selected activities receive national attention. All members of the Network receive a copy of *Promising Partnership Practices* in August, at no cost. All collections are posted on the Network's website for use by thousands of educators. Visit www.partnershipschools.org and click on "In the Spotlight" to see the 1998, 1999, and 2000 collections. Selected activities also may be posted on Disney Learning Partnership's website, www.disneylearning.com.

The call for best practices was sent to all Network members in February. Additional copies may be downloaded from the website by clicking on "In the Spotlight."

Project in Grand Blanc, Michigan Provides Valuable Resource to Parents

The Resource and Referral Booklet project was submitted to the National Network's collection of *Promising Partnership Practices—2000* by District Facilitator Martha Weiss, of Grand Blanc Community Schools. The goal of the project was to create a parent-friendly information booklet that identified current, accurate, and relevant referral resources in the community for the district's families. With this information, more parents would be able to find appropriate services to support their families and children.

A district level team of social workers, psychologists, and mental health professionals met to determine the most common needs and requests of families in the district. Similar meetings were held with directors of programs such as Parents as Partners, Children's Garden, and Family Service Centers. Social workers and

psychologists were asked to designate the professionals and agencies from the Resource Book that they would recommend based on past experience.

Many Local Services

Based on information gained from these professionals, the Resource and Referral Booklet contains listings for clothing assistance, counseling assistance, education support services, food assistance, hotlines, legal assistance, parenting information and services, support groups, and other referral sources. A strong effort was made to list resources that were geographically close to families in the Grand Blanc Community School District. This made the district Resource and Referrals Booklet more user-friendly than references for services at great distances from across the county.

The Resource and Referral

Booklet listed the names of the professionals and agencies, their addresses and phone numbers, and a brief description of the services provided. A final phone call was made to each of the contact persons to check for accuracy before the booklet was printed.

Widespread Distribution

Copies of the Resource and Referral Booklet were distributed to the home-school liaisons in all elementary schools, the counselors in all middle and high schools, and the social workers and directors of programs within the school district. All of these leaders make the booklet available to families as needed.

Adapted from: *Promising Partnership Practices—2000* of the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University.

Evaluations Help Districts and Schools Improve Partnership Programs

(Continued from page 1)

The researchers explained, "Evaluations not only are conducted in high quality programs, but also help to improve the quality of partnership programs over time." The two studies suggest that when districts and schools take their work on school, family, and community partnerships seriously enough to conduct evaluations, they are likely to use the results to improve their plans and activities for the next school year.

At this time of year, *all* schools, districts, states, and organizations in the National Network of Partnership Schools are expected to conduct two short, but powerful evaluations. First,

schools should use the End-of-Year Evaluation* (see *Handbook*, p. 137-143) to reflect on how well they succeeded in implementing their One-Year Action Plans. Districts and states should review their annual Leadership Plans for Partnerships, and assess their progress, successes, and needed improvements.

Second, schools, districts, states, and organizations in the Network should use the *2001 UPDATE* survey, which will be sent in early April, to reflect on this year's program quality, support, funding, actions, and outreach. *UPDATE* must be returned to the Network to renew membership for 2001-2002, but before sending it

in, members should use *UPDATE* as a tool to discuss key features and needs of their programs.

All members of the Network should use the results of these two assessments to write more focused, goal-oriented plans for partnerships for 2001-2002. These three steps—evaluate, write better plans, and implement the planned activities—ensure that the quality of family and community involvement will improve from year to year.

*Members may contact the Network for an alternative End-of-Year Evaluation form to assess goal-oriented partnership programs. E-mail nmps@csos.jhu.edu and ask for the End-of-Year Evaluation Form B.

Middle and High School Report

Middle Schools Develop Goal-Oriented Programs of Partnership

Is your school working to help students increase writing achievement? Improve attendance? Enhance math skills? These are goals that almost every middle school sets for students. In addition to effective curriculum and instruction, programs of school, family, and community partnerships can support students to reach these goals and more. Many middle schools are developing goal-oriented partnership programs linked directly to their school improvement plans.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Sherwood Middle School, Memphis, Tennessee, began a goal-oriented partnership program as part of its comprehensive school reform efforts. After reviewing the school's improvement plan, the ATP developed a One-Year Action Plan focused on four goals:

- improving reading and language arts achievement;
- improving mathematics achievement;
- increasing attendance; and
- partnering with community organizations.

Working Toward Math Goals

The Action Team used the National Network's framework of six types of involvement to select a few activities to help reach each goal. For example, to help students reach the math goal, the ATP will host a Family Math Night for parents and students to enjoy math activities together. Sherwood will also collaborate with its community for an after-school math tutoring program and a "Mathathon." The ATP also plans to use the school newsletter to: offer parents suggestions about how to help students with math

at home; provide information on the math curriculum; and recognize students for math achievement.

By keeping families informed of the math curriculum, providing guidance on how to interact with their sons and daughters about math, and connecting with the community to enrich the program, Sherwood Middle School is supporting student success in math with the help of school, family, and community partnerships. By implementing similarly well-targeted activities for the other three goals, the school is creating a comprehensive goal-oriented partnership program.

Writing Goal-Linked Plans

Any Action Team for Partnerships can develop a goal-oriented program of school-family-community partnerships. Begin planning by considering the major goals at your school. Most ATP's choose four school improvement goals to focus on each school year: two academic goals; one non-academic goal; and one overall partnership goal.

To organize your program, use the One-Year Action Plan, Form B, found on page 136 of *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*. The One-Year Action Plan guides your ATP to focus on each goal; identify how you will measure results; select activities using all six types of involvement to support each goal; and schedule and delegate responsibilities for implementing activities.

Conducting Goal-Linked Programs

After completing the One-Year Action Plan, your ATP is ready to implement activities. During its monthly meetings, the ATP discusses

implementing upcoming partnership activities and evaluates the effectiveness of activities that were conducted in the past month. At the end of the school year, the ATP will consider whether goals have been met, and how to improve the school's partnership program in the next school year. Most importantly, remember to focus partnership activities on supporting student success in middle school.

For more information and guidelines for creating and evaluating goal-oriented partnership programs, contact Natalie Rodriguez Jansorn, Middle and High School Facilitator, at 410-516-8893 or njansorn@csos.jhu.edu. Also, visit the Network's web site, www.partnershipschools.org, and link to "Middle and High Schools."

Meeting the Challenge

(Continued from page 4)
family and community involvement.

Your school, district, state, or organization should consider submitting press releases after completing successful partnership events, or when special involvement activities are scheduled. The local media may be happy to spotlight your work and keep the community updated on partnership activities.

The National Network of Partnership Schools provides sample press releases and ideas for communicating with families and the public. This information is on the Network's website at www.partnershipschools.org. Click on "Join the Network" and "Member Services." It is important to get the word out about good partnerships to colleagues, families, and the community to build a strong, stable, and well supported program.



Partnership Calendar

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2001

- April 2:** Members who joined the Network by 12/00 will receive *2001 UPDATE* in the mail.
- May 15:** *2001 UPDATE* must be returned to the National Network to renew membership for the 2001-02 school year.
- May 31:** Promising partnership practices from members due for consideration for the 2001 collection.
- May 31:** Applications due for *Partnership School Awards*, *Partnership District Awards*, and *Partnership State Awards* for the 2000-01 school year.
- August:** *Promising Partnership Practices—2001* mailed to all members.
- September:** Final data collection for Focus on Results 2000-01: Attendance.
- October:** Fall issue of *Type 2*.
- October 24-25:** Leadership Development Workshop for state, district, and organization members of the National Network, in Baltimore. Information will be sent in July, 2001.
- November:** Invitation to members to join the cross-site study, Focus on Results 2001-02: School, Family, and Community Partnerships to Improve Math Achievement. Initial data collection.

NNPS in the NEWS

Anoka-Hennepin, MN was featured in the Center for Democracy and Citizenship newsletter, Humphrey Center, University of Minnesota. *Deep Run* and *Elkridge Elementary Schools in Howard County, MD* were featured in the *Baltimore Sun*. *Baltimore County, MD* was featured in *Tech-Learning* (www.techlearning.com). NNPS researchers were cited by *Associated Press*, *New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Wichita Eagle*, and on NPR, to name a few. Let the Network know when your program is in the news.

UPDATE Surveys Due May 15 to Renew Membership in NNPS for 2001-2002

All schools, districts, states, and organizations that joined the National Network of Partnership Schools before December 2000* must renew membership in the National Network for the 2001-2002 school year by returning *UPDATE*.

What is *UPDATE*?

2001 UPDATE asks members for information to update the Network's mailing list and to report progress made and challenges faced in the 2000-2001 school year. This short survey helps members reflect on and discuss their progress, and write improved plans for the next school year. *2001 UPDATE* must be returned to continue receiving the Network's services that are provided at no cost, including *Type 2*, *Promising Partnership Practices*, information on research opportunities, invitations to workshops, new tools, and other professional development opportunities. *2001 UPDATE* will be mailed to members in April.

What Must ALL Network Members Do?

- ✓ Schedule a team meeting in April to complete *2001 UPDATE* as an end-of-year evaluation activity.
- ✓ RETURN *2001 UPDATE* PROMPTLY—May 15—in the stamped envelope provided.
- ✓ Look for the colorful renewal certificate that indicates that your school, district, state, or organization will remain a partner in the National Network of Partnership Schools for 2001-2002. Also, expect *Promising Partnership Practices—2001* in August, and another year of good ideas, useful tools, and good partnerships.

*NOTE: New members who joined NNPS after December 2000 will receive *2002 UPDATE* next year.