

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, 2005 No. 18

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National Network of Partnership Schools Launches District Leadership Campaign

Districts in NNPS want to know: How can we organize more effective, goal-oriented partnership programs at the district level and in all of our schools?

NNPS trainings, tools, and materials guide district leaders with this work, but NNPS staff agrees that increased support to district leaders would improve both district and school partnership programs. To meet districts' needs and to reinforce research findings that show the importance of district leadership on partnerships, NNPS announces its District Leadership Campaign. NNPS will offer district leaders a menu of nine services and professional development opportunities as part of the Campaign to help plan their work; guide all schools to organize their partnership programs; evaluate their progress; and improve the quality of family and community involvement from year to year. State and organization leaders who directly assist schools may also request the services.

Planning

Planning Support. District members may consult with NNPS facilitators on their annual district leadership plans by requesting planning templates, strategic consulting about program design, and written feedback on draft plans.

Telephone/E-mail Consultations.

District members may request telephone consultations with NNPS facilitators to discuss their work, progress, and next steps for their programs at the district

level and in their schools. As in the past, this NNPS service will continue as a regular benefit to all school, district, state, and organization members.

Program Development

District Leadership Institute. District facilitators in the start-up phase of program development may attend an intensive 2-day workshop at low cost. The newly designed Institute prepares leaders to provide direct assistance to schools' Action Teams for Partnerships and to establish a district-wide partnership

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Alert: NNPS to Conduct One Leadership Development Conference Each Fall

NNNPS is changing its conference schedule to conduct one Leadership Development Conference each fall, starting October 18-19, 2005. Instead of a spring conference, NNPS will conduct a District Leadership Institute for district facilitators in the start-up phase of program development. The change is in response to NNPS research and exemplary practice by NNPS award winners indicating that strong district leadership is crucial for the work and progress of schools' Action Teams for Partnerships.

The Fall Leadership Development Conference is open to all new and experienced school, district, state, and organization members of NNPS. The agenda includes an all-day session and targeted follow-up workshops to pre-

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Issues and Insights

Joyce L. Epstein
Director

We Pay Attention to What We Measure: Time to Evaluate Partnership Programs

One of the big questions NNPS members ask is: How can we evaluate our partnership program?

Research shows that it pays to evaluate. Using *UPDATE* data, NNPS studies indicate that districts and schools that evaluate their work report higher quality partnership programs and improvements from one year to the next. Members who evaluate their programs may take their work on partnerships more seriously and use the results to improve their plans and activities in the next school year.

After working on partnerships for a full school year, all NNPS members should take time to review and discuss: Which activities were successful? What challenges arose? How can we improve our program next year?

NNPS provides easy-to-use tools for schools, districts, states, and organizations to assess progress. Members should collect the surveys, inventories, and reflections in a partnership program notebook to chart progress over time.

Use *UPDATE* for Program Evaluation

All NNPS members must complete *UPDATE* to sustain membership. The annual survey helps schools, districts, states, and organizations assess progress on essential elements of partnership programs, including *leadership, teamwork, plans, implementation of plans, funding, collegial support, evaluation, and networking*. All members should discuss the questions, complete the survey, save a copy for the program's history, and send a copy to NNPS. (See Box on p. 3 on *UPDATE*).

Use NNPS Tools for Other Assessments

In its *Handbook*¹, NNPS provides three tools that schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) can use to supplement *UPDATE* and revise their next One-Year Action Plans.

End-of-Year Evaluations. ATPs should assess the quality of each major activity that was conducted during the year. How well was each activity implemented? Did each activity reach all intended families, contribute to student success, or meet another stated goal? (See *Handbook* pp. 360-364 if your One-Year Action Plan is organized by school goals or pp. 353-359 if your annual plan is organized by the six types of involvement.)

Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships. ATPs may assess whether activities for the six types of involvement and outreach to all families improved. Was information on homework provided to families at all grade levels? Did the ATP recognize volunteers for their time and efforts? (See *Handbook* pp. 330-335.)

Annual Review of Team Processes. ATPs should discuss how well members worked together. This quick checklist covers team membership, schedules, organization, and program implementation. Did the ATP need to replace members for next year? Were meetings well planned? Did team members share leadership for involvement activities? (See *Handbook* p. 111.)

Useful evaluations need not be complex, costly, or confusing. The NNPS evaluation tools will help all members identify successful practices, promote discussions of challenges and solutions, and improve plans for the 2005-06 school year. Educators often say that they pay attention to what gets measured. This is definitely true for school, family, and community partnerships.

¹ See Epstein, et al., *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action* (Corwin Press, 2002).

NNPS Launches District Leadership Campaign

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network. The first District Leadership Institute will be offered June 8-9, 2005, at the Johns Hopkins University campus in Baltimore. Registration information will be sent to district leaders, as well as state and organization partners. NNPS is exploring options to host regional Institutes.

Fall Leadership Development Conference. As in the past, new and experienced district members may attend the annual NNPS conference in Baltimore for all schools, districts, states, and organizations. The District Leadership Institute will replace the Spring Leadership Development Conference. NNPS will conduct its annual fall conference for new and experienced members to advance their knowledge and skills while networking with NNPS members from around the country.

Teleconferences. District leaders may participate in quarterly teleconferences with NNPS staff on key topics for improving family and community involvement. Topics will include challenges in small, medium, and large districts for organizing school teams and helping them plan, implement, evaluate, and sustain their partnership programs. The first teleconference is scheduled for November 2005.

Contracted Trainings and Site Visits. District, state, and organization members may contract with NNPS staff and researchers as consultants, keynote speakers, and workshop presenters, as in the past. These fee-for-service activities are arranged as schedules permit via direct contact with NNPS staff.

Evaluation

NNPS Annual Report. Starting in fall 2005, all NNPS members that return their annual *UPDATE* survey

will receive a summary of the descriptive data for all of NNPS. This will allow district leaders to compare their district and school reports on partnership program development with NNPS as a whole, and with subgroups of NNPS sites in major demographic categories.

Summaries of Your Schools' Partnership Data. Districts with eight schools or more that return 2005 *UPDATE* may request summaries of their schools' *UPDATE* data. NNPS will also provide trend data from year to year so that district leaders can document their schools' progress and challenges in developing effective partnership programs.

Customized Report Linking Your Schools' Partnership Data with State Test Scores. Districts or states with 30 schools or more that return *UPDATE* may work with NNPS researchers to link their partnership program quality with school-level state test scores and related demographic data over a three-year period, starting with 2005 *UPDATE*. Districts that have this option will be contacted by NNPS about participating in these evaluations.

The District Leadership Campaign will enhance the customary NNPS services and benefits already provided to district leaders and their schools. Simultaneously, the Campaign will increase our understanding of the processes required to scale up the number and quality of district and school partnership programs and their impact on student success. Look for additional information as NNPS rolls out each component of the District Leadership Campaign. Until then, contact Natalie Rodriguez Jansorn at njansorn@csos.jhu.edu or 410-516-8893 with your comments and questions.

Leadership Development Conference Each Fall

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pare new leaders. The conference also includes many concurrent sessions to advance the skills of experienced NNPS members.

By attending one national conference in the fall, schools, districts, states, and organizations in NNPS will be able to use the school year to establish district leadership, identify and train school teams, write One-Year Action Plans for the next school year, evaluate their present practices, and plan for improvements. In addition, District Leadership Institutes will zero in on key leadership skills that district leaders need to establish successful district-level and school-based programs (see District Leadership Campaign on page 1).

2005 UPDATE It Pays to Assess Progress

UPDATE—the NNPS annual survey—will be mailed to all members in April and is due June 30. *UPDATE* renews membership in NNPS for the 2005-06 school year **at no cost**. *UPDATE*, then, is valued at \$100 per school and \$200 per district, state, and organization.

Also, all members who return *UPDATE* by June 30 will be entered into the *NNPS UPDATE Lottery*. Four winners—one school, one district, one state, and one organization—will be drawn at random and awarded one free registration to a future NNPS Leadership Development Conference (a \$200 value). It pays to complete *UPDATE* on time!

Meeting the Challenge

Steven B. Sheldon
Director of Research

Using a Balanced Approach to Improve Student Performance on Achievement Tests

As NCLB heads into its fourth year, the pressure on schools to raise the percentage of students scoring at or above proficient on standardized achievement tests continues to grow. Conducting information workshops for parents about achievement tests and test-taking strategies is helpful, but should not replace efforts to help create home environments that support the development of academic skills. Schools need to plan a balanced approach to improving student performance on achievement tests—one that informs parents about the tests their children take *and* helps prepare families to support the development of knowledge and skills in their children.

Increasing Parents' Awareness of Tests

Many NNPS schools conduct after-school, evening, and weekend parent workshops to help more students pass standardized achievement tests. In some cases, schools try to familiarize parents with the content, format, and uses of the standardized tests. For example, Hammocks Middle School and Leisure City K-8 Center organized events that gave parents an overview of the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT), offered subject-matter instruction, encouraged parents to answer sample questions from the test, and provided time for parents to ask questions. As a result, family members better understood the purpose of the test, experienced what it is like to take the FCAT, and learned more about how they might help their children succeed.

In Ohio, the Action Team for Partnerships at Collinwood Computech Senior High School invited tenth graders and their parents to classes about the Tenth-Grade Exit Exam. During the Saturday workshops, teens and their parents played learning games together and received test preparation materials. The workshops familiarized parents with the test their children must pass to graduate, and provided resources to help students practice for the exit exam at home.

Increasing Students' Skills

Attention to test-taking skills does not reduce the need for schools to help parents support their children's development of skills measured on achievement tests. Dearborn Park Elementary School in Seattle, WA created an after-school program that helped prepare fourth graders for the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). While students received extra instruction, family members attended classes to learn about the state test. Students also received interactive homework that required them to talk with a family member about the academic content they were learning in order to reinforce their understanding of the material. The school noted that students in this program improved their performance on the reading, writing, and math sections of the WASL.

Providing parents with a better understanding of what their children are learning is important. Based on parent survey feedback, Meadow Glens Elementary School in Naperville, IL implemented Fourth- and Fifth-Grade Math Nights. Teachers conducted a typical math lesson for parents. Parents then completed math problems and compared their work to their children's. The instruction provided some training in advance so that parents could more effectively help their children practice the required math skills.

Because achievement tests have become a primary indicator of student learning and school effectiveness, familiarizing parents with these tests is an important goal of school partnership programs. However, focusing partnership programs on parents' awareness of tests without giving equal attention to children's academic skills diminishes the potential benefits for students. For other activities that help parents understand achievement tests and develop students' academic skills, see recent editions of *Promising Partnership Practices* by visiting www.partnershipschools.org and clicking on "In the Spotlight."

Three NNPS High Schools Develop Community Partnerships to Improve School Programs and Increase Student Success

NNPS researcher Mavis Sanders and former postdoctoral fellow Karla Lewis, conducted a study of school-community involvement in three NNPS high schools in urban, suburban, and rural communities. The researchers wanted to learn why educational leaders in demographically different high schools with successful partnership programs chose to dedicate time, energy, and resources to integrate community involvement in their school improvement efforts.

In these schools, community involvement was considered an important way to support student success, enhance school quality, and support community development. Partnership leaders at the three high schools went far beyond the limited community involvement reported by many high schools to develop a variety of community partnership activities that benefit students and their families, the schools, and the surrounding communities (see Table 1). The interviews

and information from the study may guide others interested in improving school-community connections.

Make Partnerships a Priority

The educators in this study offered the following advice: *prioritize process, permit time, and promote community ownership*. First, the leaders advised other high schools to make partnership program development a high priority and to set a firm foundation. A partnership committee member at one school sug-

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Table 1: High School Partnerships

Selected Community Partners	Selected School-Community Activities		
	School A	School B	School C
Business/Corporations: Local businesses, national corporations and franchises	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student scholarships• Student awards• Refreshments and door prizes for school events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Career exploration partner• Student internships• Student mock interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grants for school improvement projects• Student/family incentives
Health Care Organizations: Hospitals, health care centers, mental health facilities, health departments, health foundations and associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family-focused workshops (Local clinic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Career exploration partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Health Fair (Hospitals)
Cultural/Recreational Institutions: Zoos, museums, libraries, recreational centers; sports teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Play it Smart” program (Nat’l. Football Foundation(NFF)/NFL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fine Arts Day (Arts Council)• Speakers’ Series (Library)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Book Drive (Library)• Fundraising for school sports teams (Athletic booster club)
Other Community Organizations: Fraternities, sororities, media, foundations, neighborhood associations, political, alumni, and local service organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guest speakers (Alumni)• Student/family awards program (Local foundation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Career exploration partner (Local media)	
Community Individuals: Individual volunteers from the surrounding school community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hall monitors for special events• Tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Host/chaperone student dances• Teacher awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tutors and mentors

*Other community partners with the three schools included: Universities and Educational Institutions, Government and Military Agencies, National Service and Volunteer Organizations, Faith Organizations, and Senior Citizen Organizations. See full table of partners and activities in Sanders & Lewis, in press.

Our Growing Network

New Members in NNPS since September 2004

SCHOOLS (37 new members) Barth Elementary School (Romulus, MI) Ben Milam Elementary School (Dallas, TX) Bug O Nay Ge Shig High School (Bena, MN) Chapel District Elementary School (Cordova, MD) Choptank Elementary School (Cambridge, MD) Dr. Benjamin Carson Academy of Science (Milwaukee, WI) Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School (Germantown, MD) Easton Elementary School-Dobson (Easton, MD) Easton Elementary School-Moton (Easton, MD) Edgewood Primary School (Bloomington, IN) Friendship-Edison Collegiate Academy (Washington, DC) Garfield Math Science Specialty School (Milwaukee, WI) George Washington Carver Elementary School (Lexington Park, MD) Great Mills High School (Great Mills, MD) Green Holly Elementary School (Lexington Park, MD) Halecreek Elementary School (Romulus, MI) John W. Runyon Elementary (Dallas, TX) Lexington Park Elementary School (Lexington Park, MD) Mace's Lane Middle School (Cambridge, MD) Merriman Elementary School (Romulus, MI) Nicolet Middle School (Banning, CA) North Dorchester Middle School (Hurlock, MD) Oneida Tribal School (Oneida, WI) Paris Elementary School (Paris, AR) Park Hall Elementary School (Park Hall, MD) Park Junior High School (La Grange Park, IL) Poplar Street Middle School (North Little Rock, AR) Ruth Hooker School (Selkirk, MB, Canada) Sandy Hill Elementary School (Cambridge, MD) South Dorchester School (Church Creek, MD) South Philadelphia High School (Philadelphia, PA) Spring Ridge Middle School (Lexington Park, MD) Stephen C. Foster Elementary School (Dallas, TX) Sugar Creek Elementary School (Verona, WI) The Center for Language, Culture & Communication Arts (Lansing, MI) Two Rivers Public Charter School (Washington, DC) Vienna Elementary School (Vienna, MD)

DISTRICT (8 new members) Dorchester County Public Schools (Cambridge, MD) Groton Public Schools (Groton, CT) Middletown Public Schools (Middletown, CT) School District of Oconee County (Seneca, SC) St. Mary's County Public Schools (Leonardtown, MD) Suring Public School (Suring, WI) Talbot County Public Schools (Easton, MD) Windsor Public Schools (Windsor, CT)

ORGANIZATION/UNIVERSITY PARTNERS (8 new members) Center for Effective Parenting (Springdale, AR) College of Education & Human Services, Shippensburg University (Shippensburg, PA) Educational Service District 105 (Yakima, WA) FOCUS Guilford (Greensboro, NC) PA Parent Information & Resource Center (Philadelphia, PA) Philadelphia Education Fund (Philadelphia, PA) The Hara Group, LLC (Northbrook, IL) Tri County Youth Services Bureau (Waldorf, MD)

STATES (1 new member) Arkansas Department of Education (Little Rock, AR)

Current Active Membership in the National Network of Partnership Schools as of February 2, 2005

Schools: 813 Districts: 97 States: 14 Organizations: 64



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.

Maryland PIRC and NNPS Collaborate to Improve Partnerships Statewide

The Family Works, a program of the Family Services Agency, in Gaithersburg, MD received a three-year federal grant to serve as Maryland's Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC). The PIRC provides a comprehensive statewide system of information, training, and technical assistance to increase the number of families and school systems receiving information about Maryland's accountability system and the requirements for family involvement in the No Child Left Behind Act.

Benefits of Collaboration

One part of the PIRC's program, written in cooperation with the National Network of Partnership Schools, encourages all Maryland district leaders and their schools to adopt the NNPS model. Interested districts and their schools receive training and technical assistance from Brenda G. Thomas, Director of Maryland Partnership Program Development. The PIRC's grant also pays for two substitute teachers per school to enable the teachers on the Action Team for Partnerships to attend a day-long workshop, and the NNPS membership fees. At the workshop, Action Teams write draft One-Year Action Plans for family and community involvement linked to school improvement goals. Ms. Thomas also has begun to convene periodic cluster meetings with LEAs in Maryland to share ideas and sustain progress.

Current Progress

To date, 14 of the 24 Maryland school districts and 101 schools are NNPS members, with some joining prior to the grant award. Barbara Gimperling, Director of Family Works stated, "We are happy to collaborate with NNPS

to help Maryland's school systems build their capacities to strengthen the partnership programs in every school. It is a real opportunity for the PIRC to involve large numbers of families in their children's education."



High Schools Develop Community Partnerships to Improve

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gested that schools must have a "clearly defined mission." With clear goals for good partnerships, a team member at the second high school advised, "Start small with a needs assessment, strong leader, small dedicated committee, strategic plan, clear action steps, and an ongoing . . . yearly evaluation process." The high schools in the study warned against shortchanging this process to achieve quick results.

A team member at the third school observed, "You know sometimes when people try to plan something and take on a new initiative, they want to do it big . . . [B]ut it has to grow from something. The roots need to be there."

Allow Time

The NNPS high schools in the study emphasized the importance of allocating the necessary time for partnership program development. One leader reflected that other high schools "... need to take the time; they have to be dedicated." Another urged: "Don't give up after the first couple of months of trying. Initially it looks like a big undertaking, but don't be discouraged." Time is needed to identify school and community needs, contact potential community partners, attend planning meetings, and

evaluate and reflect on past activities in order to improve future activities.

Promote Ownership

Finally, the partnership leaders in the study schools encouraged other high schools to promote ownership among community partners. One principal advised: "You have to let (community partners) know that you really want

them involved, even if it is no more than sending out a communication on a regular basis . . . Then they can buy into it and actually take some ownership because you are soliciting their ideas." A partnership committee

"Community partners are valued here. ... We make sure that we help them find a niche."

member at the same school observed, "Community partners are valued here. ... We make sure that we help them find a niche."

High schools, then, like elementary and middle schools, can reap the benefits of school-community partnerships by prioritizing collaborative work, planning carefully, allocating time to develop goal-linked practices, and welcoming and valuing partners.

From: Sanders, M. G. & Lewis, K. C. (In press). Building bridges toward excellence: Community involvement in high school. *High School Journal*.

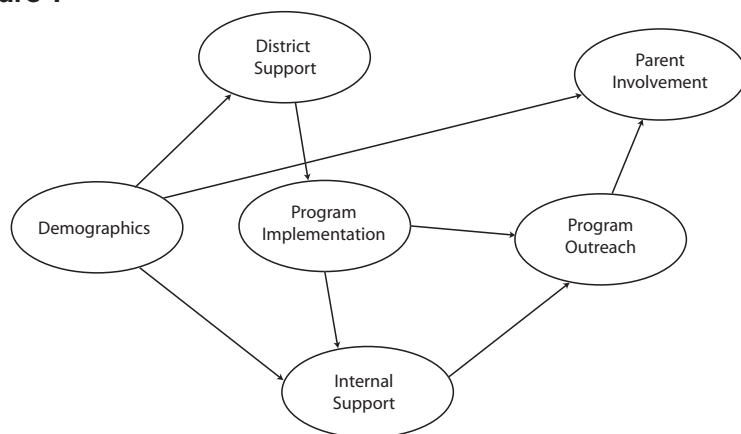
Research Brief

Effects of Partnership Program Implementation on Parent Involvement in Schools

For the National Network of Partnership Schools, the *UPDATE* surveys serve two purposes: (1) they help us keep our contact information for members up-to-date, and (2) they provide valuable data that allow us to identify important processes and outcomes of school, family, and community partnership programs. We recently completed a study using *UPDATE* data from 565 elementary schools that examined which school processes affect program implementation and the extent to which high quality implementation is associated with parent involvement at school.

Data analysis supported a model of program development (see Figure 1) suggesting that district (external) and collegial (internal) support are key elements for developing partnership programs that reach out to more family and community partners. Schools that met more challenges such as communicating with all families, recruiting and training parent volunteers, and ensuring that all major groups of families participate in school decision-making reported higher levels of parent involvement at school.

Figure 1



From: Sheldon, S. B. (in press). Testing a Structural Equation Model of Partnership Program Implementation and Parent Involvement. Accepted for publication in the *Elementary School Journal*.

78

Percentage of principals who provide time for their Action Team to meet,
according to 2004 School UPDATE

Harvard Newsletter: Evaluation of Family Involvement Programs

Harvard Family Research Project's Winter 2004/2005 issue of *The Evaluation Exchange* focuses on evaluating programs that promote families' involvement in children's learning and development. The issue compiles information on family support and involvement programs and addresses the challenges of evaluating family programs, including the need for conceptual clarity, methodological rigor, accountability, and contextual responsiveness. In an interview, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn reflects on breakthrough findings and new directions for research, evaluation, and practice in family-focused interventions. The issue also includes examples of ongoing evaluations of parent leadership programs. The full issue is available online at: <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/bfrp/eval/issue28>.

Middle and High School Report

Plan to Help Incoming Freshmen and their Parents Transition to High School

Freshmen have fears coming into high school: lockers, dances, peer pressure, getting lost, grades, work load, lunch seating, social status, and others. Parents have these concerns and more. Spring is a good time to plan how to welcome incoming freshmen families so they can ease their teens' mounting anxiety.

"We realize that when new freshmen enter high school there are so many concerns. We want to make these worries either disappear or not seem so overwhelming," says Julie O'Brien, Partnership Coordinator at North High School in Eau Claire, WI. The school's Action Team, staff, and Ms. O'Brien developed a yearlong transition program to help incoming

freshmen and their families start the high school years on the right foot.

Welcoming Students and Families

To start, North High holds a "Preview Night" for eighth graders and their families to see the school, learn about course offerings, and receive a heartfelt welcome from the administration and staff. In addition to the open house, incoming freshmen families receive the high school newsletter so they can learn about the exciting opportunities at North High. In July, incoming freshmen receive a letter from the principal, an English teacher, and the Partnership Coordinator welcoming them to North High and explaining additional programs that might help

ninth graders successfully transition into their high school years.

At the beginning of the school year, North High hosts the Freshmen Family Picnic. The picnic allows the school to share information and answer parent concerns and questions. Parents have the opportunity to network with one another, tour the building, meet staff, and receive assistance in registering online for EdLine. EdLine allows parents to access their students' grades, homework, and other important information. The Partnership Coordinator has asked some employers to make computers available for parents to check their students' progress. Families that do not register for EdLine at

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NNPS Calls for School, District, & State Partnership Award Applications

Have you been a member of NNPS for two years or more, and can you demonstrate excellence in partnership program development? If your answer is "yes," then apply for an NNPS Partnership Award.

- All winners receive one free registration to an NNPS Leadership Development Conference; and
- Up to 10 winners receive a \$500 prize for their partnership programs.

Award applications will be mailed to all eligible members and are due by June 30, 2005.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q We have been NNPS members for two years. Should we apply for a Partnership Award?

A If you have a well-organized program that is making good progress, you should apply! Applicants must address every section of the application, include all requested documents, provide several clear examples, and demonstrate high quality on each criterion.

Q Is this a competition?

A No, the awards follow a mastery model. NNPS wants to recognize all members that are implementing research-based approaches for high quality programs.

Q What about the \$500 prize?

A Up to ten programs (schools, districts, states, or organizations) may receive Special Recognition for excellent programs that are sustained over time. Programs are eligible for Special Recognition and the cash award of \$500 every two years. The prize money is to be used in ways that improve your program.

Q Can our program be a repeat winner?

A Yes, your program may apply every year. Each application must show how the program improves over time.

Q Where can we see what award winning programs are like?

A Visit www.partnershipschoools.org and click on "In the Spotlight." Scroll down to Partnership Awards for 2004 to read summaries of excellent school, district, state, and organization programs.

If you have questions about the awards application, contact Kenyatta Williams at kwilliams@csos.jhu.edu or 410-516-2318.

Elementary School Report

Partners Bridge the Gap: Addressing Diversity

NNNPS schools creatively address student and family language, gender, class, race, and ethnicity differences in positive ways. Many Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) support cultural differences by implementing activities and programs that reinforce instruction and the common values of respect and acceptance. Drawing upon practices from the six types of family and community involvement, the schools mentioned below assisted students and their families by bridging the gaps of language and cultural differences.

Support Learning

Beacon Hill School in Seattle, WA developed an extended-day program to guide non-English speaking parents and students in curriculum-related activities as a strategy to reach their school-wide learning goals. ESL students, recent immigrants, and children of color, as well as children who live in poverty, were all invited to participate in the program.

By the end of the year, students who received assistance in their home or native language showed an increase in literacy skills of at least one grade level.

Promote Pride

ATP members of Tarrant Elementary School in Hampton, VA collaborated with the PTA, teachers, school staff, and others to organize an African Drum and Folktale Night. Participants

broadened their knowledge of African customs by learning the significance of the drum as a means of communication and celebration. After a night of music and dance, students received books about African culture for their home libraries.

Increase Outreach

Lincoln Elementary School in Appleton, WI welcomed an Americorps VISTA volunteer to improve communication with the school's Hmong families, who make up almost one quarter of the school community. The VISTA volunteer translated the school calendar into Hmong and created a Hmong Family Night. As a result of this targeted outreach, Hmong families

began communicating with the school about school-related activities and attending more school events.

NNPS schools intentionally address cultural diversity so that the needs of minority students and families are

met the educational process. What are some of the cultural issues in your school? How can the Action Team for Partnerships connect with families and the community to resolve these issues?

By answering these questions, you can begin to lay a foundation for open dialogue about diversity issues and help school staff and administration build healthy relationships with minority families.

By the end of the year, students who received assistance in their home or native language showed an increase in literacy skills of at least one grade level.

Transition to High School

Continued from page 10

the picnic have another opportunity at Back to School Night.

Communicating with Families

Also to start the year, each incoming freshmen family receives a three-ring binder that helps families organize important information during their students' high school years. Dividers indicate places for the Family Handbook, newsletters, report cards, acknowledgements, and other important information. Previously, only students had a copy of school procedures, rules, and regulations. The Family Handbook gives parents access to this information.

Two weeks after school starts, North High hosts Back to School Night. Parents follow their students' schedules, meet the instructors and parents of fellow classmates, hear the expectations of each class, and learn other valuable information. In the commons area, all clubs, organizations, and sports teams set up information booths to promote their activities and to encourage students and parent volunteers to sign up.

Parent-Student-Teacher Conferences are also conducted as part of North High's yearlong transition program. In addition to meeting with teachers, parents visit tables set up by community members displaying information about their services. The Partnership Coordinator chats with parents, answers questions, and reassures them with ideas for supporting their teens in high school.

All of these activities assist incoming ninth-grade students and their families. What does your Action Team for Partnerships have planned to welcome incoming freshmen families? Partnership efforts should help students and their families start high school in a positive way, setting the foundation for a successful high school experience.



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Partnership Calendar

2005

- March:** Invitation to school, district, state, and organization members to contribute to NNPS' *Promising Partnership Practices 2005*.
- April 1:** Members will receive *2005 UPDATE* in the mail. Due June 30 to renew NNPS membership for the 2005-06 school year.
- May 6:** Promising partnership practices from members due for the 2005 collection.
- June 8-9:** District Leadership Institute in Baltimore for district facilitators in the start-up phase of program development. The Institute prepares leaders to provide direct assistance to schools' Action Teams for Partnerships and to establish a district-wide partnership network.
- June 30:** *2005 UPDATE* must be returned to NNPS to renew membership for the 2005-06 school year. NNPS will waive annual membership fees for all members who return *UPDATE*. In addition, members who return *UPDATE* by the deadline will be entered into a raffle for free registration to an NNPS Leadership Development Conference.
- June 30:** Applications due for *Partnership School Awards*, *Partnership District Awards*, *Partnership Organization Awards*, and *Partnership State Awards* for the 2004-05 school year.
- October 18-19:** Leadership Development Conference in Baltimore for school, district, state, and organization leaders who are organizing partnership programs in the 2005-06 school year, and for experienced members on advanced topics for leadership development.
- November:** Members will receive the *NNPS Annual Report* summarizing national data from *2005 UPDATE* in the mail.

National Network of Partnership Schools Staff



Standing: Kenyatta Williams, Karen Salinas, Brenda Thomas, Natalie Jansorn, Joyce Epstein
Seated: Steve Sheldon and Cecelia Martin