

# 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, 2009 No. 26

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## UPDATE Data Show Schools and Districts Hard at Work on Partnership Programs

Over 750 schools and 107 districts returned 2008 UPDATE surveys to renew their membership in NNPS and to report on progress and challenges in their partnership programs.<sup>1,2</sup> The schools (about 2/3 elementary) and districts were from more than 30 states, D.C., and Canada. They served students and families who were economically, racially, culturally, geographically, and linguistically diverse. Districts ranged in size from 1 school to over 250 schools. Over 70% of schools and just about all districts received Title I funds. Members have worked with NNPS for from 1 to 12 years.

### Data from Schools

Schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) selected a "portrait" that described their programs from *just starting* to *excellent*, with most reporting *average* or *good* programs. Elementary schools reported higher quality programs, but over 35% of middle and high school teams also had *good* or *very good* programs, with others in earlier stages of development. Schools are moving in the right direction. Data from 07 and 08 indicate that fewer schools were in planning and average stages and more had good to excellent programs.

About 80% of all schools had formed ATPs and wrote action plans for family and community involvement. On average, ATPs implemented many key components at an OK level, including conducting activities for all six types of involvement; evaluating activities, and reporting information to all families, the PTA/PTO, and

the faculty.

The data also showed room for improvement. For example, only 42% of the schools' ATPs met monthly to plan and evaluate their work, but regular monthly meetings are needed for a viable

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## Corwin Gives NNPS Members 20% Discount on New Edition of *Your Handbook for Action*

The new *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action, third edition* (2009) by J. L. Epstein and NNPS co-authors was released in January. Corwin Press is offering NNPS members a 20% discount on the new book through March 31 and "large-order discounts" at any time.

The book guides school-based Action Teams for Partnerships and district and state leaders in planning, implementing, and evaluating a research-driven program of family and community involvement. Ten chapters cover the NNPS framework of six types of involvement and provide background and tools to improve community connections, reach results with partnerships, prepare Action Teams for Partnerships, write goal-oriented plans, design interactive homework, involve parents in middle and high schools, build leadership at the district and state levels, and evaluate progress.

Changes in the *Handbook* reflect lessons learned with all members of NNPS

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# Issues and Insights

Joyce L. Epstein  
Director

## Going Green with NNPS Communications

With an eye on the future, NNPS will “go-green” with *Type 2* in the fall. In addition, we will e-mail several other communications to members. This eco-friendly decision will save trees and save funds.

### What will we e-mail?

Starting in Fall 2009 with issue #27, NNPS will e-mail *Type 2* to all members. We also will e-mail:

- **Call for submissions** for *Promising Partnership Practices 2009*
- **Call for applications** for 2009 Partnerships Awards
- **Annual summaries of UPDATE data** and **customized reports of local data** for districts with at least 8 schools
- **NNPS Conference brochure** and registration materials
- **NNPS District Leadership Institute brochure** and registration materials
- Other professional development opportunities, such as **NNPS Web Conferences**

All messages and materials that are sent by e-mail also will be posted on the NNPS website at [www.partnershipschoools.org](http://www.partnershipschoools.org) for easy printing. Members will be alerted to all e-reports in the monthly E-Briefs that are sent by the NNPS Facilitators. Those without e-mail access may ask NNPS to send the items by fax or mail.

### What does this mean to YOU?

1. **Your e-mail address is important to NNPS.** Please keep us up to date on changes to your e-mail address. Contact Jenn Ganss at [jganss@csos.jhu.edu](mailto:jganss@csos.jhu.edu).
2. **Your leadership is important to NNPS.** You can forward – via e-mail – NNPS publications and communications to your school principal, district superintendent, and others on your VIP list who support your partnership program.

3. **Our e-mail must get through to you.** If you are not receiving NNPS's monthly e-briefs, contact Jenn immediately with your e-mail address. Also, please alert your IT staff to accept messages and attachments from NNPS Facilitators at (Any Name)@csos.jhu.edu.

### What will we continue to send by regular mail?

Some publications and tools must be mailed to members, including:

- Welcome packet and membership certificate to new members, with one copy of the *Handbook for Action*, current *Promising Partnership Practices*, English and Spanish posters of the *Six Types of Involvement*, and other items.
- Annual *UPDATE* survey to all members to report progress and challenges, and to renew membership for the next school year.
- New edition of *Promising Partnership Practices* to all members who return *UPDATE*. In each new book, members share creative ideas with each other to improve family and community involvement linked to school goals for student success.

### Why this change?

Going green with communications is necessary because printing and mailing costs have risen. The decision is data-driven. The 2008 *UPDATE* surveys indicated that most NNPS members have e-mail and Internet access. Eco-friends from schools, districts, states, and organizations in fifteen states responded to request in January E-Briefs for reactions to the plan to go-green. All agreed, “I can still print it to share with team members and colleagues.” or “We are happy to receive things by e-mail!” Some made pointed comments, such as:

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### NNPS Web Conferences Serve District Leaders and School Teams

Each year, NNPS Facilitators conduct web conferences for district leaders and for school teams across the United States and Canada. Web conferences, conducted for 90 minutes, are short workshops with targeted information and activities on essential partnership program components. This professional development from NNPS, currently free to members, is growing in popularity because it requires no travel. Participants “attend” the conference at their own sites, receive and follow Power Point presentations, conduct focused activities to apply the information to their own programs, and are able to network with NNPS staff and members from across the country.

#### Web Conference for New District Leaders

In December 2008, NNPS Facilitators held a web conference to help new district leaders learn about their roles and responsibilities for conducting *district-level leadership* activities and for providing *direct facilitation to schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships*. Sixteen district leaders from 11 states participated in this conference.

Attendees not only received information from Darcy Hutchins and colleagues, but also shared best practices and discussed how to collaborate with colleagues, obtain funding, and help schools build their capacities to develop, sustain, and evaluate their partnership programs for student success. The *Web Conference for New District Leaders*, conducted each fall, is an excellent resource for individuals who cannot travel to Baltimore to attend the annual *District Leadership Institute*.

#### Web Conferences for Schools’ ATPs

In past years, NNPS held one

web conference for schools’ ATPs that were beginning their school-family-community partnership program. This year, demand was so high that three web conferences for ATPs were conducted. Over 100 schools from 26 states attended to learn how to develop their plans and programs of partnership.

Schools attended these conferences as a team of at least three members of the ATP – ideally, at least one parent, one teacher, and an administrator. In several cases, more than three team members participated. Some district leaders, such as those in **Little Rock, AR** and **Newport News, VA**, reserved a room to accommodate several school teams in one location. The Little Rock School District leader for partnerships assembled 20 schools’ ATP representatives at one NNPS web conference this year!

School ATPs learned about ten steps to successful program development, how to form a full and functioning ATP, and the components of the One-Year Action Plan for Partnership. They, then, were assigned the task of writing their own goal-linked plan for family and community involvement for the 09-10 school year.

#### A Service to Members

Feedback from attendees at this year’s web conferences has been overwhelmingly positive. One participant commented: “*What I discovered while listening to the Webcast was that . . . we have been doing (this) for the past two years. The affirmation made me feel as though we are on the right track!*” Another attendee noted: “*It was reassuring to hear from other schools and know that we are doing well and that we have some of the same obstacles as others.*”

School ATPs and district leaders who were unable to attend these web conferences can visit the NNPS

website ([www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org)) and log on to an archived, on-line version of the sessions. E-mail Darcy Hutchins ([dhutchins@csos.jhu.edu](mailto:dhutchins@csos.jhu.edu)) to receive the activities and handouts to use as you listen to the archived conferences. Read your monthly e-briefs from NNPS and visit the NNPS website to learn about future Web Conferences. ♦

Darcy J. Hutchins  
[dhutchins@csos.jhu.edu](mailto:dhutchins@csos.jhu.edu)

### Education World Features Promising Practices

*Education World*, known as “the educator’s best friend,” is linking to NNPS to feature activities from the annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices*. For the past three years, *Education World* selected creative and varied activities that involve families in goal-linked activities to support student success. The writer, Cara Bafle, called the school or district and interviewed a member of the ATP for additional insights into the activity.

From the 2007 collection, *Education World* selected 17 activities for its website section called Partners for Student Success. They were from schools in many districts (listed alphabetically): Anoka-Hennepin, MN: **Lincoln Elementary School for the Arts** (Classroom Coordinators); Chaska, MN: **Jonathon Elementary** (International Fair); Florence, SC: **Delmae Elementary** (SMART Night); Fresno, CA: **Bullard TALENT K-8 School** (All the World’s a Stage) and the **Fresno District** (One-Page School Snapshots); Hampton City, VA: **Merrimack Elementary** (Reading and Math Mania); Howard County, MD:

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# Meeting the Challenge

Steven B. Sheldon  
Director of Research

## Get Information from Workshops and Meetings to ALL Families

NNPS stresses the importance of addressing key challenges to enable more families to stay involved in their children's education. As shown in our recently-released school and district summaries of 2008 *UPDATE* data, the vast majority of NNPS members are working to meet many challenges to school, family, and community partnerships. The data indicated, however, that too few schools and districts are working on one common and critical challenge – providing information to all families who want it and need it, not just to the few who attend workshops or meeting at the school building. More schools and districts need to address this challenge in the 09-10 school year. New definitions, innovative communications, and up-to-date technologies will help.

### Open Lines of Communication on Workshops

NNPS “redefined” the term “workshop” or “meeting” to spur districts and schools to take action to meet this challenge. We note that a “workshop” or “meeting” is not only the gathering of people in a specific location, but also the *informational content* that is shared at these events.<sup>1</sup> Rather than focus only on increasing attendance at school meetings and workshops, Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) also should design ways to help more families gain access to the information that is presented.

One solution is for the ATP to open lines of communication. First, it is important to continue using *traditional tools* that parents are used to reading. For example, workshop handouts may be placed in communication folders (e.g., Wednesday folders, Friday folders) that go home with students and workshops can be summarized in school newsletters. There also are new ways to get the information out. One NNPS school summarized the information and conclusions from a workshop on the schools' phone answering machine. Anyone calling the

school could hear the main points of the workshops at any hour of the day or night. Other schools use electronic methods for communicating with families. Posting details from workshops on the school website makes the information available to many families for a long time at relatively low cost. Consider which high-tech and low-tech tools will help your school(s) get more information out to families who cannot attend workshops.

### Share Information from Family Nights

Family math and literacy nights are common events that help parents engage in productive math and reading activities with their children in school and, then, at home. Many schools gauge the success of these workshops by the number of parents attending. Even when attendance is high, many other families cannot attend and do not get important information. In the book *Family Reading Nights*,<sup>2</sup> NNPS authors suggest that the content of a reading workshop can engage all families if teachers incorporate some ideas into homework for students assigned on the days before or after an event. A reading night on biographies, for example, engages all families if students have an assignment to interview a family member or community partner and write a short biography of the person interviewed.

### Share Information about School Meetings

It also is important to share with families the topics, discussions, and information from meetings of the School Council or School Improvement Team. In the NNPS framework, Type 5 – Decision Making activities have implications for the entire school community, not only for a few parent leaders who attend meetings. ATPs need to share meeting agendas, call for ideas and input, and summarize perspectives discussed and decisions that result from these meetings.

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## Middle and High School Report

### Never Too Late: Involvement for Student Success in Middle and High School

It is in everyone's best interest to have an educated and competent work force. Educators are working hard to increase the number of students who graduate from high school and who are ready for college or for career and technical education. Families and communities can help. The question is: How can educators, parents, and others work together through the middle grades and high school to increase students' academic success?

Members of NNPS know that districts and schools must reach out to involve families and community members in ways that help students reach goals in school improvement plans. Many middle and high schools in NNPS are working with parents and the community to support, enhance, and enrich academic experiences that may lead to increased student success. The following are a few examples.

#### Reading

Administrators of **Creek Bridge High School**, Marion, SC, took a cue from a favorite children's TV program, *Reading Rainbow*, and turned a student reading challenge into a video phenomenon. Using Scholastic's *Reading Counts* program, the principal challenged students in grades 6-12 to read more and students responded. Library circulation and students' reading test scores went up! Points were awarded for books read and tests passed, followed by a celebration for all participants and awards for top point earners. The three top readers produced videos reviewing their favorite books, which were shown at the *Book Review Celebration* for students and over 100 parents.

#### Vocabulary

In *Word of the Week* at **Skyline**

**High School** in Idaho Falls, ID, word play took on a whole new meaning for students. In an effort to improve students' verbal SAT scores, the school's Action Team for Partnerships involved the entire community in a major vocabulary lesson, sponsored by local businesses. Each week, a new word was presented at the high school. Its spelling, pronunciation, part of speech, and usage were posted in every classroom. When students used the word correctly in a participating business, they received agreed-upon discounts. At the end of the year, a Word of the Week Quiz was given and students with top marks were awarded prizes.

#### Poetry

The team at **Whitney M. Young School** in Cleveland, OH, gave aspiring poets in grades 8-12 an opportunity to rhyme their way deeper into their parents' hearts at the school's *Coffee House/Poetry Night*. In an effort to improve students' reading and writing skills, teachers taught a poetry unit in which students wrote original poems and shared them with an enthusiastic family audience. For the event, the media center was transformed into a coffee house reminiscent of the Beat Generation's hangouts.

#### Social Studies

Sixth graders from **Isaac Stevens Middle School** in Pasco, WA took a cue from the Smithsonian and transformed the cafeteria into a virtual museum and Egyptian tomb, which was explored by over 300 parents on *Amacca Museum Night*. A unit about ancient Egypt came to life at as about 100 students managed 28 hands-on exhibits on hieroglyphics, pyramid math puzzles, clothing, burial customs, mummification, and more.

#### Multi-Subjects

At **Adams Friendship Middle School** in Friendship, WI, over 120 parents attended *R U Smarter than a Middle Schooler?* in math, science, health, and social studies. The game was organized so that large numbers of students and some parents could participate. With the help of 70 community partners, cash prizes and gift certificates for local businesses were awarded to winners. As in the TV game, parents were amazed at the advanced material that their children were learning.

#### Extra Academic Help

Sometimes, students need extra academic attention. **E. Russell Hicks Middle School**, in Hagerstown, MD, formed a partnership with the local Community College. In a productive school-community collaboration, students from HCC volunteered to tutor middle school students to help them improve their academic success.

#### Goal Setting

Young black males from middle and high schools in Virginia Beach dared to dream of greater academic and career success at a celebration for Martin Luther King's birthday. **Tallwood High School's** first *African American Summit: Living the Dream* focused on issues of race, peer pressure, goal-setting, and academic success. Among many activities throughout the day, a panel of community leaders discussed how they overcame many social and academic challenges to reach success in their fields. Students also attended other sessions on test preparation and course choices that would help them set goals for the future.

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### Schools and Districts Hard at Work on Partnership Programs

(Continued from page 1)

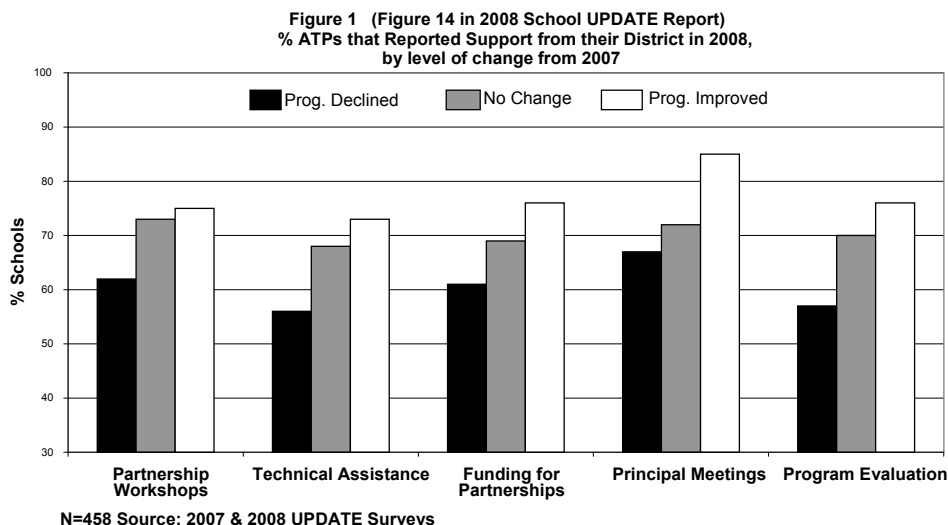
program. In addition, many schools, especially middle and high schools, need to increase outreach to involve all families, involve fathers, and improve program evaluations.

**Principal Support.** Most schools (96%) said principals were on the ATP and supported partnerships. In many schools (over 60%), active principals provided the team with meeting time, encouraged all teachers and staff to participate in involvement activities, and brought community partners to the school. Principals were least likely to allocate funds for partnerships. Compared to data from 07, more high schools reported “a lot” of support from their principals in 08.

**District Support.** School-based partnership programs benefited from support by district leaders. Schools in districts that also were NNPS members reported more district support for partnerships than did schools in non-member districts. For example, over 85% of schools in NNPS-member districts received information on best practices, compared to 64% in non-member districts. Over 75% of schools in member districts received help in evaluating their programs, compared to about 40% of schools in non-member districts.

Figure 1 shows that support from district leaders contributed to the quality of partnership programs over time. Schools with programs that *improved* in quality from 07 to 08 were more likely than schools with programs that *declined* to report that their district leaders provided funds, conducted workshops, met with the principal on partnerships, and helped the school evaluate their practices.

**Solving Challenges.** Most schools in NNPS are working to over-



come challenges to help more families get involved in their children’s schooling. In 2008, ATPs were least likely to address the challenge of getting information from workshops and meetings to families who could not attend (see *Meeting the Challenge* column on p. 4). An on-going challenge in most schools is to implement activities that involve parents in ways that increase student achievement and success in school. It is encouraging that about 88% of ATPs provided information on an involvement activity to improve student outcomes (see details in the full *UPDATE* report<sup>2</sup> and the *Middle and High School Report* on p. 5 of this issue.

**Summary of School Data.** The 2008 *UPDATE* data show that most schools in NNPS are working on key components of partnership programs, but many could improve the quality of their programs. ATPs need to meet monthly, organize committees to conduct more activities, sustain strong support from principals and others, and work with district leaders. Many schools need to increase activities to involve fathers and help teachers guide parents in monitoring and discussing homework to increase involvement

that may link more directly to student achievement.

#### Data from Districts

District leaders were at all stages of program development in 2008. About 25% were in a *planning year* or *just beginning*; 50% had a *good start* or *good program*, and 25% had a *very good* or *excellent* program. Three years of data from 59 districts from 06, 07, and 08 revealed that district leaders were moving in the right direction with fewer in *planning* phases and more with *good* and *very good* programs.

**Leadership Activities.** District leaders for partnerships must assume two responsibilities – *organize leadership* at the district level and *facilitate schools’ ATPs* to conduct effective school-based programs. Figure 2 shows that most district leaders were conducting six key activities to organize their work on partnerships. They reviewed policy (86%), established a budget (78%), and shared best practices of partnerships across schools (78%). Most conducted training workshops for schools’ ATPs (60%) and other staff development various audiences (72%).

The data show that two strategies need attention from district leaders. Only 64% wrote leadership action plans, but all need to do so to schedule their work on partnerships. Just about half (51%) posted information about partnerships on the district website. This percentage has increased from 35% in 05 and 46% in 07, and should continue to grow as websites improve as a good way to communicate with educators and families on partnerships.

**Facilitation of Schools.** Most district leaders are facilitating some schools and they are increasing assistance over time. For example, more district leaders (68%) guided schools' ATPs to write One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships in 08 than in 07 (59%). Also in that time, more district leaders for partnerships met with school principals, helped ATPs implement activities, conducted end-of-year celebrations to share best practices, and helped schools evaluate their programs. These actions contribute to the quality of schools' partnership programs. New districts must start to work with their own "partnership schools" by providing team training and other assistance. Some veteran districts need to "scale up" the number of schools with ATPs that develop research-based partnership programs.

District leaders estimated how their schools are progressing. Of more than **2200 schools** they assisted, district leaders said that about 55% of the schools were making *good progress* on partnerships; about 34% were making *some progress*; and about 11% were making a *little progress* in 2008. In all, district leaders estimated that over **352,670 families** were involved in activities conducted by these schools in the 07-08 school year.

### District Leaders' Comments.

Over 90% of the district leaders com-

mented on their progress in 2008. They noted that they improved policies, conducted professional development, obtained funds, and increased interdepartmental collaborations, as in these comments:

- *More focus on engaging parents in academic areas.*
- *There was a definite increase in parental participation. There was greater "buy in" from principals, teachers, parents and we developed a stronger (sense of) community.*
- *All Title I schools became members of NNPS and will have functioning ATPs (in 08-09).*
- *More schools were able to see the connection (of partnerships) to school improvement.*
- *We have become more accountable and have tried to tie our actions to student progress.*

District leaders listed their goals for the 08-09 school year to assist more schools, increase the number of staff working with schools on partnerships, write better Leadership Action Plans at the district level, increase outreach to diverse and underserved families, and improve partnership program evaluations at the district and school levels. These goals, written by district leaders, also reflect the results of analyses of

the 2008 data on needed improvements in district leadership and program development.

### Summary

The 2008 *UPDATE* data confirm prior reports that districts and schools in NNPS improve their programs if they continue to work on partnerships from year to year. District and school leaders build their expertise as they write plans, implement activities, and evaluate their work on family and community involvement. ♦

### NOTES:

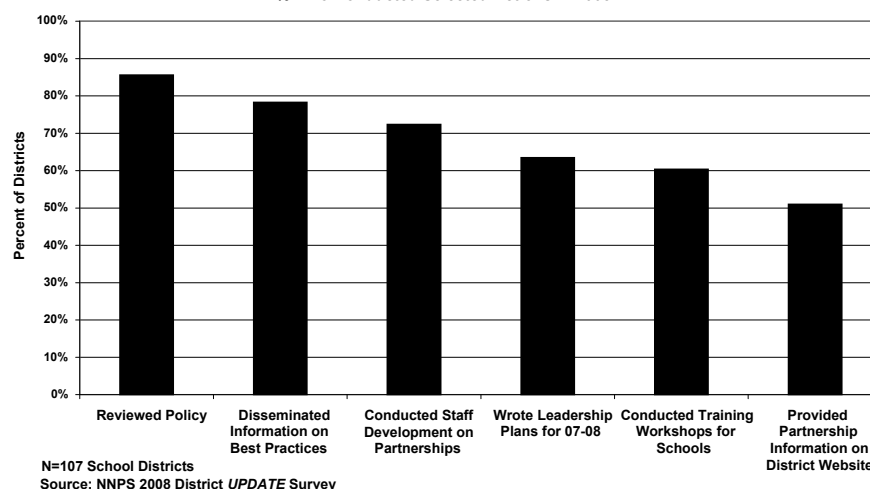
1 18 state departments of education and 43 organizations in NNPS also reported on their progress and challenges in 2008. New members are not required to send *UPDATE* until they have worked with NNPS for one year.

2 From: Epstein, J. L., Ganss, J., & Sheldon, S. (2009). *2008 District UPDATE Data*. Baltimore, MD: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships.

Hutchins, D. J., Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2009). *2008 School UPDATE Data*. Baltimore, MD: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships.

See the full reports on district and school data with demographic statistics and graphs on these and other topics are at [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org) in the section Research and Evaluations..

Figure 2 (Figure 3 in 2008 District *UPDATE* Report)  
District-Level Leadership on Partnerships  
% Who Conducted Selected Actions in 2008



# Our Growing Network

New Members in NNPS since September 20, 2008

**SCHOOLS (118 new members)** ★ A.A. Nelson Elementary School (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Andersen Elementary School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Andersen Open (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Anwatin Middle School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Arrowhead Elementary (Upper Marlboro, MD) ★ Bancroft Elementary School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Bancroft School (Wilmington, DE) ★ Barbe Elementary School (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Beardsley Elementary (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Bell City High School (Bell City, LA) ★ Bethune Community School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Blackhawk Elementary (Freeport, IL) ★ Brentwood Elementary School (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Brookwood Junior High School (Glenwood, IL) ★ Brookwood Middle School (Glenwood, IL) ★ Buckingham Elementary School (Berlin, MD) ★ Carl Sandburg Middle School (Freeport, IL) ★ Center Elementary (Freeport, IL) ★ Center for Training and Careers (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Cesar A. Batalla (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Chaparral Elementary School (Chino Hills, CA) ★ Cityview Performing Arts Magnet (Minneapolis, MN) ★ College Oaks Elementary (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Columbus Elementary (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Combre-Fondel Elementary (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Cooper Elementary School (Clayton, NC) ★ D. S. Perkins Elementary (Sulphur, LA) ★ Dane County Transition School (Madison, WI) ★ DeQuincy Elementary (DeQuincy, LA) ★ Dolby Elementary School (Lake Charles, LA) ★ E. K. Key Elementary (Sulphur, LA) ★ Edward D. Sadler, Jr. Elementary (Gastonia, NC) ★ Elbert-Palmer Elementary (Wilmington, DE) ★ Emerson Spanish Immersion Learning Center (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Empire Elementary (Freeport, IL) ★ Fairview Elementary (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Freeport High School (Freeport, IL) ★ Freeport Jr. High School (Freeport, IL) ★ Frost Pond Elementary School (Pelion, SC) ★ Galveston Elementary School (Chandler, AZ) ★ Geraldine W. Johnson School (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Gillis Elementary (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Henry Heights Elementary (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Hiawatha Community School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Hickory Bend Elementary School (Glenwood, IL) ★ High Horizons Magnet School (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Hmong International Academy School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Humboldt Senior High School (Saint Paul, MN) ★ J. I. Watson Elementary (Iowa, LA) ★ Jacob J. McClain High School (Lexington, MS) ★ Jake Drost Special School (Sulphur, LA) ★ James J. Curiale (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Jefferson Community School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Jenny Lind Community School Lower Campus (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Jessie D. Clifton Elementary School (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Jettie S. Tisdale School (Bridgeport, CT) ★ John F. Kennedy Elementary School (Lake Charles, LA) ★ John J. Johnson Elementary School (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Jones Farrar Early Learning (Freeport, IL) ★ Kenwood Elementary School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Lake Nokomis Community School – Keewaydin Campus (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Lake Nokomis Community School – Wenonah Campus (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Lakeshore Discovery Public School (Ontario, Canada) ★ LeBleu Settlement Elementary (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Lincoln-Douglas Elementary (Freeport, IL) ★ Longwood Elementary (Glenwood, IL) ★ Loring Community School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Lucy Craft Laney at Cleveland Park (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Lyndale Community School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ M. J. Kaufman Elementary School (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Marcy Open School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ McCaskey High School (Lancaster, PA) ★ Nellie Stone Johnson School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Northeast Middle School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Northrop Urban Environmental (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Oak Park Elementary (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Oak Park Middle (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Olson Middle School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Patrick Henry High School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Paul Laurence Dunbar School (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Pearl Watson Elementary (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Pillsbury Math, Science, and Technology School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Pocomoke Elementary School (Pocomoke, MD) ★ Porter Elementary (Mesa, AZ) ★ Ralph F. Wilson Elementary (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Ramsey International Fine Arts Center (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Ray D. Molo Magnet Middle School (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Reynaud Middle (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Richard R. Green Central Park School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Richard W. Vincent Elementary (Sulphur, LA) ★ Roosevelt School (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Roxhill Elementary School (Seattle, WA) ★ Royal Palm Middle School (Phoenix, AZ) ★ Selma Elementary (Hollywood, CA) ★ Seward Montessori School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Sheridan Global Arts and Community K-8 School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Snow Hill Elementary School (Snow Hill, MD) ★ South Hart Elementary (Hartwell, GA) ★ South High School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Saint Bernard Catholic School (Bellflower, CA) ★ Saint John Elementary (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Stanfield Elementary School (Stanfield, AZ) ★ Starks High School (Starks, LA) ★ Students in Transitional Education S.I.T.E. (Freeport, IL) ★ T. H. Watkins Elementary (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Taylor Park Elementary (Freeport, IL) ★ Upper Merion Area Middle School (King of Prussia, PA) ★ Vinton Elementary (Vinton, LA) ★ W. T. Henning Elementary (Sulphur, LA) ★ Waite Park Community School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Washburn High School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Washington Street Elementary (Hartsville, SC) ★ Washington-Marion Magnet School (Lake Charles, LA) ★ Western Heights Elementary (Westlake, LA) ★ Westwood Elementary (Westlake, LA) ★ Wilbur L. Cross (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Williams-Sullivan Elementary School (Durant, MS) ★ Williams-Sullivan High School (Durant, MS) ★ Windom Spanish Dual Immersion (Minneapolis, MN) ★

**DISTRICT (6 new members)** ★ Freeport School District 145 (Freeport, IL) ★ Montclair Public Schools (Montclair, NJ) ★ Halton District School Board (Ontario, Canada) ★ Worcester County Public Schools (Newark, MD) ★ Seattle School District #1 (Seattle, WA) ★ Brookwood School District 167 ★

**STATES (1 new member)** ★ New Mexico Public Education Department (Santa Fe, NM) ★

**ORGANIZATION/UNIVERSITY PARTNERS (5 new members)** ★ Mississippi State PIRC (Lexington, MS) ★ Heights Parent Center (Cleveland Heights, OH) ★ Family Involvement Training, F.I.T. for Student Success (Adelanto, CA) ★ Education Equity, LLC (Saint Louis, MO) ★ Foundation for Orange County Public Schools, Inc. (Orlando, FL) ★

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Current Active Membership in the National Network of Partnership Schools as of February 20th, 2009

Schools: 1151    Districts: 145    States: 21    Organizations: 65



### Smooth Transitions Welcome Young Students and Families to School

Practically everyone has moved at least once – to a new city, new home, or new job. Every move is both distressing and exciting. Will you be received well? Will you find new friends? Will you be happy? First impressions are important and so is the reception you receive. Students and their families feel the same mix of anxiety and excitement when entering a new school.

NNPS guides Action Teams for Partnerships to conduct smooth and memorable transitions that welcome students to a new educational adventure and welcome families as key partners in their child's educational journey. Many schools do this well when students move from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school. It also is important to conduct successful transitions when students and families enter preschool or elementary school. The following are a few examples from *Promising Partnership Practices 2008* activities that were implemented to ease the early transitions to new schools.

#### Entering Preschool

Head Start, Early Childhood Centers, and other early care and education settings must welcome young children and their families. Good information can ease parents' worries so that they and their children will love school.

**Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Education Center** in Peoria, IL hosts a New Parent Orientation to fulfill a goal in its School Improvement Plan – empowering parents to be involved. To ensure that all parents have vital information about the school and their children's learning and development, this activity is mandatory. Registration of students (birth to age 6) is not complete unless a parent has attended the orientation session.

#### Entering Elementary School

Students and families enter kindergarten from highly diverse preschool experiences or straight from home. The new school is usually larger and more structured than the preschool. A good transition will calm fears, address concerns, and share the joy of the new school. Teachers, administrators, district leaders, and community partners all can play welcoming roles, as in these examples.

Good information can ease parents' worries so that they and their children will love school.

**Maple Elementary School** in Cambridge, MD conducted a *Whistle Stop Tour* on a late summer day. Teachers and administrators boarded a bus traveled through their students' communities. Families met the bus at various stops to greet the teachers and administrators. They received information about their children's transition or return to school. As one grandparent said, "We know you really care about our kids because you came to us." Students received hugs and freeze pops from the teachers, which helped put them at ease about entering or returning to school.

At **Ranchview Elementary** in Naperville, IL, 100 new students and their parents came to the *New Family Orientation Evening* a week before school opened. Student council members served as guides, along with teachers and parent leaders. Activities included taking photos of entering families, touring the school, conducting activities for new students while parents attended a video and information session, and offering refreshments and a school-linked gift bag. The orientation welcomed new members to

the school community and celebrated the school.

District leaders for partnerships in **Saint Paul Public Schools** worked with the Mayor's office, library, and community groups on *Blast Off to Kindergarten*. They created a unified website for parents of entering students and distributed information-filled backpacks to about 5000 students entering kindergarten. A school calendar, information on school programs, ideas for reading aloud, and ways to help students appreciate other students from diverse cultures, and other items helped parents prepare their children for the first day of school.

#### Plan Transition Activities

All schools in NNPS should plan good transitions for students and families who are *leaving* or *entering* the school. ATPs may use Page 3 of the One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships to focus on transitions with the goal of improving students' adjustment and attitudes to school. If Page 3 focuses on a different behavioral goal (e.g., attendance or health), ATPs may include transition activities on Page 4 of the plan, as part of creating a welcoming partnership school. It also helps for "feeder" and "receiver" school teams to work together to ensure smooth transitions from one learning environment to the next. ♦

Read about these and other ideas for transitions to all school levels in the annual collections of *Promising Partnership Practices* at [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org) in the section Success Stories.

Also, see the transitions planning template on the CD with the new edition of *Handbook for Action*.

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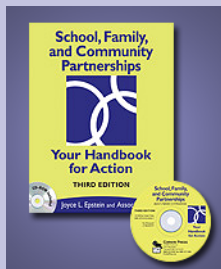
## 20% Discount on New Handbook for Action

(Continued from page 1)

over the past few years. The new and improved *Third Edition* features:

- A new literature review of research on results of partnerships for student success
- New information on evaluating the quality and progress of partnership programs
- New inventories that define leadership roles at the district and state levels
- A CD-ROM with printable planning and evaluation forms, workshop materials, Spanish translations of selected reproducibles, and a PowerPoint Presentation for a full NNPS One-Day Team Training Workshop

New members of NNPS will continue to receive one copy of the *Handbook for Action* with their welcome packet. Members of NNPS who have the *Second Edition*, can use the order form at [www.corwinpress.com](http://www.corwinpress.com). ♦



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Community Partnerships:  
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for large orders.**

## Meeting the Challenge

(Continued from page 4)

Here again, schools can use traditional paper as well as on-line methods of communication to enable all families to communicate their opinions and ideas before the meetings and to provide all families with information and explanations about decisions that are made.

### Take This Challenge

Workshops, family nights, and school meetings are three common activities that bring parents to the school building. Now, it is time to take the challenge to get important information from these events to those who cannot come. How will your school(s) do this in the 09-10 school year? ♦

1 Epstein, et al. (2009). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action, third edition*. Corwin Press. See p. 153 and CD (or prior editions on the topic of challenges).

2 See Hutchins, Greenfield, & Epstein. (2008). *Family Reading Night*. Eye on Education. See the sections called Classroom and Home Connection.

## Issues and Insights

(Continued from page 2)

*I think (NNPS) should definitely go green...and it's a money saver too! (We need to be responsible for getting (our) own information. Having Type 2 e-mailed and available online will allow (us) to do that. I'm all for it!*

Sarah Del Toro, District leader in Kennewick, WA

### The mission remains the same!

NNPS remains committed to our mission: To help schools, districts, states, and organizations use research-based approaches to improve goal-linked partnership programs that engage all families in ways that boost student success in school. We can do this and go green, too! ♦

**Link YOUR web site  
to NNPS  
at**

**[www.partnershipschoools.org](http://www.partnershipschoools.org)**

## Education World

(Continued from page 3)

**Guilford Elementary** (Hispanic Family Outreach and ESOL Homework Club).

Also: Naperville, IL: **Elmwood Elementary** (White Elephant Bingo), **Meadow Glens Elementary** (Meadow Glens Reads), **Mill Street Elementary** (Math Mates), and **Naperville North High School** (Family Connection); Queen Anne's County, MD: **Centreville Elementary** (Student Showcase Night); Saint Paul, MN: **Phalen Lake Elementary** (Testing Kickoff/Math Game Night); Virginia Beach: **Birdneck Elementary** (Christmas in July) and **Lynnhaven Elementary** (Reading Can Be a No-Brainer); Washington County, MD: **E. Russell Hicks Middle School** (Student-Led Conferences); and Windsor CT: **Roger Wolcott Early Childhood Center** (Hooked on Books).

*Education World* chose activities from 30 other NNPS schools from the 2005 and 2006 collections, all of which are archived on its website, and will select a new set of activities from *Promising Partnership Practices 2008*. Visit the *Education World* website to read all of the articles from NNPS schools at [www.educationworld.com/a\\_admin/archives/partners.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/archives/partners.shtml). ♦

### Focus Partnerships on Results for Students

The new edition of the *Handbook for Action*<sup>1</sup> includes a chapter by Dr. Steven B. Sheldon that summarizes over 100 studies on the effects of family and community involvement. The literature review reports results of family involvement on students' reading, math, and science achievement and on selected behavioral outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

#### Involvement in Reading

Many studies found that family involvement increased students' reading achievement and literacy skills. At the preschool level, for example, a literacy-rich home environment and storybook reading increased students' reading readiness. In the elementary grades, reading workshops, family reading nights, and classroom reading volunteers contributed to students' reading achievement. Even in middle and high schools, students' English and reading skills were positively affected by clear communications from school, family discussions about school, and by checking and discussing homework.

#### Involvement in Math and Science

The progressively difficult nature of mathematics, some parents' fears of math, and their discomfort with science make it necessary for schools to guide parents in how to support and interact with their children in these subjects from preschool on. There are fewer studies of involvement in math and science, but some research has important implications for practice. For example, researchers found that families affected their children's self-perceptions of ability and achievement in math and in science. This suggests that clear and useful information for parents could help them express high

expectations to their children for their effort and success in these subjects.

A curricular intervention – interactive homework in math and in science – requires children to discuss their classwork and ideas with a family partner. Quasi-experimental studies show that students assigned interactive homework had more involved parents, more positive attitudes, and higher achievement in these subjects than did students in control groups with “regular” homework. These assignments are designed to help parents understand how to work with their children without thinking they must know how to “teach” math or science skills.

#### Summary

- Studies at all grade levels show the importance of goal-oriented activities for family and community involvement.
- Results show that schools not only can increase family involvement, but also involve families to help students improve reading, math, and other skills and behaviors

This summary should help educators and policy leaders see why it is important to link well-implemented partnership programs to school improvement goals. Along with excellent teachers and well-managed schools, goal-oriented family and community involvement can affect a range of important student outcomes. ♦

1) From: Sheldon, S. B. (2009). *Improving Student Outcomes with School, Family, and Community Partnerships: A Research Review*. Chapter 1.3 in *Your Handbook for Action, Third Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

2) Also in the chapter, see reviews of research on family involvement to improve student attendance, behavior, and successful transitions to new schools.

### SPOTLIGHT YOUR PROGRAM!

#### MAY 15

SUBMIT your best practice for the 2009 **Promising Partnership Practices**.

#### JUNE 30

RETURN the 2009 **UPDATE** and SUBMIT an NNPS **Partnership Award** application.

Watch your e-mail for these forms and opportunities.

Or, print them from the section *Success Stories* at [www.partnershipschoools.org](http://www.partnershipschoools.org).

### Involvement for Student Success

(Continued from page 5)

Research shows that families and communities contribute measurably to students' learning and development at every school level. Most families need more information about adolescent development, secondary school organization, and community programs and services for teens. Middle and high schools in NNPS are taking the lead by developing creative ways to involve community partners and many families, including those who would not become involved on their own. ♦

Read more about many of these and other activities in the 2008 edition of *Promising Partnership Practices* at [www.partnershipschoools.org](http://www.partnershipschoools.org) in the section *Success Stories*.

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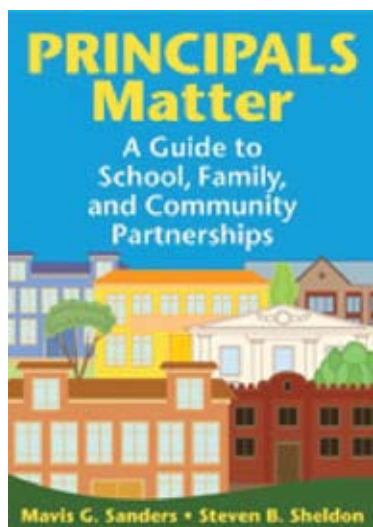
## Partnership Calendar

### 2009

- March** Spring issue of *Type 2*.
- March/April** Invitation for NNPS members to contribute to *Promising Partnership Practices 2009*. Due May 15.
- Eligible members will be invited to apply for NNPS Partnership Awards for 2009. Due June 30.
- March 19-20** District Leadership Institute in Baltimore for district leaders for partnerships in the “start-up phase” of program development. DLI prepares leaders to provide direct assistance to schools’ Action Teams and to establish district-wide leadership on partnerships.
- April** Members will receive 2009 *UPDATE* in the mail. Due June 30 to renew NNPS membership for the 09-10 school year.
- May 15** Promising partnership practices submissions due for review for the 2009 collection.
- June 30** 2009 *UPDATE* due to NNPS to renew membership for 09-10. NNPS will waive annual membership fees for all members who return *UPDATE*.
- June 30** Partnership Awards Applications due.
- September** Fall issue of *Type 2* - via e-mail and web site.
- October 27-28** Leadership Development Conference in Baltimore for new and experienced school, district, state, and organization leaders.

NNPS gratefully acknowledges support from

**MetLife Foundation**



### COMING SOON

#### Principals Matter: A Guide to School, Family, and Community Partnerships

Mavis G. Sanders and  
Steven B. Sheldon

Information for administrators and other school leaders, including:

- Review of research on principal leadership, parent and community involvement, and school improvement
- New approaches to involve fathers, families of students with special needs, Limited English Proficient families, and families in poverty
- Recommendations for program evaluations
- Examples of successful practices

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