

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, 2011 No. 30

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Schools and Districts Report Progress in 2010 on Leadership, Programs, and Outreach

A large number of NNPS schools (889) and districts (110) evaluated the quality of their work on partnerships on the 2010 UPDATE surveys. They, along with states and organizations that returned UPDATE, confirmed the importance of evaluating their efforts to organize and improve their plans and practices of family and community involvement.

School UPDATE Data

Demographics. Schools in the sample were from 39 states, Canada, and Australia. They included elementary (64%), PreK-8 (10%), middle grades (14%) and high schools (9%), with the rest having mixed grades (3%). The schools were located in large, central cities (29%), small cities (27%), suburban (24%), and rural (20%) areas. A large majority of schools (78%) received school-wide or targeted Title I funds and, on average, served families who spoke 4.6 languages at home (ranging up to 45 languages in some schools). The diversity of schools invites analyses of the effects of NNPS's recommended approaches on the quality of school programs.

Program Quality. Some schools worked with NNPS for one year and others for up to fourteen years. These differences were reflected in reported program quality, with some schools "just starting" (10%) and others reporting that they have "excellent and permanent programs that would continue even if leaders changed" (8%). Most schools (36%) reported "good" programs. They matched a "portrait" of

good implementation of activities, attention to challenges to reach all families, and awareness by most teachers and families of the school's partnership program and ties to NNPS.

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NNPS Schools Win Honors

In addition to NNPS Partnership Awards, schools in NNPS win other honors throughout the school year. In the past few months, NNPS schools were recognized for excellent school programs and for partnership activities.

Blue Ribbon Schools

NNPS members **Highlands Elementary School** in Naperville, Illinois (a ten-year NNPS Partnership Award winner), **Eunice Elementary School** in Eunice, Louisiana (an up-and-coming NNPS leader), and **Ballentine Elementary School** in Irmo, South Carolina (a recent active member of NNPS and contributor to *Promising Partnership Practices*) were named 2010 Blue Ribbon Schools by the U. S. Department of Education. The schools met important educational benchmarks, completed applications, and were thoroughly reviewed by national judges. Their excellent programs go way beyond improving test scores. These schools are clear that their excellent partnership programs and continuous improvement on family and community involvement contribute to student success in school.

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Issues and Insights

Joyce L. Epstein
Director

Questions and Answers:

What is the best word for our work?

How can district superintendents support partnership programs in all schools?

One of NNPS's rules-of-the-road is to answer all e-mails and phone calls to address members' questions and discuss next steps. We believe that this kind of responsive technical assistance helps members of NNPS increase their expertise on partnerships and continually improve their programs.

In the past few months, two important questions were raised that may interest others in NNPS.

Q What is the difference between parental *involvement* and *engagement*? Is one term better than the other for the work that we do?

A In NNPS, we use the term "*school, family, and community partnerships*." This term incorporates—but is not limited to—the involvement, engagement, and participation of parents and community partners. Our studies show that it is necessary to redirect the focus of this work from *what parents do* (or do not do) to *what schools, families, and communities do together* to increase *student success in and out of school*. Although families, teachers, and others benefit from excellent partnership programs, the work is, ultimately, for and about the *students*.

NNPS members know that each school must have an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP)—a committee of the school improvement team or council. This ensures that work on partnerships is an official part of school organization—central to all school improvement efforts. The ATP—with teachers, parents, and administrators working together—writes an annual plan for partnerships, uses the framework of six types of involvement to engage parents in various ways linked to school goals for student

success, evaluates the quality of practices and equity of outreach, and improves the school's partnership program from year to year.

Because each school is different, each ATP must plan activities linked to its own goals for students and the needs and interests of its parents and students. Sometimes, parents want and need information to best help their children. At other times, parent leaders design and conduct activities to involve other parents and community partners in productive ways. In many instances, parents, teachers, and others work together—as partners—to design, conduct, and evaluate the results of exciting and creative activities that enable all parents to guide their children toward success in school.

We know that students need multiple sources of support to do their best, stay in school, develop skills and talents, and plan for the future. The terms we use are important. Most agree that family and community *involvement*, *engagement*, and *participation* will grow stronger and will be more productive IF schools focus is on developing, evaluating, and sustaining excellent partnership programs for student success.

Q What is the Superintendent's role in supporting and advancing better partnership programs in all schools in the district?

A A District Superintendent's support for family and community involvement is part and parcel of leadership for students' success. This starts by naming a District Leader for Partnerships and continues as the Superintendent supports this leader's efforts to improve partnerships at the district level and in all schools.

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The Importance of Building Capacity at the District and School Levels

District leaders in the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) have two major responsibilities:

- Conduct district-level leadership activities.
- Facilitate the work of schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) to help them strengthen their school-based partnership plans and programs.

These tasks require district Leaders for Partnerships to build their own expertise *and* help others increase their capacities to understand, implement, and continually improve goal-linked programs of school, family, and community partnerships.

At the district level, Leaders for Partnerships may work with colleagues from other departments to integrate family and community involvement in curriculum and instruction, student services, special education, and other programs that require school and family collaborations.

At the school level, district Leaders for Partnerships help ATPs build their capacities with initial and on-going professional development for principals, teachers, and parent leaders who serve on schools' ATPs. Team-training workshops, end-of-year retreats, monthly communications, and other individualized guidance from district Leaders for Partnerships help educators and parents see that their ATPs' efforts are fulfilling district policies for family and community involvement and are helping students reach school improvement goals.

Title I legislation [presently Section 1118, Part (E) of *No Child Left Behind*

NCLB] stresses the importance of building capacities in districts, in schools, and among parents to work together to help students increase their achievement and success in school. Yet, many districts in the U. S. have not named a Leader for Partnerships. In NNPS, districts must have designated leaders who continually "grow" their expertise on family and community involvement so that they can help schools ATPs become more expert, as well.

Here are a few examples of district leadership activities that serve parents and educators well and improve the quality of partnership programs at the district and school levels.

Provide Parents with Training in Technology

Leaders in **Kennewick School District**, in Kennewick, Washington, implemented a new computerized grading and attendance system. Because they knew that some parents shy away from technology, they initiated *Adult Basic Computer Classes* to help parents learn basic computer skills and navigate the system for their children's academic information. District leaders publicized these classes to reach Spanish-speaking parents and scheduled the classes to accommodate its population of agricultural workers.

Classes met twice a week for two hours during the winter term. Some classes covered very basic computer skills (e.g., turning the machine on and off). By the end of the course, participants were able to send and receive e-mail, write a resume, fill out an online application, and check their children's grades and attendance online. Kennewick's computer classes built parents' capacities to monitor

their children's schooling and academic progress.

Share Information in Parents' Native Languages

Hampton City Schools, in Hampton, Virginia, opened a Welcome Center for parents to gain information about school and community services. The Center—*36 Languages Under One Roof*—focuses on helping students and their families start the school year off on the right foot. At the Center, children and adults can register for school, sign up for ESL classes, learn about workshops for families, and find helpful community resources.

The Welcome Center also houses the ESL Parent Resource Center, which offers games, books, and information in multiple languages. Families can check out materials to use at home to enhance children's learning. In its first two years, the Center helped build capacities of about 1,000 parents by communicating useful information in parents' native languages. In so doing, more of these parents could help their children succeed in school.

Establish a District Advisory Council

Francis Howell School District, in Saint Charles, Missouri, believes that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Following this motto, district administrators bring together representatives from its 23 schools' ATPs to form the *District Parent Involvement Advisory*. At council meetings, the schools' representatives share best practices, hear from and question district leaders (e.g., superintendent, chief academic office), and make joint plans for improving programs of family and community involvement. In this way,

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Meeting the Challenge

Steven B. Sheldon
Director of Research

Involve More Families in Decision Making

Of the Six Types of Involvement – Parenting, Volunteering, Communicating, Learning at Home, Decision Making, and Collaborating with the Community – the fifth is one that challenges many schools. Including families on decision-making committees and involving them as *true partners* in the decision making process raise issues of power and authority, parents' and educators' roles in schools, professional training, representation, and communication.

One of the biggest challenges is to provide families from major groups served by the school (e.g., representatives of different grade levels, ethnic or racial groups, income levels, special education) with opportunities for input into school decisions and activity planning. Many NNPS schools are meeting this challenge by ensuring that parents from different groups are on or active with the Action Teams for Partnerships (ATP) and in other ways. They are demonstrating that, when given the opportunity, all families can be strong and active partners in framing school decisions.

The challenge of engaging more and different families in decision-making roles stems from the fact that, often, there are limited opportunities for parents to assume this role. Most councils, task forces, and advisory boards have only one or two parent representatives. At the **Business and Economics Academy of Milwaukee**, in Wisconsin, the ATP organized its work in multiple committees to engage many parents in ATP leadership roles. Rather than work as a single large committee, this ATP created sub-committees focused on involving fathers, addressing diversity and students with special needs, tips for families on students' learning at home, and community outreach. With four sub-committees, more family and community partners could be meaningfully involved as leaders, assistants, and participants in planning, implementing, evaluating, and celebrating partnership activities.

Park Middle School, in Kennewick, WA, expanded families' opportunities for decision making when parents and other family members took almost complete responsibility for the schools' *Cinco de Mayo Fiesta*. Originally the school staff coordinated Cinco de Mayo events, but then decided to invited Spanish-speaking families to help plan a salsa cook off. Building on this invitation, parents began to extend the original plans and, then, agreed to organize a large fiesta. As word traveled that the Spanish-speaking community was planning a fiesta, more and more families and the community became involved with this event and sub-committees were needed to organize and implement *Cinco de Mayo*. Contrary to prior beliefs that families were uninterested in the school and their children's education, the Spanish-speaking families planned an activity that demonstrated the pride they have in their culture and ethnic background, and, after that, increased their involvement in other ways.

By meeting the challenge to increase the representation of different groups in leadership and decision making, educators show their respect for the many cultures in their school community. With this in mind, **Roosevelt Elementary School**, in Saint Paul, MN, implemented *Harambee Family Nights*. This series of family nights established a Council of African American families with the goal of making the school community more responsive to and for these families and their children, and to help more African American families support their children's academic achievement. At Harambee Family Nights, parents interacted informally, sharing dinner and conversation with one another. Also, school leaders shared information, discussed issues and questions, and gathered the families' perspectives on school matters. Since the formation of this group, many more African American parents have attended fall and spring conferences with teachers. School leaders attributed this to the fact that Harambee and its leaders developed strong social

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Reveal the Secret: Include the Whole Staff in School's Partnership Program

A school-family-community partnership program should not be the best kept secret in a school. To solve this challenge, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) should discuss its goals, plans, and activities with the entire staff because everyone has an important role to play in improving family and community involvement in children's education.

In addition to the efforts of the ATP, individual teachers and grade level teams conduct important family and community involvement activities to improve their students' success. Their work is one part of the school's *program of partnerships*.

NNPS recommends that the chair or co-chairs of the ATP and one or two individual teachers give a five-minute report at each faculty meeting on successful activities or upcoming plans for family and community involvement. This also will demonstrate the principal's support for this component of school improvement.

The following activities from *Promising Partnership Practices 2010* show how four schools are working to engage everyone in goal-linked partnership activities.

Activities Involve Everyone In Reading

Machen Elementary School in Hampton, Virginia applied for a district grant to share the joy of reading with families in its *Home Reading Program*. Twice a year, everyone in the school read and discussed the same book. This included students, teachers, families, other staff, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, crossing guards, and others. Before starting, guidelines for parents, lessons for teachers,

discussion topics for various meetings were developed to help everyone read and talk about the books. Machen was, indeed, a "reading place" where everyone was part of the process.

In Lake Charles, Louisiana, the hottest ticket in town was to **Barbe Elementary School's** *Come Fly With Me Family Night*. Classrooms were turned into different vacation destinations, with interesting reading and technology themes using books, videos, computers, Internet, and more.

The "airline pilot" was the principal, who announced boarding and landing times in 20 minute intervals for participants to fly to the next place. Food was served at each location. For example, in New Orleans, students, teachers, and parents enjoyed beignets; in Hawaii they were served pineapple chunks; and so on. In Seussville, the librarian celebrated Dr. Seuss's birthday by reading a book aloud and serving green eggs and cupcakes.

Over 400 people participated in this high-flying trip to enjoy reading and new technologies.

At **Lincoln Elementary School** in Wausau Wisconsin, the annual *Used Book Sale* combats summer reading loss by providing students an opportunity to buy low-cost books. The idea grew over the years to include many staff, parents, and area businesses—all working together to collect as many books as possible. During the sale, students can purchase two books for 25 cents. At a *Family Fun Night* that culminates the sale, they can buy many books.

The money raised goes back to the community. One year funds were donated to an area food pantry, and

another year to a local pet shelter. Everyone at Lincoln cares about summer reading.

Pate Elementary School in Darlington, South Carolina, hosted a *Fancy Nancy Evening of Fun*. Girls brought mothers, aunts, and grandmothers to school for an evening of reading and glamour. Members of the ATP worked together with families, students, staff, business partners and community members.

They started with the fun of a school staff fashion show supported by a local department store. Then, ten activities were offered, including *Fancy Nancy Reading* by Pate's media specialist; *Fancy Nancy Writing* led by the school's Coordinating Teacher; *Wonderful Wellness* led by the school nurse; and *Exquisite Etiquette* led by a teacher. At the end of the evening, each girl received her own copy of a *Fancy Nancy* book.

Everyone knew about this event. It may be that boys, too, will want a similar activity that spotlights style and schooling.

Account For ALL Involvement Activities

In addition to the One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships that the ATP writes each year, NNPS provides a new tool called *The Complete Picture* to list all of the partnership work conducted by individual teachers and others in the school. This tool is on the CD in *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action, Third Edition*.

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Schools and Districts Report Progress in 2010 on Leadership, Programs, and Outreach

(Continued from page 1)

Data from 596 schools that reported progress in 2009 and 2010 showed that more schools that continued to work on their partnership program reported good, very good, and excellent programs over time. Compared to schools that declined in overall program quality, schools that improved or sustained the quality of their programs addressed more challenges to reach all families and reported greater support from parents and community members from one year to the next.

Basic Program Components. Nearly 90% of schools in NNPS reported that they had the “basics” in place, including an Action Team for Partnerships and a One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships. More than 70% of elementary, K-8, and middle schools linked their partnership activities to school improvement goals, implemented all planned activities, and evaluated the activities that were implemented. Over 60% of schools at all levels (including high schools) implemented activities for all six types of involvement and reported that they engaged all families in at least some activities during the year. Although high schools still lagged behind elementary and K-8 schools on most measures, from 60% to 80% of high schools in NNPS reported having basic structures and processes for goal-linked partnership programs.

Special Focus: Father Involvement. The 2010 UPDATE asked whether and how schools were reaching out to increase the involvement of fathers and father figures. Over 70% of elementary and K-8 schools and 60% of middle schools had started to involve fathers to help students improve academic and behavioral outcomes, as shown in Figure 1. Most of these and other schools said they needed to do more to meet this challenge. A smaller

percentage of schools were working to understand how to communicate with non-residential fathers (i.e., those who do not live with their biological children).

Summary: Schools. The 2010 UPDATE data paint an important picture. Most schools in NNPS are implementing the recommended research-based structures and processes for an organized, sustainable program of family and community involvement. It is important for schools to continue to improve their programs in the next school year. The data indicate that many schools need to hold more regular team meetings and take time each month to reflect on and evaluate each involvement activity that is implemented. High schools have more work to do to engage all families to guide their teens toward on-time graduation and plans for future college or careers.

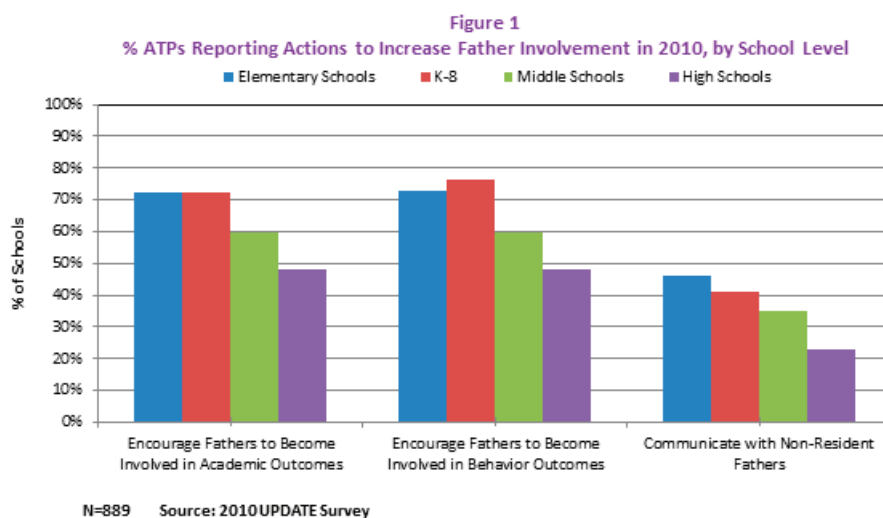
District UPDATE Data

The 110 District Leaders for Partnerships who returned the UPDATE data reported that they assisted over 2600 schools in the 09-10 school year. Their schools engaged an estimated 553,000 families in their children's

education. It is clear that district leaders in NNPS are hard at work improving partnership programs across the country.

Demographics. In 2010, districts in NNPS ranged in size from 1 school to over 250 schools in diverse communities in 32 states and 2 Canadian provinces. Some districts had been members for just one year, while others worked with NNPS for up to 14 years. The districts (as noted by their schools, above) served highly diverse students and their families.

Overall Program Quality. On a “portrait” measure of overall program quality, a few districts (mainly those new to NNPS) rated their program quality low (about 13.9% were in a “planning year” or “just beginning”). Over half the districts rated their programs as average (53.7% had a “good start” or “good program”). The remaining districts reported their partnership program quality as high (32.4% had a “very good” or “excellent” program). Data for two years (2009 and 2010) showed that districts in NNPS were moving in the right direction, with more good, very good and excellent programs in 2010.



District-Level Leadership. In NNPS, District Leaders for Partnerships must fulfill two responsibilities. They must conduct district-level partnership activities and directly facilitate school-based Action Teams for Partnerships to improve their connections with all families in ways that benefit all students. Nearly 90% of the district leaders established their offices, reviewed policy, identified their budgets, and shared best practices on partnerships with their schools. Over 70% conducted workshops for schools ATPs.

Direct Facilitation Of Schools. The most important work district leaders do is to facilitate schools' ATPs to strengthen their partnership programs. This is measured on UPDATE with an 18-item scale of facilitative actions. The data show that most district leaders (over 70%) guided schools to form ATPs, write action plans for partnerships, and use the six types of involvement to engage families in different ways. The data from districts confirm and substantiate the data from schools reported above.

From 2009 to 2010, district leaders increased their facilitative activities. Figure 2 shows that more district Leaders for Partnerships met with school principals, communicated with their schools' ATPs at least monthly, helped them evaluate their partnership practices, and helped them solve challenges to reach more families. These actions show how district leaders and school teams share leadership for partnerships, as leaders at all levels work to improve the quality of school-based partnership programs.

Special Focus: Involving Fathers

On the 2010 "featured" topic of increasing the involvement of fathers and father figures, most district Leaders for Partnerships (about 60%)

reported that some or all schools were working to make fathers feel more welcome and engage fathers in helping students improve academic outcomes in reading, math, or other subjects; and improve behavioral outcomes, such as attendance, safety, attitudes toward school. Fewer district leaders (37%) reported that some or all schools were taking advanced steps to communicate with non-residential fathers of students in their schools. The data from district leaders put the data from school teams in a clearer context.

Summary: Districts. The 2010 UPDATE data show that just about all district leaders in NNPS are working to implement key program components. As a whole, they are moving forward—step by step—on basic and advanced leadership activities at the district level and with their preschools, elementary, middle, and high schools. To continue to improve their programs, more district leaders in NNPS need to write an annual District Leadership Action Plan to schedule their time on district-level activities and on facilitating schools' ATPs. Their plans should indicate how they will "scale up" the number of schools in their local

networks linked to NNPS and the quality of all schools' programs. Many district leaders also need to work with colleagues to establish clear and exciting websites that feature guidelines and best practices of family and community involvement at the district and school levels.

Conclusion

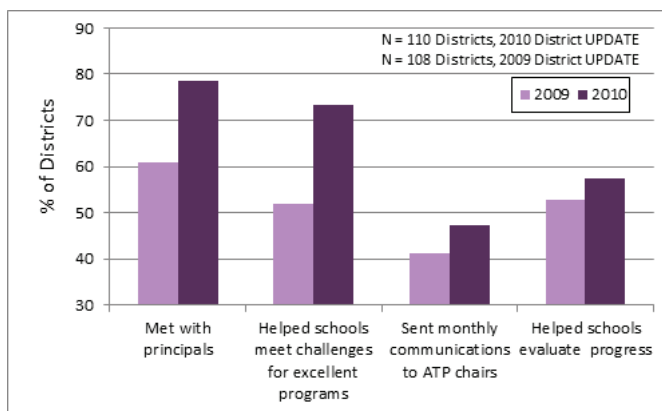
The 2010 UPDATE data indicate that districts and schools in NNPS are making progress in organizing goal-linked programs of family and community involvement. There always are new challenges to solve in developing excellent partnership programs. The data suggest that good leadership, teamwork, well-written plans, and the willingness to evaluate progress and solve problems are key components of sustainable partnership programs.

Full Reports

Epstein, J. L. & Ganss, J. (2011) *Summary 2010 District UPDATE*. Baltimore: National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University.

Sheldon, S. B. & Hutchins, D. J. (2011) *Summary 2010 School UPDATE*. Baltimore: National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University.

Figure 2: District Leaders' Support for ATPs to Advance School-Based Partnership Programs, 2009 and 2010



The full reports of data from schools and districts are at www.partnershipschools.org in the section Research and Evaluation. Click on Research Summaries and 2010 UPDATE Data. Also see practices to involve fathers in NNPS books of Promising Partnership Practices in the section Success Stories.

Our Growing Network

New Members in NNPS since October 1, 2010

SCHOOLS (114 new members) ★ A. B. Skane School (Bridgeport, CT) ★ A.C. Flora High School (Columbia, SC) ★ A.C. Moore Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Aileen Wright English Catholic School (Cochrane, Ontario, Canada) ★ Alcorn Middle School (Columbia, SC) ★ Alexander Mitchell Integrated Arts School (Milwaukee, WI) ★ Annie Burnside Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Arden Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Bassick High School (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Bishop Belleau (Moosonee, Ontario, Canada) ★ Black Rock School (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Bradley Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Brennen Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Broadmoor Middle Lab School (Shreveport, LA) ★ Brockman Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Bryant Elementary School (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Burlington High School (Burlington, VT) ★ Burton-Pack Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ C.A. Johnson High School (Columbia, SC) ★ C.P. Smith Elementary School (Burlington, VT) ★ Canyon Day Junior High School (Whiteriver, AZ) ★ Carver-Lyon Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Caughman Road Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Central High School (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Central High School (Pueblo, CO) ★ Champlain Elementary School (Burlington, VT) ★ Clarke Street School (Milwaukee, WI) ★ Columbia High School (Columbia, SC) ★ Crayton Middle School (Columbia, SC) ★ Creswell Elementary School (Shreveport, LA) ★ Detroit Service Learning Academy (Detroit, MI) ★ Dreher High School (Columbia, SC) ★ Dunseith Public School (Dunseith, ND) ★ East Elementary School (Eunice, LA) ★ Eau Claire High School (Columbia, SC) ★ Edison School (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Edmunds Elementary School (Burlington, VT) ★ Edmunds Middle School (Burlington, VT) ★ Edward E. Taylor Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ English Catholic Central School (New Liskeard, Ontario, Canada) ★ Euclid Elementary School (Ontario, CA) ★ Eunice Elementary School (Eunice, LA) ★ Eunice Jr. High School (Eunice, LA) ★ Forest Heights Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Freed Middle School (Pueblo, CO) ★ Gadsden Elementary (Gadsden, SC) ★ Garrison Middle School (Baltimore, MD) ★ Gibbes Middle School (Columbia, SC) ★ Glendale Elementary (Eunice, LA) ★ Grolee Elementary School (Opelousas, LA) ★ H. B. Rhame Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Hall School (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Hampton High School (Hampton, VA) ★ Hand Middle School (Columbia, SC) ★ Hernwood Elementary School (Randallstown, MD) ★ Holmes Road-Buckman Heights School of Inquiry (Rochester, NY) ★ Holy Family School (Englehart, Ontario, Canada) ★ Hon. Luis Muñoz Marín (Philadelphia, PA) ★ Hopkins Elementary (Hopkins, SC) ★ Hopkins Middle School (Hopkins, SC) ★ Horrell Hill Elementary (Hopkins, SC) ★ Hyatt Park Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Integrated Arts Academy (Burlington, VT) ★ J.J. Flynn Elementary (Burlington, VT) ★ J. S. Clark MicroSociety Academy (Shreveport, LA) ★ John P. Thomas Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Keenan High School (Columbia, SC) ★ Lake Taylor Middle School (Norfolk, VA) ★ Lemuel Pitts Middle School (Pueblo, CO) ★ Leonville Elementary (Leonville, LA) ★ Lewis Greenview Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Lincoln Elementary School (Layton, UT) ★ Logan Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Longfellow Middle School (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Longleaf Middle School (Columbia, SC) ★ Lonnie B. Nelson (Columbia, SC) ★ Lower Richland High School (Hopkins, SC) ★ Lyman C. Hunt Middle School (Burlington, VT) ★ Madison Elementary School (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Make the Grade Opportunity School (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Meadowfield Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Mill Creek Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Northside Elementary School (Shreveport, LA) ★ O'Gorman High School (Timmins, Ontario, Canada) ★ O'Gorman Intermediate (Timmins, Ontario, Canada) ★ Pine Grove Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Pine Grove Elementary (Shreveport, LA) ★ Pine Grove Middle School (Valdosta, GA) ★ Pinon Accelerated Middle School (Pinon, AZ) ★ Pinon Elementary School (Pinon, AZ) ★ Plaisance Elementary School (Opelousas, LA) ★ Risley Middle School (Pueblo, CO) ★ Romulus Middle School (Romulus, MI) ★ Roncalli Middle School (Pueblo, CO) ★ Rosewood Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Sacred Heart Catholic School (Kirkland Lake, Ontario, Canada) ★ Sacred Heart School (Timmins, Ontario, Canada) ★ Satchel Ford Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Shue-Medill Middle School (Newark, DE) ★ South Kilbourne Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Southeast Middle School (Hopkins, SC) ★ St. Andrews Middle School (Columbia, SC) ★ St. Anne English Catholic School (Iroquois Falls, Ontario, Canada) ★ St. Jerome School (Kirkland Lake, Ontario, Canada) ★ St. Joseph School (South Porcupine, Ontario, Canada) ★ St. Landry Accelerated Transition School (SLATS) (Opelousas, LA) ★ St. Patrick School (Kapuskasing, Ontario, Canada) ★ St. Patrick School (Cobalt, Ontario, Canada) ★ St. Paul School (Timmins, Ontario, Canada) ★ Sunset Acres Elementary (Shreveport, LA) ★ Talahi Elementary School (St. Cloud, MN) ★ Thomas Hooker School (Bridgeport, CT) ★ W. G. Sanders Middle School (Columbia, SC) ★ W.A. Perry Middle School (Columbia, SC) ★ W.H. Ruffner Academy (Norfolk, VA) ★ W.S. Sandel Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Warren Harding High School (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Warren Harding High School (Bridgeport, CT) ★ Watkins-Nance Elementary (Columbia, SC) ★ Webber Elementary (Eastover, SC) ★ Westgate Elementary School (Kennewick, WA) ★ Williston Middle School (Williston, ND) ★ Youth and Family (Pueblo, CO) ★

DISTRICTS (8 New Members) ★ Bright Star Schools (Los Angeles, CT) ★ Burlington School District (Burlington, VT) ★ Calvert County Public Schools (Prince Frederick, MD) ★ Floyd County (Rome, GA) ★ Kentwood Public Schools (Kentwood, MI) ★ Northbrook/Glenview School District 30 (Northbrook, IL) ★ Northeastern Catholic District School Board (Timmins, Ontario, Canada) ★ Northern Suburban Special Education District (Highland Park, IL) ★

ORGANIZATIONS/UNIVERSITY PARTNERS (3 new members) ★ ROE Schoolworks (Gibson City, IL) ★ West Liberty University (West Liberty, WV) ★ Ventura County Office of Education (Camarillo, CA) ★

Current Active Membership in the National Network of Partnership Schools as of March 31, 2011

Schools: 1279

Districts: 142

States: 22

Organizations: 55

Middle and High School Report

Working to Increase Family and Community Involvement in Upper Grades

Twenty-six activities in NNPS's *Promising Partnership Practices 2010* are from middle and high schools that are working to improve family and community involvement. Although UPDATE data indicate that elementary and K-8 schools still do more to organize their programs and reach out to parents, middle and high schools in NNPS are catching up by strengthening their plans and practices (Sheldon & Hutchins, 2011, and see article on p. 1 in this issue of *Type 2*).

Middle and high schools in NNPS are guided to implement the key components of the **NNPS research-based model**. They form an **Action Team for Partnerships-ATP**, write a **One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships** using the six types of involvement, **implement** their plans, and **evaluate** their progress. But secondary schools face some unique challenges. For example, if a middle or high school is very large, the ATP may need to form sub-committees for each major unit of the school (e.g., each grade level, middle school "house," or high school "academy"). In that way, many team leaders and participants can plan and conduct age- and grade-appropriate involvement activities that address students' goals and needs, and involve more parents in their teen's education.

The following are a few ways that middle and high schools are creating more welcoming schools and reaching more families.

Good Transitions

Lincoln High School in Jersey City, New Jersey is engaging families when their children first enter the school with the activity *Freshman Parent Support and Leadership*. The school

has a separate Freshman Academy to give students extra academic help and counseling for a successful transition to high school. With its partner, the New Jersey Parent Information Resource Center (NJ PIRC), Lincoln High established an Action Team for Partnerships for the Freshman Academy to ensure that parents of new high school students get a little extra help, too. In its action plan, the ATP developed *Freshman Parent Support and Leadership*—a series of eight 90-minute breakfast meetings from October to May. The sessions included a parent-to-parent support period, information on the Freshman Academy, and discussions of the importance of student attendance, community services for families and students, and other topics identified by the ATP or by parents. The ATP believes that if they engage the parents of the freshman class, more parents will remain involved across the grades.

Home Visits

School for Urban Planning and Architecture (SUPAR) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin improved connections with parents with a program of *Home Visits* to narrow the distance between home and school. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) took steps to make this high school a welcoming place, communicated frequently with all parents, and created a Parent Resource Center that met the needs identified on a survey of parents.

Home Visits were needed to meet with and engage parents who faced transportation challenges and could not easily come to meetings at the school building. Four members of SUPAR's Parent Engagement and Leadership Team—the school's founder, an advisor, an AmeriCorps*VISTA member,

and a paraprofessional—carpooled to families' homes. Some teachers joined the ATP on its visits *and/or* talked with parents over the phone about academic topics.

Discussions focused on students' strengths, how their families could support their teen's learning and development at home, parents' questions. Parents completed a questionnaire on their strengths and talents to contribute to the school, how they could support their students and the school, and how they can be involved at school and at home.

Strong Collaborations

Bennett Middle School in Salisbury, Maryland set new and stronger goals for collaboration in students' education. Their new approach—*Pyramid of Professionals*—helped teachers, parents, and administrators share leadership for students' success in school. Activities were developed and implemented to ensure that parents were involved in important decisions about students' educational experiences and were able to guide students toward success. The ATP reported that the collegial actions of teachers, staff, and parents has resulted in more positive student attitudes about school and learning, increased homework completion, improved attendance, and higher achievement test scores.

For more information on partnerships at the middle and high school levels, see Chapter 6 in the NNPS *Handbook for Action* and the collections of *Promising Partnership Practices* at www.partnershipschools.org in the section Success Stories.

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NNPS Schools Win Honors

(Continued from page 1)

National Title I Schools

Grasonville Elementary School

in Queen Anne's County, Maryland, and **Gadsden Elementary School** in Gadsden, South Carolina, were named National Title I Schools in 2010. The awards from the National Title I Association of State Title I Administrators recognize high-poverty schools that make progress in closing achievement gaps between groups of students. In addition to attention to students' test scores and individualized assistance for students who need extra help, these schools' are working, as members of NNPS, to increase family and community involvement that contributes to student success.

Maryland Parent Involvement Matters

Parent leaders in five NNPS schools in Maryland were their districts' finalists for the state's Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Awards. One parent from each school system was nominated for their leadership, advocacy, and participation on school committees. The schools include **Accident Elementary School** in Garrett County, **Rock Hill Elementary** in Kent County, **Kennard Elementary** in Queen Anne's County, **Leonardtown Middle School** in St. Mary's County, and **Princess Anne Elementary School** in Somerset County. The parents selected from these schools will attend a May event where one parent

will be the Maryland State Winner. In fact, all parent leaders (including ATP members and all who support their schools' partnership activities) are winners in many ways.

Other Awards?

If your school, district, state, or organization is recognized for excellence, let NNPS know so that we can report your accomplishments. If your site has been a member of NNPS for two years or more, you can apply for a 2011 Partnership Award to spotlight your good work on family and community involvement. See the awards applications on the NNPS website in the section, Success Stories.

Leadership Line

(Continued from page 3)

all schools learn that their ATPs have on-going support and guidance from the district.

Building capacity on partnerships goes well beyond "compliance" with federal, state, or local policies. A checklist to identify whether a district or school is in or out of compliance on parent involvement gives a "snapshot" of a program. Capacity building is like a "moving picture" that becomes more interesting over time. The examples show how district leaders are helping ATPs make their schools more welcoming, engage traditionally "hard-to-reach" populations, and support a district "culture" for partnerships. Capacity building at all levels—district, school, and family—is important for sustaining programs of school, family, and community partnerships.

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Meeting the Challenge

(Continued from page 4)

networks at the school and improved home-school relationships with families based on mutual respect.

It is not always easy to meet the challenge of having more diverse representation in decision-making roles at a school. The ATP provides NNPS schools with ways to increase the number of parents who take leadership roles—first on an ATP activity, later as an ATP member, and then on the School Council or other committees.

These and other schools in NNPS are showing that there are many different ways to provide more families with opportunities to voice ideas, take leadership roles, and increase their own and others' involvement at the school and in their children's education. Increasing parents' participation in school decisions can benefit the school, families, and the students. More information about these and other practices are in books of *Promising Partnership Practices* and on the NNPS website.

NNPS in Numbers

70.8%

Percent of schools reporting that 75% - 100% of families attended at least one parent-teacher or parent-teacher-student conference in the 09-10 school year.

Source: 2010 School UPDATE Survey.
872 school teams

553,000+

Number of families involved in students' education in schools guided by districts in NNPS in the 09-10 school year.

Source: 2010 District UPDATE Survey.
110 district leaders

Issues and Insights

(Continued from page 2)

Data show clearly that districts and schools are not starting from “ground zero” on partnerships. Most districts have a policy for family and community involvement. Most schools conduct various activities to communicate with and involve parents. Most, however, need to be more systematic in developing comprehensive programs of family and community involvement. The District Superintendent may take important actions to encourage all schools to implement the district policy on partnerships in ways that meet their goals for student success.

How Can District Superintendents Support Partnership Programs in All Schools?

- ✓ Share a vision for good partnerships and encourage the District Leader for Partnerships (and, in large districts, that leaders’ staff) to become expert in guiding all, elementary, middle, and high schools on school-based partnership program development.
- ✓ Place the district Leader for Partnerships on the Superintendent’s Leadership Team. Encourage leaders of different departments to work together. Discuss family and community involvement as one of the strategies for attaining academic and behavioral goals with students.
- ✓ Feature one school’s good work on partnerships at each monthly meeting of principals. Stress the importance of teamwork by Action Teams for Partnerships so that principals understand that they no longer should work alone on family and community involvement. Give the Leader for Partnerships a few minutes to discuss progress and challenges across schools so that principals know this leader speaks for the Superintendent on partnership program development.
- ✓ Use the Superintendent’s “bully pulpit” (e.g., a start-of-school-year rally, district advisory council, meeting with the Chamber of Commerce, discussion with local media) to discuss the importance of school-based partnership programs.
- ✓ Give greetings at key partnership activities (e.g., One-Day Workshops for new Action Teams for Partnerships, annual End-of-Year Celebrations for ATPs) to share best practices.
- ✓ Emphasize the importance of evaluating the district’s and all schools’ partnership programs so that improvements will be data-based, and so that progress can be documented and celebrated.
- ✓ Incorporate work and progress on partnerships in the annual professional evaluations of the district leader for partnerships, principals, and teachers, and in criteria for hiring new district and school staff.
- ✓ Meet with the District Leader for Partnerships on the adequacy of the annual budget to support and encourage schools to advance their outreach to all families and to develop their goal-linked partnership practices.
- ✓ Support the district’s “scale up” of partnership programs so that all schools have well-functioning teams and improve their programs from year to year.

For more ideas on district leadership for partnership program development, see the *Lead and Succeed Inventory* for district leadership on partnerships in Chapter 7 of the *Handbook for Action, Third Edition*, and visit the NNPS website section called *NNPS Model*—Click on *Districts*.



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Partnership Calendar

2011

- April** Spring issue of *Type 2*, #30 via E-Alert and website.
- April** Invitation for NNPS members to contribute to *Promising Partnership Practices 2011*. Due May 1.
- Eligible members will be invited to apply for **NNPS Partnership Awards** for 2011. Due June 30.
- April** Members will receive **2011 UPDATE** in the mail. Due June 30 with renewal fee for NNPS membership for the 11-12 school year.
- May 1** Promising partnership practices **submissions due** for review for the 2011 collection.
- June TBA** **Web Conference** on *Evaluating Partnership Programs* for district, state, and organization leaders to learn basic uses of NNPS tools to evaluate progress of school-based programs.
- June 30** **2011 UPDATE due** to NNPS to renew membership for 11-12.
- June 30** **Partnership Awards Applications due.**
- August** **Members of NNPS receive** new book of *Promising Partnership Practices 2011*.
- September** Fall issue of *Type 2* - #31 via E-Alert and website.
- October 20-21** **Leadership Development Conference** in Baltimore for new and experienced school, district, state, and organization leaders.

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**SPOTLIGHT
A BEST PRACTICE
by MAY 1**

Submit a best practice for consideration in *Promising Partnership Practices 2011*.

**APPLY FOR A
PARTNERSHIP
AWARD
by JUNE 30**

Members in NNPS for two years or more may apply for a 2011 Partnership Award.

**EVALUATE
YOUR PROGRAM'S
PROGRESS
by JUNE 30**

Members before Dec.1 2010 must return 2011 UPDATE with \$200 renewal fee to continue NNPS membership for the 2011-12 school year.

NNPS will pay a matching fee to support your membership and continued benefits.