

type 2

Communicating to improve partnerships for student success



NATIONAL NETWORK OF
Partnership Schools
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

NOTE: This is a printer-friendly version of *Type 2*, downloadable from the National Network of Partnership Schools web site (www.partnershipschools.org). Some formatting has been changed from the original newsletter (e.g., graphics/photos may not appear). For hard copies of *Type 2*, please e-mail the Network staff at nnp@csos.jhu.edu or call 410-516-8800.

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

Fall, 2000 No. 9

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States, Districts, and Schools Receive National Network's Partnership Awards

Two states, five school districts, and six schools received the first annual Partnership Awards from the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University. The awards recognize excellence in developing and sustaining comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships for at least two years.

Key contacts from sites in California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, and Utah submitted applications that documented how they implemented essential elements of good partnership programs. They described and gave evidence for teamwork, leadership, plans for action, implementation, evaluation, and connections with the National Network of Partnership Schools. Applications were reviewed by six readers for the comprehensiveness of responses and strength of evidence. The following states, districts, and schools received Partnership Awards for 2000:

- Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of School-Family-Community Partnerships;
- Ohio Department of Education, Office of School, Family, and Community Partnerships/Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement;
- Francis Polytechnic/North Hollywood Cluster, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), CA;
- Grand Blanc Community Schools, Grand Blanc, MI;

- Los Angeles County Office of Education, Los Angeles, CA;
- Naperville Community Unit School District 203, Naperville, IL;
- Southern Area of Baltimore City Public Schools, Baltimore, MD;
- Bouquet Canyon Elementary School, Saugus, CA;

(Continued on page 3)

Concept to Classroom: On-Line Workshop on Partnerships

WNET, a PBS affiliate in New York, and Disney Learning Partnership are offering an on-line workshop, *Making Family and Community Connections*, based in large part on an extensive interview with Dr. Joyce L. Epstein, Director of the National Network of Partnership Schools.

The workshop, ninth in a series of workshops on school improvement, includes four sections: Explanation, Demonstration, Exploration, and Implementation. Each section outlines a series of questions and answers that explains and illustrates how to develop a comprehensive program of school, family, and community partnerships in schools, districts, and states.

You can meet Dr. Epstein on-line at www.thirteen.org/wnetschool/concept2class/month9 as one of the work-shop experts. Read about the research-based approaches that guide the work of the National Network of Partnership Schools, including

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Issues and Insights

Joyce L. Epstein
Director

How to Organize Successful Action Teams

Together Everyone Achieves More (TEAM) is a favorite saying of many schools, districts, and states in the National Network of Partnership Schools. Why are action teams so important?

Studies show that partnership programs are not sustained when just *one* person is “in charge.” If that person moves or changes schools, as often happens, partnerships decline or disappear. Also, there is little buy-in when involvement is seen as “Ms. Myown’s program.” By contrast, an action team of teachers, parents, administrators, and community partners working together to plan, implement, evaluate, and improve partnerships from year to year can involve all families in ways that support school improvement goals for student success.

How can schools make the most of their Action Teams for Partnerships? The Partnership School Award sites have some good examples and advice on effective teams.

Integrate School Leadership Structures

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) is the “action arm” of a school improvement team or site council. Bouquet Canyon, Franklin-York, and Westlake Elementary Schools integrate partnership goals with their overall plans for school improvement. Mount Logan Middle has fully integrated the ATP with its Community Council and PTSA. Nightingale Middle’s ATP reports its progress in the school’s monthly newsletter so that all parents and teachers know about partnership activities and how to participate.

Delegate Tasks and Find Team Talent

An ATP has a chairperson or, better, co-chairs to lead the team and committees. To organize its work, Westlake’s ATP selects a team leader, facilitator, timekeeper, recorder, and liaison to the Building Leadership Team. Good teams also seek talent. For example, Woodridge Primary School recruited a parent team member to develop the school’s web site.

Allocate Time for Meetings

Well-functioning Action Teams meet at least monthly, and committees meet as needed to implement scheduled activities. Westlake holds one ATP meeting per month *before* school and one *after* school so that parents with different schedules can participate. Some administrators support teamwork by covering classes or arranging monthly substitute teachers so that the teachers on the ATP can meet with other team members.

Involve All Teachers and All Families

There are many ways for an ATP to plan a partnership program that involves the whole school community. At Franklin-York, all teachers make “porch visits” at the start of the year to their students’ homes to meet all families and to initiate a spirit of partnerships. All teachers at Mount Logan Middle have telephones in their classrooms to communicate with students’ families.

Maintain Members

Action Teams must replace teachers, parents, and other members who leave, and orient new members to team procedures and on-going action plans. For example, Woodridge has had three principals in the past three years who needed to be included in the school’s partnership program. Despite changing leaders, the ATP sustained a quality partnership program.

Select a Team Name

Action Teams for Partnerships may be given unique local names. Bouquet Canyon calls its ATP the Parents as Partners Committee. Whatever the name, a well-organized action team is essential for a successful and sustained program of school, family, and community partnerships.

NOTE: To help your Action Team with its work, see the Network’s *Partnership Planner*, which guides Action Team activities for one school year. Also, see useful information and tools in *Your Handbook for Action* including “Who are the members of your Action Team?” (pp. 148-150); and alternative forms for the One-Year Action Plan (pp. 130-136).

Middle and High School Report

Promoting Postsecondary Planning Through Partnerships with Families and Communities

In a recent study, the National Center for Education Statistics concluded that “parent involvement was strongly associated with students taking algebra in eighth grade, advanced-level mathematics courses in high school, and subsequent enrollment in postsecondary education.”¹ The results were strong even after accounting for students’ prior skills and parents’ education. The study reinforces the fact that middle and high schools need to develop school-family-community partnership programs so that all families can help guide their teens toward college and other postsecondary opportunities. Some NNPS high schools are taking important steps in this direction.

Types of Involvement

Indian Creek High School in rural Ohio conducts workshops for parents on preparing for college and financial aid (Type 1); provides information on postsecondary opportunities in the school newsletter (Type 2); and has supported an Author-in-Residence (Type 6) who inspired students by linking the writing process to various careers. Indian Creek also offers a career exploration course for students that uses interactive homework (Type 4) to encourage students to discuss careers with family and community partners.

Glenville High School, a large urban school in Ohio, collaborates with the Council for Economic Opportunity in Greater Cleveland to implement Youth Education Services (Type 6), a college readiness program for students in ninth through twelfth grades. Now in its third year, Youth Education Services (formerly College Club) includes three main components: a tutor and test-taking program staffed by local college students; academic coun-

seling for high school progress, career awareness, and postsecondary planning; and a summer academic program for which students get paid to attend. The twenty-four students in the program also take college tours to local universities and to campuses as far away as Alabama and Georgia. Program Coordinator Iris Owens explained, “These are students who want to go to college and who are ready to prepare themselves.” Some are the first in their families to attend. Last year, three students received full scholarships.

Support from School

Owens, a member of Glenville’s Action Team for Partnerships, makes home visits to develop a rapport with the Youth Education Service students’ families and to personalize the program to student and family needs. The school administration provides space for tutoring and has strongly supported the program. “It’s a lot of work,” Owens admits, “but with the help and support of a lot of people, the students obtain big rewards.”

These high schools demonstrate that partnership programs can help prepare students and families for postsecondary opportunities by implementing activities for the six types of involvement. Which family and community involvement activities will your high school implement this year to support students’ plans for postsecondary education and training? Share your ideas with the Network by contacting Natalie Rodriguez Jansorn, Middle and High School Facilitator, at 410-516-8893 or njansorn@csos.jhu.edu.

¹ Horn, L. & Nunez, A. M. (2000) *Mapping the road to college: First-generation students’ math track, planning strategies, and context of support* (NCES 2000-153). Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education/NCES.

Partnership Award Recipients

(Continued from page 1)

- Florence Nightingale Middle School, Los Angeles, CA;
- Franklin-York Learning Community, Massillon, OH;
- Mount Logan Middle School, Logan UT;
- Westlake Elementary School, New Carlisle, OH;
- Woodridge Primary School, Cuyohoga Falls, OH.

See pages 6-7 in this issue for photos of all of the award recipients’ teams.

Dr. Mavis Sanders, Assistant Director noted, “The Partnership Award schools, districts, and states demonstrate that structures and processes can be developed to ensure that school, family, and community partnerships are planned, on-going, and productively linked to school improvement goals.”

Summaries of approaches and activities of the Partnership Award recipients, as well as the award criteria, are on the Network’s web site, www.partnershipschools.org. Click on “In the Spotlight” and “National Network Announces Partnership Awards.”

NNPS congratulates the Partnership Award recipients for 1999-2000. The criteria for the awards set standards that all schools, districts, and states in the Network are expected to achieve. Applications for the 2001 awards will be issued in January.

On-line Workshop

(Continued from page 1)

the six types of involvement; the importance of teachers along with parents and administrators on Action Teams for Partnerships; and the importance of on-going One-Year Action Plans. NNPS members also are featured, including schools in Anoka-Hennepin, MN; Vineland, NJ; Texas; and Wisconsin.

Meeting the Challenge

Steven B. Sheldon
Postdoctoral Research
Scientist

Parent Networks: An Overlooked Resource to Strengthen Partnership Programs

Most parents know at least one other parent at their children's school, and some parents know many more. If you stepped back to examine parents' social networks, you would see an interconnected web of relationships among parents in every school. These networks can be a valuable resource to help all parents become more effectively involved at home or at school.

Sharing Information

One of the most important functions of parent networks is to help parents share information about upcoming school events and programs, as well as community activities such as sports, dance, scouts, and others.. In a study in Michigan, one mother with three children commented that keeping informed of the many available community activities takes a great deal of time and effort. She said that having friends who share information about community activities makes her life more manageable. Such connections also help to enrich children's learning experiences.

Encouraging Participation

The relationships parents establish with one another may prompt more of them to volunteer or participate in school events. For example, one mother recalled how she drew upon the strengths and talents of her friends in order to coordinate successful after-school carnivals and fundraisers. Parents who otherwise would not have been involved, became active because they were asked by friends to help. Similarly, parents may be more likely to attend PTA/PTO meetings if they can arrange to ride to school or to attend with their friends.

Mobilizing Resources

One challenge facing schools is how to encourage and systematize parent-to-parent interactions to develop supportive and informative ties among all families. Many schools in the National Network of Partner-

ship Schools proactively bring parents together. Shaker Heights High School, for example, established a parent support group for parents of ninth graders to share information and advice about the challenges and strategies of parenting adolescents.

Schools can increase the flow of information between and among parents with telephone "trees" that include all parents, or in special parent-to-parent meetings. For example, Monica Leary Elementary School in Rush, NY, conducted a discussion group for parents of fifth graders about their children's upcoming transition to middle school. Altoona Middle School in Altoona, WI, organized a panel of sixth-graders' parents to present information to parents of fifth graders who would be attending their school in the fall. Such meetings help parents meet and talk with other parents who are experiencing similar situations.

Helping Schools

Parents' social networks also benefit schools. The web of parent networks in a school may alert Action Teams to resourceful community partners that can help the school. Every school's Action Team for Partnerships plans some activities that require team members to delegate tasks to other teachers and parents for successful implementation, creating opportunities for parents to collaborate. Action Team leaders should be mindful about opportunities to introduce parents to one another at formal and informal school events including open houses, workshops, and other parent meetings. Parents and their social ties collectively represent an important resource for schools to strengthen their partnership programs.

This article draws from Sheldon, S. B. (2000). *Exploring the Mesosystem: Parents' Social Networks and Parent Involvement*. Presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Researchers Association in New Orleans, LA. Also, some school activities are drawn from the National Network's 2000 and 1999 collections of *Promising Partnership Practices*.

Elementary School Report

Bears, Parents, and the Community Help Students Read in Brooklyn, New York

The Sunset Park School established B.E.A.R. (Be Excited About Reading) Day to bring community members into the school to read with children, and to emphasize that adults think it is important to be able to read well. The event supported the school's goals by focusing on reading and by bringing together the many stakeholders in children's education.

B.E.A.R. Day involved the entire school, including over 1400 students in about fifty classes. Parents, elected officials and their representatives, members of community organizations and the business community, and school staff members volunteered as guest readers for each class. Parents who did not speak English well read to a class where their language was spoken, or they used a translator. One mother from Bangladesh brought a stuffed bear, a book to read, and her older son to translate.

Classrooms that were not given a bear on the day of the event, received one later, compliments of a local elected official. Bears appeared in offices, on desks, in classrooms, and on posters around the building. In an Assistant Principal's office, a large bear sat in a rocking chair holding a book in its paws, while a smaller bear appeared to be listening to the story. If bears could read, then so could kids!

B.E.A.R. Day required no special training, however the Neighborhood Literacy Coordinator introduced classroom teachers to the project at a faculty meeting. A community organization donated books about bears for teachers to read to their students to get everyone into the spirit of the event.

The expenses of B.E.A.R. Day included invitations mailed to guest readers; breakfast of juice, coffee, and bagels; name tags and bear balloons; and lunch for guest readers (expense shared by the Parents' Association). Parents crocheted a bear blanket, which was displayed in the front hall.

There was no formal evaluation of B.E.A.R. Day, but reactions were immediately apparent. The participants were very excited and requested another B.E.A.R. Day. Guest readers shared testimonials at lunch about the success of the day. Many of them had not been in a classroom for years and enjoyed the experience. Other schools and a daycare center have replicated B.E.A.R. Day successfully.

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

Last Call for 2000 UPDATE

ATENTION: Check the upper left hand corner of the front page of this newsletter. If you see a label reminding you about *UPDATE*, please return it **now** to renew membership in the National Network of Partnership Schools for 2000-01. If we do not receive *UPDATE* by Nov. 30, your school or district's membership will be cancelled, and you will not receive future issues of *Type 2*, *Promising Partnership Practices*, and other tools and information. *UPDATE* is the only required communication with the Network. If you have questions, contact Kenyatta Williams at 410-516-2318 or kwilliams@csos.jhu.edu.

New Tools from NNPS

The following new tools may be purchased to help schools, districts, and states strengthen their school, family, and community partnership programs.

Transparencies and Power Point Presentations. NNPS offers color transparencies and Power Point presentations in Microsoft Word 97 or 2000 for PCs to help members conduct training workshops for schools' Action Teams for Partnerships, and for developing Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) Interactive Homework.

Poster on the Six Types of Involvement. NNPS developed a poster of the *Keys to Successful Partnerships* featuring the six types of involvement. All members of the Network received one free copy of the poster with this issue of *Type 2*. Additional copies to display or distribute may be ordered.

Promising Partnership Practices 2000. The new collection of ideas from NNPS members is available. All members of the Network received one free copy in August. The 1998, 1999, and 2000 collections also can be found on the Network's web site at www.partnershipschools.org by clicking on "In the Spotlight." Additional copies of the collections are available.

For information on ordering these tools, contact Jameel Nolan at 410-516-8833 or jnolan@csos.jhu.edu. Or, visit www.partnershipschools.org, click on "Publications and Products," and follow the links.

NNPS Suggests Visiting . . .



www.disneylearning.org

Partnership Award Recipients 1999-2000

Bouquet Canyon Elementary



Row 1: Jane Turner (ATP Chair) and Evie Gustafson (Principal). Row 2: Candy Brown, Toni Kuhn, Cindy Claffy, Teresa Bosarge, Marianne Yuwiler, Amy McDonald, Samantha McKeon, and Kristy Mahakian. Row 3: Teresa Aragon, Alice Bendixen, Emily Iland, Mary Osborne, Suzanne Saginian, Natasha Bovee, and Loren Graham. Row 4: Tarra Messick, Amy Hairfield, Dave Leathers, Eric Greenfield, Lori Russum, Susan Nales, Maria Waschak, and Amanda Wiseman.

Florence Nightingale Middle



Row 1: Rosalina Acedo, Marylou Amato (Principal), Luz Maria Gonnzalez, and Carmela Gomes (ATP Chair). Row 2: Maria Mazloom, Margaret Andrews, Gina Rodriquez, Grace Jones, and Zhang Li. Not Pictured: Joe Lomonto, Rick Lujan, Elsa Dominguez, and Rosario Nava.

Franklin-York Learning Community



Sue Rohr (ATP Co-Chair), Shirley Bradley, Diane Zupp, Judy Kenny (Principal), and Karen Long (ATP Co-Chair).



Michael Monson, Eileen Clarke (ATP Co-Chair), Nancy Weimer, Marilyn Janes, Cara Allen, Jean Ehrhart, Susanne Paulsen, Maggi Straley, Lynette Riggs, Natalea Geddes, Tracy Hunsaker, Christine Higham, Rick Maughan, Susan Stephens, Elsa Akina, and Dan Johnson (Principal, ATP Chair). Not Pictured: Gayle Buxton, Teri Painter, Marian Pittman, Janet Voldness, and Sherilee Guest.

Westlake Elementary



Row 1: Robyn Gruber, Deanna Gehret, Micki Norfleet, Kari Dillman, and Barb Luttrull. Row 2: Matt Curtis, Jeff Broyles, Bill Gruber (ATP Chair), Mike Mastin, and Denny Dyer (Principal).

Woodridge Primary



Don Lathem, Chris Farren, Betsy Gorrell (Principal, ATP Co-Chair), Jan Quinn, Vicki Lex-Booth, Carol Stanley (ATP Co-Chair), Dina Palumbo, Mary Kaforey.

Francis Polytechnic/ North Hollywood Cluster, LAUSD



Row 1: Laura González, Charlotte Castagnola (NNPS Key Contact), Beatriz Gutierrez, and Juan González. Row 2: Susana Martinez, Richard Alonzo (Cluster Administrator), Phyllis Gudoski, and Alvaro Cortés.

Grand Blanc Community Schools



Martha Weiss (NNPS Key Contact), Lillian Mason (School Board President), and Kay Reed (NNPS Key Contact).

Los Angeles County Office of Education



Row 1: Barbara Sandoval, Angie Papadakis, H. Jennifer Hartman, Dr. Donald Ingwersen (Superintendent), Michaelene Wagner, Leslie Gilbert-Lurie, and Rudell S. Freer. Row 2: George Sakelarios, Kathleen Sullivan, Teresa Merino, Sophia Waugh, Ann Kinkor (NNPS Key Contact), and Tim McNulty. Row 3: Dr. Andrew Kennedy, David Flores, Tony Lufrano, Barbara Wilson, and Alice Cunningham. Row 4: John Siler, Bruce Petersen, Paul Gothold, Shelby Carmichael, Isabel Herrbrich, and Ray Guillaume.

Naperville Community Unit School District 203



Row 1: Jack Buller, Victoria Boomgarden, Dave Patton, Mark Pasztor, Maureen Dvorak, Karen Perry, Denise Mitchell, and Meda Peterson. Row 2: Ginny Ritchie, Ann Staats, Lenore Johnson, Janet Reed, Bessma Shammass, Pam Wilson, Gretchen Zelinski, Pat Larson, and Mary Ann Bobosky (NNPS Key Contact). Row 3: John Tableriou, Tim Costello, Sheila Verkamp, Sue Faber, Ed Schmidgall, and Don Weber (Superintendent).

Southern Area of Baltimore City Public Schools



Row 1: Anjali Patel Durepo (Key Contact), Juanita Campbell, Christine Johnson, Stephanie Triantos, Reada Nelson, and Angela Jones. Row 2: Chava Rosen, Barbara Phillips, Audrey Francis, Anne Carusi (Area Executive Officer), Victoria Ray, and Wanda Jackson. Row 3: David Brock, Concetta Fantom, Arthur Chenoweth, and Evelyn Anderson. Row 4: Kenneth Jackson.

Ohio Department of Education



Cicely Chapman, Connie Spencer Ackerman (NNPS Key Contact), Barbara Sprague, and Barbara Boone. Not Pictured: Rebecca Wheelersburg, Marcia Philipps, Linda Martin, and Ellen Frasca.

Connecticut State Department of Education



Judy Carson, Harriet Feldlaufer (NNPS Key Contacts), and Dr. Eddie Davis (Chief, Bureau of School-Family-Community Partnerships). Not pictured: Wendy Harwin and Barbara Slone (NNPS Key Contacts).

Our Growing Network

New Members in NNPS since March 2000

Louisiana Identifies Partnerships with Families as Key Link to School Reform

The Louisiana State Department of Education joined the National Network of Partnership Schools in the fall of 1999 to increase family and community involvement in ways that help students meet the state's high standards for learning, and to meet the goal of ending social promotion. State Superintendent Cecil J. Picard regards developing partnerships as a "process that links families and communities to school improvement goals for student achievement and success." With support from Superintendent Picard, Louisiana's leaders plan to work with Regional Education Service Centers across the state to assist many districts and schools to join the Louisiana and National Networks, and to develop strong partnership programs.

As Key Contacts to NNPS, Pamela Wall and Patricia Ortiz, from the Office of School and Community Support, will work with other state program managers on the Louisiana Department of Education's (LDE) Action Team for Family Involvement. The team has identified three main goals in its partnership plan for the 2000-01 school year.

A Common Vision

Goal One: To create a more common vision across the state for parent, family, and community involve-

ment, especially among other members of the Department of Education's state and regional staff. The LDE Action Team for Family Involvement will be the vehicle for interdepartmental communications and coordination about partnerships, as each division works toward school improvement. The Action Team will familiarize department staff and state educational leaders with the main components of the NNPS model, and how it may be integrated in the state's school improvement planning process. LDE plans a department-wide "kick-off" Family Involvement Informational Rally to promote school, family, and community involvement.

District and School Partnership Programs

Goal Two: To increase the use of the framework of the six types of family and community involvement in districts and schools across Louisiana. Louisiana's Department of Education will establish statewide partnerships with youth and family service organizations for the advancement of school, family, and community involvement. Regional Education Service Centers, Distinguished Educators, Title I Parish Coordinators, and other state leaders will provide training and technical assistance to school Action Teams to

help them use the six types of involvement to plan and implement goal-oriented partnerships with all families.

Successful Practices

Goal Three: To identify and disseminate successful family and community involvement practices in Louisiana schools, districts, and communities. A variety of communication forums and strategies will be used to disseminate research-based and recommended school, family, and community practices. The LDE web site, www.doe.state.la.us, will include family and community information and links to partnership activities. Presentations and training on the six types of involvement and the partnership model will be on-going activities. At the end of each school year LDE will disseminate recommended activities from Louisiana schools.

Louisiana's leaders have begun to implement an important program that demonstrates the state's clear vision, strong leadership, and dynamic support for action on school, family and community partnerships.

For more information about Louisiana's plans for school, family, and community partnerships, contact Pam Wall, Louisiana State Department of Education, at pwall@mail.doe.state.la.us (225-342-9442) or Patricia Ortiz, portiz@mail.doe.state.la.us (225-342-1031).

NNPS Upgrades Designs

To celebrate the new school year, NNPS redesigned its logo, selected a user-friendly web site address, and improved *Type 2's* format. An improved logo for NNPS members' use is available (see right). Please contact Karen Salinas at 410-516-8818 or ksalinas@csos.jhu.edu if you would like a copy e-mailed or mailed on disk.



NATIONAL NETWORK OF
Partnership Schools

Bookmark NNPS'
new address:
www.partnershipschools.org

Research Briefs

Partnership Activities Help Improve Student Attendance in Elementary Schools

Many studies of students at all grade levels indicate that students with better attendance are less likely to drop out of school, and more likely to achieve at high levels and graduate from high school on time. In short, students learn more and are more successful if they have good attendance. This makes attendance an important issue in education, and an important school improvement goal.

In 1996-97, schools in the National Network of Partnership Schools were invited to join an exploratory Focus on Results study to learn whether and which family and community involvement activities affect student attendance. Twelve elementary schools returned the longitudinal data needed to address the question. After statistically accounting for the schools' prior levels of attendance, several family involvement activities significantly increased rates of daily attendance, reduced chronic absenteeism, or both.

Two-Way Communications

Three partnership activities increased daily attendance rates *and*

reduced chronic absenteeism: rewarding students for improved attendance; providing parents with a contact person at the school to call as needed; and communicating effectively with all families about attendance issues. Two-way communications between the school and home seem to help families influence their children's attendance.

Community and Family Action

Three other partnership activities were associated with improving daily attendance rates: referring chronically absent students to a counselor; using truant officers with problem students and families; and conducting workshops to help parents understand and take action on attendance issues. School and community resources can be used to improve attendance, along with families' active support.

Personal Contact to Reduce Chronic Absence

Schools that reported conducting home visits decreased the percentage of students who missed over

20 days of school. This strategy may help parents of chronically absent students feel more personal support from school representatives, and parents may be more likely to reinforce the school's emphasis on student attendance.

In elementary schools, parents greatly influence children's school attendance. This exploratory study suggests that schools can improve or sustain good attendance by implementing targeted family and community involvement activities.

From: Joyce L. Epstein and Steven B. Sheldon. (2000). *Improving student attendance: Effects of family and community involvement*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Washington, DC.

Focus on Results Will Revisit Attendance

Each year, Focus on Results invites schools to explore how family and community involvement affects student outcomes of attendance, math achievement, behavior, or reading achievement. In 2000-2001, NNPS will again explore how partnerships affect student attendance. A larger sample of elementary, middle, and high schools is needed to learn specifically which involvement activities consistently improve attendance rates from one year to the next.

If your school is working to improve student attendance by involving families and community partners in specific ways, please join the next Focus on Results study when you receive the invitation and base-line survey in November 2000. Districts and states in the Network can help by encouraging schools to participate.

Partnership Programs in Portugal's Schools Produce Results for Parents, Teachers, and Students

Researchers in Portugal are working to understand and improve comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships. Dr. Adelina Villas-Boas of the University of Lisbon conducted a survey of principals and teachers in a random sample of 1195 schools in Portugal. She also studied the effects of helping teachers at 25 elementary schools selected randomly from the larger sample

to implement strong programs of partnerships.

The survey data indicated a serious gap between what teachers and principals said about the importance of family involvement and the activities that they implemented. It was clear that the schools needed help to plan and conduct activities that involved families in their children's education.

(Continued on page 11)

District Record

Parent Centers Move Libraries to the Curb

Local School District B* (a mini-district in the Los Angeles Unified School District—LAUSD) established libraries in all parent centers in the district to help improve student reading achievement. Previously, families may have looked for information, but often did not know what resources were available or how to access them.

The Parent Libraries helped the district support families by making available accurate and relevant parenting information and children's literature. Materials included books, leaflets, audiotapes, videos, and other resources for parents in both English and Spanish to check out on a daily basis.

Curbside Libraries

In order to increase the number of parents using the library services, the parent centers displayed an assortment of books on rolling carts twice a week at the front gate or curb, where parents could easily make their selections. Borrowed books were returned inside the parent centers to ensure that new parents discovered the centers and services.

When parents checked out materials, they received flyers listing upcoming workshops on how to share books with their children, and other events sponsored by the centers. Parent center leaders were trained to conduct a variety of bilingual workshops on family reading, high frequency words, Latino family literacy, and other topics.

Results Documented

Records were kept of the number of parents using the curbside libraries, the number of workshop series presented, and how many parents attended. In addition, Los Angeles Compact on Evaluation studied a group

of comparison schools to measure the effects of the district's parent involvement efforts on student achievement. Data for the 1998-1999 school year showed a 5.7% increase in students' reading scores and a 4.7% increase in students' language scores for the schools in the program.

As a member of the National Network of Partnership Schools, Local School District B in LAUSD demonstrates strong leadership, quality planning, innovative practices, and continuous improvement in its school, family, and community partnership program. This mini-district received a Partnership District Award for excellence in and commitment to improving partnerships for student success.

*Local School District B was formerly the Francis Polytechnic/North Hollywood Cluster.

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

TIPS Video for 2001

Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) Interactive Homework is featured in a new video from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). *How to Make Homework More Meaningful by Involving Parents* will be released in January 2001. It features science teachers from Pikesville (MD) Middle School who worked with NNPS to develop interactive homework assignments that match the school's science units in grades 6-8. For information on the video, visit www.ascd.org and follow the links to the Online Store, or call 1-800-933-ASCD. For information on the Network's TIPS manuals and prototype homework assignments, contact Frances Van Voorhis, TIPS Coordinator, at 410-516-8061.

Partnerships in Portugal

(Continued from page 10)

Extensive evaluations were conducted of 20 of the 25 schools that completed two years of program development.

Results for Parents, Teachers, and Students Over Time

The schools improved the quantity and quality of partnerships. Villas-Boas reports that parent and teacher relations improved, the number of parent-teacher meetings increased, parents become more involved at school and at home, and more "hard-to-reach" parents became involved. With the help of on-site facilitators and training in partnerships, teachers improved their attitudes toward parents, carefully prepared for meetings with parents, and designed "interactive homework" (akin to the Network's TIPS approach). The teachers observed positive effects in student achievement due to parental involvement, and fourth graders' achievement test scores improved.

Key Support Structures

Villas-Boas concludes, "It is possible to modify schools and improve the quality of teaching and learning by developing a culture of partnerships. This helps the students, families, teachers, and the community." She sees a key role for facilitators, a need to provide teachers with professional development on partnerships, and the need for schools to work over time to plan and sustain good partnerships. She also notes that "enforcing legislation" may be needed to encourage reluctant educators to develop strong programs of home-school partnerships.

The successful application in Portugal of the research and approaches of the National Network is particularly exciting.

From: Adelina Villas-Boas (2000.) A prospective overview on the school/family/community relationship: A three-year study. University of Lisbon, Portugal.



Partnership Calendar

National Network of Partnership Schools
Johns Hopkins University
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NNPS in the News

The work of the National Network of Partnership Schools and its schools, districts, or states were cited in: *Time*, June 12, 2000; *Education Week*, September 13, 2000; *Working Mother*, September 2000; *NEA Today*, September, 2000, among others. If your school, district, or state is recognized in the news, let the Network know about this for the spring issue's NNPS in the News.

2000

November: Invitation to members to join the cross-site study, Focus on Results 2000-01: School-Family-Community Partnerships to Improve Attendance. Initial data collection.

2001

January: Invitation to school, district, and state members to contribute to the Network's collection of *Promising Partnership Practices 2001*.

January: Invitation to school, district, and state members to apply for the Network's *Partnership Awards 2000-01* for excellence and permanence.

March: Spring issue of *Type 2*.

March 8-9: Leadership Training Workshop at Johns Hopkins University for new members who want initial training to prepare for the 2001-02 school year.

March 10: Workshop at Johns Hopkins University for members to develop and implement Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) Interactive Homework for the 2001-02 school year.

April 2: Members who joined the Network by 12/00 will receive 2001 *UPDATE* in the mail. Due May 15 to renew Network membership for the 2001-02 school year.

May 15: 2001 *UPDATE* must be returned to the National Network to renew membership for the 2001-02 school year.

May 31: Promising partnership practices from members due for the 2001 collection.

May 31: Applications due for *Partnership School Awards*, *Partnership District Awards*, and *Partnership State Awards* for the 2000-01 school year.

National Network of Partnership Schools Staff



Row 1: Kenyatta G. Williams, Network Coordinator; Mary G. Nesbitt, State and District Facilitator; Frances E. Van Voorhis, Network Facilitator and TIPS Coordinator; Jameel Nolan, Administrative Secretary; Laurel A. Clark, Network Consultant. Row 2: Steven B. Sheldon, Postdoctoral Research Scientist; Beth S. Simon, Dissemination Director and Web Site Developer; Mavis G. Sanders, Assistant Director; Joyce L. Epstein, Director; Karen Clark Salinas, Communications Director; and Natalie Rodriguez Jansorn, Middle and High School Facilitator.