

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!

Fall, 2013 No. 35

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NNPS Awards 22 Partnership Programs for Increasing Outreach and Producing Results

NNPS recognized 22 members' programs with 2013 Partnership Awards—13 schools, 8 districts, and 1 organization. The programs were located in 8 states (east, west, midwest, and south) and in highly diverse communities at all socioeconomic levels, with many serving immigrant families.

In their applications, the award-winning programs provided evidence of how they used NNPS's research-based structures and processes to frame their programs, and how they customized approaches to meet the needs in their own communities. Their descriptions showed how they attended to "essential elements" of partnership program development that help improve the quality of programs from year to year: leadership, teamwork, written plans, implemented actions, funding, evaluation, support from colleagues, and networking. The mix of research-based requirements and flexible, tailored plans and practices for partnerships is the "secret" to the success of NNPS approaches.

Schools described specific practices designed to increase the number of different families engaged in their children's education and to improve student success in school. Districts and organizations described how they were strengthening leadership, in general, and how they guided individual schools' Action Teams for Partnerships to build their capacities to work with their own students' families.

District and Organization Award Winners

Studies indicate that when districts have strong Leaders for Partnerships, they are more likely to help more schools build

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MetLife Foundation Continues Support for NNPS

MetLife Foundation awarded NNPS a grant for the 2013-14 year to continue scaling up NNPS approaches in districts and schools across the country, and to disseminate new products that were developed with MetLife Foundation funding over the past two years.

The support for scaling up the number and quality of partnership programs will benefit NNPS with on-going professional development products such as the next edition of *Promising Partnership Practices 2014*, *Type 2* newsletters, monthly E-briefs, the spring District Leadership Institute, and the 2014 NNPS Partnership Awards.

Dissemination activities will identify the best ways to share three NNPS products with appropriate audiences. The three products—*Samplers*, *TIPS-Math in the Middle Grades*, and *Modules for College Courses: Improve the Homework Process*—will be useful to different groups of educators. We will determine feasible and effective ways to connect with appropriate groups using varied communications and

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Issues and Insights

Joyce L. Epstein
Director

Is NNPS Becoming an *International* Network?

Over the past year, NNPS attended meetings in several countries to share research, practical approaches, and “lessons learned” with researchers and educators who guide schools to improve their programs of family engagement. These international connections in the Netherlands, Ireland, Portugal, and Chile also have spotlighted the work of members of NNPS.

1. Netherlands – September 2012

The organization, CPS—an education consulting group in the Netherlands—organized *Nationaal Congres Ouderbetrokkenheid* (i.e., *National Conference on Parental Involvement*), attended by over 150 educators and parent leaders from across the country. Dr. Epstein presented the Keynote on developing effective partnership programs for student success. She also met with over 70 policy leaders at the Ministry of Education in The Hague on the connections of research, policy, and practice for improving school, family, and community partnerships..

The staff of CPS works with schools across the country to improve schools, develop parent leaders, and engage all families in ways that increase student achievement and other school outcomes. The enthusiasm of the conference attendees was clear. CPS is an action-oriented group that can advance partnership programs and practices across the country.

2. Ireland – June 2013

In Dublin, the National Parents Council (NPC)—an organization that supports school improvement in Ireland—conducted the *Great Expectations Conference*, attended by over two hundred educators and parents from Ireland and other parts of Europe. Dr. Epstein’s Keynote address focused on moving from Great Expectations to Action in organizing research-based partnership programs. Her talk was followed by a presentation by the Minister for Education and Skills and by a Q and A session with

the audience. She also met with leaders at the Ministry of Education about the kinds of advances in national policies that will encourage more schools to organize effective partnership programs focused on student learning and success in school. The NPC leaders and their facilitators aim to advance this work in schools in many parts of Ireland. The organization joined NNPS to continue our connections and interactions.

3. Lisbon, Portugal – September 2013

Over 125 researchers and program leaders from 38 countries across continents met at the biennial conference conducted by the European Research Network About Parents in Education (ERNAPE) to share advances in research, policies, programs, and practices of family and community engagement. Dr. Epstein conducted a Keynote session on the challenge of “scaling up” research-based partnership programs and practices. She noted that there have been more than three decades of studies by countless researchers that confirm the importance of partnerships for student success in school. It is, now, time to translate research to good policy and useful practice so that more schools—indeed all schools—organize effective programs to engage parents and community partners in ways that support student learning.

NNPS is one effort to “scale up” partnership programs with publications and with on-going facilitation from our “home-base” at Johns Hopkins University. Because schools in all nations need this kind of guidance and support, we hope that others will step forward to replicate or adapt NNPS to meet the needs in their locations.

4. Chile – October 2013

In Santiago, Chile, the organization *Fundación CAP* and its project leaders for *Aprender en Familia* organized a conference on school, family, and community partnerships

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Career Awareness Helps Students Transition to the World of Work

Middle and high schools that aim to increase graduation rates and decrease dropout rates should help students think purposefully about their goals for post-secondary education and training. All students have dreams for life after high school. Some let their dreams slide if they are not taken seriously by their teachers and counselors. Others, who are encouraged to think about the future, enjoy planning their courses, credits, and career paths to college, trades, or the military. Middle and high school teachers know that, in addition to class lessons, family and community support helps students make successful transitions from high school to college or careers.

Students face many challenges as they move from middle to high school and beyond—such as overcoming test anxiety, identifying courses that will prepare them for a chosen post-high school path, and finding part-time jobs or internships during summer breaks or after school. The following *Promising Partnership Practices 2013* helped schools strengthen school, family, and community partnerships for preparing students to transition to the future.

Career Awareness and Planning

H. H. Ellis Technical High School in Danielson, CT prepares students in 11 technologies for future careers. Two activities last year helped focus students on life after high school. At *Family Beauty Day*, students in the hairdressing program used their skills and learned how to provide customer service. Students invited their family members to come to class, offered spa treatments, and served refreshments. Family members admired the students' maturity and professionalism. "I

loved working on my mom and spending time with her," said a student.

The *School-to-Career Assembly* at Ellis Tech included a job fair and exploratory employment agency. At the assembly, local professionals spoke to students about how to apply skills they learned in school to the workplace. *Job fair* booths were staffed by community businesses. Students were invited to speak with representatives about employment prospects and submit their resumes and portfolios for review. Also, an *in-school employment agency* enabled students to browse through job postings online and get information for positions that interested them. Both activities showcased students' skills and abilities and deepened their understanding of post-high school career options.

College and Career Information

More than 500 10th through 12th graders at **Lake City High School**, Lake City, SC, were introduced to post-high school possibilities at the *Panther College and Career Expo*. The goal was to increase students' motivation to work harder in school, graduate, and plan for future education and training. Students and parents were invited to the Expo via announcements on the school website and in local newspapers.

The school received a \$700 grant from the Center of Excellence at Francis Marion University to implement the *Expo*. The ATP and faculty worked with the counselor from the district's Work Force Investment Act (WIA) Center to invite more than 40 local colleges and businesses to the event. Classes rotated through the exhibits and discussions in 55-minute shifts. Students chatted with the college and

career representatives and collected information from each booth.

Hands-on-Experience

At **Edmondson-Westside High School** in Baltimore, Maryland, students in the *Redline High School Internship Program* spent the summer learning about potential careers. The program, supported by the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), involved students in the construction of a new light rail system in downtown Baltimore. Eighteen students from three Baltimore high schools spent six weeks as interns to project engineers. At Edmondson-Westside, the internships were aligned with the Action Team for Partnership's goals of increasing community engagement and preparing students for the work world.

The interns worked 6 hours per day and received \$10/hr. from the MTA and an engineering company. They gained experience in working in a professional environment by attending meetings, visiting project sites, and interacting with planners and engineers. They visited MTA facilities and assisted with community outreach projects, such as distributing information, conducting surveys, and answering citizens' questions about the Red Line. The interns were mentored by MTA employees, engineering staff, and students from Morgan State University. Because the construction will take several years, more interns will benefit from intensive internships that extend students' ideas for college and careers.

See these and other college and career activities in NNPS books of *Promising Partnership Practices*.

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Meeting the Challenge

Steven B. Sheldon
Director of Research

Implement Partnership-Oriented Workshops for Families

Family Reading Nights, Family Math Nights, Science Fairs, and Open Houses are standard practices in schools across the country. How do we know the workshops are successful? Does the number of parents in attendance indicate a workshop's success? How do we know if a workshop affects parents' knowledge and actions with their children at home? Are students' improved skills or behaviors the real measures of the success of workshops for parents? Or, are other measures important—such as the development of more positive relationships among parents and teachers?

Regardless of how we define success, school workshops for families will be most successful if they are implemented with partnerships in mind. That is, the content should be responsive to the challenges that families face in their efforts to support their children's success in the classroom. In many schools, this means being responsive to parents who speak different languages, or understanding how to reach the parents of students in high school. Here are two examples of how schools in NNPS organized and implemented workshops for families with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Also, see one way that high school students took the lead in organizing a workshop for their parents.

Responsive Reading Workshop

It is common for schools to implement literacy-linked workshops to help parents understand and practice how to read with their children at home to spark students' interest in reading and reading skills. In Kennewick, WA, at **Westgate Elementary School**, immigrant families who did not read English wanted to know how they could help their children strengthen their reading skills. The workshop, *How Can ELL Parents Help Children Read at Home?*, was conducted in parents' native languages. Members of the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and other teachers demonstrated a three-step process that parents could use to support their children's literacy

development. The steps—discuss the pictures, student reads aloud, and student *retells* the story to a parent in their native language—are reinforcing and enjoyable interactions. By focusing on the specific needs, requests, and strengths of parents, the school designed and conducted this literacy workshop in true partnership spirit.

Responsive Information

At **Dearborn Park Elementary School** in Seattle, WA, teachers responded to immigrant families' requests for more responsive workshops. The partnership team and colleagues offered informational dinners about the school and curriculum for parents by language and culture at the beginning of the school year. *Language/Culture-Based Family Workshops* were conducted Monday evenings in the first two months of school in Tagalog, Somali, Vietnamese, Chinese, Spanish, and other languages, and for African American families. Child care was offered; there was time to meet teachers and the principal; and opportunities to hear from cultural organizations in the community. Topics included basic school procedures, how to contact staff, how to use copies of the district's translated reading, math, and science toolkits, and how to become involved in school activities. The workshops helped groups of families feel welcome at school, helped families meet one another, developed relationships between families and teachers, and shared important school procedures and expectations for student learning.

Unique High School Workshop

At **Emmett O'Brien Technical High School**, in Ansonia, CT, freshman students organized the *Freshman Student Leadership Family Night* as a culminating activity for their *Freshman Leadership Course*. The goal was to communicate with families about students' accomplishments in leadership skills and learning developed through the first year of high school. Students took leadership to plan the event, create the content to share with families (e.g., technical skills,

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Building Multicultural Partnerships to Involve All Families

Schools must take responsibility for organizing, implementing, evaluating, and continually improving their programs of family and community involvement. This starts by knowing the families of students attending, and reaching out in friendly ways to engage *all* families—including immigrant and refugee families—so that all students are supported by home, school, and community to do their best in school.

Across studies of diverse populations, researchers list the same five major recommendations to increase the involvement of immigrant and refugee families in their children's education at school and at home.

1. **Welcome all families.** Parents need to know that educators understand, value, and respect their work to care for and guide their children to succeed in school.
2. **Communicate in languages that parents understand.**
3. **Provide parents with clear, useful, and timely information** about the school and school system. This includes school policies, expectations for children, parents' rights to information about their children, school and community programs for children, expectations for parental involvement, contacts at the school for questions and concerns, and guidance on how to help their children each year.
4. **Organize a planned program of activities** that enable all parents to

be productively involved in their children's education at school and/or at home.

5. **Incorporate students' backgrounds and family cultures into the classroom** and in the school's program of family and community involvement.

The following activities from *Promising Partnership Practices 2013* show how elementary schools in NNPS are working to fulfill these recommendations.

At **Hawthorne Elementary School** in Seattle, WA, about one third of the students are English Language Learners (ELL) who speak little or no English at home. Many of their parents are unemployed or underemployed due to lack of English-speaking skills. Teachers knew that to support their children academically, these parents needed to learn English so that they could find better jobs and communicate with their children's teachers.

To help parents learn English, the school's Family Engagement Action Team (FEAT) reached out to Seattle Community College, which agreed to offer free ESL classes to parents twice a week. With extensive advertising and phone calls in multiple languages, an active *Family Engagement University* program was initiated.

When teachers at **Delmae Elementary School** in Florence, SC need to com-

municate with parents who spoke limited English, they stop at the school's new *English Language Learner's (ELL) Translation Station* to find the right words. In a private area, the *Translation Station* laptop and software facilitate interactions between teachers, staff, and parents who speak languages as diverse as Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Gujarati, Wolof, and Urdu. Teachers say that this software is useful for translating written documents for students to take home and during parent-teacher conferences, and families also have unlimited access to use as often as they like.

Show-and-tell has long been a favorite elementary school activity. **Ranch View Elementary School** in Naperville, IL took a fresh approach to the classic practice. The school, which has a large percentage of students of East Indian and Asian descent, partnered with parents to launch a multicultural presentation series to celebrate diversity. Each week, a different parent comes to school to talk about his or her culture. Presenters gave 20 minute talks with photos and PowerPoint slides on geography, customs, costumes, holidays, festivals, games, food, and a few phrases in the native language to groups of 20 to 25 students in grades K-5.

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Meet the Teams! 2013 PARTNERSHIP SCHOOL AWARD WINNERS

Amistad Elementary School, Kennewick, WA



Apalachee Tapestry Magnet School of the Arts



Meet the Teams! 2013 PARTNERSHIP SCHOOL AWARD WINNERS

Captain Gray Early Learning Center, Pasco, WA



Clinton Middle School, Los Angeles, CA



Delmae Elementary School, Florence, SC



D'Ippolito Elementary School, Vineland, NJ



Dolby Elementary School, Lake Charles, LA



Eastgate Elementary School, Kennewick, WA



Highlands Elementary School, Naperville, IL



Naperville North High School, Naperville, IL



Park Middle School, Kennewick, WA



Prairie Elementary School, Naperville, IL



Read summaries of these programs at www.partnershipschools.org in Success Stories.

2013 PARTNERSHIP SCHOOL, DISTRICT, AND ORGANIZATION AWARD WINNERS

Westgate Elementary School, Kennewich, WA



Calcasieu Parish School District, Lake Charles, LA



Connecticut Technical High School System, CT



Florence School District Three, Lake City, SC



Francis Howell School District, St. Charles, MO



Kennewick School District, Kennewich, WA



Naperville Community Unit School District 203, IL



Pasco School District, Pasco, WA



Seattle Public Schools, Seattle, WA



Francis Marion University Center of Excellence, SC



Read summaries of these programs at www.partnershipschools.org in Success Stories.

Our Growing Network

New Members in NNPS since April 15, 2013

SCHOOLS (62 new members) ★ Anderson United Community School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Anwatin Middle School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Bancroft Elementary School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Bethune Community School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Cityview (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Elizabeth Hall International Elementary School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Emerson Spanish Immersion (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Folwell School, Performing Arts Magnet (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Green Central Community School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Hiawatha Community School (Hiawatha Howe Campus) (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Jefferson Community School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Jenny Lind (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Lake Nokomis Community School- Keewaydin (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Lake Nokomis- Wenonah (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Lucy Craft Laney (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Patrick Henry High School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Thomas Edison High School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Lyndale Community School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Marcy Open School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Nellie Stone Johnson (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Northeast Middle School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Northrop Urban Environmental (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Pierre Bottineau French Immersion (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Ramsey Middle School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Roosevelt High School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Sanford Middle School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Seward Montessori (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Sheridan School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ South High (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Waite Park Community School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Wellstone International High School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Whittier International Elementary School (Minneapolis, MN) ★ Graham Hill Elementary (Seattle, WA) ★ The School for the Creative and Performing Arts, Bluegrass (Lexington, KY) ★ Curiel Primary School (Eloy, AZ) ★ Eloy Intermediate School (Eloy, AZ) ★ Eloy Jr. High School (Eloy, AZ) ★ Springwood Elementary (Tallahassee, FL) ★ Stars Middle School (Tallahassee, FL) ★ Kettering Early Childhood Education Center (Moraine, OH) ★ James P. Wickersham Elementary (Lancaster, PA) ★ A. B. Davis Middle School (Mount Vernon, NY) ★ Pennington Elementary School (Mount Vernon, NY) ★ Edward Williams Elementary (Mount Vernon, NY) ★ Falfurrias High School (Falfurrias, TX) ★ Hidalgo Early College High School (Hidalgo, TX) ★ Veterans Memorial High School (Mission, TX) ★ La Villa ECHS (La Villa, TX) ★ Donna North High School (Donna, TX) ★ Santa Maria High School (Santa Maria, TX) ★ Lyford High School (Lyford, TX) ★ Donna High School (Donna, TX) ★

DISTRICTS (5 new members) ★ Mount Vernon School District (Mount Vernon, NY) ★ Paterson Public Schools (Patterson, NJ) ★ San Antonio Independent School District (San Antonio, TX) ★ Alvin Independent School District (Alvin, TX) ★ North Slope Borough School District (Barrow, AK) ★

ORGANIZATIONS/UNIVERSITY PARTNERS (6 new members) ★ The MATT Foundation (San Antonio, TX) ★ GEMS Education Solutions (New York City, NY) ★ The University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa, AL) ★ National Parents Council Primary (Dublin, Ireland) ★ Region One ESC GEAR UP: Ready, Set, College! Partnership (Edinburg, TX) ★ Driving Force Giving Circle, Inc (Katonah, NY) ★

Current Active Membership in the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) as of October 15, 2013

Schools: 682 Districts: 69 States: 12 Organizations: 35

Issues & Insights: Is NNPS Becoming an *International* Network?

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attended by over 1000 educators, university students, and parent leaders. Dr. Epstein's keynote shared the "structural secrets" of NNPS and the "essential elements" of good partnership programs at the school level—the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), a goal-linked Action Plan for Partnerships including the six types of involvement, and the importance of evaluating progress every year so that programs improve and engage more and different families in ways that support student success in school.

The presentation reinforced approaches that *Aprender en Familia* is taking with about 50 schools in all parts of Chile.

Leaders from the project schools traveled to Santiago and shared many of their best practices and challenges for engaging the vulnerable families in their communities. Their good ideas and challenges echoed those faced by many schools in NNPS. They were very interested in the books of *Promising Partnership Practices* and may create their own, similar publication to share best practices in Chile.

An International Question

Interestingly, most nations do not have school districts as we do in the

U.S. This means that organizations in Chile, Dublin, the Netherlands, and other countries must take the lead in guiding schools on partnership program development. It will be interesting to see if the same progress made by schools in NNPS—due to expert leadership at the district level—can be matched in other nations by educational organizations.

In these and other countries, the U.S. and NNPS are influencing the international agenda on school-based partnership programs to improve family and community engagement in ways that support student success in school.

Leadership Line

Creating Community: Connections and Celebrations at the Top of the World

In September, I was invited to be a keynote presenter in Barrow, Alaska. Peggy Cowen, Superintendent of the North Slope Borough School District (NSBSD) in Barrow was conducting an All Hire In-service. She brought together all professional and classified staff for a 3-day professional training experience. This was an important plan. Staff in this vast district—the size of Minnesota—serving 2,000 students in 11 schools in the northernmost part of Alaska had not been all together in over 20 years. Many of the 400 participants from the villages in the district had to fly to Barrow for the district-level meeting on improving schools. Many came with their dogs and children in tow.

The district's policy and goals for students make clear the important links of school, family, and community for student learning and success in school: *Learning in our schools is rooted in the values, history, and language of the Inūpiat. Students develop...skills...to be:*

- *Critical and creative thinkers able to adapt in a changing environment and world;*
- *Active, responsible, contributing members of their communities; and*
- *Confident, healthy young adults, able to envision, plan, and take control of their destiny.*

To help implement the policy, the NSBSD joined NNPS. At dinner after a full day of workshops on school improvement projects, everyone was excited to hear that a whale had been caught at sea. Here is my account of this unique experience.

Waiting for the Whale

I stood on the edge of the Arctic Ocean with about 100 others on that freezing cold September night watching in anticipation as two dots on the horizon pulled in the whale just caught.¹ I

thought, “What an interesting way to build community.” Wrapped in a turtleneck, sweat shirt, sweater, borrowed parka and earmuffs, hat, scarf, warm boots, two pairs of socks, and two pairs of gloves, I stood shivering. I was wishing for a hot flash that seems to come only at the most inopportune times. It was about 20°, but with wind chill it felt like -50°.

Karen Melin, Administrator of Instructional Support from the Alaska Department of Education & Early Learning, Lillian Stone, a conference participant from Anaktuvuk Pass (a village in the district), and I took turns shooting photos of the growing specks coming in from the ocean. As the boats made their way to shore, we also took turns running back to a heated car to try to thaw out. When the boats reached the shore, we forgot how cold it was and stood in awe watching the community work and cheer together to help the crew drag in the whale.

The Whale Arrives

Tractors helped pull in the enormous whale onto the frozen tundra. The boat crews who had sailed on the freezing waters and those who had pulled the whale ashore were able to warm up a bit. Then, the celebration really started. Car horns sang out in approval. Birds circled the whale in anticipation of a feast to come. I'm sure the women of the community

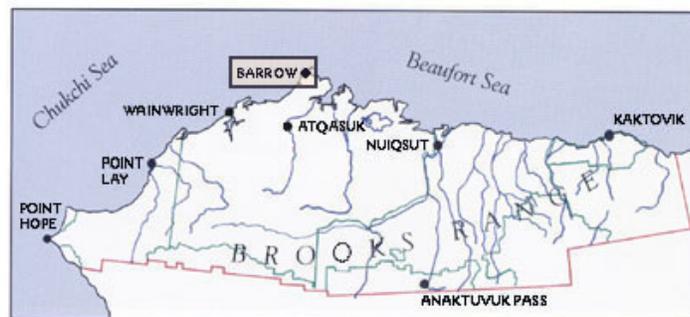
thought about all of the ways they would prepare the whale meat and blubber they would receive. Men measured the length of the whale. While they waited for just the right knives to begin cutting and sharing this bounty with everyone in the community, the kids were allowed to climb on the whale to enjoy a slippery, wet sliding board.

Reflecting on the Celebration

At home the next weekend, I watched my 13-year-old nephew become a “man” at his Bar Mitzvah. The celebration of our community marked his rite of passage and was no less triumphant than the celebration by the community in Barrow, Alaska. I thought of the young children at play climbing on the whale dreaming of their turn to hunt for their first whale or caribou. I imagined the young girls thinking about how they would preserve and prepare the valued meat to sustain families through the very harsh winter. In both celebrations, I felt the connectedness of the community and the traditions being passed from generation to generation. What an important place rituals have for every culture. How honored I was to experience both.

¹ The International Whaling Commission sets catch limits or quotas of bowhead whales for Alaska Eskimo subsistence hunters. This “catch” was within those limits.

Marsha Greenfeld,
NNPS Facilitator



School and District Networking Helps Improve Partnership Programs in the Middle Grades

Educators agree that positive parental involvement is critical for students' success in school. Yet, many schools—particularly secondary schools—continue to struggle with how to engage parents in productive ways. This research brief is drawn from a larger article on “lessons learned” from a study of policy and practice in middle schools (Hutchins, 2013).

North Shore School District (NSSD), the pseudonym for the district in this study, had several structures and practices in place to guide schools in engaging families and communities in children's education. These components are important for any district to support and improve school-based partnership programs.

District Policy and Designated Leaders

A thoughtful district policy on partnership program development makes public the district's priority and sets clear expectations that schools will implement the policy. More important, however, is having the infrastructure (e.g., staffing, budget) to support schools' in implementing the official policy to engage all parents. Schools are more likely to have higher quality partnership programs, address more challenges to reach all families, and report greater district support and assistance, when they are in districts with designated leaders who guide partnership program implementation (Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon, 2011).

Strong Principal Leadership

The study confirmed the importance of strong principal leadership for developing high quality partnership programs (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). In addition to district-level leadership, principals' leadership also was critical for encouraging their staffs to create a positive climate

and to conduct partnership activities to increase student success.

Many principals reported that they recognized their responsibility for promoting family and community engagement. In this study, schools with the strongest partnership programs had principals who attended events with teachers and students' families, including academic workshops, sporting events, and plays.

Besides being visible and accessible to parents, principals set clear expectations for the faculty and staff to follow. For example, several principals asked teachers and administrators to aim for a 24-hour turnaround in responding to parents' e-mail or phone calls. Others encouraged teachers to collaborate with colleagues in developing activities to involve parents. They recognized that teamwork was a strong structure for program development.

Multi-Level Social Ties

Principals who had strong networks with parents and with other principals reported more parental involvement in their schools. Six principals shared their weekly parent newsletters with each other. These principals reported feeling more positive about their relationships with parents because they received feedback from their colleagues on how and what to communicate with families.

Three principals formed their own Professional Learning Community to discuss challenges and best practices in their schools, including those involving partnerships. Principals who collaborated with colleagues and shared leadership with teachers, parent leaders, and their school-based Action Teams for Partnerships reported higher quality and more inclusive partnership programs and addressed more challenges to engage

diverse families.

Principals' social ties with district leaders also were important. Those with personal relationships with district leaders (e.g., were friends, former classmates, or had children the same age) were more likely to seek and receive district support for their schools' partnership programs. In one instance, a middle school principal who attended graduate school with a district administrator received special assistance to secure community partners' support for a transition activity with a feeder school.

Conclusions

NSSD middle schools were on the right track for developing effective partnership programs, but the schools had considerable room for improvement. Like most middle schools, these schools struggled to involve all students' parents. The findings suggest several recommendations for strengthening partnership program development in all middle level schools.

- Enact a district-level research-based policy that guides all schools to involve family and community partners in their children's education.
- Form a school-based Action Team for Partnerships that writes clear plans to engage all students' families in activities linked to school improvement goals for student success.
- Provide time and training for principals to utilize district-level support for their own school's partnership programs and to form collaborative social ties with district leaders, other principals, and parents to strengthen support for school, family, and the community for student learning.

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Partnership Awards

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high-quality partnership programs. This year, Partnership District Awards were earned by: **Calcasieu Parish, Lake Charles, LA**; **Connecticut Technical High School System, Florence County School District Three, SC**; **Francis Howell School District, St. Charles, MO**; **Kennewick School District, WA**; **Naperville Community School District 203, IL**; **Pasco School District, WA**; and **Seattle Public Schools, WA**. **Francis Marion University's Center of Excellence, Florence, SC**, the Partnership Organization Award winner in 2013, guides districts and schools in South Carolina to improve their partnership programs.

School Award Winners

The 13 Partnership School Awards were earned by schools at all levels. At the preschool level, **Captain Gray Early Learning Center** in Pasco, WA, was a first-time awardee. Elementary schools included: **Amistad, Eastgate,**

and **Westgate ES** in Kennewick, WA; **Apalachee Tapestry Magnet School of the Arts** in Tallahassee, FL; **Delmae ES** in Florence, SC; **D'Ippolito ES** in Vineland, NJ; **Dolby ES** in Lake Charles, LA; **Highlands ES** and **Prairie ES** in Naperville, IL.

At the middle level, **Park MS** in Kennewick, WA and **Clinton MS** in Los Angeles, CA, earned awards. At the high school level, **Naperville North High School, IL**, earned a repeat award for more and better work with families and community partners.

Noteworthy Practices

Among many noteworthy practices at the district level, the award winners described ways to increase participation by ELL parents, reach out to grandparents, individualize ATP advanced training sessions, and set standards for ATP teams to implement NNPS structures and processes for strong partnership programs.

At the school level, the award winners described direct and innovative practices to translate communications into several languages to reach all families; and conduct activities on a regular schedule so that families know they are always welcome to ask questions or share ideas (e.g., Fabulous Family Fridays or First Monday meetings with the principal). See how award winners are linking family and community engagement activities to Common Core State Standards and other standards (e.g., trimester goals) for which schools are being held accountable. See creative activities that bring literature and history “to life” for students and their families.

Many other exemplary approaches are reported by all of the 2013 Partnership Award winners in the summaries of their work on the NNPS website, www.partnershipschools.org in the section Success Stories. See the photos of the leadership teams of these excellent programs on pp. 6-7 of this issue of *Type 2*.

Meeting the Challenge: Partnership-Oriented Workshops

(Continued from page 4)

hand-crafts, videos, and speeches), and orchestrate the evening. Student committees decorated the school and prepared refreshments. Families of high school freshman, who typically do not receive much information about what their teens do in school, heard from the most important source—their children—about their school work, progress, and goals.

Many Workshop Designs

There are many ways for schools to conduct workshops to strengthen school and family partnerships. First and foremost, this means educa-

tors must be responsive to the needs and challenges faced by families at their school. Partnership-oriented workshops may need to be offered in families' native languages or may be most successful when spotlighting the leadership and accomplishments of students. Over the years, members of NNPS have reported creative designs that move workshops from communicating only what the school wants to say to communicating what families want to hear. See many examples at www.partnershipschools.org in books of *Promising Partnership Practices* and in NNPS Samplers.

Research Brief: Networking

(Continued from page 10)

If schools fulfill these recommendations, they will continually improve the quality of their programs, engage more families, and help more students to succeed in school.

From: Hutchins, D.J. (2013). Improving home-school collaboration in middle grades. *AMLE Magazine*. September. <http://www.amle.org/Browse-byTopic/WhatsNew/WNDet.aspx?ArtMID=888&ArticleID=315>

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Partnership Calendar

2014

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- January 16** **Web conference** for district leaders on program development and direct facilitation of schools. Registration information will be available in E-brief and at www.partnershipschools.org.
- January/Feb.** Members will receive the **NNPS Annual Report**, summarizing data from schools and districts on the 2013 UPDATE surveys.
- February 27** **Web conference** for schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) in the start-up phase of program development for ideas on "Writing Goal-Oriented Action Plans" for 14-15 school year. Registration information will be available in E-brief and at www.partnershipschools.org.
- March 20-21** **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' ATPs and to establish district-level leadership on partnerships. Organization leaders who guide schools' ATPs also may attend.
- March** **Spring Issue** of *Type 2*. Sent by E-Alert and available online at www.partnershipschools.org.
- March/April** Invitation for NNPS members to contribute to *Promising Partnership Practices 2014*. Due May 1.
Eligible members will be invited to apply for **NNPS Partnership Awards** for 2014. Due June 30.
- April** Members will receive 2014 UPDATE in the mail and via e-mail. Due June 30.
- May 1** *Promising Partnership Practices* **submissions due** for review for the 2014 collection.
- June 30** **2014 UPDATE due** with \$200 fee to renew membership in NNPS for the 14-15 school year.
2014 Partnership Award Applications due.
- October 23-24** **Leadership Development Conference** in Baltimore for new and experienced school, district, state, and organization leaders.

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MetLife Foundation Continues Support for NNPS

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technologies to (a) inform them about the products; (b) explain or demonstrate their uses; and (c) make them available to a wide national audience of likely users.

The schools, districts, states and organizations in NNPS will be interested in all three products. We will outreach to math teachers in the middle grades and district

math curriculum supervisors to introduce *TIPS-Math in the Middle Grades*. We will communicate with college professors who teach courses to prepare future teachers and administrators for their professions to encourage them to give attention to the homework process. If you are interested in the new products, please contact NNPS.

MetLife Foundation is a valued partner for improving leadership, programs, and practices of school, family, and community partnerships. NNPS appreciates the ongoing support through 2014.

**SAVE THE DATE
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**NNPS PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**

**District Leaders
WEB CONFERENCE**

January 16, 2014

**School Teams
WEB CONFERENCE**

February 27, 2014

**See November E-Brief
for more information**