

# 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, 2015 No. 39

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## NNPS Partnership Awards in 2015 Recognize Excellent Programs and Practices

Twenty NNPS member-sites earned Partnership Awards in 2015 for applying research-based approaches to develop and advance programs and practices of family and community engagement. The awardees included 12 schools: **Bell City School**, **\*Dolby ES**, and **Clifton ES** in Lake Charles, LA; **\*Castlio ES** in St. Charles, MO; **\*Hawthorne ES** in Seattle, WA; **Moore Intermediate School** in Florence, SC; **Ochoa MS** in Pasco, WA; **Patterson Park Public Charter School** in Baltimore, MD; **Roosevelt MS** in Anoka-Hennepin, MN; **\*Vista ES** and **\*Westgate ES** in Kennewick, WA; and **Wolcott Technical HS** in Torrington, CT.

**Partnership School Award** winners provided evidence that their Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) were functioning well. The teams had written One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships, implemented their plans, and evaluated progress. They reported how planned activities (a) engaged more and different families and (b) were designed to increase students' academic or behavioral success in school. Each school submitted a copy of its Action Plan for the 14-15 school year.

Seven districts and one organization earned Partnership District Awards for their leadership and facilitation of schools' teams: **\*\*Alvord Unified School District** in Riverside, CA; **\*\*Calcasieu Parish School District** in Lake Charles, LA; **Connecticut Technical High School**

**System** in Middletown CT; **Kennewick School District** in WA; **Naperville Community School District 203** in IL; **\*\*Pasco School District** in WA; **Seattle Public Schools** in WA; and **Francis**

*(Continued on page 11)*

### *JHU-NNPS and Seattle Collaborate to Improve the Transition to High School*

Johns Hopkins University, NNPS, and Seattle Public Schools (SPS) earned a four-year grant from the U. S. Department of Education—Institute of Education Sciences (IES) to develop, study, and continually improve family and community engagement to improve students' transition to high school and success in grade 9. Based on a long-standing partnership of NNPS and SPS, the grant—*Family Engagement in the High School Transition (FEHST)*—requires the university and district to collaborate with 8th grade schools and high schools to engage families in ways that support students' successful completion of 9th grade. The grant's leaders are Principal Investigator (PI) Dr. Martha Mac Iver at JHU, and Co-PIs Bernardo Ruiz at SPS, and Dr. Joyce Epstein, Dr. Steven Sheldon, and Dr. Douglas MacIver at JHU.

Research confirms that grade 9 is a "make or break" year that affects whether students graduate from high school on time or risk dropping out of school. At

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# Issues and Insights

Joyce L. Epstein  
Director

## NNPS Celebrates Its 20th Anniversary Year *Working Together for Student Success*

Twenty years ago, a few schools, districts, and states responded to my article in *Phi Delta Kappan* by joining a new network to apply research in organizing programs of family and community involvement. After conducting 15 years of basic research, initial field work, and publishing countless articles on family and community engagement using from elementary, middle, and high school, my colleagues and I felt it was time to put research to work in practice. We wanted to enable any school, district, or state department of education to fulfill its official policy for more and better family and community engagement.

We called the network *Partnership-2000 Schools* because we envisioned a 3-year project. We had only a loose-leaf binder (Fig. 1) to guide the work of our new partners. Our motto, *Working Together for Student Success*, was a good one, which reinforced that school, family, and community partnerships reflected the shared responsibility of teachers, parents, and community partners for supporting student success in school. It was important to understand that a partnership program was an important component of good school organization so that all families—not just a few—could encourage and support student learning at each grade level.

By 1997, it was clear that we were just getting started, as more sites were interested in joining the growing network. Our first handbook, *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action* (Fig. 2) was published by Corwin Press in 1997; the second edition in 2002 (Fig. 3); third in 2009 (Fig. 4); and the fourth edition is being planned. More than the color of the cover changed with each new book. Each handbook added information and tools based on lessons learned from NNPS members at all policy levels.

The 1st edition focused on the six types of involvement and added attention to middle and high schools. The 2nd edition showed how the six types of family and community engagement could be designed to focus explicitly on school improvement goals to increase students' reading, math, science or other academic skills, behavior, health, and postsecondary plans for college and careers. It also added guidelines for district and state leadership, and discussed why community connections were essential to (not separate from) programs of school, family, and community partnerships. The 3rd edition included a comprehensive literature review of research on the results of partnerships for student success and a chapter on the importance of evaluating programs of partner-

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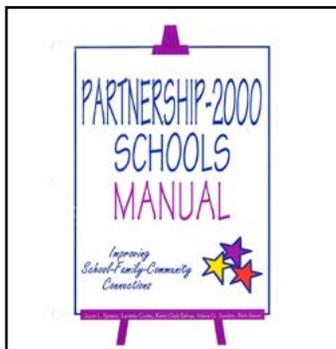


Figure 1: Notebook

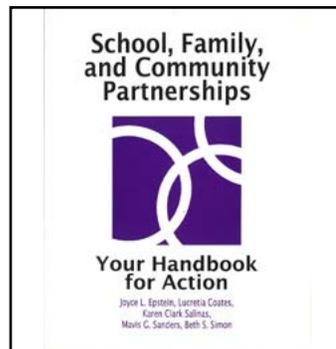


Figure 2: First Edition

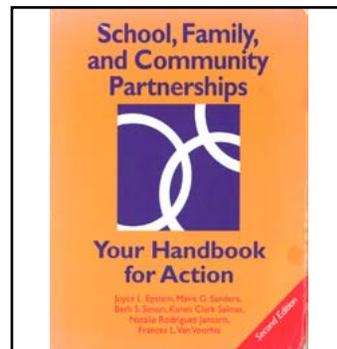


Figure 3: Second Edition

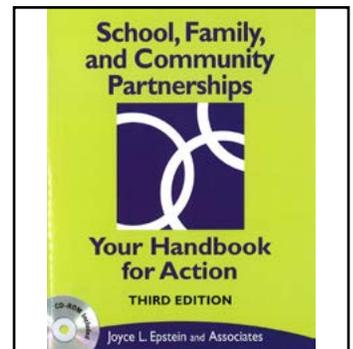


Figure 4: Third Edition

## Leadership Line

# District Leadership – Deliberate and Structured for Success

Small incentives can produce big results. District-sponsored competitions can motivate schools' Action Teams for Partnership (ATPs) to strive for excellence. Recognition and celebration of schools' good ideas encourage other ATPs to take similar action. Over the years, effective district and organization leaders in NNPS have used these strategies to support schools' ATPs and to help them scale up the quality of their programs of family and community engagement. This work by strong Leaders for Partnerships is not accidental. Rather, it is the product of strategic plans and on-going effort.

Here are a few of many examples of important actions taken by district and organization Leaders for Partnerships in NNPS. They are reported books of *Promising Partnership Practices* and in summaries of Partnership Award winners at [www.partnership-schools.org](http://www.partnership-schools.org) in the section Success Stories. Want to be inspired? Read what good leaders report.

### Incentives/Awards

- At the 8-time NNPS award-winning Center of Excellence (COE) to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty at Francis Marion University, leaders conduct an Outreach Project to encourage districts and schools in South Carolina to develop programs of family and community involvement that contribute to student achievement and success in school. Schools in SC that are members of NNPS may apply for a grant of up to \$500, share their activities with other ATPs at an End-of-Year Celebration, and submit their activities and results as a *Promising Partner-*

*ship Practice*. In this year's book, see Delmae Elementary School's *Manipulating Math*, John S. Moore Intermediate's *Moore's Lion Club*, Wallace Gregg Elementary's *Bully-Free Kindness Challenge*, and South Florence High School's *PI R-Squared: Partners in Resources and Resourcefulness*. All of these activities were supported by a COE small grant.

- Over the years, leaders in the 9-time NNPS award-winning Pasco School District, WA, organized competitions, recognitions, and small bonuses for schools' ATPs to improve the quality of leadership and teamwork for partnerships. For example, \$100 bonuses were based on specific criteria, such as having a non-staff parent as a co-chair of the ATP; participating in a Chair Chat; and preparing a *Road Map for ATP Success* display to share activities in the school's One-Year Action Plan with all parents and visitors. District leaders also recognized experienced ATP leaders at all school levels by inviting them to share *Words of Wisdom* with other ATPs to spread good leadership.

One year, Pasco's leaders inspired us by inviting students to write an essay on a partnership activity that they believed would help their school. The winning entries (e.g., increase father involvement; increase multicultural awareness) were awarded small grants for the ATP and student essayist to implement the activities. It is wonderful what small grants will do!

### School Boards Need to Know

- In Greenbrier County Schools, WV, the district Leader for Partnerships celebrates the work of the ATP at School Board Meetings.

*Time Out for Applause* gives the Board an opportunity to recognize good work on family and community engagement at the district level and in the schools. Often a reporter is present at the Board meetings and shares the good partnership activities with the community as a whole.

- In St. Landry Parish, LA, the district Leader for Partnerships invited all Principals and ATP Chairs who submitted and were included in the NNPS book, *Promising Partnership Practices 2015*, to be recognized at a School Board Meeting where they provided summaries of their practices.
- In Kennewick, WA, a 6-time award winning district, the Leader for Partnerships collected best practices from all schools, whether they were included in the NNPS book or not, and published them in *Tried and True*. Kennewick's collection was shared with the School Board, schools and interested community members.

School Boards need to know about efforts by district leaders and school teams to engage all families in productive ways.

These and other examples from NNPS books of *Promising Partnership Practices* can be adopted or adapted by other district and organization Leaders for Partnerships. These are not costly ideas, but show how district leaders can help schools' ATPs strengthen their capacities to work with their students' families to increase student success in school.

Marsha D. Greenfeld  
[mgreenfeld@jhu.edu](mailto:mgreenfeld@jhu.edu)

# Meeting the Challenge

Steven B. Sheldon  
Director of Research

## Take a Partnership Approach to Share Data

In the current era of accountability, students are given benchmark assessments, Common Core-related assessments, unit tests, and other formative, interim, and summative tests to measure what they know and are able to do. For educators, assessments are meant to help identify students in need of extra or different teaching or academic support. Yet, the demands of tests significantly affect the time available for student learning. For families, the acronyms for various assessments may be mysterious. The results that are reported to parents on their own child's scores, school scores, district and state scores may be meaningful, but also may range from meaningless to overwhelming. The way teachers share student data with families is an important strategy that strong partnership programs take seriously. This exchange of information can be a powerful resource for improving student success in school.

### Understand Tests

Strong partnership programs ensure that families understand which tests are administered and the meaning of the numbers in reported results. Most families are not familiar with terms such as PARCC, Smarter Balance, DIBELS, TRC, SAT, or ACT. Several NNPS member schools in St. Landry Parish, LA (**Northeast Elementary School, Grand Coteau Elementary School, and Sunset Middle School**) designed and conducted workshops to help families understand the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment, how the school's curricula help students meet the learning standards on that exam, and how parents and other family partners can support their children's learning to maximize achievement and test scores.

Workshops like these are critical because educators cannot assume family members understand what a "computer-adaptive test" is, or the implications of their children of scoring at, above, or below proficiency. With clear and timely information, families gain an understanding of the exams, their children's scores, and how to guide children's learning and attitudes about the tests.

### Access Data—Test Scores and More

Helping families access data about their children's progress in school also is vital for them to effectively support learning and academic achievement. Many schools have Parent Portals that provide families with information on test scores, report card grades, homework and missing assignments, attendance, and more. To increase the use of this technology, the Action Team for Partnerships at **Ochoa Middle School** in Pasco, WA revised directions for using the Parent Portal to be clear and user-friendly to all parents, including those with weak reading skills. The team translated instructions into Spanish for the sizable Hispanic population at the school, and designed magnets to post on refrigerators for easy use. (See details in the Middle and High School column on p. 9 in this issue). Data showed that the use of the Parent Portal increased from fall to spring.

### "Share Data" Means Two-Way Communications

Parents have data about their children to share with educators to promote learning. This includes information on students' interests and talents, stories about family backgrounds and traditions, and parents' observations of whether students are struggling with homework. NNPS TIPS interactive homework is one resource that helps families share data on student learning each week with teachers. TIPS activities include space for families to give teachers quick feedback on whether their child understood the homework, whether they enjoyed the activity together, and whether additional instruction may be needed.

Also see Harvard Family Research Project's free publication *Tips for Administrators, Teachers, and Families: How to Share Data Effectively* at <http://www.hfrp.org/>. Click on *How to Share Data with Families* for ideas on how families can share information about their child and what questions they might ask teachers.

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### Twenty Years and Still Improving: Family Engagement in Elementary Schools

Elementary schools have led the way on family and community engagement for many years. In pre-school and the primary grades, young children are highly dependent on their parents and parents are eager to be involved in their children's education. Educators in elementary schools are, typically, aware that they should reach out to engage all families.

When Joyce Epstein, Director of NNPS, started research to study how to involve families to increase students' success in school, she did not know that NNPS would continue to assist schools for decades. Studies progressed from eight pilot elementary schools in the 1980s, to studies of middle and high schools, and to research on district and state leadership in the '90s, and to establishing NNPS in 1995. Educators wanted to know how to engage all families at home, at school, and in the community in ways that contributed to student learning and development at all grade levels.

Elementary schools still lead the way by recognizing that partnership programs and practices must continually improve to engage all students' families. Some schools that joined NNPS in 2005 were featured in the new book *Promising Partnership Practices 2015*. We are inspired by these schools' innovative practices. Here are a couple of examples.

Without good guidance from math teachers, most parents have a hard time supporting their children's math learning. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and math teachers at **Delmae Elementary School** in Florence, South Carolina knew that they could increase student success

on Common Core Math Standards if more parents felt comfortable about helping their children practice math skills at home. On a survey, fourth graders' parents, in particular, asked for this information. Teachers developed friendly information sessions for parents—*Manipulating Math*. Parents of fourth graders came to school on two evenings from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Teachers demonstrated how they could help students on specific math skills that students needed to practice and master, such as long division and fractional parts. One teacher noted, "Anytime we can help parents support their children at home, there is no downside."

Children and parents were invited to come to school in pajamas, bring blankets and pillows, and settle in for an evening of reading and learning together.

**Whittier Elementary School** in Pasco, Washington hosted *Whittier Winter Reading Evening*. When it's cold outside, it is good to curl up with a good book. Children and parents were invited to come to school in pajamas, bring blankets and pillows, and settle in for an evening of reading and learning together. Five reading stations were staffed by teachers, high school students, and parent volunteers. The stations were family reading in a cozy spot with cocoa and cookies; fifth grade Reader's Theater; food station for dinner; food bank for families to take home bags of food donated by Second Harvest; and photo with Santa. Teachers, community members, and the local library donated books for all 300 participating students and their siblings to take one home. The ATP and others at school

evaluated the activity, with praise for success and ideas for the future.

**Patterson Park Public Charter School (PPPCS)** in Baltimore, Maryland, a 2015 Partnership School Award winner, implemented *Innovative Volunteer Engagement* in which all of its diverse families could participate. The school asks each family to serve 20 hours of volunteer time each year using their varied skills and talents. On a Gifts and Talents Survey, families identified how they could help on such things as assembling bookshelves, laundering team uniforms, chaperoning field trips, aiding lunch, being a reading buddy or tutor, translating and interpreting, and more. PPPCS recognizes volunteers' contributions in the school's monthly newsletter. Those who complete the 20-hour commitment are invited to the Volunteer Appreciation breakfast at the end of the year where certificates and thank you gifts are presented by their children. The school appreciates its families and families know that they are valued by their children, the school, and other families.

Like hundreds of schools in NNPS, these schools continue to strengthen their programs of family and community engagement every year with well-designed goal-linked partnership practices. See 40 more great ideas from NNPS elementary schools in *Promising Partnership Practices 2015* at [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org). Click on Success Stories.

Brenda G. Thomas  
[bthomas@jhu.edu](mailto:bthomas@jhu.edu)

*Meet the Teams! 2015 PARTNERSHIP SCHOOL AWARD WINNERS*

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**Bell City School, Lake Charles, LA**



**Castlio Elementary School, St. Charles, MO**



**Clifton Elementary School, Lake Charles, LA**



**Dolby Elementary School, Lake Charles, LA**



**Hawthorne Elementary School, Seattle, WA**



**Moore Intermediate School, Florence, SC**



**Ochoa Middle School, Pasco, WA**



**Patterson Park Public Charter, Baltimore, MD**



**Roosevelt Middle School, Anoka-Hennepin, MN**



**Vista Elementary School, Kennewick, WA**



2015 PARTNERSHIP SCHOOL, DISTRICT, AND ORGANIZATION AWARD WINNERS

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Westgate Elementary School, Kennewick, WA



Wolcott Technical High School, Torrington, CT



Alvord Unified School District, Riverside, CA



Calcasieu Parish School District, Lake Charles, LA



CT Technical High School System, Middletown, CT



Francis Marion Univ. Ctr of Excellence, Florence, SC



Kennewick School District, WA



Naperville Community School District 203, IL



Pasco School District, WA



Seattle Public Schools, WA



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Read summaries of these programs at [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org) in Success Stories.

# Our Growing Network

## New Members in NNPS since April 1, 2015

**SCHOOLS (125 new members)** ★ Child Development Center at Alfred Rush (Quimby, SC) ★ Child Development Center at R. N. Beck (Florence, SC) ★ Jesse S. Bobo Elementary School (Spartanburg, SC) ★ Carmichael Middle School (Richland, WA) ★ White Bluffs Elementary School (Richland, WA) ★ J.M. Wright Technical High School (Stamford, CT) ★ Barbara McClintock STEM Elementary School (Pasco, WA) ★ Marie Curie STEM Elementary (Pasco, WA) ★ Atherton Elementary School (Burton, MI) ★ Collett Elementary School (Riverside, CA) ★ Foothill Elementary School (Riverside, CA) ★ Rosemary Kennedy Elementary School (Riverside, CA) ★ Stokoe Elementary School (Riverside, CA) ★ Twinhill Elementary School (Riverside, CA) ★ Valley View Elementary School (Riverside, CA) ★ Harrison Preparatory School (Lakewood, WA) ★ Hudtloff Middle School (Lakewood, WA) ★ Lake Louise Elementary School (Lakewood, WA) ★ Mann Middle School (Lakewood, WA) ★ Acceleration Middle Charter School (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Alternative Learning Centers (Central and West) (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Bonita Springs Elementary (Bonita Springs, FL) ★ Bonita Springs Middle Center for the Arts (Bonita Springs, FL) ★ Caloosa Middle School (Cape Coral, FL) ★ Cape Coral Charter School (Cape Coral, FL) ★ Cape Coral Preparatory and Fitness Academy (Cape Coral, FL) ★ Colonial Elementary School (Ft Myers, FL) ★ DJB Technical Academy (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Dr. Carrie D. Robinson Littleton Elementary (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Dunbar High School (Ft Myers, FL) ★ East Lee County High School (Lehigh Acres, FL) ★ Edgewood Academy (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Fort Myers Middle Academy (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Fort Myers Preparatory and Fitness Academy (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Franklin Park Elementary School (Ft Myers, FL) ★ G. Weaver Hipps Elementary (Lehigh Acres, FL) ★ Harns Marsh Elementary School (Lehigh Acres, FL) ★ Harns Marsh Middle School (Lehigh Acres, FL) ★ Hector A. Cafferata Jr Elementary (Cape Coral, FL) ★ Island Coast High School (Cape Coral, FL) ★ J. Colin English Elementary (Ft Myers, FL) ★ James Stephens International Academy (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Lee Adolescent Mothers Program (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Lehigh Acres Middle School (Lehigh Acres, FL) ★ Lehigh Elementary School (Lehigh Acres, FL) ★ Lehigh Senior High School (Lehigh Acres, FL) ★ Manatee Elementary (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Mariner Middle (Cape Coral, FL) ★ Mirror Lakes Elementary School (Lehigh Acres, FL) ★ Oak Hammock Middle School (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Orange River Elementary (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Orangewood Elementary (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Patriot Elementary School (Cape Coral, FL) ★ Paul Lawrence Dunbar Middle School (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Ray V. Pottorf Elementary (Ft Myers, FL) ★ River Hall Elementary (Alva, FL) ★ Royal Palm Exceptional School (Ft Myers, FL) ★ San Carlos Park Elementary (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Spring Creek Elementary (Bonita Springs, FL) ★ Sunshine Elementary (Lehigh Acres, FL) ★ Tice Elementary School (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Tortuga Preserve Elementary (Lehigh Acres, FL) ★ Treeline Elementary (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Tropic Isles Elementary (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Varsity Lakes Middle School (Lehigh Acres, FL) ★ Veterans Park Academy for the Arts (Lehigh Acres, FL) ★ Villas Elementary (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Baker Elementary (El Monte, CA) ★ Cogswell Elementary (El Monte, CA) ★ Kranz Intermediate (El Monte, CA) ★ La Primaria Elementary (El Monte, CA) ★ Madrid Middle (El Monte, CA) ★ Maxson Elementary (El Monte, CA) ★ Miramonte Elementary (South El Monte, CA) ★ Monte Vista Elementary (South El Monte, CA) ★ Parkview Elementary (El Monte, CA) ★ Twin Lakes Elementary (El Monte, CA) ★ Voorhis Elementary (El Monte, CA) ★ Willard Payne Elementary (El Monte, CA) ★ Dower Elementary School (Lakewood, WA) ★ Lakeview Hope Academy (Lakewood, WA) ★ Cleveland Children's Daycare Academy (Parma, OH) ★ Debra Ann November Early Learning Center (Cleveland, OH) ★ Horizon Education Centers (North Olmsted, OH) ★ King Kennedy Head Start (Cleveland, OH) ★ Louis Stokes Head Start (Cleveland, OH) ★ Ohio City Early Learning Center (Cleveland, OH) ★ Sister J's Child Enrichment Program (Cleveland, OH) ★ St. Thomas Aquinas Head Start (Cleveland, OH) ★ Vision Academy Charter School (Landowne, PA) ★ Arthur Eddy Elementary (Saginaw, MI) ★ Arthur Hill High School (Saginaw, MI) ★ Central Language Academy (Onatio, CA) ★ Chester Miller Elementary (Saginaw, MI) ★ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School (Santa Ana, CA) ★ Eisenhower Elementary School Garden Grove, CA) ★ Elderberry Elementary (Onatio, CA) ★ Glenn L. Martin Elementary School (Santa Ana, CA) ★ Handley Elementary (Saginaw, MI) ★ Herig Elementary (Saginaw, MI) ★ Heritage Elementary (Santa Ana, CA) ★ James Russell Lowell Elementary (Santa Ana, CA) ★ Jessie Loomis Elementary (Saginaw, MI) ★ Jessie Rouse Elementary (Saginaw, MI) ★ Kempton Elementary (Saginaw, MI) ★ Lehigh Elementary (Monclair, CA) ★ Lincoln Elementary School (Santa Ana, CA) ★ Merrill Park Elementary (Saginaw, MI) ★ Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy (Saginaw, MI) ★ Saginaw Career Complex (Saginaw, MI) ★ Saginaw High School (Saginaw, MI) ★ Stone Elementary (Saginaw, MI) ★ Vineyard STEM Magnet School (Ontario, CA) ★ Willie E. Thompson Middle School (Saginaw, MI) ★ Zilwaukee International Studies School (Saginaw, MI) ★ Frederick Douglass Academy VII HS (Brooklyn, NY) ★ Gregorio Luperon High School (New York, NY) ★ The School for Human Rights (Brooklyn, NY) ★ Del Roble Elementary School (San Jose, CA) ★ Miner Elementary School (San Jose, CA) ★ Parkview Elementary School (San Jose, CA) ★ Rieck Avenue Elementary School (Millville, NJ) ★ Sealey Elementary Math and Science Magnet School (Tallahassee, FL) ★

**DISTRICTS (6 new members)** ★ Richland School District #400 (Richland, WA) ★ Lee County School District (Ft Myers, FL) ★ Charles County Public Schools (La Plata, MD) ★ Garden Grove Unified School District (Garden Grove, CA) ★ School District of the City of Saginaw (Saginaw, MI) ★ Riverside Unified School District (Riverside, CA) ★

**ORGANIZATIONS/UNIVERSITY PARTNERS (4 new members)** ★ Expanded Success Initiative (New York, NY) ★ You Too Can, INC (Ellicott City, MD) ★ Active Community Health Center (Pembroke Pines, FL) ★ California Association for Bilingual Education (Covina, CA) ★

Current Active Membership in the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) as of November 30, 2015

Schools: 720    Districts: 67    States: 13    Organizations: 3

# Middle and High School Report

## Middle and High Schools Are Catching Up on School, Family, and Community Partnerships

A school's program of family and community engagement should not be wishful thinking. Partnership activities must be well-planned and purposeful. This is particularly important in middle and high schools that are, usually, larger and more complex than elementary schools. The more good and timely information that secondary schools provide to families, the more families will be able to support their children through the grades to high school graduation.

In NNPS annual data, elementary schools do more to communicate with and engage families in children's education, but middle and high schools in NNPS are catching up. This also is clear in voices from the field in *Promising Partnership Practices 2015*. Here are a few examples of how secondary schools are engaging families and community partners to support student success.

### Help Parents Use Portal

At the 3-time NNPS award winning **Ochoa Middle School** in Pasco, WA, teachers and the ATP knew that all parents wanted to know about their child's academic progress. The school's web-based parent portal makes it easy for families to access and monitor their student's report card grades, assignments, and grades. But many parents were not using the portal. About 95% of the students at Ochoa are Hispanic. The ATP and colleagues conducted *Parent Portal Access*.

At the fall parent-teacher conference, parents in two sample seventh grade classrooms discussed the portal and took a pre-survey in Spanish or English on their use of the portal. The three-question survey asked:

1. Are you familiar with or do you know about the Parent Portal.

2. Do you use the Parent Portal to monitor your student's grades?
3. If you use the Parent Portal, does it help your student be more successful in school?

Parents received printed, magnetized directions to post on the refrigerator on how to access and use the Parent Portal. They were surveyed again at the spring teacher-parent conference. The data indicated that more parents used and found the Parent Portal helpful from fall to spring. Students, too, were more aware in the spring of their own grades because their parents used the Parent Portal.

### Make Homework Interactive

**Mary Emily Bryan Middle School** in the Francis Howell School District, MO, wanted to show students that school skills were connected to real-world activities. In *Home to School Lessons*, the ATP identified 8 subject areas: ELA, Math, Social Studies, Science, Fine Arts, Practical Arts, PE, and Reading. Each quarter of the year, teachers of two subjects selected or developed interactive homework activities from a list of 30 suggestions from the ATP. Students conducted the activities with a family partner. For example, in the first quarter, teachers of fine arts and practical arts asked students to talk about and collect favorite recipes, listen and critique music together, or play a game of charades. In the second quarter, communication arts and science teachers asked students to interview a family member on how technology differs now from when they were in middle school, how the family partner chose a career, or do a science experiment together.

### Keep Parents and Teens Talking

The ATP at **Platt Regional Vocational Technical High School** in Milford, CT is working to increase family engagement that encourages students to

complete high school and plan for the future. *Reaching Out to Build Life Skills* included many good ideas.

- To increase students' reading skills, the *Millionaire Luncheon* challenged students to read one million words in conjunction with the school's Accelerated Reading (AR) program. Those who met this goal were invited to bring a family member to a red-carpet luncheon celebrating the accomplishment. Culinary Arts students provided the menu.
- Based on a survey of parents early in the school year, the ATP knew that families were interested in the benefits and pitfalls of social media. An activity at school was followed by ideas for conversations that students and parents could conduct at home about internet and social media safety.
- A panel on *Financial Literacy for Students and Families* focused on smart goal setting. A school counselor and the Coordinator of Student Financial Literacy and Advising at Southern CT State University were panelists. They addressed topics such as becoming a savvy consumer, managing credit and debt, improving money management skills, planning for college and postsecondary education, and setting and implementing financial goals.

See 10 great ideas from ATPs in middle schools and 13 more from NNPS high schools in *Promising Partnership Practices 2015*—and in prior editions at [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org) and click on Success Stories.

Marsha D. Greenfeld  
[mgreenfeld@jhu.edu](mailto:mgreenfeld@jhu.edu)

## Grant with Seattle

(Continued from page 1)

the same time, family engagement tends to decline as schools are unsure of how to engage parents of middle and high school students in goal-linked activities. Secondary schools using NNPS approaches are showing that they can implement age-appropriate involvement activities linked to goals for student success. However, NNPS has not formally studied how or how much attention to the transition process contributes to student success in grade 9.

In SPS, schools' action teams will use an adapted NNPS One-Year Action Plan that requires attention to the transition to high school with engagement activities to enable all families to support their student's move to high school. Activities will focus on improving student attendance, course passing throughout grade 9, and promotion to grade 10. Special attention will be given to ensure the involvement of families with diverse socioeconomic, racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. The schools' action teams will be facilitated by SPS Middle and High School Coordinator Adie Simmons. All project schools will be members of NNPS and will be guided with on-going professional development and support.

Schools will design or select innovative family engagement activities for the transition to high school such as (but not limited to):

- Interactive homework to help 8th grade students and their families gain knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes about the transition to high school.
- A Digital Direct-to-Parents Communications Toolkit with options for text messages, video attachments, DVDs, parent service announcements, and voice mail messages in parents' preferred languages.
- Training modules for parents on how to use the school's parent portal to monitor their children's academic progress throughout the school year.

JHU, SPS, and school teams will use a Continuous Improvement Process (e.g., *plan-do-study-act* short cycles) to assess, sustain, or adapt partnership practices throughout the year. Researchers will use surveys, interviews, and data on student attendance and report card grades to understand whether and how family engagement in the transition process affects students' transition to high school, attendance rates, rates of course passing, and promotion to grade 10. A comparison study with another district conducting "business as usual" also will be conducted.

## Issues and Insights

(Continued from page 2)

ships. This book also provided a CD to share NNPS professional development for school-based Action Teams for Partnership, including our Power-Point and workshop activities in English and Spanish. The next edition will continue to add and strengthen information and tools for improving partnership programs at the school, district, and state levels.

NNPS is a unique side-by-side network in which the national home base at Johns Hopkins University teaches and learns from educators, parents, and community partners at all policy levels. The main goal is to scale up the number of districts and schools that use research to organize and continually improve their partnership programs. In NNPS, members network with each other through the annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices*, *Partnership Awards* program, NNPS Facebook and Twitter platforms, monthly and other communications throughout the year, and on-call technical assistance. NNPS helps all members evaluate their programs by collecting, analyzing, and reporting data on the quality and progress of all programs each year. These data help everyone learn how to improve the organization, outreach, and results for students of goal-linked partnership programs.

NNPS watched 20-years fly by. We have learned that any school, district, or state department of education can use research-based strategies to engage all families and community partners in ways that matter for student success. We are NNPS at 20 and counting....

Reference: Epstein, J. L., et al. (2009). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action, third edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. See [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org).

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## Partnership Awards

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### Marion University's Center of Excellence in Florence, SC.

Partnership District and Organization Award winners provided evidence that their leaders (a) conducted district-level leadership activities on partnerships and (b) facilitated the work of school-based ATPs to help each school strengthen its plans and practices of family and community engagement. Each district or organization applicant submitted a copy of its leadership plan for the year.

Recipients of the 2015 Partnership Awards were located in diverse communities in all regions of the U. S. Their leadership on partnership program development tells us that elementary, middle, and high schools in large and small districts can use NNPS approaches to organize, implement, evaluate, and continually improve family and community engagement linked to goals for student success in school.

### Creative Work in Schools

Partnership School Award winners described several exciting activities that connected parents, other family partners, and community members with students to increase learning in different subjects. For example, **Vista Elementary School's** *Catapult Olympics: Launching into STEM Night* included students from a local community college's engineering program. They helped Vista's students design (and redesign) catapults to send mini marshmallows 2 and 4 feet into a bowl and to go the longest distance. Teachers presented parents and students with information on STEM goals and design challenges, and, then, students were star-

engineers for the night. Catapulting combined great fun with learning.

At **Clifton Elementary's** *Fall Festival Math Day*, parents learned about Common Core Math Standards and students showed their parents how to solve problems with the Read-Draw-Write strategy used in math class. Students visited 6 of 10 grade-specific booths with standards-based activities to show parents how they were building math skills. Students earned homework passes and other prizes for correct and completed activities.

### Leadership to Strengthen School ATPs

Partnership District and Organization Awardees described well-planned strategies to help schools' ATPs effectively engage families and community partners in students' education. For example, Leaders for Partnerships in the **Connecticut Technical High School System** conducted *Our Time to Shine*—a meeting of Chairs and Co-Chairs of ATPs to share practices and discuss challenges. The activity combined attention to the common needs of ATPs in all schools and the unique approaches for family and community engagement that ATPs must take in each of 17 high schools.

In **Pasco School District**—now entering its 2nd decade as a member of NNPS—leaders documented how they keep improving their programs every year. The co-Leaders for Partnerships adapted NNPS tools and created their own to guide Chairs and Co-Chairs of all ATPs to work smart. The district leaders help schools move step-by-step to improve goal-linked family engagement activities. They developed guidelines on how to conduct good ATP meetings, write goal-linked plans for partnership, evaluate each practice that is implemented, and

share best practices in Pasco and with NNPS schools across the country.

See the 2015 Partnership Award winners' photos and reports at [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org) in the section Success Stories. Also, see pp. 6-7 of this issue of *Type 2*. Read details of these activities in *Promising Partnership Practices 2015*.

\* Earned Special Recognition and a \$500 award to improve their partnership programs.

\*\* Served as NNPS Conference Partners at the national Leadership Development Conference in Baltimore in November.

\*\*\*\*\*

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NNPS "free" WEB CONFERENCE  
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**NNPS LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE  
2-day Intensive Training for  
District and Organization Leaders  
March 17-18, 2016**

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National Network of Partnership Schools  
Johns Hopkins University  
2701 North Charles Street, Suite 300  
Baltimore, Maryland 21218  
tel: 410-516-8800 fax: 410-516-8890  
e-mail: [nnps@jhu.edu](mailto:nnps@jhu.edu)  
website: [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org)

Director: Joyce L. Epstein  
Associate Director and Director of Research:  
Steven B. Sheldon  
Senior Program Facilitators:  
Marsha D. Greenfeld, Brenda G. Thomas  
Senior Advisor: Mavis G. Sanders  
Network Coordinator: Jessica Elmore  
Website Developer & *Type 2*: Christine Marsh

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## Meeting the Challenge

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In schools, data on students have the potential of helping educators and families support and increase student learning. The benefits for all students, however, will only be realized if schools take a partnership approach to education and data sharing.

For details on these and other projects related to sharing data on tests with families, see *Promising Partnership Practices 2015* at [www.partnership-schools.org](http://www.partnership-schools.org) in the section Success Stories. Also, see information on interactive homework on the NNPS website in the section on TIPS..

# Partnership Calendar

2016

- January 21** **Web Conference for District and Organization leaders** on program development and direct facilitation of schools' Action Teams for Partnerships. Registration information will be sent in E-Brief and at [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org)
- Jan/Feb** **NNPS Annual Reports** summarizing data from schools' and districts' 2015 UPDATE surveys will be e-mailed to all members.
- February 25** **Web Conference for Schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) in the start-up phase of program development.** Training on Writing Goal-Oriented Action Plans for the 16-17 school year. Registration information will be sent in E-Briefs and at [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org).
- March 17-18** **Leadership Institute for District and Organization Leaders for Partnerships** in the start-up phase of program development. This is an intensive 2-day professional development activity in Baltimore that prepares leaders to directly facilitate schools' ATPs and strengthen district or organization leadership on partnerships. Registration information will be sent in E-Briefs and at [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org).
- April** **Spring 2016 issue of Type 2.** Sent by E-Alert, E-Brief, and on [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org).
- NNPS members will be invited to contribute to *Promising Partnership Programs 2016*. Due May 15.
- Eligible NNPS members will be invited to apply for 2016 NNPS Partnership Awards. Due June 30.
- April** Members will receive **2016 UPDATE surveys** in the mail and via e-mail to evaluate program progress. Due June 30.
- May 15** *Promising Partnership Practices* **submissions due** for review for the 2016 book.
- June 30** **2016 UPDATE due** with \$200 fee to renew membership services in NNPS for the 16-17 school year. On-time UPDATES are entered in the 2016 UPDATE Lottery for a free registration to an NNPS Conference or to renew next year's membership.
- 2016 Partnership Award Applications due.**
- August** **Monthly E-Briefs** resume from NNPS facilitators to all members.
- September** **Members of NNPS for the 16-17 school year receive new book of *Promising Partnership Practices 2016*.**