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Annual NNPS Report: 2019 District Data



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National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS)
Johns Hopkins University

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Studies confirm that schools with strong district leaders for partnerships have more effective programs of family and community engagement and more parents as partners (Epstein & Sheldon, 2016). In NNPS, district leaders are responsible for improving family and community policies and practices for the district as a whole, *and* for facilitating each school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) to strengthen its own program of family and community engagement. In this way, district leaders and well-functioning school-based ATPs create welcoming schools for all partners in children's education.

NNPS publications, training, planning, and evaluation tools and services enable district leaders and school ATPs to work together on family and community engagement. In this report, district leaders reveal how they organize their offices and devote time to guide schools' ATPs to plan, implement, evaluate, and continually improve their partnership programs to increase student success in school.

2019 DISTRICT HEADLINES

- 20 district leaders for partnerships in urban, suburban, and rural communities guided about 390 schools to strengthen their programs and practices of family and community engagement in the 2018-19 school year. The district leaders estimated that their schools engaged over 150,000 families in ways that supported student success in school.
- Compared to a year ago, more district leaders conducted activities to facilitate the work of schools' Action Teams for Partnerships. High percentages of district leaders guided schools to write *One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships*, collected the plans, and assisted schools in solving challenges so that more and different families could be partners in education at school or at home.
- Districts leaders who conducted more leadership and facilitation activities reported that more of their schools were "making good progress on partnerships." These district leaders were likely to be in frequent contact with their schools' ATPs and aware of the work and progress at the school level.
- The new topic on the 2019 UPDATE focused on *family engagement in decision making* at the district and school levels. Most district leaders reported that parents served on district and school committees, and that parents on committees took leadership roles. However, district leaders have "room to grow" to strengthen educators' views of parents on committees as equal partners. Leaders for partnerships need to guide parents on committees to become "true representatives" who gather input on district decisions from the families they represent, and who report results of district meetings and decisions to all families.

DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

Twenty district leaders for partnerships in highly diverse communities in 13 states provided data on their work and progress in the 2018-19 school year.¹

- In 2019, districts in NNPS were located in central cities (21%), small cities (26%), suburban (31%), and rural (21%) areas. The districts varied in size from 2 schools to over 50 schools.
- Districts in this sample had been members of NNPS for 1 to 22 years. They joined NNPS to get extra help on partnership program development and for productive networking. NNPS helps districts move forward from their individual starting points.
- Districts served populations of students and families who spoke from 2 to about 100 languages and dialects at home, with an average of 34 languages spoken by students and their families, across districts. On average, about 12% of students were English Language Learners (ELL), ranging from under 1% to 56% of students enrolled in these districts.
- On average, about 62% of students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals, ranging from 18% to 100% of students across districts.
- District leaders for partnerships worked about 27 hours per week on partnership program development—almost three-fourths of full time. In some large districts, leaders had staff who also worked on partnerships for an average of 19 hours per week.
- Most district Key Contacts (83%) expected to continue in their positions in the next school year (2019-20). This is important because, schools with on-going district leaders improved the quality of their partnership programs from year to year more than did schools where district leaders changed or left the field (Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon, 2011).

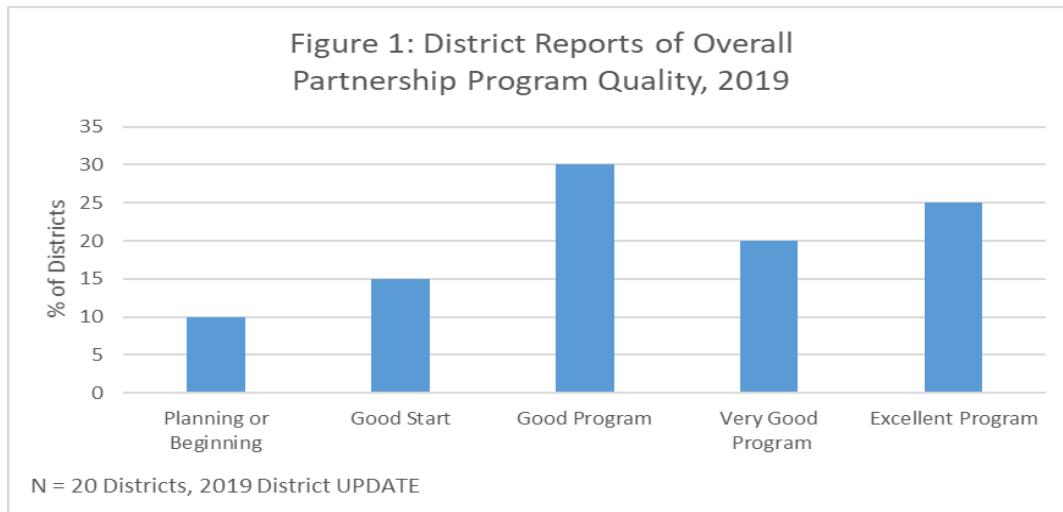
Summary. Districts in NNPS serve socioeconomically, culturally, racially, linguistically, and geographically diverse students, families, and communities. The percentage of students in NNPS districts that are eligible for free or reduced-price meals and the percentage of ELL students closely match statistics for the U.S. as a whole (NCES, 2018). The descriptive statistics, above, suggest that NNPS’s research-based tools and materials are being used by leaders in diverse districts to help strengthen their partnership programs.

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP ON PARTNERSHIPS

NNPS works to increase the knowledge and skills of district leaders for partnerships. NNPS publications, communications, and on-going support enable leaders to improve policies and practices of family and community engagement throughout the district *and* to enable school ATPs to work well with their own students’ families. The 2019 *UPDATE* asked district leaders paint a “portrait” of the quality and progress of their partnership programs.

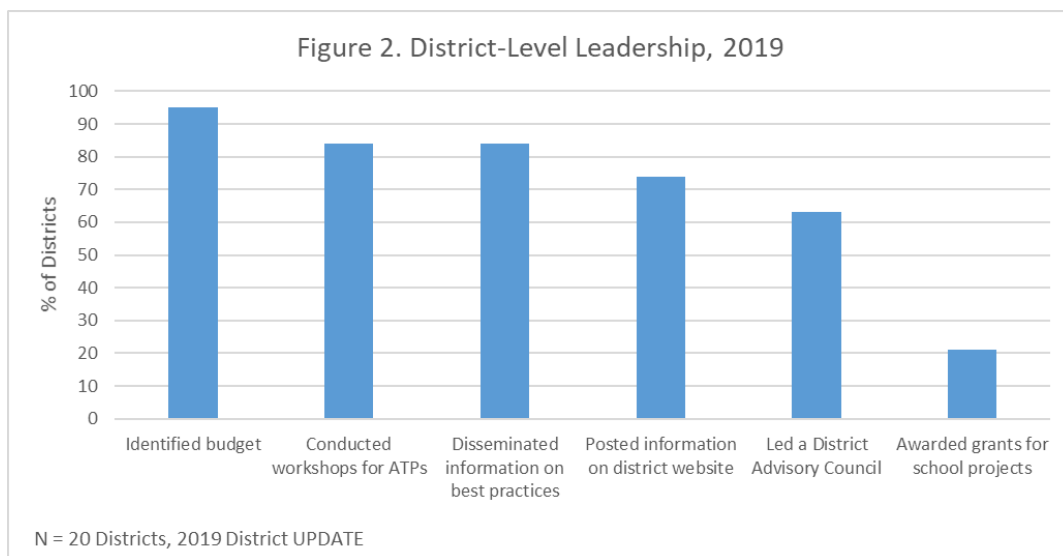
OVERALL QUALITY OF PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

Figure 1 shows that some districts in NNPS (10%) were “planning or beginning” their work on partnerships, and 15% reported making a “good start.” These districts were just getting organized, and realized that their programs of family and community engagement needed “a great deal of work” to move forward. Other district leaders reported that their partnership programs were *good* (30%), *very good* (20%), or *excellent* (25%). To earn an “excellent” rating, district leaders described programs that would be “*permanent*, even if leaders changed.”



DISTRICT LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

NNPS examines the quality and progress of eight “essential elements” that have been shown to improve district and school programs of partnerships from one year to the next. At the district level, we start with Leadership—a 15-item *Leadership Scale* ($\alpha = .876$).² Figure 2 shows that in 2019, a large majority of district leaders in NNPS planned their budgets (95%); conducted professional development workshops for school ATPs (84%); disseminated examples of best partnership practices (84%) to school ATPs; posted partnership information on the district website (74%); and led a District Advisory Council on Family Engagement (63%).



A small percentage of districts (21%) made small grants to school teams (i.e., \$500 - \$3500 in 2019). NNPS believes that even limited grants (as low as \$50) are good investments if they are linked directly to activities in schools *One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships*. They tell school ATPs that the district supports their work on family and community engagement. In some districts, ATPs that receive small grants must share their findings with other schools and discuss the challenges they encountered in the implementation process.

In 2019, district leaders for partnerships conducted an average of 11.6 of the 15 leadership activities in the measure. This indicates that most leaders in NNPS are serious about organizing their offices, planning their work, and influencing district-wide family and community engagement.

COMMENTS ON LEADERSHIP

District leaders commented on how they improved leadership on partnerships in the 18-19 school year. Here are a few of their reflections.

- Family engagement has become a part of our district's expectations.
- Each Title I school developed their own Parent Engagement Policy and Parent / School / Student Compact.
- We worked this year to increased awareness of the need for quality parent engagement in all schools.
- The partnership action plans were aligned to the schools' own learning plans.
- My office facilitated a Poverty Immersion Workshop for teachers.
- Parents served on the district's Master Facilities Planning Committee for a 10-year plan.
- My office partnered with two other local districts to conduct a College Going Conference.

FACILITATION OF SCHOOL ATPs

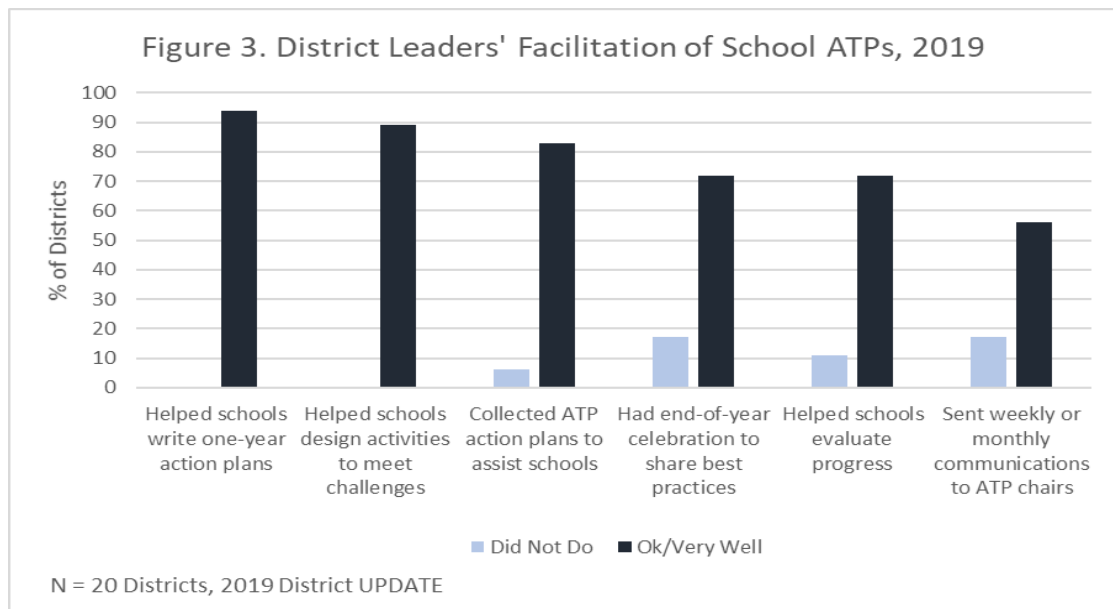
A major responsibility of district leaders for partnerships is to actively facilitate (or “shepherd”) their schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs). District policies and Title I requirements direct schools to communicate and collaborate with all families, regardless of their socioeconomic, racial, or linguistic backgrounds in ways that support student success in school. Using NNPS tools and materials, district leaders can guide school ATPs to write plans, implement activities, evaluate progress, and continually improve outreach to engage all families in their children’s education.

With knowledgeable and dedicated district leaders, every school can be a welcoming place for all partners in education. Of course, partnership plans, activities, and outreach differ at the preschool, elementary, middle, and high school levels to meet the needs and interests of parents and specific goals for student learning and development. See a summary of the 2019 School *UPDATE* data (Sheldon and Hine, 2020).

NNPS measures how actively district leaders guide school teams with an 18-item *Facilitation Scale* ($\alpha = .90$). In the 18-19 school year, district leaders for partnerships conducted an average of 14.1 facilitative actions *OK* or *very well*, ranging from 1 to 18 activities. Figure 3 reports a few facilitative activities.

Most district leaders guided schools to write *One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships* (94%). This is a basic starting point for all schools’ programs of family and community engagement. Large percentages of district leaders collected the plans (83%) to keep track of ATPs’ progress; helped schools address emerging challenges to reach all families (89%); held end-of-year celebrations for schools to share best practices (72%); and helped schools evaluate progress (72%).

Just over half of the district leaders (56%) sent weekly or monthly communications to the Chairs, Co-chairs, or all members of schools’ ATPs. This was a 16% increase over last year, suggesting that district leaders heard NNPS’s recommendation to set a weekly, bi-monthly, or



Percentages do not add to 100%. Some leaders reported that they “need to improve” these facilitative actions.

monthly schedule to communicate with their school-based teams. These connections may be conducted in person, by phone, e-mail, Skype, texting, or an equivalent. Regularly scheduled district-school communications tell each ATP that the district leader for partnership cares about their work and progress on family and community engagement.

COMMENTS ON FACILITATION

District leaders commented on how they facilitated school ATPs and helped them improve their programs in the 18-19 school year. Here are a few examples.

- We had a lot of turnover in administration and staff. I was able to provide additional professional development and support for new and returning team members in our schools.
- Schools were more proficient in using the *One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships* this year.
- We did better in planning and spending our budget for partnerships.
- We worked to help schools shift from events at school to implementing practices that would impact student success.
- We provided all ATP chairs with training on conducting effective team meetings.
- We conducted Cluster Meetings for school chairs and made media resources available.
- A district leader for partnerships attended most school activities for family engagement
- We offered “refresher” training to help schools update and improve their partnership plans.
- We met individually with first-time ATP Chairs at each school

SUPPORT FOR PARTNERSHIPS

NNPS district leaders for partnerships do more when they feel supported by their supervisors, School Board, and district and school colleagues. Data show that colleagues’ support for the district leader for partnerships increases if they see that well-planned activities are conducted at the district and school levels on family and community engagement. Figure 4 reports the percentage of district leaders who had “a lot” of support from district and school colleagues on a 13-item *Support Scale* ($\alpha = .95$). The items were scored 1-4 for *no support*, *a little*, *some*, and *a lot of support*. District leaders had an average scale-score of 3.23, indicating that most felt a combination of some and a lot of support for their work on partnerships.

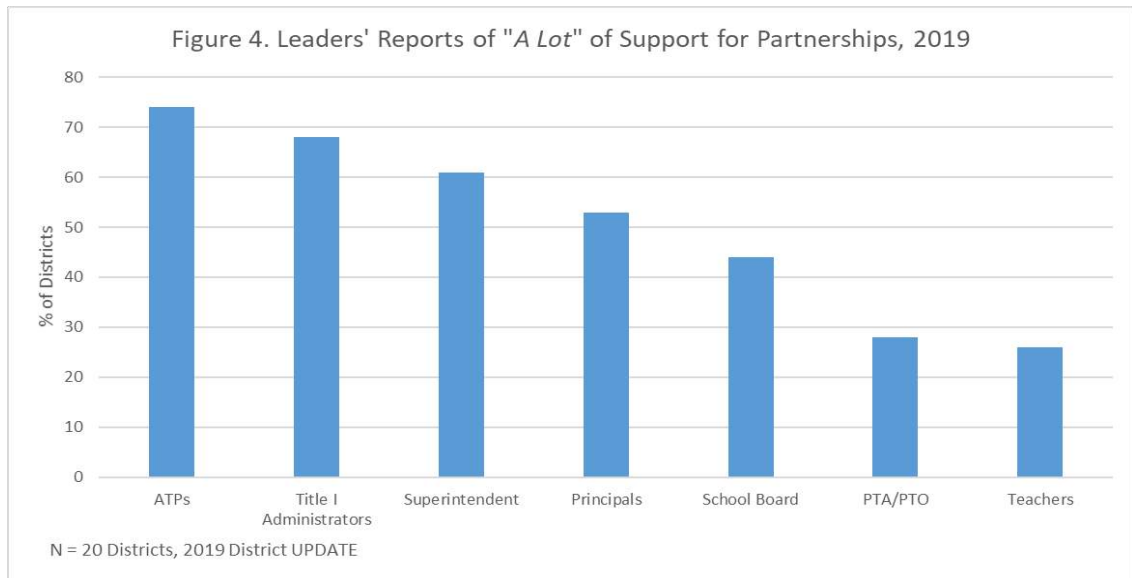


Figure 4 shows that 74% of district leaders in 2019 reported a lot of support from the ATPs that they assist. About 68% of districts reported *a lot* of support from Title I Administrators, as their partnership program ensures that the district and schools will meet the requirements for parent and family engagement in the Title I (ESSA) legislation. Just over 60% of district leaders feel strong support from the district Superintendent. District leaders are not reporting “a lot” of support from the school PTA or PTO and teachers, who may be strongly supporting their school-based ATP, but may not have much contact with district leaders. If Figure 4 reported whether colleagues offered at least *some* support, the percentages would jump dramatically. This is encouraging, but district leaders for partnerships in NNPS are working to earn *a lot* of support from district and school groups. They must continue to raise awareness about their efforts to guide schools to engage all families in their children’s education.

COMMENTS ON SUPPORT

District leaders commented on how they are building support from district colleagues, school leaders, families, and community partners. Here are a few comments from district leaders in the 2018-19 school year.

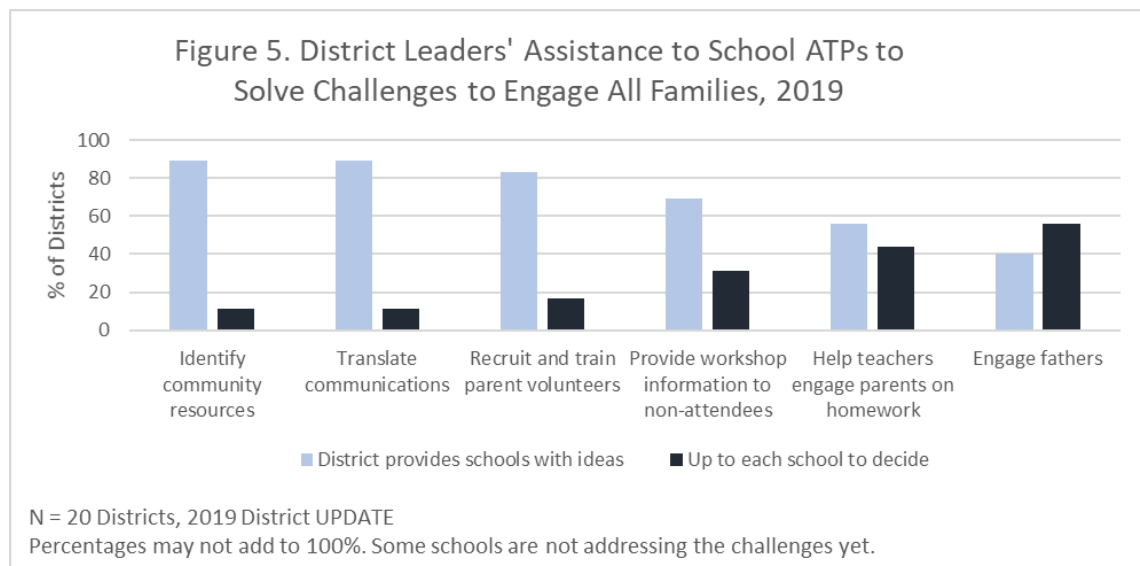
- [We are building] better relationships through closer collaboration and support.
- We reached more of our non-English speaking families and students through bilingual staff, parenting programs, and computer language assisted programs.
- Parent leadership increased with new parent Ambassadors.
- We added training workshops for our new PTO groups.

SOLVE CHALLENGES TO INVOLVE ALL FAMILIES

NNPS measures whether district leaders and schools are working to solve common challenges to engage family and community partners that are often hard to reach. Figure 5 reports whether district leaders provide information and ideas to help schools solve engagement challenges, or leave it up to the schools to solve on their own. District leaders addressed an average of 5.6 of the challenges on an 8-item scale ($\alpha = .61$). This suggests most leaders are actively assisting schools to reach out to engage all families and to collaborate with community partners.

Over 80% of the district leaders reported working with schools on three big challenges: translating communications for parents (89%); identifying community partnerships (89%); and

recruiting volunteers for the schools (83%). These have been traditional foci of districts' work on partnerships for decades.

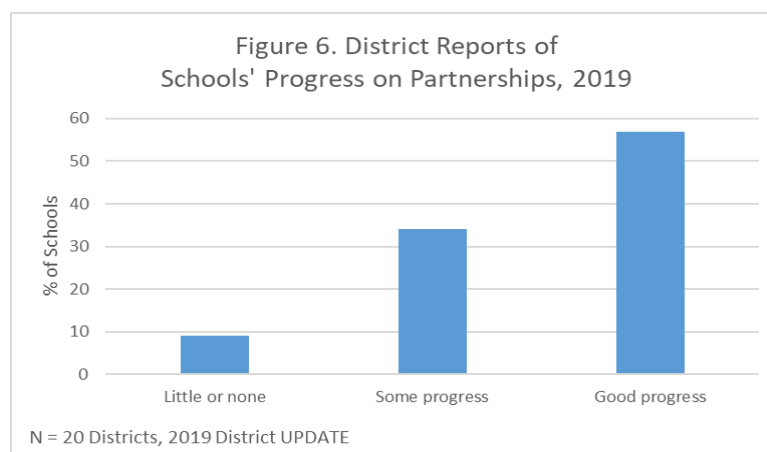


In 2019, more district leaders than last year (69%) helped schools get information to parents who could not attend meetings or workshops at the school building. This is a big challenge in all schools and is being addressed more than in the past with new technologies. Figure 5 also shows that near-equal percentages of district leaders assisted schools or left it up to the schools to engage fathers and to guide parents on how to help with homework. These tend to be school-specific, grade-specific, and subject-specific challenges and may require schools' ATPs and teachers to develop individualized solutions.

SCHOOLS' PROGRESS ON PARTNERSHIPS

The 20 district leaders in this sample reported working with over 390 schools this year. They rated these schools' progress. They estimated that their schools engaged over 150,000 families through goal-linked activities in their *One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships*.

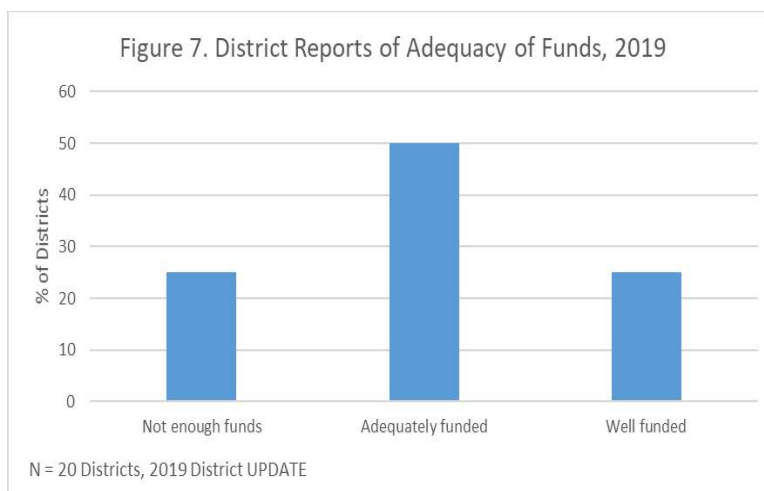
Figure 6 shows that district leaders noted that over the 18-19 school year, most of their schools made *good progress* (57%); 34% made *some progress*; and a few made *little progress* (9%).



In 2019, district leaders who conducted more leadership activities ($r=.536, p<.05$)³ and more facilitative activities ($r=.608, p<.05$) were more likely to report that more schools were making good progress on partnerships. These district leaders are in frequent contact with their schools' ATPs and are aware of and invested in the work and progress at the school level.

ADEQUACY OF FUNDING FOR PARTNERSHIPS

About 75% of district leaders reported that they were *adequately* or *well-funded* for their work on partnerships, as shown in Figure 7. A small portion (25%) reported *not enough funds*. The district leaders cite Title I, other Titles (Titles II, III, IV), and general funds as major sources of funds for district-level partnership programs.

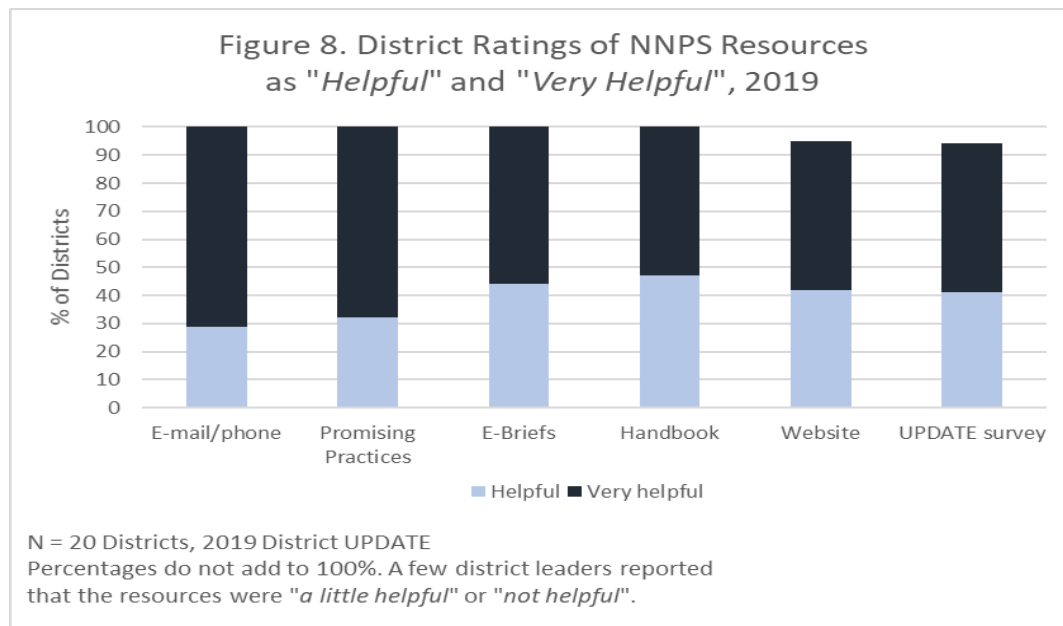


For information on average per pupil expenditures and sources of funds for partnership programs in districts, schools, and states in NNPS, see p.254 in *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action, 4th Edition* (Epstein, et al., 2019).

Four district leaders wrote proposals for extra funds in 2019. All four were funded with grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$42,000, for an average grant of \$26,000. NNPS agrees to write letters of support for districts that write proposals to obtain funds to strengthen district and/or school partnership programs.

USE OF NNPS RESOURCES

Figure 8 summarizes results of a 5-item *NNPS Resource Use Scale* ($\alpha = .87$) that measured how district leaders for partnerships rated the usefulness of major NNPS communications and materials that were provided to all members in 2019. These included the *NNPS Handbook*, book of *Promising Partnership Practices 2019*, website, monthly *E-Briefs*, and *UPDATE* survey to evaluate progress. Some members of NNPS initiated contacts with NNPS by e-mail or by phone. Their assessments of the usefulness of direct communication with NNPS are included in Figure 8. Responses were coded from 1 to 4 for *not helpful* to *very helpful* to indicate whether district leaders used and valued NNPS products and services.



See the list of NNPS benefits and services at www.partnershipschools.org in the section *Join NNPS*.

Compared to last year, the percentages of district leaders reporting NNPS resources were “very helpful” increased on all of the connections in Figure 8. Overall, from 94% to 100% of district leaders reported that the NNPS benefits and services that were disseminated in the 18-19 school year were *helpful* or *very helpful* to them in improving their programs. About half of the district leaders visited the NNPS website at least monthly and the others reported visiting a few times a year. It is clear that the busy district leaders for partnerships were assisted by NNPS materials and communications.

ANNUAL EVALUATIONS

NNPS provides a unique benefit to members by conducting annual evaluations of the quality and progress of their programs.⁴ As an added benefit, district and organization leaders with eight schools or more in NNPS that submit the *School UPDATE* receive a customized summary of their own schools’ data each year to compare with the national data on all schools in NNPS.

In the past, it was rare for districts and schools to evaluate their partnership programs. Some educators collected exit surveys from parents at workshops, events, and activities; some administered general surveys of parent satisfaction with schools. Very few district leaders assessed the quality of plans, teamwork, and practices of partnerships at the district level and in each school. Without detailed evaluations of program components (as in this report), it is not possible to monitor progress from year to year, or use data to identify needed improvements.

In 2018-19, most district leaders in NNPS reported that they evaluated their own (79%) and their schools’ (79%) programs of family and community engagement, and used the *UPDATE* survey as one assessment tool. By contrast, fewer than half of the district leaders reported that their state departments of education evaluated the quality and progress of district and school partnership programs. Some leaders added other ways that they assess progress, including writing monthly reports for their supervisors on their time and work on partnerships. Others noted that they are evaluated on their annual professional reviews.

Plans for Improvement. In completing *UPDATE*, district leaders reflected on how they could improve their programs in the next school year. Here are a few specifics from district leaders.

- We would like to see more schools committed to our district's family and community engagement guidelines that include Action Teams for Partnerships.
- Make sure teams are meeting and evaluating the activities in their plans.
- I am planning to add several schools to NNPS and conduct ATP team-training workshops.
- We are getting a new Superintendent and new Elementary Assistant Superintendent. I hope they will show more support for this work.
- My [district-level] office will provide more support to school teams.
- We will do more up-front planning to schedule activities throughout the year, building on our experience from the 1st year.
- I plan to meet with ATP Chairs one-on-one to guide their work.

The 2019 *UPDATE* data suggested three important actions that district leaders may take to improve their programs in the next school year. These important “basics” reinforce the district-leaders’ reflections in the list above.

1. **Fund small grants** (e.g., \$50 or more) to support specific goal-linked activities in schools’ *One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships*.
2. **Make weekly or monthly contacts with ATP Chairs or Co-Chairs** (e.g., once a week or twice a month) to let school ATPs know that the district leader is interested in their work and progress, and available to help solve challenges that arise.
3. **Scale up the local “network” of partnership schools.** If not all schools in the district are members of NNPS with functioning ATPs and annual plans for partnerships, help them get started. This will ensure that the district receives the most valid data on the quality and progress of their schools’ work on family and community engagement on the NNPS *UPDATE* survey.

SPECIAL TOPIC 2019

Family Engagement in District Decision Making

Each year, NNPS explores a new topic on the *UPDATE* survey. The topic in 2019 was *parents’ participation in district and school decision making*. In NNPS, Type 5-Decision Making is one of the Six Types of Involvement.⁵ The NNPS *Handbook for Action* lists many examples of activities that bring parent and community voices to bear on district and school policies and practices (Epstein, et al., 2019).

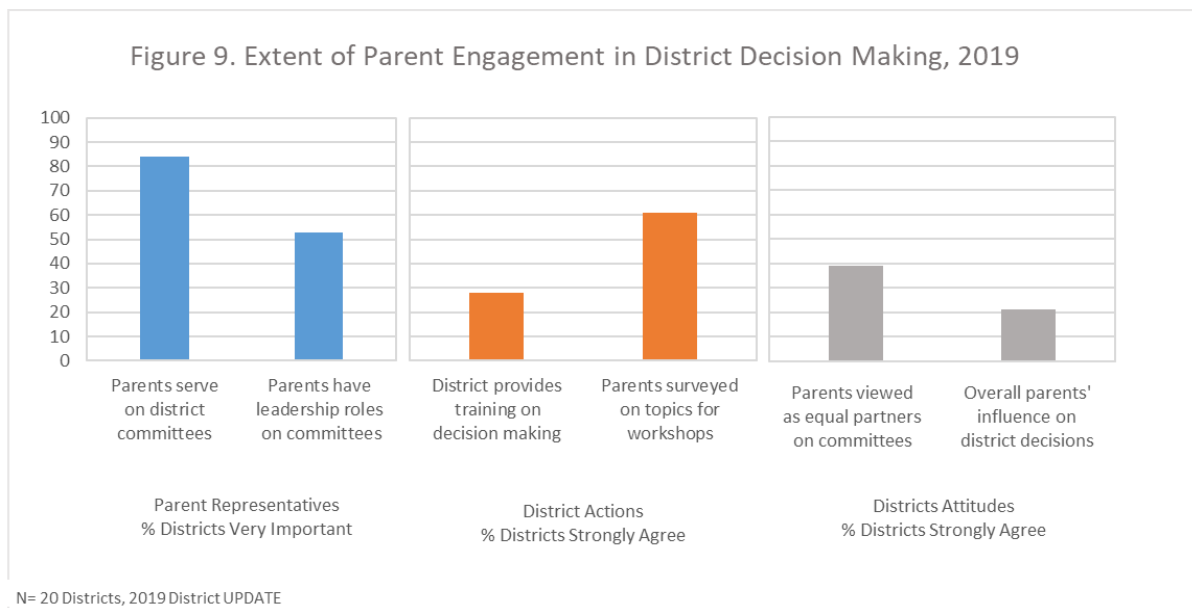
This topic is of national importance. The *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* includes requirements for districts and schools to implement goal-linked partnership programs to engage all families in students’ education. Among its directives, the law specifies that parents should be involved in decisions relating to the education of their children. The policy tells educators “to do” this work, but does not say “how to” make that happen. NNPS guides districts and schools to organize programs that include Type 5-Decision Making activities in their comprehensive plans and practices of family and community engagement.

Members of NNPS have been sharing effective decision-making activities that they implemented in the annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices* for over 20 years (Thomas, et al., 2019). However, NNPS has not studied whether and how family engagement in decision making

is associated with the quality of district and school partnership programs. We explored this topic using data from the 2019 *UPDATE*. We asked two main questions.

1. To what extent did district leaders in NNPS engage parents in district-level decision making?

Families on District Committees. A three-item scale ($\alpha = .87$) measured how important district leaders rated parent representation and leadership on district committees and advisory councils. Panel 1 in Figure 9 shows that over 80% of leaders for partnerships reported that it was “very important” for parent **representatives** to serve on district committees and councils. Over 50% of district leaders said it was very important for parents to take leadership roles on these committees.



Panel 2 reports two **actions** by district leaders to support parents in decision making. Just over one fourth (28%) of leaders for partnerships reported that their districts provided training for parents on decision making. Most leaders (61%) agreed it was very important to survey parents for input on topics of district workshops. A similar percentage of district leaders reported that they conducted general surveys of parents on their satisfaction with their child’s school.

Panel 3 reveals that districts have room-to-grow to improve their **attitudes** about parents on district committees. Some district leaders (39%) strongly agreed that educators viewed parents as “equal partners” on committees. Fewer (20%) reported that parents had “a lot of influence” on district decisions. These percentages increased dramatically if we include district leaders who agreed *and* strongly agreed (83%) that parents were equal partners on committees. Also, district leaders reported that parents had some (68%) *or* a lot (21%) of influence on district decisions. As district programs work to continually improve all aspects of family and community engagement, leaders will be need to strengthen educators’ understanding of and attitudes about parent engagement in district decisions.

There are potential explanations for the descriptive data in Figure 9. Even in districts where parental involvement in decision making is “very important,” only a few parents serve on committees compared to the total number of parents of all students in the schools. In order for their positions to be taken seriously, parent representatives must be guided to (a) communicate with all of the parents they represent to obtain their input on district decisions and (b) report back to their constituents the results of district meeting and decisions. Until they are true “representatives” of all

parents, those who serve on committees will be viewed by many educators as marginally influential and representing their own views.

The *UPDATE* data suggest that districts in NNPS are moving in the right direction on family engagement on district decision making. About 60% of district leaders agreed it was “very important” for all parents to know who their representatives are on school and district committees. This viewpoint could undergird improvements in how parent leaders “represent” all parents in the district or in their schools.

Other analyses identified an interesting pattern of linked responses about parent engagement in district decision making. We asked leaders if their district “shared the minutes and reports of School Board meetings with all parents.” The correlations (*r*) in the text table below indicate that districts that disseminated School Board meeting minutes and reports to all parents were significantly more likely to conduct other activities and attitudes to strengthen parents’ engagement in district decision making.

Correlates of Disseminating School Board Minutes to All Families	<i>r</i>	Significance
Serve on district committees	.561	<i>p</i> <.05
Survey parents about workshop topics of interest	.585	<i>p</i> <.05
Parents know representatives on committees	.535	<i>p</i> <.05
Many school PTAs or PTOs represent all families	.504	<i>p</i> <.05
Educators view parents on committees as equal partners	.429	<i>p</i> <.10

The data suggest that the broad dissemination of reports on School Board business may be an important indicator of other ways that parents participated in decision making.

More broadly, the data from district leaders for partnerships indicated that family engagement in decision making was significantly and positively correlated with one of the main measures of the quality of partnership programs—leaders’ *facilitation* of school teams (as reported on p. 4, above). District leaders who did more to facilitate schools’ ATPs on partnerships were more likely to report that the district provided training to parents for effective decision making, and that parents served and took leadership roles on district and school committees (see summary in Table 1, below). Although “correlation” is not “causation, the data suggest it is more likely that leaders who actively facilitate schools’ ATPs also encouraged and supported parent participation on district and school committees than vice versa.

2. In what ways did district leaders in NNPS engage parents in decisions to improve the quality of district programs and student success in school?

Examples of Parent Engagement in District and School Decisions. Chart 1 lists examples of activities that district leaders reported conducting in the 2018-19 school year to engage parents in decisions that improved district policies and practices, school programs, and student learning. Almost all leaders (90%) provided an example of how parent leaders and/or all parents voiced their interests and preferences on district policies and practices (Part A) and on school improvements for student learning (Part B).

Chart 1. Examples: Parents' Participation in District Decision Making

Part A. How did your district encourage parents' participation in decision making?

- This district conducted monthly parent councils that were open to all parents and guardians.
- We organized Family Engagement Focus Groups to obtain input on district and school topics.
- Parents gave input to the decisions in our search for a new Superintendent, through phone calls, group meetings, electronic comments, etc. (Similar entry from 3 districts.)
- Leaders in the Parent Cabinet & Parent Advisory Board provided feedback and comments on many decisions.
- Parent feedback on the annual school calendar was solicited and heavily influenced final decisions.
- District community forums on the budget included parents, educators, and citizens.
- Parents served on the Master Facilities Planning Committee and all parents were invited to participate, including input to decisions about possibly closing a school.
- Parents' participation on a school levy committee influenced community support and passage of the levy.
- Parents participated in naming a new elementary school and in boundary revision decisions.

Part B. How did students benefit from parents' engagement in decision making?

- One school's focus groups of parents suggested changes in scheduling school activities so that they could attend. The school is making changes based on their recommendations. Next year, more students will benefit from parents' attendance at school activities and events.
- Newly-elected members of the School Board are listening to parents and addressing their needs to benefit their children.
- Based on parents' requests, we are helping schools increase family engagement activities that are practical and directly linked to students' academic learning.
- Following a middle school Transitions Night, I sent a survey to all 5th graders' families to find out what parents and students wanted to know to make the transition more successful. The information that was gathered is changing the transition process for the better.
- Parents provided input and comments on expanding AP courses offered in all high schools in this district.
- Parents of students in a school choir visited a school board meeting to ensure that program would not be reduced due to budget cuts.
- Parents helped develop a School-Based Health Center that will be open December 2019 with services from a doctor at our high school during the school day. One goal is to reduce student absenteeism.
- An education advocates group and the School Improvement Council held a Family Ball to raise money for materials needed by students at the school.
- Parents participated in the development of a Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). Their input on technology and fine arts directly benefited students.

See more examples of district activities for engaging families in decision making in the NNPS annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices*, at www.partnershipschoools.org in the section Success Stories.⁷

There is a long history of selectivity of parent participation in decision making that limited many parents—especially those with less formal education and with diverse linguistic backgrounds—from voicing their ideas about district and school decisions. In many places, parents on committees were “token representatives” who were not expected to be active or influential. District leaders in NNPS, likely, are doing more than leaders in other districts to ensure that Type 5-Decision Making is part of the development of district and school partnership programs. Nevertheless, all districts can sharpen and strengthen family engagement in district decision making to increase the importance and respect given to parents' views on issues in education. NNPS will

continue to work with district leaders to address the broad challenge of helping parents on decision-making committees become true representatives who collect the views of all other parents on policy questions and who report the results of discussions to all other parents.

Connections of the Quality of Partnership Programs and Parents' Participation in District Decision Making

NNPS explored whether family engagement in decision making is associated with the quality of district leadership on partnerships. One of the strongest measures of the quality of district programs of family and community engagement is how actively district leaders *facilitate* their schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) to engage all students' families.

Table 1 shows a constellation of correlates in the 2019 District *UPDATE* data. District leaders who more actively facilitated their schools' ATPs, also conducted more leadership activities at the district level ($r=.646$, $p<.01$); reported strong support from colleagues ($r=.670$, $p<.01$); emphasized program evaluation ($r=.666$, $p<.01$); and reported that more of their schools were "making good progress" on partnerships.

Table 1 also indicates that more facilitative leaders reported that their districts considered it "very important" for parents to serve on district committees ($r=.526$, $p<.05$), school committees ($r=.607$, $p<.01$), and for all parents to know their committee representatives ($r=.423$, $p<.10$). We see, then, early evidence of connections between leadership, quality partnership programs, and strong support for parent input in district decision making.

It is important to note that the extent of district leaders' facilitation of schools was not significantly associated with the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-priced lunch; the percentage of students who were English Language Learners (ELL), or the urban, suburban, or rural location of the district. That is, district demographics did not determine whether district leaders actively facilitated their schools' ATPs.

Table 1. Correlates of Extent of District Leaders' Facilitation of Schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) and Family Engagement in District Decision Making

	Leadership on Partnerships	Collegial Support for Family and Community Engagement	Emphasis on Evaluation	Schools Making Good Progress	District Training for Parents on Decision Making	Parents Serve on District Committees	Parents Serve on School Committees	Parents Know Their Representatives	% Free or Reduced-price Lunch	% English Language Learners	Location (Urban, Suburban, Rural)
Extent of District Leaders' Facilitation of School ATPs	.646**	.670**	.666**	.608*	.688**	.526*	.607**	.423#	.000 (NS)	-.212 (NS)	.092 (NS)

Source: 2019 DISTRICT *UPDATE*, N=20.

Zero-order correlations: ** $p<.01$, * $p<.05$, # $p<.10$, NS= Not significant

CONCLUSION

The 2019 District *UPDATE* data confirm findings in prior years that district leaders for partnerships in NNPS are working hard to guide family and community engagement for the district as a whole and to help school-based ATPs work more effectively and more equitably with all students' families. In geographically, socioeconomically, racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse districts, leaders use NNPS tools and guidelines to organize their work and to facilitate ATPs with their plans and practices. The district leaders in NNPS are guiding hundreds of schools to engage thousands of families in ways that create welcoming schools and that contribute to student achievement, attendance, attitudes, behavior, and other important results for students.

Districts that are not members of NNPS may not be as systematic in guiding school ATPs to build their capacities to design and implement programs of school, family, and community partnerships. NNPS welcomes all districts with leaders for partnerships who are ready to join this agenda.

NOTES

- 1) In 2019, data are from NNPS districts in 13 states: AR, AZ, CA, ID, IL, LA, MI, MN, SC, UT, VT, WA, and WV.
- 2) The *internal reliability* (α or alpha) of a scale indicates whether the items represent a common construct. Reliability coefficients of .6 or higher indicate that the items are related and that the scale is useful.
- 3) (r) refers to a correlation coefficient that reports the strength of relationships between two variables.
- 4) States and organizations in NNPS also completed a 2019 *UPDATE*. We examine these data, but the samples are small and agendas are too varied to analyze aggregated data.
- 5) *Type 5-Decision Making* includes specific practices, challenges, and results for students, parents, and teachers. See Epstein, et al., 2019, chapter 1, tables 1, 2, and 3.
- 6) Copies of this report and summaries of prior years' *UPDATE* data are posted at www.partnershipschoools.org. Click on *Research and Evaluation*.
- 7) See stories and photos of NNPS Partnership Award winners and books of *Promising Partnership Practices* at www.partnershipschoools.org. Click on *Success Stories*.

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HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

Review each section of this report and reflect on how *your* program compares with reports from district leaders across the country.

- Discuss with your colleagues and school teams:

What are we doing well now?

What can we improve in the next school year? In the next 3 years?

What advice or professional development from NNPS would help us meet our goals?

- Review your district-level *Leadership Plan for Partnerships* for the rest of this year and for the 20-21 school year. Retain good practices and consider needed improvements.
- Read the companion *Annual NNPS Report: 2019 School Data* (Sheldon and Hine, 2020).
- If your district has 8 schools or more in NNPS that completed the 2019 School *UPDATE*, you will receive a *customized report* from NNPS on your schools' data in the next week or so. See graphs that compare your schools with data from all schools in the *Annual NNPS Report: 2019 School Data*. Discuss these patterns with your school ATPs when you meet with them. Praise their good work and help them identify needed improvements.
- Contact NNPS with questions about this report or your next steps to improve district-level and school-based partnership programs.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FROM NNPS

Members of NNPS have many options for professional development to continually improve their programs of school, family, and community partnerships.

- **Visit the NNPS website:** www.partnershipschools.org.
- Read the monthly NNPS *E-Brief* for news and ideas. Use information from the *E-Brief* in your own communications with school-based ATPs.
Make sure your IT office allows *E-Brief* and other e-mail from NNPS, Johns Hopkins University, and from Constant Contact that disseminates *E-Brief for NNPS*.
- Share this document with your colleagues and supervisors to show how NNPS uses *UPDATE* data to monitor and report progress on partnership programs across the country. Click on Research and Evaluation for downloadable copies of the annual report.⁶
- Register for an NNPS Leadership Institute in March or October. The next one is:
✓ **Spring Leadership Institute – March 26-27, 2020** – for district and organization leaders who are new to NNPS or who are ready to conduct *One-Day Team Training* workshops with their schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs). To register, follow the links from the home page, www.partnershipschools.org.
- Find good ideas in the annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices* on the website in the section *Success Stories*.⁷
- Read the quarterly *Type 2 Blog* on new research and reports on important policies and practices. Share your views with NNPS. Follow the link to the *Blog* from the homepage.
- Follow NNPS on *Facebook* and *Twitter* for photos, notes, and newsletters from NNPS Institutes and from district and school members. “LIKE” NNPS on **Facebook** at: <https://www.facebook.com/partnershipschools> and follow us on **Twitter** at: https://twitter.com/NNPS_JHU.
- Scaling up? Ask your next set of schools to complete the *NNPS School Membership Form*. See the section Join NNPS at www.partnershipschools.org.
- E-mail NNPS Facilitator—Brenda Thomas, bthomas@jhu.edu, with YOUR questions about next steps at the district level to strengthen your program and assist your schools.
- Want on-site professional development? Contract with NNPS to travel to your location to provide keynote addresses, presentations, and workshops to support your work and to prepare your schools' ATPs. Contact an NNPS Facilitator for information.



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