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Annual NNPS Report: 2019 School Data



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From NNPS book of
Promising Partnership Practices.

Annual NNPS Report: 2019 School Data

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *2019 School UPDATE* data confirm past reports that most schools in NNPS are working to implement core components and essential elements that research shows affect the quality of partnership programs over time. This year's special topic focused on family voice and input in various dimensions of school decision making.

Special Topic: Family Input and Voice

- We identified three dimensions of family input and voice: (1) families as advisors, (2) families as evaluators and planners, and (3) outreach to families as decision makers.
- Schools were more likely to value families as advisors than they were to value families as evaluators or co-planners.
- Action Teams were least likely to indicate that family input on teacher hiring or evaluation was important.
- Schools serving younger grades tended to support family input and voice more than secondary schools.

Connections to Program Quality and Implementation

- Schools with stronger partnership programs tended to report greater support and encouragement for all three dimensions of family voice and input.
- There is a moderate positive relationship between measures of family voice and input with measures of NNPS program quality and implementation.

Characteristics of *Excelling* Programs

- About one-third of the schools in NNPS have *Excelling* programs.
- *Excelling* programs are more likely to be in preschools and elementary schools.

Program Organization and Structures

Excelling programs are more likely to:

- Implement six core components of the NNPS program.
- Have higher quality partnership programs.
- Have at least six people on their Action Teams for Partnerships.
- Have ATPs that meets monthly.
- Communicate about the program with all stakeholders (e.g., families, teachers, administrators, and district leaders).

Program Outcomes

Excelling programs are more likely to:

- Effectively address challenges to engagement often faced by families.
- Report higher percentages of teachers reaching out to engage families.
- Report higher percentages of family participation in their children's schooling.

ANNUAL NNPS REPORT 2019 SCHOOL UPDATE

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SCHOOLS IN THE 2019 *UPDATE* SAMPLE

At the end of the 2019 school year, 317 Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) reported *UPDATE* data to the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). These ATPs were located in schools from 16 states.¹ About half (50.6%) of the schools served students in the elementary grades (PK-6); 4.2% served students in PK-8; and 0.9% served students in PK through high school (PK-12). Just over fourteen (14.3%) percent served students in the middle grades only (4-8), 9.7% included high school grades only (9-12), and 0.9% of schools combined middle and high school grades. Fifty-nine sites (19.2%) were exclusively preschools or early childhood centers. For the analyses and graphs below, we categorized schools into three large groups: preschools (only PK); elementary schools (elementary and PK-8 schools); and secondary schools (middle and high schools).

Schools were located in geographically diverse areas: 34.9% of schools were located in large, central cities, 30.3% in small cities, 18.4% in suburbs, and 16.4% in rural areas. Most schools (70.7%) received school-wide or targeted Title I funds.

Schools served students from various racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. Across all schools, about half (50.1%) of the students were African American, 28.6% were White (non-Hispanic); 17.8% were Latino/Hispanic American; 2.0% were Asian American; 1.1% were Native American; and 4.1% were from other racial/ethnic groups. On average, schools served families who spoke 3.65 different languages at home, and 14.3% of students who were English Language Learners. The linguistic diversity ranged from schools with only English spoken at home to up to 32 different languages and dialects spoken at home.

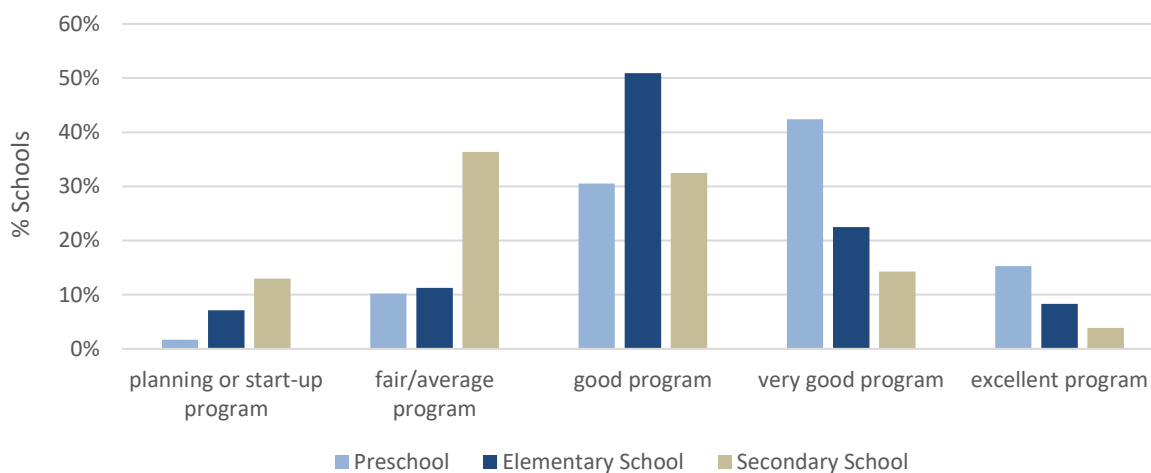
FINDINGS

OVERALL PROGRAM QUALITY

The NNPS *School UPDATE* asks schools' ATPs to reflect on the overall progress and quality of implementation of their partnership program. This measure describes six program portraits, each representing a different level of program quality from *planning* stage up to an *excellent* program.

- Overall, preschools and elementary schools reported stronger programs than secondary schools (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Overall Program Quality, by Grade Level



- Many schools (42.3%) reported *good* programs, indicating the formation of an ATP and written plan for partnerships for the 2018-19 school year, implementation of several activities addressing most of the six types of involvement, meeting some challenges to include families, and noting teacher and parent awareness of the partnership program.
- The distribution of program quality ratings are similar to those in previous years. NNPS schools reflect a wide range of program implementations, with more schools at all levels—preschool, elementary, and secondary—concentrated around *good*, and fewer schools at the extremes (*planning/startup* and *excellent*).

EXCELLING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

To identify strong partnership programs with more advanced implementations of the NNPS model, we compared schools that rated their programs as *Very Good* or *Excellent* with schools that reported less advanced programs of partnerships. The *Very Good* and *Excellent* programs are referred to as *excelling* partnership programs throughout this report.

- About one third of the schools (33.1%) rated their partnership programs strong enough for us to categorize them as *excelling* in 2019.
- As in previous years, preschools (57.6%) and elementary schools (30.8%) were more likely than secondary schools (18.2%) to rate their partnership program as *excelling*.

PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Various measures in *UPDATE* illustrated how ATPs were implementing the core components of the NNPS partnership model, as well as a wider range of programmatic features.²

CORE COMPONENTS

The core components of the NNPS partnership model were measured using six items. ATPs were most likely to report that they had an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) of six or more people (90.9%), and that they had written or planned to write a One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships for the current (18-19) school year (91.5%) and *next* (19-20) school year (91.8%). By contrast, schools were least likely (60.6%) to have participated in an end-of-the year celebration to share activities and ideas on partnerships with other schools in their district.

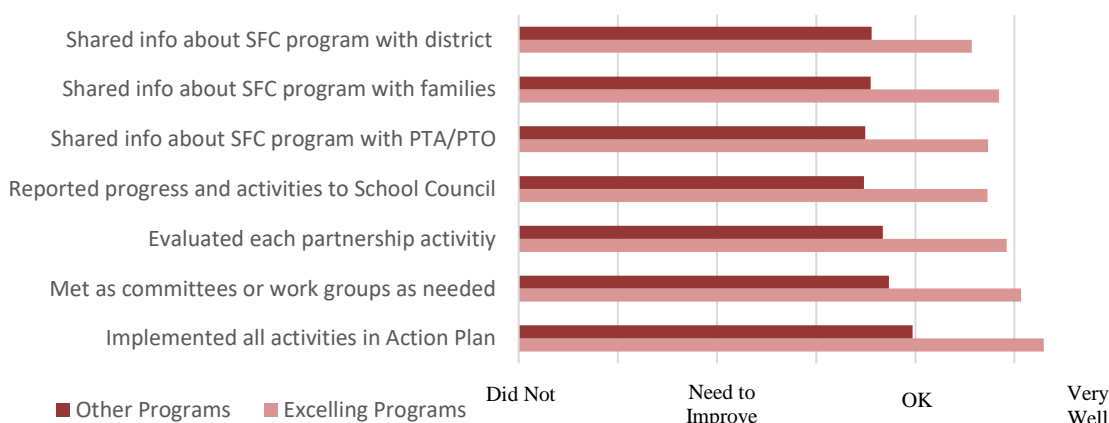
On average, schools in NNPS at all grade levels implemented five of the basic components of the NNPS program model. Excelling programs, however, were more likely to implement all six core components.

- The excelling programs were especially more likely to have an ATP of six or more members (98.1% vs. 87.3%) and to have an end-of-the-year celebration to share activities and ideas on partnerships with other schools in their district (75.2% vs. 53.3%).
- Analyses indicated a few differences in the extent to which preschools, elementary, and secondary schools implemented the core components of NNPS.
 - Preschools (72.9%) were much more likely than elementary (59.8%) or secondary (50.6%) schools to participate in an end-of-year celebration to share progress.
 - Elementary (78.1%) and secondary (77.9%) schools were more likely than preschools (59.3%) to identify a budget for activities to involve families.

QUALITY OF IMPLEMENTATION

The quality of partnership program organization and implementation was measured using a 12-item scale ($\alpha = .91$).³ This scale included questions about using all six types of involvement to engage families; evaluating activities; and reporting progress or information to all families, parent organizations, faculty, and staff. Schools could respond that they *did not do* the practice, *need to improve* the practice, implemented the practice *OK*, or implemented the practice *very well*.

Figure 2. Quality of Program Implementation



Excelling schools reported higher implementation of all 12 items, compared to other schools (Figure 2).

Preschools and elementary schools reported stronger program implementation of NNPS program components than secondary schools.

ACTION TEAM FOR PARTNERSHIPS (ATP)

School-based Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) are a central component of the NNPS model. Each school in NNPS must have an ATP or a similar committee of administrators, teachers, and parents working together to facilitate school, family, and community engagement. The responsibilities of the ATP include planning, implementing, managing, and evaluating the partnership activities that are linked to academic and behavioral goals in their own School Improvement Plans. ATPs, like other committees in the school, may report their progress to the School Improvement Team or School Council on a regular basis. The *UPDATE* asked schools to report the structural elements of the ATP, such as the organization of the team, members on the team, frequency of meetings, funding, and their efforts to share plans and progress with the school community.

MEMBERSHIP

Although each school may increase the number of members of its ATP, NNPS suggests that each ATP includes at least two or three teachers, two or three parents, and one administrator. At the high school level, one or two students should serve on the team. Community partners, other educators, other school staff, and other representatives may serve on the ATP. In NNPS, school ATPs consisted of 8.2 members, on average. About 50% of schools had seven or more members.

- On average, excelling programs reported having two more team members (9.5) than other programs (7.5).
- Preschools reported the largest ATPs with 9.6 people, on average, followed by elementary schools with an average of 7.9 people, and secondary schools with an average of 7.3 people.

STRUCTURE

NNPS encourages ATPs to create a committee structure, based on prior studies of effective programs (see Chapter 3 in Epstein, et al., 2019). Committees enable teams to conduct more family and community engagement practices, and create opportunities to share leadership roles and responsibilities among ATP members and others individuals not on the team.

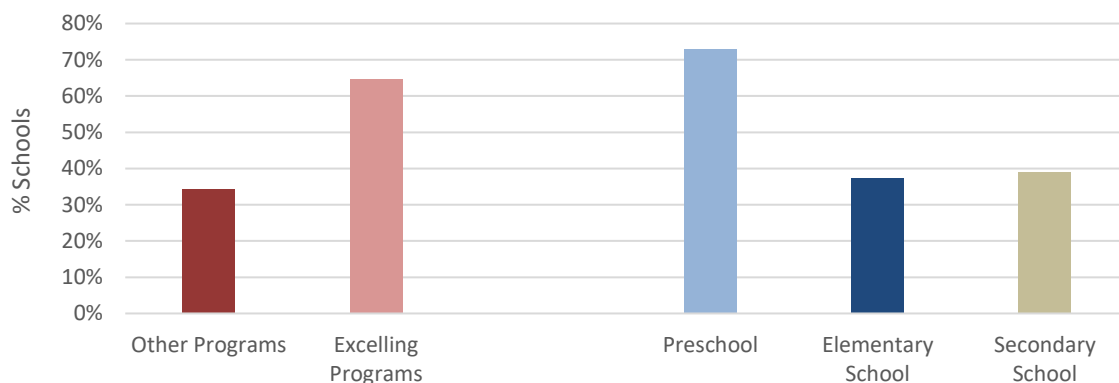
38.7% of the ATPs reported working together as a single team on all activities, whereas almost half (46.7%) formed committees.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

To effectively plan and implement a partnership program, NNPS suggests that ATPs hold monthly meetings. The *UPDATE* asked about the frequency of ATP meetings.

- More ATPs in excelling schools reported meeting at least monthly, compared to other schools (64.8% vs. 34.4%). (See Figure 3.)
- ATPs in preschools were most likely to meet at least monthly (72.9%), compared to elementary (37.3%) and secondary schools (39.0%).

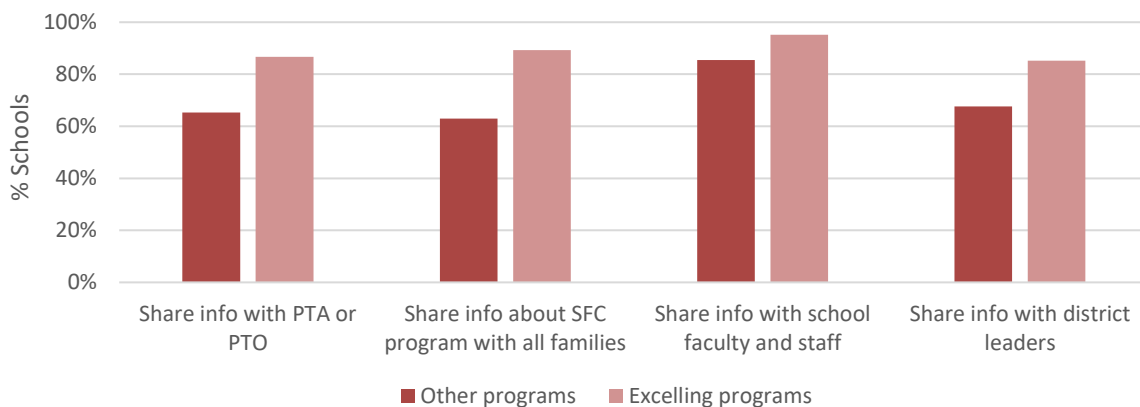
Figure 3. Percent of ATPs that Meet at Least Monthly



REPORTING PROGRESS

NNPS encourages ATPs to report progress on family and community engagement to others including the School Improvement Team or Council, faculty, district NNPS facilitator, and parent groups (e.g., PTO or PTA). By communicating with key stakeholders in the school and district, ATPs work to keep family and community involvement a priority in the school.

Figure 4. Percent ATPs sharing information with others
"OK" or "very well"



- Excelling schools were significantly more likely than other schools to share information about their partnership work with parent groups, school faculty and staff, and district leaders (Figure 4).
- Preschools and elementary schools were more likely to report progress and information about the partnership program to parent groups, parents, school faculty and staff, and district leaders.

FUNDING

The *UPDATE* included one question about funding for partnership programs. ATPs reported *no funds* for the partnership program (3.9%); *not enough funds* for the partnership program (18.8%); *adequate funds* for the partnership program (61.8%); or a *well-funded* partnership program (15.5%).

Title I is an important source of funds for school's family and community engagement efforts. Schools receiving Title I funds were more likely than those not receiving Title I to indicate that they had adequate funding for partnerships (79.5% vs. 71.0%).

- About 10% of schools not receiving Title I indicated having *no funds* for their partnership program, compared to just 1.8% of schools receiving Title I funds.
- There was no significant difference in reports of adequacy of funds in excelling and other schools or by grade level (preschool, elementary, and secondary).

ACTION TEAM SUPPORT

PRINCIPAL'S SUPPORT

Support of the principal is crucial for creating and sustaining a thriving school, family, community partnership program (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004). NNPS asked ATPs to report whether their principal *Never*, *Sometimes*, *Often*, or *Always* provided ten forms of programmatic support ($\alpha = .95$).

All NNPS schools reported high levels of principal support. Excelling programs reported statistically higher levels of principal support, compared to other programs.

DISTRICT LEADER'S SUPPORT

NNPS encourages a “nested” system of leadership and support, in which the district supports the schools nested within them. On a seven-item scale ($\alpha = .90$), ATPs reported whether specific kinds of district support were *not provided*, *not very helpful*, *helpful*, or *very helpful*.

On average, school ATPs reported strong support from their district leaders for partnerships.. Preschools and elementary schools reported slightly more support than did secondary schools.

Excelling programs reported statistically significantly higher ratings of district facilitation and support, compared to other schools.

- There were no significant differences in ratings of district support between Title I schools and non-Title I schools.
- There were no significant differences in district support across urban, suburban, and rural locales.

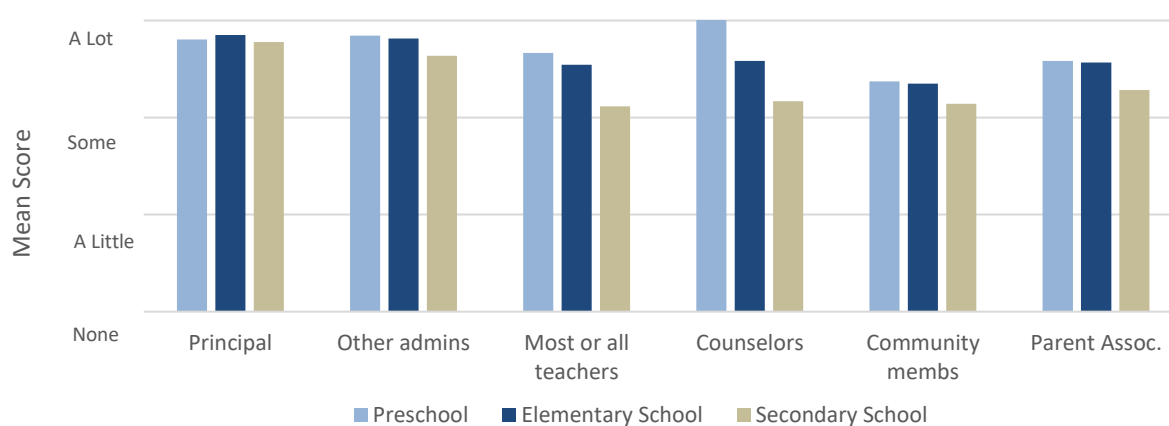
See 2019 data from NNPS district leaders on their support of schools in Epstein and Chappell, 2020.

COLLEGIAL SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS

Support from important stakeholders in the school and community—including principals, other administrators, school counselors, teachers, and parent organizations—is an important factor for high-quality partnership programs (Sanders, Sheldon, & Epstein, 2005; Sheldon, 2005). ATPs rated the level of support from colleagues in the school from *none* to *a lot*.

- ATPs with excelling programs reported stronger support from all colleagues, compared to other programs.

Figure 5. Ratings of Collegial Support



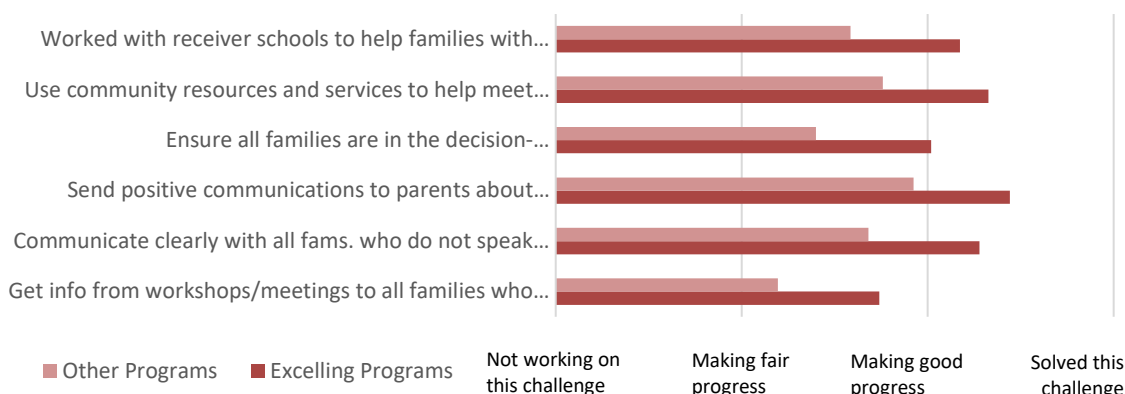
- Across grade levels, a pattern was clear: preschools rated collegial support highest, followed by elementary schools, and then secondary schools.

MEETING CHALLENGES TO REACH ALL FAMILIES

NNPS asks ATPs to evaluate their progress in addressing several challenges to reach, involve, and engage *all* families—specifically families who are “harder to reach.” Tackling these challenges and increasing outreach to families are associated with higher student achievement and attendance rates (Sheldon, 2003, 2007). A 9-item scale measured ATPs’ efforts to solve these challenges ($\alpha = .89$). ATPs were either *not working on the challenge*, making *fair progress*, making *good progress*, or had *solved the challenge*.

Schools with excelling programs consistently reported working on the challenges more than other schools (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Extent Addressing Challenges to Engage More Families



- Preschools were making most progress in addressing the challenges, followed by elementary schools, then secondary schools.
- Neither Title I status nor location was related to the extent to which ATPs reported addressing the challenges to family engagement.

TEACHERS' PRACTICES OF INVOLVEMENT

ATPs reported the percent of teachers conducting six family involvement practices, including holding parent-teacher conferences, communicating with all students' families, using volunteers in the classroom, guiding parents in discussing homework with their children, and supporting the school's partnership program.

Excelling programs were more likely to report that at least 75% of teachers implemented each of the family engagement practices.

FAMILIES' INVOLVEMENT IN PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

NNPS asked ATPs to report the percent of families engaged in various partnership activities, including attending Back-to-School Nights, participating in parent-teacher conferences, volunteering to help the school or teachers, monitoring their child's homework, and being good partners in their children's education.

Extensive family engagement was more common in elementary schools than in secondary schools.

- Excelling programs were more likely to have at least 75% of parents involved in all of the measured activities and across grade levels.
- Fewer schools reported 75% or more of parents volunteering at the school than any other parent participation activity.

SUMMARY

The 2019 School *UPDATE* data provide important insights about the organizational structures and processes that underlie strong programs of family and community engagement in schools. The *excelling* schools that reported very good or excellent partnership programs, overall, distinguished themselves from other programs in several ways.

Excelling programs were more likely than other schools to have more members on the ATP. They had more regular (monthly) meetings. These ATPs shared information about their plans and activities with administrators, faculty, families, and the community. Schools with excelling programs reported stronger principal support for family and community engagement, as well as district support for partnerships. Finally, excelling schools were more likely to say that a greater percentage of their teachers were working to engage all families, and that a greater percentage of families attended school events and were seen as “good partners” in the education of their children.

These findings are consistent with patterns of results in prior NNPS reports. They shine a spotlight on specific organizational structures and systematic supports that can be implemented by schools at all levels and in all locations to strengthen programs of school, family, and community partnership programs.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PARENT VOICE AND DECISION MAKING

Each year, the NNPS *UPDATE* includes a section asking members to report on a special topic related to the implementation of their partnership programs. Past years have included topics such as the use of technology to facilitate school, family, and community partnerships; attention to diversity and culturally responsive partnership practices; and school safety. This year, the special topic focused on schools’ recruitment and inclusion of parent voice in school decision making.

Actively recruiting families’ input into school policies and practices, including the development and conduct of the program of family and community engagement, is an important characteristic of high-quality partnership programs. The Action Team for Partnership (ATP) needs to have parents as active team members. Indeed, many NNPS Partnership Award-winning programs have had parents serve as chair or co-chairs of the ATP.

UPDATE asked a series of questions on the degree to which schools valued parent input on school matters, as well as the extent to which the school was actively working to increase parent input in school governance and decision making. This section summarizes the data from ATPs on the inclusion of families in school decision making.

Dimensions of Parent Voice

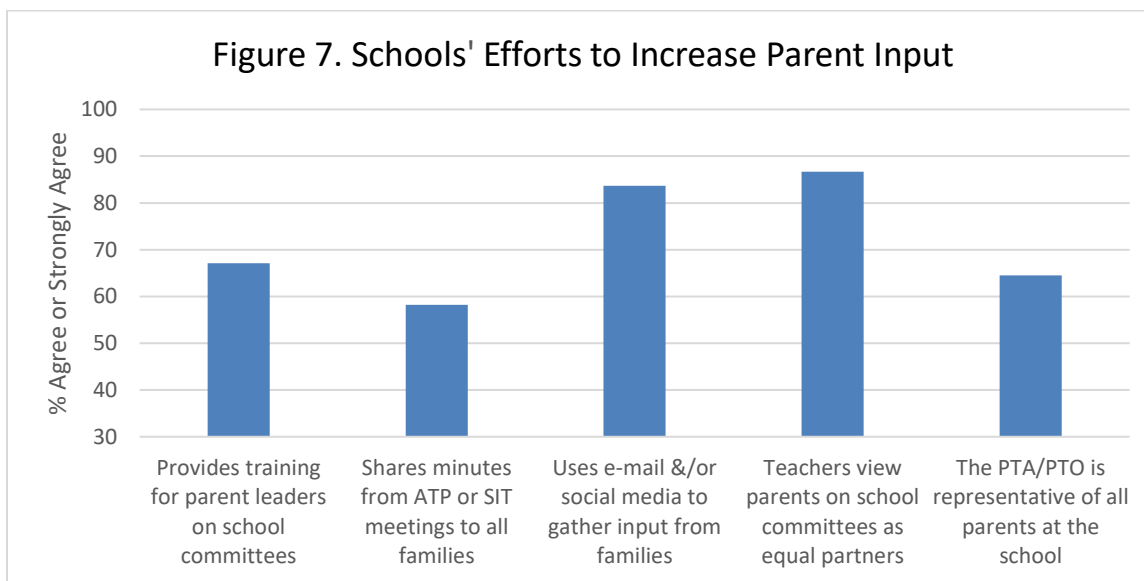
ATPs responded to fourteen questions about the importance of parent input and their school's efforts to encourage parent input. Statistical analyses indicated that these questions separated into three dimensions of parent voice:

- (1) Importance of parents as advisors (Advisor Scale, $\alpha = .90$).
- (2) Importance of parents as evaluators and planners (Evaluator Scale; $\alpha = .79$).
- (3) Extent to which schools actively encouraged input from families in school decisions (Decision Making Scale; $\alpha = .82$).

On the Advisor measure, ATPs indicated whether it was *not*, *a little*, *somewhat*, or *very important* for the school to have parents serve on committees, take leadership roles, and offer advice to leaders on school matters. On the Evaluator measure, ATPs reported whether parent voice helps to evaluate school practices and weigh in on hiring and evaluating teachers. On Decision Making, ATPs reported how strongly they agreed or disagreed that their school conducted specific activities to train parent leaders and communicate with all parents to increase their input to school decisions.

ATPs placed higher importance on parents in Advisor roles than in Evaluator/Planner roles (mean scores of 3.4 vs. 2.7). The ATPs made some distinctions among items on the Evaluator scale. They reported it was very important to hear parents' voices on determining workshop topics and evaluating the workshops. They reported it was not so important to hear parents' views in hiring or evaluating teachers. More than half of the ATPs reported that, at this time, involving parents in hiring educators was not part of their school programs.

Five questions on the Decision Making Scale asked ATPs how actively their schools implemented specific practices to obtain families' perspectives and input, as shown in Figure 7.

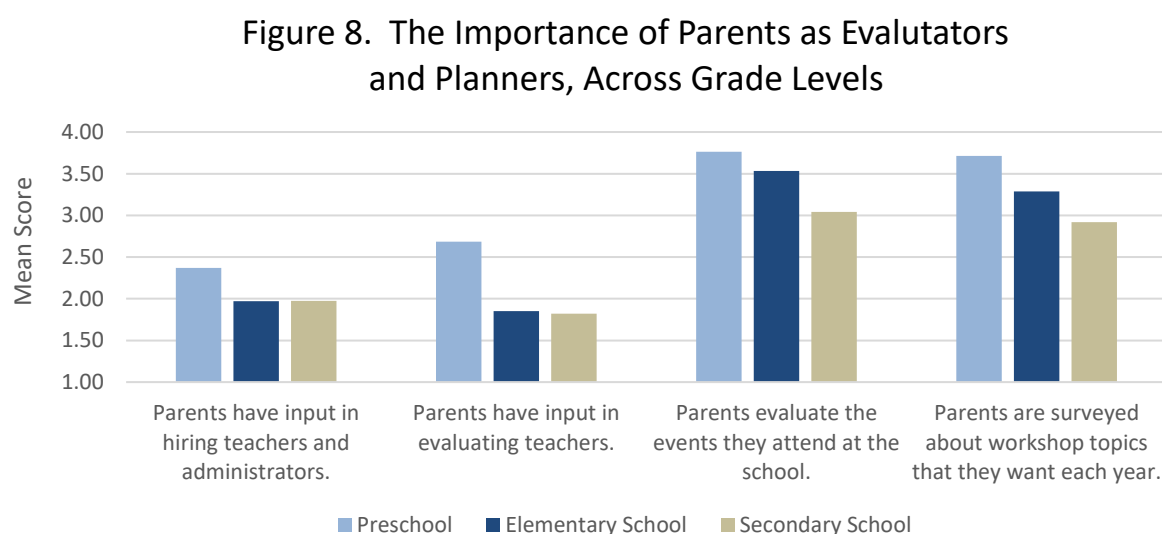


Over 80% of the ATPs reported that their schools use new technologies to gather input from more and different families. Nearly 90% believed teachers viewed parents as equal partners on committees. About 70% of the ATPs provided training for parent leaders on committees (likely including the team training for ATPs when they join NNPS).

ATPs in NNPS are working to increase parent voice in school decisions. Still, there is room for improvement on all of the measures—Advising, Evaluating, and Decision Making—as ATPs and their colleagues work to continually improve their partnership programs.

Differences Across Grade Levels

There were some differences by grade level on the importance of parents in decision making roles. Schools serving younger students (preschools and elementary schools) reported greater support and more outreach than secondary schools for including parents' input on school decisions. In particular, fewer secondary schools placed high importance on parents serving on the School Improvement Team.

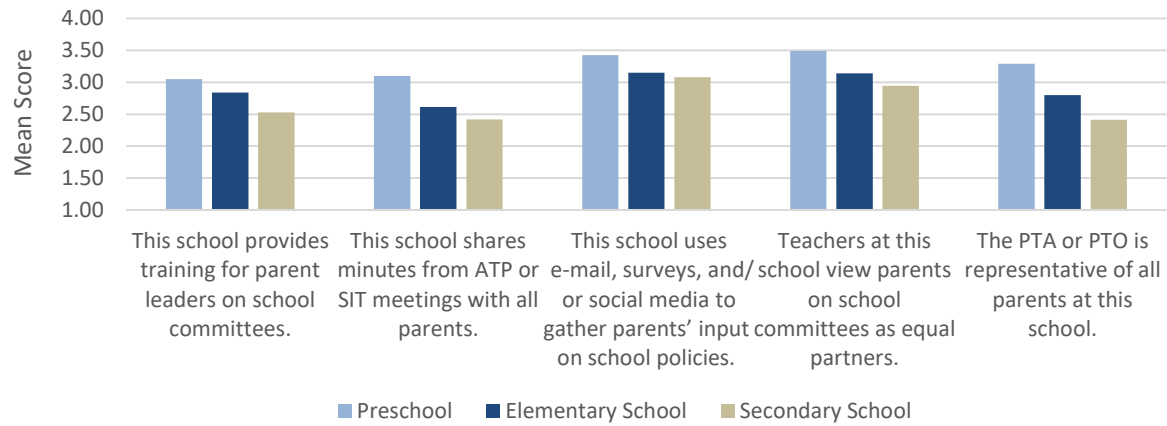


On the 4-item Evaluator Scale, there were grade level differences to note. Figure 8 shows that preschools reported significantly more support than other schools for including parents in evaluating teachers and school events, and for input on topics for workshops for parents.

On the Decision Making Scale, preschools had higher mean scores than did other schools on whether they taking specific actions to reach out to increase family engagement, as shown in Figure 9.

The differences between preschools and secondary schools were statistically significant. The pattern across grade levels is clear: educators serving families of younger students tend to view input from families as more important. They are more likely to reach out to families to promote their voice in the operation of school practices.

Figure 9. Schools' Encouragement of Input From Families, Across Grade Levels



Predictors of Programs Emphasizing Parent Voice

Additional analyses explored the extent to which school characteristics other than grade level predicted how much schools valued family voice and took action to increase families' input in school decision making. The analyses revealed few significant relationships between characteristics of the student body and the value or encouragement of family input. The percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price meals, the percentage of students labeled English Language Learners, and the extent of principal and teacher turnover were not related to any measure of family input to school decisions. Schools with larger enrollments, however, tended to rate the Evaluator and Decision-Making scales lower than smaller schools. These findings suggest that school processes and key program qualities may be better determinants of schools' efforts to include families' perspective in school decisions.

Table 1 – Correlations of Partnership Program Qualities and Parent Voice in School Decision Making

Partnership Program Qualities in 2019	Parent Voice as Advisors	Parent Voice as Evaluators/Planners	School Actions to Increase Parent Input in Decisions
Overall Program Quality	.217**	.233**	.366**
Program Implementation	.289**	.222**	.447**
Principal Support	.156**	.098	.245**
District Support	.110	.197**	.285**
Parent Engagement	.159**	.181**	.261**
Teacher Outreach	.185**	.215**	.347**

Other analyses explored whether measures of the quality of partnership programs and support for partnerships predicted the three measures of family input to school decisions. Table 1 (above) shows that important elements of high-quality partnership programs were positively correlated⁴ with the three measures of parent voice in school decision making.

The results Table 1 indicate:

- Schools with higher quality programs of partnership, overall, strongly support the three measures of family input in decision making. Similarly, schools that report higher percentages of teachers who reach out to engage more families and higher percentages of parents who participate as “good partners” in education place more importance on the three measures of parent input to school decisions.
- Principal support for the school’s partnerships program was associated with higher scores on the Advisor Scale ($r = .156$) and Decision Making Scale ($r = .366$). Principal support was not associated with the Evaluator scale.
- Greater support from the district leader for partnerships was associated with the importance schools placed on family input as Evaluators ($r = .197$) and on schools’ actions to increase family input to school decisions ($r = .285$). District support was not associated with ATPs reports of family input in advisory roles.
- The measure of schools’ actions to increase family input to school decisions (Decision Making Scale) was strongly associated with all six measures of program quality. ATPs that reported high quality program implementation and strong support from diverse partners were more likely to place high importance on parent voice as they developed comprehensive partnership programs.

The moderate, positive relationships in Table 1 suggest that schools with high quality programs place greater importance on parents as advisors and evaluators, and take specific actions to train, communicate with, and gather input from parents on school decisions. Program planning, organization, implementation, and support structures that contribute to the quality of partnership programs, overall, are likely to increase schools’ attention to and actions for increasing family input to school decision making.

Summary

The exploration of approaches to parent participation in school decision making revealed several interesting findings. First, three dimensions of family input into school decision making contribute to school culture (i.e., Family Voice as Advisors, Evaluators, and with school’s action to increase Family Voice in Decision Making). At this time, secondary schools tended to report lower levels of support for all three forms of family input. Finally, schools at all levels with stronger partnership programs tended to report greater support for incorporating families’ voices in school decisions. The findings, overall, indicate that many NNPS schools are working to include families in ways that will improve programs of school, family, and community partnerships.

NOTES

- 1) Schools were located in 16 states: AR, CA, CT, FL, LA, MD, MI, MO, NJ, OH, PA, SC, UT, WA, WI, WV
- 2) NNPS *UPDATE* data also are analyzed each year in research studies to learn how the various scales and measures in this report combine to affect the quality of district and school programs. For summaries of past years' results of *UPDATE* data, visit www.partnershipschools.org and click on Research and Evaluation. Also see annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices* (Thomas, et al. 2019) in the section Success Stories.
- 3) The α or alpha reports the *internal reliability* of a scale, indicating whether a group of items are correlated and represent a common construct. Reliability coefficients of .6 or higher indicate that a set of items is consistent and that the scale is useful.
- 4) (r) refers to a correlation coefficient that reports the strength of relationships between two variables.

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Visit the NNPS website:
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- For a more complete description of the NNPS school and district approach to school, family, and community partnerships, click on NNPS Model.
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- Find good ideas in the annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices*. (Click on Success Stories)
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