

Leadership Line



Number 3
November 20, 2024

Leadership Line is the NNPS newsletter for our Professional Development Partners. We will send recordings, summaries, and other notes after NNPS institutes, workshops, and quarterly meetings to support and advance your program of family and community engagement.

Please share each issue of *Leadership Line* with your colleagues and partners who were not able to attend the live event.

Recent NNPS Professional Development Activities

Quarterly Meeting: Let's Talk about Partnerships

Conducted November 7, 2024

As suggested at our first meeting, *Let's Talk about Partnerships* will enable NNPS Professional Development Partners to talk with each other about their programs and progress, including best practices and emerging challenges. This meeting was attended by NNPS partners from CT, KY, LA, NH, OH, and WA. They confirmed that *Let's Talk* meetings help develop a “partnership community” across the country.

At this meeting, we asked NNPS Professional Development Partners:

- **What is one example of your program's progress so far in the 2024-25 school year?**
- **What is one emerging challenge that your office, districts, or schools are trying to solve?**

Here are a few ideas from our discussion.

1. **At the school level:** Erika Treannie, district leader in Bristol, CT, reported that one school wanted to increase and diversify the parents who participated at meetings to discuss school policies. They gave a targeted list of names to each teacher to call, personally, to invite their participation. This intentional approach made a real difference. Families explained that they felt valued and wanted as partners with the school. The district learned that it had to expand its translation services when diverse parents attended activities.

2. **At the district level:** Lorraine Landon, in Pasco, WA, explained that district leaders reviewed and discussed various schools’ “exit surveys” for parents to evaluate partnership activities. The district leaders are developing a standard form that schools can use or adapt so that they do not have to create their own forms for each engagement activity. Pasco’s leaders volunteered to share the exit survey template with NNPS Professional Development Partners when it is completed and tested.
3. **At the region level:** Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES) in Connecticut held an in-person kickoff conference for about 65 educators to motivate and encourage family engagement. Taché Vereen, ACES Leader for Partnerships, invited leaders in that region and other districts across the state to focus on their high expectations for family and community engagement. She alerted district leaders to keep in mind the *End-of-Year Celebration* that is scheduled in May or June to share best practices, exchange ideas, and plan program improvements for the next school year. Veronica Marion, SFEC leader, noted that ACES’ welcoming and meaningful gathering of leaders early in the school year set an important tone about the importance of partnership programs across the state.
4. **At the district level:** A district leader reported that a big challenge is building a cohesive system throughout the district because departments’ work often feels “siloeed.” NNPS notes that this is a common challenge in complex organizations. It is why NNPS enables Professional Development Partners to invite colleagues *across departments* to attend NNPS workshops and meeting together *at no extra cost*. By working across departments, leaders can build collegial connections for family and community engagement and conduct more shared, coherent, and enjoyable work.

NNPS asked for feedback in CHAT: What was most helpful about today’s meeting?

One comment echoed many others: “I really like the sharing segments of this meeting.” Another wrote: “Hearing others’ experiences is always helpful to me.”

We will continue to discuss progress, best practices, and emerging challenges at the next quarterly *Let’s Talk* meeting (February 5, 2025). NNPS Professional Development Partners may contact NNPS at any time to discuss challenges and to brainstorm solutions.

A recording of *Let’s Talk about Partnerships* is available on request.

Quarterly Meeting: Let’s Learn More about Partnerships

What Research Says: Family and Community Engagement to Improve Student Attendance and Reduce Chronic Absenteeism

Conducted November 12, 2024

The first quarterly meeting to “Learn More” focused on family and community engagement to improve student attendance, on-time arrival, and reduce chronic absence. NNPS Professional Development Partners and colleagues from CT, KY, LA, NH, OH, SC and WA attended. Steve Sheldon, Co-Director of NNPS, shared results of NNPS and other studies. Here are a few main points.

Study 1: NNPS schools had better student attendance compared to matched schools not in NNPS. Analyses accounted for prior year’s attendance, school size, Title I status, and other variables. The results indicated that better attendance was due to more *responsive outreach* to families and to community conditions (Sheldon, 2007).

Study 2. Schools in NNPS with strong principal support and district leadership for partnerships implemented more advanced partnership programs. These schools reported more parents as “good partners” in engagement activities and higher student Average Daily Attendance (ADA). The study suggests an important pattern of program development and results over time. As schools improve their partnership programs, they engage more families as partners. Families are, then, more likely to help students attend school regularly (Epstein and Sheldon, 2016).

Other Research. Many other studies suggest ways to reduce students’ chronic absence. These include home visits, texts and postcards to parents, recognition of students’ improved attendance, individual mentors for students in school and after school, and other systematic connections with parents about their children’s attendance (see LEAP, 2021; Sheldon & Jung, 2018; and the Attendance Works website). Also see a comprehensive and readable review of research and practical approaches in *Phi Delta Kappan* by Capretta et al., 2024 (an NNPS Professional Development Partner).

Joyce Epstein, Co-Director of NNPS, presented a few practical family and community engagement activities to help students improve attendance, reduce lateness, and reduce chronic absence (see attached slides from the presentation). Also see examples in the NNPS *Sampler on Attendance* at www.partnershipschoools.org in section Success Stories, or click [NNPS Attendance Sampler](#).

A few “take-aways” from *Let’s Learn More* from research and practice to improve student attendance.

- There are many ways to recognize and encourage student attendance without resorting to punishing or embarrassing students or families.
- Results of studies vary in whether they report incentives and recognition of the whole class or individual students are more effective, or whether home visits are the best and most economical approach to improve student attendance. Rather than “one way,” research and practical approaches suggest that different strategies will be needed to improve student attendance and reduce chronic absence in various locations and different grade levels.
- It is clear that schools must take comprehensive approaches to help students improve attendance with roles for teachers, counselors, family members, community partners, and the students, themselves. Goal-linked programs of family and community engagement help.
- In practice, students’ poor attendance may be boosted by interesting and engaging classes and projects. Students are more likely to go to school when they are working on topics that develop their interests and talents. Family engagement includes celebrating student learning and the products of their creative work.

Let’s Learn meetings also include a summary of a recent **Topic of Interest**.

The U.S. Surgeon General issued an *Advisory* on the problem of *parent stress*. Parents’ stress may affect their children’s school attendance, classwork, homework, and well-being. The report calls for *action* by schools, employers, and others to reduce parents’ stress. The good news is that NNPS Professional Development Partners *are taking action* by developing and continually improving partnership programs that make parents feel welcome and valued at their children’s schools. Good

partnerships reduce parents' stress about their children's well-being. See the Surgeon General's report at: <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/parents-under-pressure.pdf>

Selected References and Links from *Let's Learn More about Attendance*

[Learner Engagement and Attendance Program \(LEAP\) CT.gov \(2021\).](#)

Attendance Works Website. <https://www.attendanceworks.org/> (See the section on Research) and

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/>.

Capretta, T. J., Zhang, J., & Boone, B. J. (2024). School and family partnerships can reduce chronic absenteeism –

Kappan Online or <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/00317217241295424>

Epstein, J. L., & Sheldon, S. B. (2016). Necessary but not sufficient: The role of policy for advancing programs of school, family, and community partnerships. *Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 2(5), 202–219.

Sheldon, S. B. (2007). Improving student attendance with school, family, and community partnerships. *Journal of Educational Research*, 100, 267–275.

Sheldon, S. B., & Jung, S. B. (2018). *Student outcomes and parent teacher home visits*. . Johns Hopkins University School of Education.

Attachments to Leadership Line #3:

- PowerPoint slides for the Let's Learn meeting
- Recording of Let's Learn More About Partnerships on Attendance: <https://youtu.be/d6vWinGfpC8>

**COMING UP!
NNPS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

Let's Learn More about Partnerships

The next quarterly meeting on research and practical approaches for student success:

**Improving Students' Reading Skills and Attitudes
with Family and Community Engagement**

Wednesday, December 11 2-4 p.m. (EST)

Here is the *Zoom* link for the December 11 meeting:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/97267072432?pwd=Nbff73a6sU8EopiaHPyy8BcBf1Fi12.1>

Meeting ID: 972 6707 2432

Passcode: 428513

We will send a reminder about this *Zoom* link before December 11.

December 4 – 13

Individual Conversations with NNPS Senior Facilitator, Brenda Thomas

Brenda will contact you to set a time to chat with you on your schedule.

INPUT—INPUT—INPUT

1. Are you working to solve an emerging challenge that you want to discuss at the next meeting of *Let's Talk about Partnerships*? Send your challenging topic to NNPS at nnps@jhu.edu.
2. Do you need NNPS materials, resources, or other assistance to help you with your work? Send your request to NNPS at nnps@jhu.edu.
3. Do you have an idea or new information to share with other Professional Development Partners in the next *Leadership Line*? Send your *INPUT* to NNPS (nnps@jhu.edu).

**We are walking the *Leadership Line* with you
on the path to partnerships!**

Joyce L. Epstein
Co-Director, NNPS

Steven B. Sheldon
Co-Director, NNPS

Brenda G. Thomas
NNPS Senior Facilitator