

PROMISING PARTNERSHIP PRACTICES



An annual collection from the members of the
National Network of Partnership Schools

Johns Hopkins University

2017

Edited by

Brenda G. Thomas, Marsha D. Greenfeld, R. Tyler Ames, Megumi G. Hine, and Joyce L. Epstein

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at Johns Hopkins University**

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for the photographs of partnership activities in *Promising Partnership Practices 2017*.

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INTRODUCTION

Promising Partnership Practices 2017

Joyce L. Epstein, Director
National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS)

Promising Partnership Practices 2017 includes over 75 good ideas to improve school programs of family and community engagement and to sharpen district and organization leadership on partnership program development. This is a “Wow!” collection.

We are inspired by the work conducted by members of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) in highly diverse communities in all parts of the country and at all grade levels. NNPS researchers and program facilitators can study, write, report, and provide training on ways to improve programs of family and community engagement. But, without the good work of educators, parents, community partners, and students on plans and projects—like those in this book—we would never know if research-based approaches to family and community engagement can be implemented in practice.

This year, we added a new label—STEM subjects—in the goals-section of the book. Schools across the country are increasing communications with parents and community partners about STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and math). See creative approaches to STEM partnerships such as Zoom into Engineering Week when students worked with local engineers on several intriguing challenges.

There are projects worth reading in every section of the book:

- Several reports describe activities that engage community partners in new ways. For example, see *Read for a Bead* (in Reading) in which local store keepers and business leaders listened to listen to students’ reports on books they read.
- Many projects this year put students in charge of their own learning, and featured students’ presentations for their proud parents. Parents appreciate activities that shine a spotlight on their child’s work and their child’s character. See, for example *Abilities Awareness Week* (in Behavior) and how students came to understand children with “different” abilities, rather than “disabilities.”
- We always are interested in how the arts bring student learning and family engagement to life. See for example, *Pollack and Papas* (in Other/Multiple Subjects) at the preschool level that increased the involvement of fathers with students on art projects.
- Many schools continue to introduce parents to state learning standards that students must attain.

There are far too many good activities between the covers to list them here. You simply must be an active reader. Find a favorite. Redesign an activity to give it your own spin. Match an activity with your goals for family and community engagement and for increasing student success.

In This Collection . . .

All activities come *from* members of NNPS *for* members of NNPS. We share these ideas with others who visit NNPS to learn how to improve their programs of family and community engagement. From over 100 submissions, the editors of *Promising Partnership Practices 2017* selected 77 activities—63 at the school level and 14 from districts and organizations in NNPS. The activities are from highly diverse communities in the north, south, east, and west. The students and families they serve are economically, racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse. The activities are from schools and districts like yours!

Take a look! See four Tables of Contents (TOC) to find ideas that you can adopt or adapt to strengthen your partnership program.

- 1. GOALS FOR PARTNERSHIPS.** Check this TOC for activities that engage family and community partners to improve a school’s welcoming climate and to increase students’ skills and positive attitudes in reading, STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and math), other or multiple school subjects, student behavior, health, multicultural awareness, transitions, and plans for college or career.

See excellent activities from district and organization leaders on how to strengthen leadership on partnerships and how to support school-based partnership programs.

2. **SIX TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT.** This TOC identifies activities that strengthen **parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community.** Although each activity is identified with *one* type of involvement, each practice may activate several types of involvement.
3. **SCHOOL AND POLICY LEVELS.** This TOC lists activities from elementary, middle, and high schools. Preschool activities are listed with the elementary level. Remember—many activities implemented at one school level may be used or adapted at other school levels. Also, see activities for district and organization leaders.
4. **CONTRIBUTORS.** This TOC identifies the programs (name of contributor, city/state) included in this book. Activities developed in one community (urban, suburban, or rural) may be adapted to meet conditions and interests in other locations.

Also see. . .

NNPS WEBSITE. *Promising Partnership Practices 2017* will be posted on the NNPS website—

One print copy of *Promising Partnership Practices 2017* is sent to each member site in NNPS. See the Order Form on the website for additional print copies.

NNPS SAMPLERS. NNPS *SAMPLERS* provide an easy way to review ten good activities from prior books of *Promising Partnership Practices*. The *Samplers* help schools meet partnership goals in **reading, writing, math, science, health, the arts, homework, attendance, behavior, career awareness/postsecondary planning, transitions to new schools, involving fathers, involving grandparents, involving families with students in summer learning, increasing family awareness of school tests and assessments,** and for improving partnership programs in **preschools, middle schools, and high schools.** Each *Sampler* includes a one- page summary of research on the featured topic. See all *Samplers* in the section Success Stories.

MEMBERS ONLY. Members of NNPS can access prior books of *Promising Partnership Practices* (from 2010 to 2016) and all *Samplers*. The **Members Only Code** starting in January 2018 will be **mem18NNPS**. Members will be reminded in monthly E-Briefs when the new code is activated.

National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University

Established by Dr. Joyce L. Epstein and her colleagues at Johns Hopkins University in 1996, the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) provides professional development and on-going technical assistance to strengthen leadership for programs of school, family, and community partnerships. NNPS assists schools, districts, organizations, and state departments of education to develop and sustain research-based partnership programs that contribute to student learning and development.

- Each Partnership School strengthens its program by forming an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), writing goal-linked partnership plans, and conducting partnership practices using the framework of Six Types of Involvement to engage all families in their children’s education in varied and meaningful ways.
- Districts, organizations, and states are guided to develop policies, provide leadership, and directly facilitate schools’ ATPs to organize, implement, evaluate, and continually improve their programs of family and community engagement.

All members of NNPS benefit from on-going research at Johns Hopkins University. In annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices*, members share best practices to improve school climate, engage all families, and increase student success in school.

For more information, visit www.partnershipschools.org.



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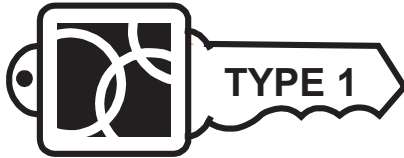
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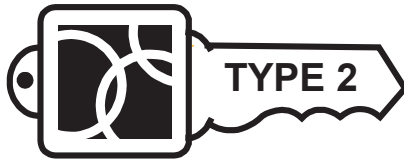
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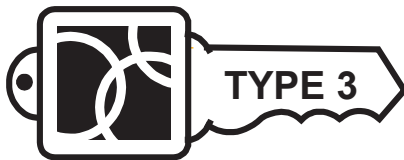
EPSTEIN'S SIX TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT



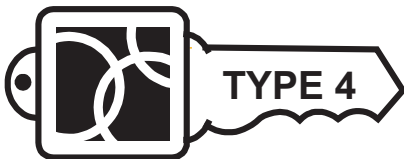
PARENTING: Assist families in understanding child and adolescent development and in setting home conditions that support children as students at each grade level. Assist schools in understanding families.



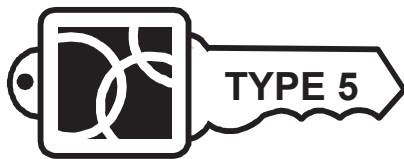
COMMUNICATING: Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.



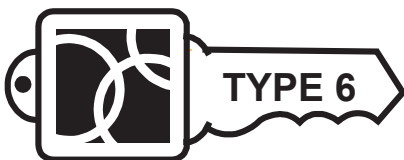
VOLUNTEERING: Improve recruitment, training, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school and in other locations to support students and school programs.



LEARNING AT HOME: Involve families with their children in learning at home, including homework, other curriculum-related activities, and individual course and program decisions.



DECISION MAKING: Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, action teams, and other parent organizations.



COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY: Coordinate community resources and services for students, families, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other groups, and provide services to the community.

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1

ACADEMIC GOALS



Practices for Types 1-6 in this section involve families and community partners to help students meet academic goals in reading and literacy, math, science, other academic subjects, or multiple subjects.

ELA FAMILY FUN NIGHT

ALCORN MIDDLE SCHOOL
COLUMBIA, SC

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Alcorn Middle School reviewed student test data. The team decided to be proactive about engaging families in helping to meet the school's goal of helping students improve skills and scores in English Language Arts (ELA). This includes reading, writing, speaking, and listening—all of which are important for student success in all other subjects.

Among the concrete activities in the ATP's One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships was an English Language Arts (ELA) Family Fun Night to introduce parents to the ELA standards, the school's curriculum, and ways to support their middle grades students at home. ELA Family Fun Night kicked off with a warm welcome from the principal and parent coordinator. They presented an overview of the state's ELA standards, the curricular content that enables students to meet the standards at each grade level, and a summary of recent test data.

ELA teachers from each grade level, the media specialist, and the Curriculum Resource Teacher elaborated with interesting examples of how the school's curriculum and teachers' instructional methods aim to help students meet specific standards and pass their classes. They also shared several ideas that families could use at home to support students' learning and ways to discuss the standards and students' ideas, work, and experiences with their child at home.

Perhaps most interesting to parents, teachers showcased exemplary student work on the ELA standards. Parents like to see students' work products and what excellent work looks like. The media specialist reported that the number of books students checked out of the library this year was about 30% higher than the previous year. She encouraged parents to support their children's reading at home and shared information on the library's resources.

She showed how parents can sign up for a public library card and how the school ID automatically served as a library card for each student. The welcoming tone and content of the presentations and time for questions was a good way to start to build parents' understanding of the ELA program and how they can encourage student learning... "The Family Fun Night was very informative and helpful," one parent evaluated.

The School Improvement Council, principal, and parent coordinator helped advertise the event through their communication channels. The school's automated communication system sent reminders, text messages, and emails home to all families. The ATP distributed flyers to students to take home with space for parents to RSVP. To encourage attendance, the ATP distributed door prizes and held a lottery for eight food gift baskets. After the meeting, all the families enjoyed a spaghetti dinner. These activities cost about \$250 covered by school funds and donations.

The ATP plans to build on the introductory ELA Family Fun Night with additional activities that will engage all families with their children to strengthen reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. They will work to continue to reach out to more and different families so that more students have support at home for their work and progress in ELA. The ATP plans to visit different neighborhoods served by the school to meet and greet families, disseminate information, and conduct some local family nights in these communities. At Alcorn Middle School, family engagement in ELA is an important goal because it will increase the success of more students.

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HAWTHORNE'S MINION SCHOLARS

HAWTHORNE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SEATTLE, WA

TYPE 3

READING & LITERACY

Everyone loves a good “Whodunnit?” For the sixth year, Hawthorne Elementary School conducted a mystery literacy night. Students and parents gathered clues through reading activities to solve a mystery. Each year, the partnership team, reading teachers, and others change the theme and aspects of the event. The theme this year? Minions.

Students and parents were given a set of minion goggles to wear for the evening, made by family volunteers. They watched a video clip where Gru (played by a teacher) told the student minions that he was writing a mystery book about unicorns, but he needed help from the minions. Gru explained that to solve the mystery, students had to complete three literacy activities to gain clues. Then, the students and their families went to work!

The literacy activities varied by grade level to reinforce skills taught in class. They included decoding puzzles, conducting a treasure hunt using the Dewey Decimal System, playing family word games, reading passages from grade-appropriate books, identifying parts of speech, and more. When students completed an activity, the volunteer leader stamped the minion’s passport. The activities enabled students to practice skills they had learned in class in a new and different atmosphere.

Students also earned a passport stamp by visiting the librarian from the Seattle Public Library. She helped families sign up for library cards and answered many questions. She said, “I’m always delighted to discover that over 50% of the families are regular library users.” Other community partners, such as Coast Guard members, a local author, and other organizations volunteered to help run activities.

When they completed their activities and solved the mystery, students earned a free book to take home. One student summed up, “Literacy night was AWESOME because we got

to do some fun games and I got to eat six bananas! And ... we got a free book.”

The organizers worked to connect with diverse families. The school serves students who speak 15 different languages at home, and many students are English Language Learners. Flyers about the Minion Scholars went home in multiple languages, as did phone message invitations. Also, interpreters were present to assist families. One parent related, “I didn’t know that I can help my child with reading even if I don’t speak English. I felt important that my daughter asked me to help her to solve the mystery.”

Prior to the event, the partnership team and others conducted a series of cultural and language-based Coffee Chats to meet and hear from families about their specific needs and interests. These chats also enabled educators and parent leaders to share information about the school’s resources and programs.

After the event, two-way connections with diverse families continued. Leaders conducted a follow-up workshop based on parent surveys collected at the mystery night. Parents wanted to know more about phonics, sight words, their child’s reading levels, and how they (including non-English speaking parents) could best help their children with schoolwork at home. A follow up workshop covered these questions and demonstrated how the school is truly invested in partnering with parents.

The school credits its dramatic increases in Hispanic students’ reading achievement over the past two years, in part, to its many activities to better understand and partner with all families. It’s no mystery—family engagement will help students be the best minions.

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I AM MALALA READING EXPERIENCE

WILCOX TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL
ANSONIA, CT

In the beginning of the school year, the Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS) announced an all-district reading of the book, *I am Malala (Young Readers Edition)*. Wilcox conducted this challenge and opportunity with style.

Every day, a member of the Wilcox community read an excerpt of the book on the intercom or on the school's TV station. Readers included faculty and staff, students, a police officer, a retired teacher, and many more community members. Also, in class, all students viewed Malala Yousafzai's Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech.

To supplement the district's plan, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Wilcox Technical High School created Kindness Week for students to capture the spirit of Malala in their actions. During Kindness Week, in their English classes, students wrote Thank You Notes and Gratitude Cards to someone in the school community who helped them grow as an individual.

As a culminating activity, students planned and conducted the Three Generations Book Club. All students, families, faculty, and community guests, including residents of a nearby assisted-living community, were invited to read and join a conversation about the book. In the school library, participants were divided into four discussion groups, each with one or two student facilitators, at least one teacher, and at least one family member. Some groups included senior citizens, community members from a local book club, and several students. The students and all participants contributed questions to discuss.

At the meeting, participants conducted several activities. Alphabet Soup asked participants to identify a character, event, place, or object from the book for each letter of the alphabet. This helped to jog memories about the book and encourage discussions. Student facilitators

randomly selected discussion questions submitted by their group members and led comments back to the book's themes of injustice, kindness, and bravery.

Another activity was the Malala Magic Square in which participants matched quotations with the person in the book who said them. The first group to accurately complete the activity read the quotations aloud to the whole group, while participating in a modified game of "hot potato" with a Barnes and Noble gift card.

Participants gave the student facilitators high marks for planning the book club meeting and leading discussions. One community member remarked, "The Malala discussions engaged [all of us] in evaluating how to be kind and courageous to benefit those around us."

Many others also helped plan the meeting. The ATP prepared pre-discussion guides, an acrostic poem game, and some discussion questions. Teachers coordinated with the assisted-living community. One chef and his students in the Culinary Arts Department baked cookies and refreshments.

The ATP advertised the book club discussion in a student-created display case, on the intercom, the school's TV station, and marquee, with e-mails, and at school meetings. Students' work was featured in the display case, including poems, essays, word clouds, and ornaments--all related to Malala's story.

"At first I thought this was an impossible idea," said one administrator. "Then, it became something for me to talk about to the students when I saw them in the cafeteria or library." The all-read-Malala experience strengthened a sense of the school community, encouraged tolerance of differences among students, and reinforced a deep awareness of the importance of education.

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IT PAYS TO READ

STEPHENS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LITTLE ROCK, AR

TYPE 2

READING & LITERACY

At Stephens Elementary School, the partnership team, Literacy Committee, and teachers all wanted to help more students become more competent and critical readers. The school uses Accelerated Reading (AR)—a computerized program that encourages students to progress at their own rate in reading books at increasingly difficult reading levels. When students complete a book, they take a quiz on their comprehension and ideas about that book. If they pass the quiz, they can proceed to a new book or the next reading level.

AR gives students an overall score on each quiz and awards “points” based on the length of the book and reading level. Each week, the top three students from each class with the highest number of AR points earn “incentive time.” They can choose how to “spend” their rewards—e.g., a certain number of minutes watching a movie, going to the game room, in the computer lab, or having extra time on the school playground. The points earned are reset every week to give every student a fresh opportunity to earn rewards.

At the end of each quarter, six students from each grade with the most AR points are invited to attend a reading celebration ceremony and brunch with their parents. Teachers also are recognized if their students qualified for the quarterly celebration.

One challenge arose when some students took quizzes without carefully reading their books. Stephens Elementary School added its own incentive program called It Pays to Read to encourage students to read books more carefully and not hurry to the quizzes. When students read a book and passed an AR quiz, they earned \$1 in STAR coins—the school’s currency along with the AR points. They had to maintain at least a 70% average correct on the quizzes to earn these rewards. Teachers reported that students become more serious about how they

read books, took quizzes, and earned incentive time and STAR coins.

Parents received a flyer about AR. They also received regularly scheduled telephone “blasts” about the school’s literacy program and ideas to encourage their children to read for pleasure at home. Parents became strong supporters of reading in school and at home, and were eager to attend celebration brunches when their children earned that recognition.

The students made real progress. In March over 370 students took an AR quiz, in May the number rose to over 1,000. Teachers reported that student’s confidence and self-esteem also rose, and parent participation in the reading celebrations increased. When the program added these rigorous requirements, one teacher opined, “All students need to break an academic sweat on a regular basis. No athlete who breaks a sweat only occasionally will become a champion.”

The school monitored weekly summary statistics through the Accelerated Reading software. Teachers could see which students were participating, the number of quizzes taken and passed, total points earned, the percentage of students reading independently, and percentage of students who were at satisfactory levels of comprehension.

The school seemed to have solved some important challenges and established a more effective program. AR + It Pays to Read = more students reading and having fun doing so.

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LITERACY ENRICHMENT

W. J. KEENAN HIGH SCHOOL
COLUMBIA, SC

“**R**eading is to the mind, what exercise is to the body. As by the one, health is preserved . . . ; by the other, virtue—the health of the mind—is kept alive, cherished, and confirmed” (Joseph Addison). Educators at Keenan High School understand that reading should be practiced every day, and so they changed the school schedule to allow more time for reading.

Now, each day includes a 30-minute period for reading. To begin, students took the STAR Assessment—a computer-adaptive test of reading skills—in their English classes. The students’ scores determined if students were reading at grade level. Students whose skills were below grade level attended classes focused on vocabulary development and reading comprehension strategies. Those at or above grade level, read novels and focused on literary analysis (e.g., identifying characters, plots, and themes). All parents were asked to ensure that their students read 20 minutes each day at home.

Because all students participated, it was necessary for all teachers of all subjects to be involved, too. This met with initial resistance, but professional development helped all teachers feel prepared to encourage students to read, think, and write to increase their literacy skills and their love of reading. To ease teachers’ concerns, the school’s literacy specialist designed PowerPoint presentations for each day’s lesson and distributed them school-wide.

During the 30 minute reading time, teachers gave short introductions to the day’s lesson and, then, students read and recorded their experiences in a log. For example, one month centered on poetry, with each day focused on a different aspect and a specific poet. For example, poetry’s connection to human emotions featured the poem *Fire and Ice* by Robert Frost. Students were guided, “As you read today, look for an emotion shining through

your story or poem. Describe those feelings in your literacy log.”

Students retook the STAR Assessment in winter and spring and moved to different groups based on their growth. An administrator pointed to improved scores on the end-of-course exam in English 1 as evidence of the hoped-for results of this practice. Keenan High School serves 678 students in grades 9 through 12. Almost all student (95.8%) are African American and over 70% are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. These factors do not determine whether students become good readers, but good reading skills determine student success in school.

The school also encouraged strengthening literacy skills by inviting students to engage in original writing and reading. At one event titled *The Spoken Word*, original compositions were read by the authors. 20 student writers read short works to an audience of 170 of their peers and some family members. The literary works ranged from insightful political commentaries to creative writing to deep personal reflections, indicating students’ ownership of difficult ideas—just as education was intended.

Literacy is an important goal for student success at just about every school in the country. Keenan High School students loved the extra time each day to lose themselves in their favorite books or selected literary works. Changing the school schedule to accommodate more reading and emphasizing reading at home every day clearly communicated to students the importance of reading as a life skill.

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LITERACY NIGHT COLLABORATION

TERRACE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
RIVERSIDE, CA

TYPE 5

Like many schools, Terrace Elementary set a goal for all students to reach high literacy standards. With an innovative spirit, the Action Team for Partnerships and other school leaders sought help by collaborating with the local high school. A collaboration between elementary and high schools can work well when each one meets the needs of the other. In this case, the high school students needed a place to provide community service, and the elementary school needed extra support for its reading night. High school students worked together with parents and teachers from the elementary school to plan and conduct a fun literacy event—Literacy Night Collaboration.

The principal worked to help the planning committee create successful connections with the high school. The elementary school had to be clear about the assistance it needed. The high school students had specific requirements for how their time and efforts would be recognized as hours of community service in their program. The two school principals communicated to ensure their needs and requirements were met.

In planning the family and community reading night, the Terrace team over-estimated the number of people who would attend to ensure that there were enough different activities to keep everyone busy and happy. In Terrace Elementary, about 60% of the students are English Language Learners. With energetic outreach, the Action Team for Partnership and others have increased parent participation at various events. For each school-based engagement activity, planners use the attendance at a previous activity as a baseline. Then, they estimate slightly higher attendance as participation continues to grow. The school continues to strive for a “full house,” where all parents of all students attend an activity.

At Literacy Night Collaboration, the elementary school students and their families rotated through various stations in the multi-

purpose room. Students could read with a high school student, talk about plans for college with a high school senior, make bookmarks, write poems, or imagine stories about life in high school with a real high schooler’s help. The eager young students grinned as they moved from station to station, chatting about their new connections with friendly teenagers. Said one Terrace student, “It was fun reading with a high school kid.” The high school students who participated as activity leaders emphasized the importance of reading and writing at every grade level.

Other event activities also were of interest. For example, non-fiction reading included “how-to” activities such as creating marshmallow catapults, popsicle construction, and soda bottle volcanoes. Mad Libs—the short, silly stories that students create with their own words—were popular. After experiencing many stations, one parent assessed the evening as “a fun way to participate in learning.”

The event culminated with the installation of a *Little Library* (patterned after similar projects in the community to share and exchange books at no cost). *Little Library* was designed and built by the high school shop class for the Literacy Night Collaboration. Students and families were encouraged to “take a book or leave a book” to increase students’ reading for pleasure. The school stocked the *Little Library* with donated, gently-used, elementary-appropriate material. The new *Little Library* was another way to encourage reading—something built by high school students to benefit elementary school students. Now, that’s good literacy collaboration.

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READING & LITERACY

MARDI GRAS READING PARADE

OAK PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LAKE CHARLES, LA

What's the best parade in town? If you ask students at Oak Park Elementary, many will say that it is their school's Mardi Gras Parade. In Louisiana, Mardi Gras is a popular celebration. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and school leadership committee discussed ways to involve more students in the school's parade by motivating them to reach their reading goals.

Starting at the school, the Mardi Gras Parade stretches for two blocks. The local media and crowds of students, parents, teachers, neighbors, and community partners line the parade route to support the school. The parade cars and props are donated by the community. This year, the most prolific readers at each grade level were notified that they would be featured on the parade floats and cars. The students dress up in costume and throw Mardi Gras beads and candy to the spectators on the sideline.

Students who read the most books in their grade were selected to be featured in the parade. The school uses the Accelerated Reading (AR) program that encourages students to read books, take a test, and move on to read more. For a book to "count," it had to be on the student's grade level or above. The top three boys and the top three girls from each grade—1st grade to 5th grade—were honored in the Mardi Gras Reading Parade.

Throughout the school year, teachers keep grade-appropriate books available for all students to read. They also kept track of progress in reading. The AR weekly reading tests helped teachers monitor progress and support and encourage students who fell behind. Teachers spoke individually to help students improve reading skills and read more books for pleasure.

Parents, too, encouraged students to read for pleasure at or above grade level. They talked with their children about the books they read and their AR tests. Community members

volunteered at the school library to read with students. The school worked to create a culture in which students encouraged each other to read more, recommended good books to each other, and increased their reading skills. As students read, they reviewed and reflected on the content of the books by completing book reports.

Through the year, the honor of being in the Mardi Gras Parade was publicized. Messages were sent home. Progress was reported in the school newsletter, notices to parents, monthly calendars, and at every family reading night throughout the year. All students let their parents know about the upcoming Mardi Gras Reading Parade.

Parents were part of the process by encouraging their children to meet their reading goals. All students knew they were enjoying many good books—fiction and non-fiction—and improving their reading skills. Teachers reported an increase in the number of parents who visited the school and who helped their child with homework.

Academically, the results were promising. Teachers observed that students were improving their English Language Arts skills and behavior. Oak Park's goal is for every student to read at or above grade level. This Title I school is a Spanish Immersion School with nearly 100% African-American students. In this challenging and stimulating environment, students are making progress in reading and celebrating their accomplishments.

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ONE BOOK—ONE SCHOOL

ORCHARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
RICHLAND, WA

TYPE 4

READING & LITERACY

“**T**oday, Monday, Wanda Petronski was not in her seat. But nobody, not even Peggy and Madeline, the girls who started all the fun, noticed her absence.” So starts the story of *The Hundred Dresses*, written by Eleanor Estes. This book closely matched the mission at Orchard Elementary School “to grow passionate minds and compassionate hearts.” The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and teachers selected the book for all students to read at school and at home.

While it is difficult to find one book that could be read by students K-5, the leaders at Orchard Park thought this book had meaningful messages for all students and also could help to improve the school climate. A note explained the plan to parents. They were asked to obtain a copy of the book for their child, or the PTO donated books for students whose families needed help with this purchase. When everyone had a book, the all-school-read began.

Each day, students read an assigned portion of the book in class and the same portion at home with a parent, followed by a discussion the next day at school. A note to parents outlined the reading schedule and provided prompts and questions to stimulate conversations about the reading.

Each morning at school, a trivia question was added to morning announcements about the prior day’s reading passage. Students who correctly answered the question in class had a chance to win a small prize.

To facilitate this reading, many teachers used a “buddy classroom,” where older students read to younger students. Also, several community members volunteered to read with the students. To facilitate reading at home, some teachers took time after school at apartment complexes for families with low incomes to help students with the assigned reading. Everyone helped students read and think about

the story. The principal reported, “We had kids reading with their parents, with their big sisters and brothers, with grandparents, older students with younger students, students reading with community members, and even with the superintendent. This event really showed the power of literature to promote discussion.”

Some schools might choose a book for each grade level, but Orchard Elementary deliberately chose one book that everyone could think about together. Teachers observed and reported that the focus on compassion improved student behavior at school and gave teachers a common story to use about how to treat each other. One teacher commented on this, “Weaving a common thread throughout our school through literature that enriches our hearts and minds is an incredible opportunity to grow together as a community.” Other measures were made of student participation and reading comprehension.

When students finished the book, the school held an evening assembly to think together. Different classrooms performed songs, dances, or some other visual representation to share what they had learned. Students were still talking about the book, its characters, and its lessons in the spring—several months after the December activity.

Although this book was written in the 1940s, the message of standing up against bullying resonates today. At Orchard, students’ discussions about Wanda and her experiences at school helped them develop empathy for others. Teachers agreed that this good story really came alive for Orchard students.

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READ FOR A BEAD

DELMAE HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
FLORENCE, SC

Every student needs a good education to be a good citizen. With this in mind, Delmae Heights' Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and others at the school implemented a program to link student reading to the community. For one month, students recorded the title of each book they read and wrote a sentence about the book in their Read-for-a-Bead Logs. Then, each student went to a participating local business, told about the book they read, and collected a red, blue, orange, green, or yellow bead, and a signature from the proprietor. When students read five books and collected all five colored beads, they delivered the completed log to their teacher.

The Literacy Coach placed the names of these students on the Bead Board in the cafeteria. These students qualified to play in the Bead Ball Games (free throw, volley ball, relay, and others). Students at each grade level rotated through the games led by parent volunteers. Refreshments were provided for all.

The ATP and Literacy Coach were well organized in planning Read for a Bead. Local businesses were invited to a Community Interest Meeting on how to partner with the school to increase students' reading skills. The local newspaper ran an article about the meeting to spark attendance. Each business—25 in all—that became a partner received a jar of beads of one color and a plaque that identified the site as a Read for a Bead stop for students. Five businesses were given each color bead to ensure that no place would be overwhelmed by student visitors. Some partners went further. For example, an orthodontist gave a free t-shirt to every student reader who visited him. A bank gave away piggy banks and contributed \$5 to a new student bank account (opened with parental permission). Chic-Fil-A donated reading bookmarks and free

meal cards for the school to give as prizes to every student who collected five beads.

The literacy coach visited all 30 classrooms at Delmae Heights to explain the project to students and answer their questions. Students were enthusiastic. During Read for a Bead month, 197 students participated, made 985 visits, and made necklaces of their colored beads. Some businesses received more than 100 visits from students and others just a few. One student said, "This is the most fun thing I have ever done in my life!" Parents enjoyed taking their children to visit the businesses. They also read books with their children at home.

At the end of the month, students and the Literacy Coach wrote thank you notes to each business partner. They all sent positive comments and were eager to partner again. The remaining beads and plaques were collected.

Other donations were made to the Bead Ball games to celebrate reading. Barnes & Noble donated gift cards that were raffled off to the readers. Wal-Mart sent volunteers to help staff the event and supplied free refreshments. Chic-Fil-A sent its cow to celebrate with the students.

Delmae Heights serves one of the most culturally diverse populations in the district. The well-organized project was a hit because everyone—students, parents, teachers, and business partners-- understood the importance of reading. The manager at Barnes & Noble summed things up noting that reading is important for all students *and* for the future of the community.

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SHOOTING FOR THE STARS

FOOTHILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
RIVERSIDE, CA

TYPE 4

With a deep desire to strengthen the school climate of partnerships and increase school, family, and community connections, Foothill Elementary planned a wonderful activity. The goal was to show that science could be understood and appreciated by everyone—not reserved for only a few individuals. This vision of science-for-all brought a sense of excitement to the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, and everyone at school.

Previously, some parents seemed intimidated by science because of language and social differences. Teachers knew, however, that science was all around us and could be a bridge to equity. Shooting for the Stars was planned to help students and their families see that science was exciting and accessible, not secretive.

Shooting for the Stars had several phases. Parents could attend a Science Fair where 4th and 5th grade students displayed and discussed their projects. The family could purchase dinner, too. The largest turnout, however, was for the events that followed. All families attended hands-on science activities in classrooms between 6 and 7 p.m. Families learned about and actually planted a plant, watched a substance change through all three states of solid, liquid, and gas, tested how many pennies a floating tin foil boat would hold, conducted experiments with air pressure, built a catapult, made silly putty, and more.

Because some activities had high demand, only 25 attendees per activity could participate at one time. Over 300 people signed up for their choices, received a ticket and time to attend the activities. The limitations on time and access worked to the school's advantage as students left eager for the next science night. It was clear to Foothill leaders that science and STEM activities are of high interest to students and their families.

At 7 p.m. everyone gathered for the highlight of the night: Stargazing. Leaders arranged for the local astronomical society to bring five high-powered telescopes to the lawn of the school. Each telescope was trained on a different sight. At each one, a local astronomy enthusiast explained to students and families what they were looking at in the night sky.

This combination of science experiences was a big success. The plans required attention to adequate space for the demonstrations and hands-on activities. Some space for particular activities had to be indoors or outdoors, have carpet or tile floors, have water available, and/or have ease of access and movement. Foothill Elementary learned that science activities take good, collaborative plans.

The school held Shooting for the Stars in November, which was a good time to view a dark, night sky without keeping children out too late. To ensure safety at night, the planners used caution tape to create walkways and handed out glow sticks to improve visibility without disrupting outdoor viewing conditions.

In the end, Shooting for the Stars did its job of helping science feel more comfortable, more real, and more fun. One parent commented, "It is so great to see all the wonderful things happening at Foothill. I never liked science, but this was really fun. Now I can 'do' science." Her daughter valuably added, "Science is everywhere—and it's fun!"

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SCIENCE

STEM FAMILY ACADEMY

LAKEVIEW HOPE ACADEMY
LAKEWOOD, WA

Lakeview Hope Academy had a school goal to make science a priority for students and their families. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), science teachers, and others aimed to engage the school community in hands-on activities that would make science come alive for all students and families. As an added bonus, the school's STEM Family Academy would support an up-coming district-wide STEM Fair.

More than a third of the school's students are learning English and many parents are new to the country, speak languages other than English, or have few years of formal education. But, Lakeview Hope's parents are wonderful volunteers and support the school and their children's learning. For the school's Family STEM Academy, the ATP, teachers, and many parent volunteers worked together to plan the event, prepare materials, and contribute translations.

Parents participated in the early brainstorming session to ensure that STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) activities were meaningful to students and families at all grade levels (k-5), and not just the older students. Indeed, the parents of children who were English Language Learners, and who were learning English themselves, were especially helpful. They attended the planning meetings, created bilingual signs to explain the activities, and sorted materials for the STEM boards and classroom activities. The school's bilingual family involvement coordinator helped facilitate these activities and served as interpreter and translator, as needed, to support parents.

Six classrooms housed 2 activities each, for a total of 12 STEM demonstrations or explorations to interest students at all grade levels. The hands-on activities focused on problem solving and creativity, such as coding with beads, building spaghetti and marshmallow bridges, cup stacking, and creating pictures using tangrams. Each activity was conducted, at least in part, by

community volunteers. One student's parent is a middle school science teacher who agreed to conduct a "science lab." The favorite demonstration in the lab—predictably—was fire-breathing. After observing all of the action, one teacher said, "It was so much fun to see parents and students working together on STEM-activities."

The organizers posted signs prepared by parent volunteers with explanations and instructions by each activity in Spanish and in English. To ensure that all families felt welcome and cared for, the school also hired six translators to be on hand for the evening to facilitate conversations. The extra effort to welcome all families speaking many languages helped them feel comfortable at school. Said one parent, "This is the best event that I have been to at this school!"

In the cafeteria, families could take a dinner break of pizza and water. They also could obtain materials including display boards, graph paper, and colored paper to prepare their own STEM project displays for the district-wide Fair. Students and parents examined examples of completed boards, selected materials, and got advice about describing a STEM project or application. Students and parents had serious conversations about their experiences with science, technology, engineering, and math.

The event would not have been successful without hours of planning by the ATP, teachers, parents, and community members. After the school's Family STEM Academy, the ATP sent thank cards and small gifts to the volunteers as a measure of gratitude. STEM—the combination of subjects that go well together—becomes **Something To Explore Meaningfully.**

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SEUSS AND STEM NIGHT

CASTLIO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
ST. CHARLES, MO

TYPE 3

TECHNOLOGY

Add a new idea to a successful program and the result may be a special activity that is fun for all. This was the case at Castlio Elementary School. Its Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, and other school leaders added reading activities to the annual Family Tech Fest—creating Seuss and STEM Night.

Parents were invited to attend and were asked to respond with digital RSVPs through *SignUp Genius*. Over 380 people sent in positive responses, and so the school was expecting a large crowd. The organizers worked together using Google-Docs to share responsibilities and stay on top of planning. About 300 students and 300 parents came to Seuss and STEM Night.

Parents and community partners took active roles. Parents donated common household items for the event. Some parents volunteered to conduct activities, set up, and clean up. Local and regional businesses, the PTO, and others (YMCA, Monsanto, Junior Achievement, Bricks4Kids, library, and scouts) donated materials and snacks, or participated by leading activities.

Students and parents were given a map that described all activities and their locations throughout the school. First, everyone congregated in the Learning Commons to hear a local author read aloud one of his books for children. He stayed to autograph books throughout the evening.

Representatives from community groups led demonstrations and conducted hands-on STEM activities. Parents, teachers, and students also led engineering, math, and science activities of interest, including teaching basic coding skills in the computer lab, and “flashlight reading” of Dr. Seuss books in the cafeteria (along with milk and cookies).

The school worked to provide a range of activities. There were 24 different Dr. Seuss-

themed activities related to reading and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). Some activities were building a car, making a kazoo, creating origami, stacking cups, making spaghetti towers, and more. One parent noticed, saying, “Glad to see so much offered—such an assortment. The theme was great, very unique—must do again!”

At the end of the evening, families were encouraged to turn in their maps to participate in a lottery for a chance to win an attendance prize. Prizes included t-shirts and portable power banks, which were donated by the school district as part of a “We Love to Code” project.

Thank you notes were sent to all groups who supported the event with their donations and their participation. A survey of parents assessed the success of the combined event of reading and STEM activities, and gathered ideas for improvements. Some had good suggestions about the logistics for such a well-attended event, such as spacing tables so that people could move more freely, clarifying the map of locations, and finding more volunteers to help students complete all of the activities. Most parents simply indicated that a good time was had by all: “Most excited I have ever seen my son about a school event!”

The school’s goals for “Literacy, Learning, and Lots of Fun” were well met. Everyone agreed that they were enriched, entertained, and enlightened by the mix of reading and STEM activities.

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TECHNOLOGY TUESDAYS AND WELLNESS WEDNESDAYS WITH THE COMMUNITY

LINCOLN CHARTER SCHOOL
YORK, PA

With a firm belief in educating the whole child, Lincoln Charter School set out to connect students to community experts in the fields of technology and health. Teachers and administrators wanted to develop new kinds of hands-on learning activities that would foster students' critical thinking about specific topics. And, they wanted to open the school doors to the community to strengthen their program of school, family, and community partnerships. To meet these goals, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and teachers worked together to find experts in the community to provide mind-stretching experiences for students.

Each Tuesday, several Community Teachers came to the school. They brought with them "a mystery technology-related object" from their work that students could touch, explore, analyze, and reflect on. Students could sketch the object in their learning journals and were required to record ideas and predictions about the object's use. After some thinking time, the Community Teachers revealed the actual name, use, and nature of the object. The same process was repeated on Wednesdays, when Community Teachers brought in an object linked to health and wellness.

Community Teachers are asked to visit four classes throughout the year for 30 minutes each. Each expert talks with one class per visit to respect their busy schedules. A large number of volunteers were involved to meet with all classes. Teachers made adjustments to accommodate their guests, and ensured that all students had pens and journals to make their notes and observations.

Students had a chance to practice good citizenship and social skills as they interacted with the presenters. The activities also advanced students' knowledge about many different occupations linked to technology and health. The school's Director of Community Engage-

ment noted that this partnership practice was "preparing [Lincoln Charter School's] students for jobs in 2030 by exposing them to real world application and experts."

The ATP worked with teachers, over time, to help them recognize the value of school and community connections for student learning. At first some teachers were skeptical, but now all teachers support Technology Tuesdays and Wellness Wednesdays as a real benefit for students.

The ATP and others were clever in their outreach efforts. Community Teachers were identified from networks that were already in place. Teachers' spouses and students' parents were among the experts, and teachers' friends in the community were tapped to participate. As this practice continues, more contacts with different experts will be made. The program may grow with Community Teachers connecting with classroom teachers on other topics in the curriculum beyond technology and health. More partners may make more visits to each class. This expansion will require advanced organizational skills, but Lincoln Charter School is ready for that challenge.

The contributions of the Community Teachers help students see that the "school community" extends beyond the school doors. Teachers were asked to record observations linked to Community Teachers and the topics that were discussed. Every teacher observed and reported improvements in students' thinking and behavior, including increased scores on the state science tests. Technology Tuesdays and Wellness Wednesdays are powerful—yet manageable—ways to increase students' critical thinking and introduce them to the world of work.

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TYPE 6

TECHNOLOGY

ANNUAL FAMILY KITE ENGINEERING CHALLENGE

ROSALIND FRANKLIN STEM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PASCO, WA

TYPE 4

ENGINEERING

In the digital age when kids are often staring at a screen, the Annual Family Kite Engineering Challenge on a grassy field at Rosalind Franklin STEM Elementary is, indeed, a breath of fresh air. September is usually a windy time, but even if the wind isn't strong, the spirit of family, fun, and STEM have carried the Kite Engineering Challenge to great heights.

The big idea is that students and their families engage in the engineering process to build a kite together. Designs range from elaborate kites (some built by children and their aerospace engineer moms) to simple kites. Students and families have learned that kites with simple, light designs are easiest to launch and keep airborne.

In the past year, plastic shopping bags, recycled t-shirts, and newspaper were common materials for successful kites. The school set up a registration table for families and provided a "kite hospital" for supplies such as tape, string, pieces of recycled plastic, and wooden dowels. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and other school leaders invited engineers from local companies to come and give expert advice on kite design and how to cure an injured kite. A photographer took pictures of each family with a kite. Parents loved the format. Said one, "It is a great 'no pressure' event. Come when you can and leave when you want." Students had the best responses, as one said, "I love making the kite and trying to fly it with my friends!"

To celebrate the hard work of students and their families, certificates were awarded in several categories: smallest kite, biggest kite, highest flyers, most recycled materials, best design, most beautiful kites, kites with the most school spirit, most elaborate kite, simplest kite, best box kite, and—principal's choice. Students also had an opportunity to explain how their

kite will fly. The panel of guest judges included engineers from the community who have different specialties.

Students work to improve their designs from year to year. One year, a 3rd grader came with a kite that she designed with her dad that went so high that school officials worried it might create a hazard for incoming and outgoing flights from the nearby international airport. They won highest flyer. The next year the girl and dad were back trying for the biggest kite award. They rolled out a 3 meter long and 1.5 meter wide kite and won the title. With the dad's running start, the kite did fly—for a short time. Not to worry. In true engineering spirit, the student said she would improve the "string-to-kite connection" and would come back next year.

Kite engineering has found its way into classroom instruction. Teachers report that they add it to their lessons, using the Next Generation Science Standards to focus on engineering design. School leaders invite students and parents to the kite challenge at the Back to School Night, in fliers in English and Spanish, with PTO support on social media, and with a reminder two weeks in advance. Over 100 families participated last year, but school leaders say, "The sky's the limit" in the number who may participate next year.

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ZOOM INTO ENGINEERING WEEK

RUTH LIVINGSTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PASCO, WA

Ruth Livingston Elementary School enthusiastically celebrates National Engineers Week each February. Last year, students in grades 3 and 5 participated in activities with local engineers to become active scientists and to learn about STEM careers that they may want to pursue in the future.

The engineers set several design challenges for students to solve. They worked with teachers so that the activities were appropriate for each grade level. Third graders were introduced to what engineering is and its importance in our lives by building a Hoop Glider. This is a flying machine made with a straw and at least two paper hoops that will fly through the air. Students learned that throwing the Hoop Glider provides thrust, the curved surfaces of the hoops generate lift, and gravity pulls the glider to the ground. Engineering comes in as students learn to change the design of the Hoop Glider to see if they can make it fly farther. The students' Hoop Gliders went surprising distances.

Fifth graders were asked to take the challenge of designing a method of transportation to move a ping-pong ball (a contained element) from one point to another. This challenge taught students about defining the problem, planning solutions, making and testing a solution, and redesigning the solution to improve performance—all elements of the engineering design process. Teachers gained many other ideas for hands-on engineering challenges that they could conduct with students

After the engineers' visits, teachers sat down with their students to discuss what they saw and experienced. Taking time to reflect on the activities they conducted and make connections with other real life experiences in flying objects and transportation helped students see that just about everything they use every day was designed, developed, and (maybe) improved through engineering.

Several students went home and shared their new learning with their parents and siblings. One parent said their child brought home his Hoop Glider and taught everyone in the family how to make one and how it worked. The classroom activities, generally, were designed so that parents could replicate the activity at home with their child.

For three years, the school has partnered with the same engineering firm to celebrate the week. One teacher said that as a result of these activities, she observed a real improvement in students' understanding about engineering and its connections with other STEM subjects (science, technology, and math).

Engineering Week has had other effects. The annual activities strengthened the relationship between the engineering firm and the school. By inviting engineers to talk and work with students, the school has established a positive connection with the company. As a result, other community volunteers and organizations have reached out to help the school make other science topics exciting and interesting for students to learn.

Ruth Livingston will continue to build on its past successes in introducing engineering to its students. There, students are conducting exciting and meaningful activities that require them to design, develop, and improve ideas and products. It is never too early to increase students' awareness of careers that may interest them in the future.

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DONUTS AND MATH WITH DADS

HERIG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SAGINAW, MI

There's always room for improvement. That statement, which applies to just about everything, propelled Herig Elementary to design and conduct a family engagement activity focused on mathematics. The school is always working to improve students' math understanding and test scores, and to mobilize family support for children's math learning.

The constant challenge is to attract as many students and parents as possible to attend a math engagement activity. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and math teachers thought it would be a good idea to combine the focus on math with another popular activity—Donuts for Dads. The school welcomes fathers and father figures each year to spend time with their children during the school day, meet teachers in class, and enjoy some refreshments.

At the newly designed Donuts and Math with Dad, fathers and father figures joined their children in the cafeteria (see the cover of this edition of *Promising Partnership Practices 2017*). Each student was given a deck of cards and instructions for simple card games that would reinforce basic math skills at each grade level. But, students and dads could play any of the games for which children were ready.

The games were as follows:

Number identification: Take out all face cards. Divide the cards evenly to all players, leaving them face down. Each player turns over a card. The player with the highest card wins and collects the cards. The player with the greatest number of cards at the end wins.

Addition: One addition game asked students and dads to reveal 2 cards from their packs. The player whose cards produced the highest sum takes the cards.

Subtraction: Players reveal 2 cards and find the difference between them. The player with the smallest difference takes the cards.

Multiplication: Players reveal 2 cards and multiplies their values. The player whose cards produce the highest product takes the cards.

Advanced options: One advanced game leaves in the face cards and players assign values to them. Another game includes more than two players.

In all cases, the player who collects the most cards at the end of the game is the winner.

After playing the games one of fathers said, "Thank you for letting me be involved with my son's school," while another said it was simply "great to spend time with my children." The school accommodated the fathers' various schedules by holding the activity early in the morning at the start of school (9 am) and in the afternoon one hour before dismissal (2:30 p.m.). Over 120 fathers or father figures came to play with math.

Community partners donated supplies for the event. One who attended was impressed, "You have a really great connection with your parents." The turnout was high and making space for everyone was a challenge. At the end of math time, fathers were asked to complete a survey about their experience and the school staff talked with them about the event.

All students were given a pack of cards and instructions for all of the games to take home and play with their families, whether a father figure could attend or not. This simple design showed parent many different ways to reinforce students' math skills. All of the parts of Donuts and Math with Dad added up, multiplied good feelings, and there were no subtractions!

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MATH-FOCUSED OPEN HOUSE

BADGER MOUNTAIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
RICHLAND, WA

The team at Badger Mountain Elementary wanted to spur excitement about math and help more families become comfortable supporting their children on math at home. In the past, the school held a math night each year, but stopped when attendance dropped and interest waned. This year they took a different approach.

The school's Open House each fall is always well attended. The principal suggested that a family math activity could be combined with the Open House. A special section of the agenda would spotlight the school's math focus and, in teachers' classrooms, parents would gain information on Common Core math standards and conduct a math game with their children that they would take home to play and enjoy.

At the Open House, parents and children moved from the full assembly to their child's classroom. There they viewed posters on grade level math standards and learned how the school's curriculum is designed at each grade level to help students meet or exceed the standards. The teachers pre-played the game with students and parents, and showed how the students would be the "teacher" when they played the game at home. Every family took home the game they played in class, which was based on one or more math standards. After receiving a game, one parent evaluated the gift, "Thank you! This will be so much fun!"

The combination of a Math-Focused Open House was popular with teachers. They gave it full support. Teachers at each grade level identified or developed a game to send home based on a grade level math standard in math. They kept the games simple and included common items such as dice, colored card stock, and game pieces. The resulting games addressed specific skills. For example, *Place Value Race* came with instructions, a game board, two dice, and a few game pieces. One teacher added,

"Offering math games at Open House will enable each student to have an interactive experience at home with a parent or sibling."

To assist the teachers, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), principal, and math teachers obtained the Common Core State Standards posters by grade level for teachers to display. The games were assembled ahead of time by paraeducators and provided to the teachers in zip-locked bags to distribute to all parents who attended and, via the students the next day, to those who could not attend.

At all grade levels, directions were written for the students to conduct the games at home. Teachers knew that parents often told them things like, "I don't understand how to help Johnny with his math." or "I forgot how to do these skills." The constructed games enabled students to share a math skill they were learning in class and helped parents approach math with confidence—after all, their children were in charge.

This Math Focused Open House raised parents' level of math awareness. The combined two-events-in-one strengthened school and family partnerships because more families attended Open House. By adding math to the agenda at the start of the school year, teachers helped more parents understand the schools' goals for students' math learning. Teachers want to increase the number of students who meet state math standards by at least 5% each year and increase the enjoyment of math by 100%.

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SKITTLES MATH NIGHT

MARK TWAIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PASCO, WA

Learning the basics of mathematics can be challenging. For one family-friendly activity, Mark Twain Elementary used something better than fingers and toes to help students solve math problems. The “new” technology involved Skittles. The idea was to have a fun evening to increase positive attitudes about math and to help parents see some unusual ways to reinforce the importance of math at home. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and math teachers provided Skittles to all families as they worked through math problems together.

Skittles at each station were accompanied by grade-level math activities. Teachers of mathematics at each grade level collaborated to identify common learning goals. They created activities that could be solved with the help of Skittles. The teachers were on hand at each station to answer questions and provide support. Said one, “I enjoyed the opportunity to connect in a different way with the parents of students in my classroom.” The following were the topics of each grade level station:

- Kindergarten—Skittles Sort
- 1st grade—Skittle Graphing
- 2nd grade—Measuring with Skittle
- 4th grade—Skittle Multiplication
- Tic-Tac-Toe
- 5th grade—Skittle Fractions
- 6th grade—Skittle Ratios

The visual and colorful activities allowed the students to become “teachers” to show their parents how to conduct these math activities. Packs of Skittles also were sent home with each family to reproduce or extend the activities they conducted at school. The principal observed, “Students were having a great time using candy to measure, count, compare, and make equations. I was impressed with the teachers’ creativity in designing Skittle-themed activities that truly incorporated mathematical learning.

And of course, the students were happy to eat their work!”

Logistically, Skittles Math Night was conducted in two locations to ease congestion and create a good traffic flow. Students in the younger grades and their parents went to the cafeteria, and those in the older grades were in the gymnasium. The planners were correct that over 100 students and 50 parents would be crowded and noisy in one room. In the two places, families moved with ease and there was enough room for parents to sit and interact with their children on the activities.

Skittles Math Night helped the school meet a goal to engage parents with students on math to improve students’ skills and scores, and to increase everyone’s enjoyment of math. The math night even supported the school’s goal to engage parents with students on reading. Instead of having a teacher explain the activity, teachers created printed materials with easy-to-follow instructions and distributed them to students and families in attendance.

The school serves a growing student population that is majority Hispanic. Also, 80% of the student population qualify for free and reduced-price lunches, and a third of all students are learning English. The school hopes that fun-with-math activities will strengthen their connections with the students’ families. To understand if this goal for good partnerships was met, the ATP gathered feedback from teachers and students. The evaluations were positive, with messages that reinforced the decision to arrange the grade-level groups in two locations. It is odd to think of mathematics being described as “delicious.”

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ART IN BLOOM—EARLY CHILDHOOD ANNUAL ART SHOW

THE MUSIC SETTLEMENT
CLEVELAND, OH

The Music Settlement, a preschool in Cleveland, Ohio, is cultivating its blooming artists to fulfill their creative potential. To help the pre-K and kindergarten students achieve this goal, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) invited practicing artists to collaborate with students on Art in Bloom—the school’s annual art show. The ATP hoped that this partnership with local artists would introduce students to a wide range of media that is not typically available in the classroom, and promote collaborations between the community and the school.

Throughout the year, the ATP organized class visits and lessons from several guest artists. Teachers and parent volunteers facilitated the lessons that the visiting artists conducted. Students’ artwork was collected throughout the year to showcase at the annual art show. One teacher expressed everyone’s feelings: “This is my favorite event—there is so much joy and pride in the children and families.”

The ATP planned the logistics for the art show over several months. The team coordinated with artists, created and sent invitations, planned the reception, scheduled volunteers to help with the show, and prepared items to exhibit. The organizers mounted the artwork for display, labeled each piece, and grouped the work by grade level and classroom. Teachers and organizers ensured that every student had one piece included in Art in Bloom.

Volunteers—including parents, teachers, and administrators—came in the day before the show to set up the show and prepare the reception. The Large Muscle Room (an indoor play area) was transformed into a sophisticated art gallery. Black panel backdrops were hung on the walls and dark tablecloths covered surfaces to create a good background for the art. Framed pieces were adjusted on the panels, and art and sculptures were arranged on tables. A dance

studio was rearranged to host the reception filled with donated refreshments. On the day of the art show, volunteers checked the displays and installed a red carpet area for photos.

Art in Bloom was a great success attended by 140 students, more than 400 parents and family members, 35 school staff and faculty, and 25 community members. Volunteers, including some from a nearby college sorority, circulated and captured photographs of the students with their artwork and family members, and assisted with the refreshments. “[Our child] is so excited to be here and show us his work today,” one parent commented. “We had no idea he could do this.”

The show was accompanied by live music as students, parents, and school and community members enjoyed the students’ artwork for the year. A classroom canvas auction was conducted at the reception, and some student work was purchased. A grandparent and board member saw great potential, “I will hang this in my house. This is a real art show!”

The cost of \$800 for the artists and materials was covered by the Parent Committee and donations. To publicize the event, the ATP sent invitations home, mailed invitation to Board Members, posted information on the school website, and welcomed extended family and returning families. Following the show, the ATP sent thank you notes to the artists and volunteers who helped make Art in Bloom a bloomin’ success. This activity, based on student learning through art experiences, drew in many partners.

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ART WALK

TREMONT MONTESSORI
CLEVELAND, OH

Every month, the Tremont neighborhood organizes a community Art Walk for artists and galleries to open their doors for art shows, music, and food. The Art Walk brings together residents, local businesses, and community artists. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Tremont Montessori decided to participate in the May Art Walk as one of the “stops” for families and community members to view students’ artwork and engage in art activities.

The ATP, art teacher, faculty, staff, parents, and students planned the Art Walk. They selected the art of Gustav Klimt as the theme for the Tremont Montessori project. This theme guided the art curriculum throughout the year and carried over to other subjects. Because Klimt was well known for his *Tree of Life* painting and his love of cats, the art teacher focused her lessons on nature and animals. As a part of the art class, students read nonfiction books on animals and nature, including *Klimt and his Cat*—a picture book biography of Gustav Klimt. All teachers extended the theme to other subjects and skills for preschool students including socioemotional learning, writing exercises, and reading more nonfiction books.

Tremont’s Art Walk was open for two hours one Friday evening in May. Parents, students, other family members, caregivers, and community members came by to enjoyed displays of students’ art, student music, hands-on art projects, and literacy activities. “Working on the Art Walk is always a great experience bringing together our families and the community,” the art teacher remarked.

A local organization, Upcycle Parts Shop, guided some Tremont art activities using recycled materials and turning them into creative art projects. With the Art Walk scheduled close to Earth Day, the Klimt theme of nature and earth extended to community engagement.

For example, for one activity volunteers guided students in making a pinwheel to learn how wind makes pinwheels turn. Another recycling project provided materials for students to create colorful and unusual hats.

Tremont’s team invited a storyteller for the Art Walk who demonstrated for parents how interactive read-aloud stories at home help build students’ literacy skills. The storyteller weaved in culturally-relevant stories and storytelling methods from her Puerto Rican background. She also shared story-songs *Des Colores* and *Abiyoyo*. All students received books to take home.

The school orchestra and band gave live performances at Art Walk. Resource tables were set with information on local libraries and the school’s participation in an annual parade organized by the Cleveland Museum of Art. The ATP also included information about and opportunities for Pre-K enrollment.

The ATP created and distributed flyers in the school and community, and sent flyers home to all families. There also was information posted around the school on lawn signs. Community partners helped by posting information in local businesses. The ATP recruited volunteers who helped mat and hang students’ artwork. Refreshments were served by Tremont to the Art Walk visitors. The cost to implement this practice was about \$1000, which was covered by Universal Pre-Kindergarten grants, Title I funds from the school district, and general school funds.

Tremont Montessori’s Art Walk was a great success with about 600 students and their families attending. The arts came to life for all to enjoy during this creative and colorful event.

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BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS

EMERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PASCO, WA

Education is the lifeline for a brighter future for students at Emerson Elementary School. Most students come from families that are struggling economically, yet parents want their children to succeed in school. Breakfast of Champions provided parents with an opportunity to learn more about the importance of the standardized tests that students take every year, starting in Grade 3. They wanted to know what tests their children would take, what was expected at each grade level, and how they could help prepare their children for test taking.

The activity was adapted from one conducted at a nearby school. Pasco's district leaders for partnerships encourage schools to learn from each other, share best practices, and make the adaptations needed to meet their needs.

Parents came to school at 7:50 a. m. on their way to work or other busy tasks. They were greeted by friendly faculty and staff, and taken to the library for breakfast and for good information about the students' required tests. This included a list of dates of the English Language Arts and Math Assessments that are part of standardized tests (i.e., Smarter Balanced), other state tests, and specific tests for bilingual students.

The principal used PowerPoint to present information on the purposes of each test, sample questions, and how all parents can—in the language they speak at home—help students—including English Language Learners—practice skills that will give students confidence about taking the tests. Parents also were reminded of the common parenting activities that always are helpful, such as ensuring students get a good night's sleep and eat breakfast. They were reminded not to schedule children's medical appointments on test days.

Most importantly, parents were invited to ask questions. The staff made sure that each question was clearly answered and that parents felt comfortable and confident about their role in supporting students as test takers. When students know what to expect on test day and feel that their parents know that they will try their best, they may experience less anxiety and perform better on the tests.

Teachers are one of the best resources for talking with parents about their children's learning and the tests they take. Teachers know when students are doing well and when they are struggling with specific skills. They can help by addressing gaps in students' learning before these become serious deficits that will influence test taking and test scores. At Breakfast of Champions, teachers took an active role in talking with parents about their children's concerns and how parents can help relieve students' worries.

Parents completed a short survey giving their views on whether Breakfast of Champions was helpful to them, and what suggestions they had to improve the information they received. Teachers suggested that it would be good to poll the students, too, about their questions, concerns, and stressors.

Breakfast of Champions was publicized with flyers that went home with students in the grades that are tested, and information was posted on the school's website and reader board. The attendees' active interest told the principal, ATP, and teachers that the topic was an important one to continue to discuss so that more parents understood the tests and their purposes, and so that more students knew that they had the support of their parents to do their best.

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TYPE 4

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

CAMPING WITH CURRICULUM

HENRY HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LAKE CHARLES, LA

TYPE 2

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

Outdoor apparel, gear, tents, and artificial “fires” set the scene for camping at Henry Heights Elementary School, a school-wide Title I school with almost 400 students. Teachers and administrators created Camping with Curriculum to involve parents in their student’s learning and improve students’ math and reading skills.

As students and parents entered the campgrounds, they received a passport listing all campsite locations. Their passports were stamped by teachers at different activities. When the passports were complete, students received a treat.

A guest reader, the district’s Chief Academic Officer, opened camp on the cafeteria stage with a campfire story, *A Camping Spree with Mr. Magee* by Chris Van Dusen. The book in rhyme and with colorful illustrations, follows the adventures of Mr. Magee and his dog, Dee, in camp adventures.

The first stop after story was a Math Scavenger Hunt. Students picked up a clip board, pencil, and set of age-appropriate math problems to solve with their families. Their teachers wore the correct (final) answer to the problem on a bandana. Teachers checked the student work, and if the answer to the scavenger hunt was correct, the student received a small treat. Like other activities, the Math Scavenger Hunt included an end assessment or score. Students knew how they did immediately after finishing a game.

Families travelled along to the multi-purpose room campsite to participate in a book walk and several academic activity stations. One activity station focused on math, including estimating the number of items in a collection of jars. The closest estimates won the jars and the contents. Math Rock Climbing at the camp took students up a “mountain” of math problems by

solving equations using Hot Dots for Math (a variation of math flashcards) to reach the top and a treat. The fishing hole at camp focused on language arts. Students and parents went fishing for prefixes and suffixes to build and understand new words. Other activities included math and reading Bingo, with prizes for the campers.

The last stop was the library campsite, where the school hosted a book fair and reading area. Families could purchase books, academic materials, and other items. The Calcasieu Parish Library set up a station for students to get library cards and information on events at the library. The reading area was furnished with tents, chairs, and plenty of space for reading. Students also had the opportunity to take an Accelerated Reading (AR) reading test if they completed a book that evening.

About 150 students and over 100 parents and caregivers came to Camp, along with more than 40 faculty and staff who facilitated activities. The student activities account covered the \$200 cost for the evening. Camping with Curriculum was advertised in the school newsletter, notes and flyers sent home, and phone calls were made for personal communications.

Camping with Curriculum included reading and math activities by grade level, combined with a fun theme and entertaining games. Parents gained a better sense of what their children were learning in class, and gathered ideas for engaging in similar activities at home. Everyone who came to camp wanted “s’more.”

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COOKIES WITH SANTA

HENRY DOERR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER
SAGINAW, MI

Even if it's cold, the December holidays offer opportunities to build a sense of community with warm and welcoming activities. The Doerr Early Childhood Center parent educators and preschool teachers developed Cookies with Santa to bring students, parents, teachers, and other colleagues and friends together. They selected the time, 5:30-7 p.m., that was most requested by parents.

Three planning meetings helped everyone share ideas and identify their responsibilities. The school has clear goals for student learning in reading and math readiness, early science skills, and the development of fine and gross motor skills. The planners wanted to offer activities that would link students' experiences at Cookies with Santa to these skills. Planners also checked responses on a prior survey of parents to select the activities that parents and students enjoyed doing together.

Students could participate in cookie decorating, face painting, coloring, playing with play dough, reindeer art, story time, a gross-motor skill maze, mouse candy canes, pine cone ornament-making, and helped parents collect some ideas for helping students with early reading and literacy skills. Parents were able to see the types of activities that help students learn. Some of these were organized and quiet, such as story time. Other activities teach skills through play.

Parents were encouraged to bring a camera because Mr. and Mrs. Clause were taking a quick trip down from the North Pole to have some cookies (even during their busy season). They brought each child a gift and were available for photos. One parent exclaimed, "You guys did awesome!"

Enough pizza was on hand for all attendees, thanks to the RSVPs from a tear off section

of the main flyer that went home. There were some interesting volunteers to help with all of the activities. The Center's administrator contacted the local high school to find students who would assist the little ones. They earned some service learning hours that they needed. Other community partners helped set up tables and activities. Still others offered donations to support the planned program.

Friends of the Center—assessment workers, parent educators, and teachers—sent flyers home one month in advance, and made follow-up phone calls to families as a reminder right before the event. Parent educators created their own contest to see who could get the most families to participate. The Center provided families with \$10 bus passes to solve transportation problems.

Teachers conducted and collected surveys from parents to get their views on Cookies with Santa. Nearly 90 parents attended and provided positive evaluations of the activity. One good suggestion was to provide more areas or activities for toddlers.

The Doerr Early Childhood Center expects that the parents who attended this informal, busy, and fun activity will know that the school welcomes their participation and ideas throughout the year. Cookies with Santa was successful largely because of the excellent planning and implementation efforts of the administrators, teachers, and staff. Working together, they presented a true gift to students and parents, reflecting the spirit of the holidays.

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TYPE 2

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

HOMework CENTER MAKE IT AND TAKE IT NIGHT

& 2ND GRADE HOMEWORK NIGHT

COTTONWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
& EDISON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
KENNEWICK, WA

TYPE 2

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

At a cluster meeting of school-based Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs), district leaders in Kennewick, Washington, discussed the topic of homework. Some schools are conducting “homework nights” to help parents better understand their roles in guiding students to do their homework. The ATPs and teachers at Cottonwood and Edison Elementary Schools shared their activities to help students and parents think positively about the benefits of homework for student learning and to encourage conversations about students’ ideas and work at home.

At Cottonwood, the meeting with parents and students about homework focused on students in grades K, 1, and 2. Students and parents gathered to build a three-section collapsible privacy wall or “homework station” where students can retreat at home to do their work in their own quiet space. Parents and students picked up directions on how to build a sturdy homework station to use at home.

Each student received a packet of age-appropriate learning tools, including alphabet charts, number charts, math operations, sight words, and color words to take home to help them on various homework assignments. They also could choose printouts of motivational quotes and sayings, and crayons to decorate their stations. Teachers circulated to meet families, answer questions, and provide advice.

At Edison Elementary, the 2nd grade teachers wanted to work collaboratively on this year’s event to bring students and families together as a grade-level community. Teachers set up tables around the school gym to explain expectations for students’ homework, distribute materials and resources for students and parents, and to answer questions about how to help at home.

At Edison, other features included a presentation by the public librarian about online

reading resources and how to obtain a library card. At each table, teachers demonstrated games, activities, and tips to use when students and parents worked together on homework. At another table were materials, such as donated pizza boxes and math supplies for students and parents to build and decorate a privacy “homework station” as a designated place for students to do their work.

Both schools had a similar purpose, but each one customized its activities. At Cottonwood, teachers in grades K-2 met to discuss materials for the resource packets for students. They made sample homework stations. At Edison, the 2nd grade teachers gathered materials and contacted the local library to be a partner for the homework night. The schools were variously supported by an ATP budget, PTO funds, Title I funds, and donations. They advertised the meeting to encourage parents of children in the targeted grade levels with fliers, reminders, and social media platforms.

The ATPs, teachers, and other partners (e.g., PTA or PTO and community groups) may address similar topics—such as homework—and use their creative powers to develop activities that meet the needs of their own students and parents. Teachers know that homework helps students practice new skills and get ready for the next lesson. They also know that parents can be a powerful, positive motivators, but want information on how best to help at home. In their own ways, Cottonwood and Edison demonstrated how schools, families, students, and the community can collaborate to improve the homework process.

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INVOLVING PARENTS WITH READING, MATH, RED BEANS, AND

NORTHEAST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
OPELOUSAS, LA

Northeast Elementary School is working to strengthen partnerships between school and home. The school is located in a rural area and most of its students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), school leaders, and teachers know that despite their economic challenges, parents want their children to succeed in school. They are aware that reading is key to their children's success in all school subjects.

The school planned a welcoming and comprehensive family night—Reading, Math, Red Beans, and RICE—for parents of students in grades 3-6 to improve family and school connections around student learning. Notices went home to parents and the school's billboard prominently declared the upcoming event.

As parents and students arrived they found several stations set up by teachers from each grade with activities and information focused on grade-appropriate reading and math. For example, to help parents understand the math solving processes that students were learning, they received information on the **RICE** process. In math, children are taught to: **R**ead the problem and underline the question. **I**dentify the important information needed to solve the problem, and then circle it in the question. **C**reate a plan to solve the problem. **E**xplain your answer.

At some stations, parents worked to solve sample math problems at the same time as the students. Then, they compared and discussed the processes they used and answers to the problems. The students showed their parents how they worked through the RICE process to arrive at their answers. This was an eye-opening activity for some parents, as one

commented: "I had no idea that students were working these types of problems."

As they rotated through stations for their child's grade level, parents and students explored sample questions that students might see on the end-of-year math and reading tests, and ideas for how to help students at home on math and reading homework. Parents could pick up the end-of-year testing schedule and a list of 10 suggestions to help their child succeed in school (e.g., Attend back-to-school night and parent-teacher conferences; Visit the school and its website; support homework expectations; Get involved; Take student attendance seriously; Make time to talk to your child about school, and others).

In keeping with the RICE theme and in conjunction with Louisiana's reputation for cuisine, the school spiced up the night by serving red beans and rice to all attendees.

As the parents left they completed surveys about their experience, which gave the ATP and teachers good ideas about how to improve their on-going efforts to improve partnerships, and questions that need to be answered. The side-by-side activities that parents and children conducted in math and reading were fun to watch, as the principal noted: "I am glad to see parents involved with his or her child, solving the task presented, and interested in each other's ideas."

The efforts to improve its partnership program did not stop at the school door. Reading, Math, Red Beans, and RICE set clear expectations for parents to continue to help at home and sign the daily agenda that showed they reviewed and assisted with homework.

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IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE

LAGRANGE HIGH SCHOOL
LAKE CHARLES, LA

TYPE 2

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

To address goals for student success in the School Improvement Plan, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at LaGrange High School created It's a Jungle Out There! This family night combined attention to reading, math, college planning, and test-taking strategies. The organizers selected a jungle theme to attract interest in the school's upcoming musical production of *Madagascar*, featuring its mad-cap animals and wild adventures.

Students and parents were given passports to track their travels through various classrooms to conduct activities together linked to reading, math, college planning, and test preparation. Faculty from all disciplines hosted the classrooms and facilitated the activities. For example, in one classroom, students and parents wrote acrostic poems about animals from *Madagascar*, strengthening expressive language skills that students learned in a poetry unit. In another room, students and faculty recited their original poetry.

Many classrooms integrated technology into the activities. A *Jeopardy* game focused on reading and literature. A safari scavenger hunt used iPads to send students and parents in search of clues to answer math problems. In science, an activity focused on finding information about fascinating wild animals from Madagascar. The participants appreciated the innovative use of technology: "The Jeopardy game was so cool," evaluated a group of students and parents.

Representatives from local colleges guided students and parents to complete FAFSA forms and to review college application forms. The school library introduced resources and services available at public libraries, and helped participants obtain library cards.

In one classroom, the ATP presented information about the end-of-course tests that students must take, and test-taking strategies. This included how families may support the test takers. A representative from the La Familia

Resource Center, a local bilingual non-profit organization, provided support to Spanish-speaking families on all activities.

Students and families had to complete eight activities for passport stamps. The passports could be exchanged for popcorn, nachos, sodas, and water. To encourage attendance at the performance of *Madagascar*, LaGrange students who will be performing in the musical were in full costume and interacted with attendees throughout the evening. They also posed for photos with families at a "selfie" station. Young siblings and children of the high school students were given age-appropriate math and reading materials to take home.

Prior to planning It's a Jungle Out There, the ATP surveyed parents, students, and teachers to learn which academic concepts to emphasize in activities and what information to provide at the family night. Teachers helped the ATP plan activities that reinforced students' skills in English language arts and math.

The ATP advertised widely, using the school messenger, parent contacts, and flyers sent home with each student. In addition, feeder schools and families were invited to attend. The school's morning news broadcasts included messages about the event, and teachers gave classroom incentives for students to attend. Title I funds and donations covered the \$840 cost of the event. A local restaurant and partner in education donated nachos and drinks for the evening.

More than 175 students, family members, teachers, and others left It's a Jungle Out There! with useful resources and test-taking strategies. School leaders observed that everyone had a good time "rumbling in our jungle."

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MERRICK HOUSE FAMILY EXPO

MERRICK HOUSE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER
CLEVELAND, OH

A bright blue flyer about the Family Expo went home to all families of the preschool students at the Merrick House Neighborhood Center, followed by e-mail reminders and other communications. The advertisements explained the purpose and agenda for the Merrick House Family Expo on early childhood education. Families were invited to come to learn about the early learning and development standards that were being used by teachers to guide their instruction and activities.

Knowing that parents and other family members nurtured children's learning, the Center's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and faculty planned the Expo to provide resources and ideas that would help families reinforce their children's learning at home. The Family Expo featured several booths that were staffed by the Center's teachers. They shared information and activities with parents and students on topics in the state's Early Learning Development Standards for children from birth to five years old. The standards identify instructional approaches and assessments to ensure that young children gain skills in language and literacy, math, science, social studies, social-emotional development, and physical well-being and motor development so that they are ready for kindergarten. The standards were addressed in each booth for the age groups served by the Center—infants, toddlers, and pre-kindergarteners.

Many booths provided interactive activities for parents and children to do together and to enjoy at home. The "make-it, try-it, take-it" spirit for the evening was by design. The Center's CEO explained, "[These activities] helped parents become more engaged with their child while learning developmentally appropriate activities. I loved that all activities connected to the domains of Early Learning Development Standards."

In addition to visiting booths, there were presentations by two community members who specialized in holistic well-being. Cooking with Mr. D. included an interactive snack station and a pamphlet on easy-to-prepare healthy snacks. Storytime with Mr. Hassan demonstrated rhythm beats that parents and children learned, as well as interactive calls and responses.

The Center provided a salad bar and fruit water for a healthy dinner. A raffle for door prizes included gift cards from Wal-Mart and several language and literacy kits. One parent said, "I love that the teachers were the presenters and were the ones conducting the activities. The raffles were a bonus."

After the Family Expo, the Center observed an uptick in the number of parents asking in-depth questions about the curriculum and early learning development standards. The parents seemed to be empowered to do more to engage their children in learning activities at home. The positive feedback from parents prompted administrators to think about how to expand the Expo in the future by combining it with other school activities. For example, the Center conducts an arts and cultural festival that could include other activities for families on how to engage their children at home in meaningful, age-appropriate ways to increase reading and math readiness skills and meet the state's Early Learning Development Standards.

The Center solved an important challenge faced by all partnership programs of serving families who did not attend. Materials from booths that matched their child's age group were collected and sent home to families who were unable to attend the Expo.

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TYPE 4

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

MINGO NIGHTS

VINTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VINTON, LA

TYPE 2

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

The love of Bingo for Moms—Mingo—helped the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Vinton Elementary School capture the interest of over 800 people at Mingo Nights this year. The quarterly celebrations of students’ academic and behavioral progress caused traffic to pile up at sign in tables. That’s a good problem to have. Even with the crowds, one parent said, “Best parent night ever!”

So, how did Mingo get to be so popular? It started with a solid foundation of good planning. The school’s leadership and Action Team for Partnership (ATP) met in the summer to select dates for four Mingo nights during the year. The group worked together to agree on how students would earn their Mingo boards (see below). At the start of the school year to get on parents’ calendars, they mailed home notices of the selected dates for Mingo Nights and a summary of how students would earn Mingo boards.

At the start of the school year, students learned about the connection of setting goals, reaching goals, and earning Mingo boards. Each student had six goals and could earn six boards as they met their goals. Some goals were common for all students, such as: earn a place on the school’s quarterly honor roll, banner roll, or have perfect attendance for the quarter. Other goals were individual or class-specific, such as meeting classroom goals for good behavior as part of the *PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Support)* program, individual goals for progress in AR (Accelerated Reader), or having exemplary conduct.

As students worked toward their goals, they recorded their daily progress for PBIS, attendance, and Accelerated Reader. Parents reviewed and signed these progress logs every night. In class, teachers helped track student progress. On Mingo Night, each student with a mom or guardian was given the number of Mingo

boards they earned that quarter. By having a few Mingo Nights per year, more parents began to feel comfortable coming to the school. As one said, “I feel very welcomed on this campus.”

In order to attract more participants on Mingo Night, the school provided top-notch prizes. About 10 prizes were awarded to Mingo winners each night. A community partner conducted the Bingo calling. A large projector displayed the i-pad Bingo app that was used to generate numbers. Concession stands sold refreshments.

Parents and students appreciated the link between students’ motivation to reach their learning and behavior goals and the chance to attend the next scheduled Mingo Night. Said one parent, “I love celebrating my child’s success this way. It’s fun!” The school’s mantra for good turnout was to promote, promote, promote. And it worked.

The ATP, principal, and teachers reviewed the purpose and results of Mingo Nights. They felt that the events helped support three important program objectives: enable parents to encourage their child to reach their Accelerated Reading (AR) goal; improve their math skills and math homework completion; and improve their daily positive behavior.

When students have important and attainable goals, they will work to reach them and their parents will support their efforts. With Mingo Nights, everyone is a winner and deserves to shout out “Bingo!”

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POLLOCK WITH PAPAS

BROOKLYN PRE-SCHOOL
BROOKLYN, OH

The art of Jackson Pollock came to life when Brooklyn Pre-School partnered with the Cleveland Children’s Museum for its Great Artist outreach program. Pollock with Papas aimed to connect the school’s art appreciation program with its ongoing efforts to engage more fathers, dads, and father figures—the papas—with their children in class during the school day.

The preschool serves about 55 students, aged 3 to 5 years old. Many families have low incomes and receive discounted preschool tuition. About 30% speak languages other than English at home and many students are English Language Learners.

The ATP and museum staff modified the program to include family participation and to focus on preschool age-appropriate skills. On one visit, the museum volunteer introduced Jackson Pollock and showed and discussed copies of his paintings. Children and parents—including many papas—went to their tables to create a Pollock-style piece of art. The projects incorporated pre-academic, developmental, socioemotional, and motor skills outlined in Ohio’s Early Learning and Development Standards.

Some students and parents planned and constructed 3D sculptures out of modeling clay. They were strengthening skills to meet planning, self expression, and stimuli regulation standards. They combined simple shapes to create larger, more complex shapes—another Early Learning Standard.

Pairs of students and parents used yarn to create paintings in Pollock’s style. They dipped yarn in paint and pressed it onto paper to create something like Pollock’s famous “drip painting” effects. This activity required cooperation and sharing, and helped children increase coordination and dexterity. The children and parents created beautiful Pollock-inspired art.

At the end of the session, students and guests enjoyed an alliterative snack of pudding, pretzels, and punch with their guests.

They activated more standards by engaging in extended conversations, using motor skills, and identifying initial sounds in words. One student exclaimed, “This was a special day because my daddy was here!”

The ATP scheduled four 90-minute sessions of 15 students and their parents, so each student had a chance to participate in a small group. All 55 students and 45 parents and other caregivers experienced the Jackson Pollock lesson and produced their own work. Funds from the Cuyahoga Universal Pre-Kindergarten program covered the cost of the Museum outreach sessions (\$400) and supplies (\$60).

To publicize this event, organizers created color postcards featuring Pollock’s artwork and placed them in students’ folders, which all parents review. Teachers added the event to class webpage calendars, sent text message reminders via RemindMe, provided students with take-home reminder stickers the day before the event, and verbally reminded families at drop-off and pick-up. Although male family members were specially invited, any special grown-up could attend with the child.

The event was evaluated at the next ATP meeting and teachers were asked for feedback. All families also provided feedback on Pollock for Papas and other family engagement events in the end-of-year survey. Pollock with Papas not only encouraged dads and other father figures to participate in their preschoolers’ education, but also generated excitement about family engagement, overall. One mom reported, “My husband loved the event! I am so excited for my turn [in the upcoming Dinos with Dames event].” The ATP aims to continue this practice in the future to introduce students and families to many different artists and link art with children’s learning.

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TYPE 2

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

PREPARE TO EXCEL

LEWIS AND CLARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
RICHLAND, WA

TYPE 2

Tests can cause anxieties in students and in parents. It helps parents to know what tests are administered each year and how the results are used to help their children do their best in school. Lewis and Clark Elementary learned about a successful practice at a school in a nearby district. Leaders borrowed or adapted components to meet the school's needs. The goal of Prepare to Excel was to help parents know more about the state achievement test (*Smarter Balanced Assessment*) and its importance for children's learning.

Plans were to pilot the activity with 4th grade teachers, parents, and students, and then expand Prepare to Excel to connect with parents at all grade levels. The 4th grade teachers worked with the Action Team for Partnership (ATP) on all aspects of the event—planning content, advertising, RSVPs, and refreshments. Other partners included the Communities in Schools liaison for information on resources in the community, high school volunteers for child care, and the principal for information in English and Spanish on ideas for how children can prepare for tests and how parents can help.

At Prepare to Excel, students and parents received movie and dinner tickets. Children went to the cafeteria for a fun-movie. Parents went to the library for a presentation on the school's assessment program and received a calendar of when tests are scheduled. The presentation discussed how the new *Smarter Balanced Assessment* compared to previous tests their children took, and why the changes were made. Teachers and administrators addressed parents' questions and concerns in a Q & A session that followed. Translation headsets and the services of dual-language teachers were available for Spanish-speaking parents. One teacher noted, "I love that our parents were given a voice, because often times they have questions that we don't [hear] about."

Following the presentation, parents joined teachers in the computer lab to take a practice test, just as their children do in school. Again, questions and concerns were addressed. One teacher noticed: "The parents were SO into the test! We had to gently remind a few that their kids were waiting to eat [dinner] with them downstairs."

Parents were guided to stop at the Card Creation Station to write their child a note of encouragement about taking the state test. One parent remarked, "I love that my daughter will have this note waiting for her on the morning of the test!" A flexible time for practice tests, card construction, and dinner allowed families to flow freely through the areas.

Prepare to Excel was held about a week after parent-teacher conferences. At that time, the 4th grade teachers personally invited parents to meet again to learn more about assessments. The personal touch paid off, as over 100 4th grade parents attended. This required the organizers to set up enough Chromebooks for all families to be able to take the practice test.

All information given at the event was sent home to families who were unable to attend, including blank motivational cards for parents to send back to school as a nice surprise for their child on testing day. Prepare to Excel should help more students feel confident about taking tests and more parents feel comfortable about the school's assessment program.

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OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

2

NON-ACADEMIC GOALS



Practices for Types 1-6 in this section involve families and community partners to help students meet non-academic goals for positive behavior, post-secondary education and career planning, health and safety, multicultural awareness, and successful transitions.

ABILITIES AWARENESS WEEK

INDEPENDENCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
WELDON SPRING, MO

It is well known that you cannot really understand someone until you walk in their shoes. Independence Elementary School wanted to strengthen students' awareness of each other's unique abilities. During Abilities Awareness Week, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and many teachers organized a variety of activities to foster a keener sense of empathy of students with those said to have disabilities, but who actually have *different abilities*.

The school gathered for a kick-off assembly where a speaker from the Disabled Athletes Sports Association spoke about how some people overcome their disabilities and participate in sports, such as power soccer. A daily video throughout the week introduced a student with a particular disability to show how that student was able to do fun things—such as horseback riding—despite the disability. The videos were created by parents and helped all students develop a heightened sense of awareness of others and greater awareness of their own diverse abilities in and out of school. Said one student, “Everyone at school has a better understanding of the many abilities that people have.” He went on to explain that he felt he was learning how to “be more friendly to others.”

Another daily practice was to wear colors that supported new knowledge about others. Everyone was encouraged to wear royal blue on Monday to increase awareness among students about autism. On Tuesday, students wore silver or gray clothes to highlight hearing and visual impairments. Wednesdays invited blue and yellow clothes to recognize Down Syndrome. Thursday's purple clothes raised awareness of ADHD and epilepsy. Friday's green clothes stood for knowledge of cerebral palsy and muscular dystrophy. The colors illustrated how students with different abilities also may show many similarities.

Throughout the week, students in different grade levels held town hall meetings to listen

to presentations and discussions by guest speakers about various disabilities. On the last day of the week, all students participated in Abilities Awareness Activities. In their special area classes, the music, art, and PE teachers conducted activities that fit the age and interests of students such as the following:

Hearing Impairment: Students learned a song in sign language and read a sentence to a partner without using the voice. The partner had to read lips.

Visual Impairment: Students learned to write their names and a message in Braille. Colored dots on paper represented the raised bumps of actual Braille writing.

Motor impairment: Students played basketball on scooters using a softer ball and lower hoops for safety. They opened and closed various containers using only one hand.

About 40 parent volunteers came to help the special area teachers with these activities. The parental involvement contributed to the school's major goal of ensuring a welcoming climate for everyone, and developing parent leaders at the school.

Teachers reported that they observed more empathy among students during unstructured social times such as recess or field day. Students were observed to be more inclusive and welcoming of students with all kinds of abilities. In a school that has many students with special needs, Abilities Awareness Week was important and eye-opening. In any school, students need to know that peers with special needs are, like all students, special in many ways.

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CELEBRATING STUDENT SUCCESS

PARK MIDDLE SCHOOL
KENNEWICK, WASHINGTON

TYPE 2

Labels, especially negative ones, are a risky business. They may give the wrong impression about students' abilities to succeed. For example, although they know that risk factors are definitely present in students' lives, the educators at Park Middle School decided to classify all students as "at-hope" and not "at risk." The concept grew from the national group called *Kids at Hope* that works to help all students find their strengths and have confidence in a bright future.

Park Middle planned a Celebrating Student Success project to spotlight the various talents and abilities that put students "at hope," including those with artistic, music, technology, and other talents. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and others wanted to make sure that all teachers and staff agreed that students should not be classified—summarily—as "at risk" if they were really "at hope" in fulfilling their dreams and using their talents. They started the project by focusing on student athletes who have clear strengths, even when they also must overcome various risk factors. The school's athletic director also wanted to inspire more students to try out for a team sport—something new for students entering middle school. He wanted students to join a team and to learn that athletics—even as a hobby or interest—could be important in their futures.

Advertising posters were created by the students for the first Celebrating Student Success ceremony for athletes. About 100 students and 50 parents attended, along with a dozen community members who served as athletic coaches for the school. The evening showed students "at hope" in action. Student leaders led the staff in the Treasure Hunter's pledge: "As an adult and a treasure hunter, I am committed to search for all the talents, skills, and intelligence that exists in

all children and youth. I believe all children are capable of success. No exceptions!"

Student leaders also led the students in the Kids at Hope pledge, which they recite at school every day: "I am a Kid at Hope. I am talented, smart, and capable of success. I have dreams for the future and I will climb to reach those goals and dreams every day. All children are capable of success. No exceptions!" The principal spoke about the need for all students to have hope for their futures and how the school would support their dreams for success.

As part of the awards ceremony, the audience watched highlights from the school's fall sports season. Coaches for the fall sports teams recognized three student-athletes per sport to receive a certificate. Their photos were displayed on the large screen while the coach spoke about their leadership, improvements, positive attitudes, and hard work as reasons for their selection for recognition.

The teacher who coordinated the creation of posters for the event recognized the top three poster designers from each grade level, selected by student and staff votes. The artists' talents were recognized and their posters were displayed.

Pizza was served to all attending. One parent reported, "I didn't want to miss seeing my son get a certificate for soccer." The parent's feeling of pride in his youngster's efforts was shared by everyone who is working to help students succeed in learning and in developing their interests and abilities—no exceptions!

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BEHAVIOR

LAYERS OF LOVE

RIDGE VIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
KENNEWICK, WA

Handmade blankets given out at hospitals warm the hearts of those who receive them. The blankets also are a source of pride and accomplishment for the people who make them. Just ask the students and parents at Ridge View Elementary. As one parent noted, “It was wonderful to see my children and other students creating something that will benefit someone in need.”

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and others adapted this activity—Layers of Love—from a similar event conducted at a nearby school. They sent home flyers, email, and text messages inviting students and parents to attend the blanket making night. They requested donations of fleece in solid colors and prints and other materials. Parents and local fabric and craft stores donated materials. Volunteers pre-cut the fleece into 3’ x 3’ squares.

Students and family members made blankets from two pieces of fleece, fringe, ties, and decorations. The blankets were given to various medical institutions. Recipients included newborns in intensive care, cancer patients, pregnant mothers, and others. By the end of the night, the families had produced 80 blankets for the community. As the families turned in their completed blankets, they learned which local institution would receive them. The sight of everyone working together for the benefit of the community was inspiring, as one teacher explained, “I loved seeing all the families, especially dads, come together with their children to create such a thoughtful gift.”

The school’s advice for others conducting similar events is to ensure that there are enough fabric scissors for all participants, because they are more useful than regular scissors for cutting fleece. They also suggest using tables in the cafeteria for craft work to accommodate family members for whom it is difficult to work on the floor.

Although the main focus of Layers of Love was for students, parents, and other family members to work together on a good project, the organizers included ways for parents and students to conduct some academic learning activities. Math activity sheets dealing with measurement concepts linked to blanket making were distributed during the evening, along with some writing activities. Students also gained empathy for others as they learned about others’ needs. They refined fine motor skills in cutting and sewing blankets and they brought teamwork to a new level.

Attendees completed a short survey that asked several questions about how well organized the activity was, what the family most enjoyed, and what would make Layers of Love even better. The responses were very positive. On the survey, one student cut to the heart of the matter, “I liked helping people.” Reactions from the community also were positive. One community member contacted the school saying, “I’ve heard that Ridge View students are making blankets to donate. What a wonderful idea!” The spirit of giving seemed to catch hold for some participants. One student enthused, “This is so fun! I can’t wait for my family to make more blankets and donate them on our own!”

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MAPLEWOOD LEADERSHIP DAY

MAPLEWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SULPHUR, LA

According to its website, the *Leader in Me* program is used in schools around the world. Maplewood Elementary has been implementing the principles of *Leader in Me* for three years and has seen important changes in student behavior.

This year, the principal, Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), and many others celebrated the good work of each and all students on Maplewood Leadership Day. The school opened its doors to showcase its program and progress to parents and the community. Visitors toured the school to see students' leadership notebooks, observe students serving in school leadership positions, and examine important facts and data posted on the schools' walls. A former teacher who attended Leadership Day reflected, "I used to teach here at Maplewood. The school climate is so positive now and the kids are so respectful."

The students' leadership notebooks help students track their own progress. They record their goals and document their academic and behavioral data and other successes. The leadership positions that students fill at school require them to apply for the job, just as they will do for jobs in the future. The data posted on walls around the building show visitors how students are performing academically, behaviorally, and in leadership roles. Students interpreted the data for the visitors, explaining how they have achieved important learning and behavioral goals. This was one parent's favorite part of the tour: "I loved the way the students told us all about the data on the walls."

Over 100 parents and about 37 community members visited the school on Leadership Day. The school ran a solid advertising campaign including ads in school newsletters, flyers, the school's messaging system, and e-mail reminders. One visitor summed up the feeling, "The students here seem to be so proud of their school."

The administration and staff have worked hard to help students feel part of a safe, nurturing environment that supports their many achievements. They want students to know that teachers expect them to do their best and take leadership for their own learning, helping others, and making the school a great place for everyone to learn and grow. The school leaders and teachers have emphasized the 7 Habits of Happy Kids in the *Leader in Me* program:

Habit 1: Choose your actions, attitudes, and moods. You are in charge of your own life.

Habit 2: Have a plan and a set of goals. Know what you want to accomplish, and what you need to do in order to accomplish that goal.

Habit 3: Work first, then play. Decide what is the most important thing to do, then do that first.

Habit 4: Everyone can win. Nobody loses.

Habit 5: Value other people's ideas and feelings. Try to see things from their point of view.

Habit 6: Work together. Value other peoples' strengths and learn from them.

Habit 7: Take care of your body by eating right, exercising, and getting sleep.

One community member remarked, "These kids really know the 7 habits. I'm so proud of them." The school staff believes that students have internalized the seven habits and feel in charge of their own learning and the climate of the school. There is always room for improvement, but right now, Maplewood students are setting important goals for personal growth and academic success.

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“PAWS”ITIVELY GREAT COUGAR BUS BEHAVIOR CONTEST

LAKE LOUISE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LAKEWOOD, WA

At Lake Louise Elementary School, the school day includes the bus rides to and from school. A great bus ride is important—it sets the tone for the day. This reality prompted a school-wide competition to promote good behavior on the bus.

At the home of the cougar (school mascot), the goal of the “Paws”itively Great Cougar Bus Behavior Contest was to reduce or eliminate problems reported by bus drivers to the school staff. This fit an important goal set by the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at the start of the year: “To provide a safe physical, social, emotional, and intellectual environment at school and improve student behavior on the bus.”

Bus drivers reported daily on student behavior on their routes to and from school. They recorded their ratings on a specially-designed notepad, ranking bus behavior from 1-5, with 5 representing the highest or best rating. Cumulative scores were kept for each bus route throughout the year. An on-going scoreboard was posted in the school for all students to keep track of their bus and its standing. This public scoring helped to maintain student interest throughout the year.

At the beginning of the year, students were promised that the bus with the best cumulative score at the end of the year would get to attend a professional AAA baseball game during the school day. The school reached out to the baseball team, the Tacoma Rainiers, and arranged for the team’s mascot, Rhubarb the Reindeer, to attend the kickoff event of the competition.

A surprise for parents was another aspect of the program called Bus Parent Appreciation. School personnel followed each bus one morning in a district car to thank the parents who waited

at the bus stop with their children and other students. The school staff hopped out at each bus stop and presented the parents with a candy bar wrapped in a custom wrapper featuring a picture of Superman and showing that parents were “super” as well. The custom wrapper added a few ingredients to the candy—noting the bar was made from the strength, excellence, helpfulness, determination, and caring of parents.

One school official said, “Bus stop heroes are making a big difference in their children’s day—and contributing to their overall success in school—by ensuring their child makes it to the bus safely and on-time.” The parents seemed pleasantly surprised to learn that teachers and administrators appreciated the part parents played in bus safety and support for students’ good behavior.

Rhubarb the Reindeer came back to school at the end of the year to celebrate with the children and announce the winner of the Bus Behavior Contest—the children who would attend the Tacoma Rainiers baseball game. Many of the students had never attended a baseball game before. One student from the winning bus simply said during the game, “I am having so much fun!”

The real winner of the contest was the whole school. Results were overwhelmingly positive and the number of bus referrals for poor behavior decreased. Said a district coordinator, “I love this bus behavior program. I want other schools in the district to implement similar programs.”

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TYPE 2

BEHAVIOR

STUDENT OF THE MONTH

STONE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SAGINAW, MI

Stone Elementary School created a new approach by combining two new school programs—*Promoting Positive School Climate (PPSC)* and *Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS)*—with a long-standing practice of recognizing the Student of the Month.

A special committee was formed consisting of the principal, parent liaison, community mental health school-based therapist (a community partner), behavior interventionist, and three teachers. The group was tasked with creating a plan to integrate new programs to improve the school climate and student behavior into the culture of the school as a whole. The committee decided to link the new programs with a popular, on-going activity—Student of the Month—to reinforce the connections of student learning and behavior. The school is working to ensure a welcoming climate for all partners, where all students can learn, and where good behavior prevails in all areas. The plan was approved by the School Quality Team and the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). The PAC agreed to support the plan financially.

In the integrated design, behavioral expectations were created for all aspects of school life in positive, concise, student-friendly language that emphasized how good behavior was respectful, responsible, and safe. A master matrix of good student behavior was printed on posters and displayed throughout the school. Lessons were provided in all classrooms. To proactively recognize good behavior, teachers and staff worked to “catch students doing good.” The students were given “tickets” that could be used to purchase rewards.

The rewards—such as stickers, small toys, school supplies, dolls, and sports equipment—were available for purchase once a week. Some cost 5 tickets and other cost more—up to 200 tickets. Non-tangible rewards also could be purchased, such as extra computer time, extra

recess, a surprise field trip, and desired privileges such as lunch with a staff member, after-school cooking, or art projects.

This behavior system dovetailed with the school’s Student of the Month program, which has been part of the school culture for ten years. Students work hard to maintain good behavior, and each teacher selects one or two students a month for recognition.

A school-wide assembly is conducted to honor the students of the month and parents are invited to attend. Parents also receive a note thanking them for preparing their child to be a good school citizen. Students appreciate the congratulations they receive. Community partners weigh in each month with gifts and coupons for the students and families, and students’ names are entered in drawings for prizes donated by the community. Said one parent, “My son was so excited when he won a bike. He just loves it!”

Although prizes provide some extrinsic motivation for good behavior, the most valuable result of the focus on good school citizenship has been sharing the accomplishment with parents. Over 600 parents came to Student of the Month assemblies over the year.

At the end of the year, good behavior and good citizenship combined to create a good learning environment. The combined efforts have helped to increase attendance, improve achievement, and reduce suspensions and office referrals by nearly 50% throughout the school year. It is clear that providing multiple opportunities for student success leads to continual improvement.

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TYPE 1

BEHAVIOR

THE KICK TEAM

JOHN W. MOORE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL
FLORENCE, SC

The Keeping It Classy Kids (KICK) team consists of two girls per classroom (about 80 girls in grades 5 and 6). The girls are nominated by their teachers as having leadership potential, but not yet meeting their full potential. KICK aims to develop girls' leadership skills, with an emphasis on good attendance, good behavior, friendship, and kindness toward others. The program ran for 15 weeks. It was one of the innovative proposals funded by a small grant from Francis Marion University—a partner on family and community engagement projects.

The school counselors who facilitated KICK met with eight girls at a time. In order not to disrupt instructional time, the meetings were held once a week during the girls' scheduled recess for about 15 minutes per meeting. Topics included friendship, goal setting, family commitment, etiquette/manners, teamwork, healthy choices, community involvement, college, careers, and hygiene. The topics were organized by four themes: Knowledge (I can discover and explore new things); Respect (I am loved and can love others); Forgiveness (I will not stay angry); and Humility (I don't have to be first). Some girls couldn't get enough. "I can't wait for our next KICK meeting!" said one. Parents reported, "My daughter looks forward to the meeting each week."

Some parents suggested topics, as one wrote "Will you talk with my daughter about girl drama in KICK next week?" Also lending support were community volunteers and guest speakers, including two news reporters, a city councilwoman, a police officer, an athlete and coach, a teacher, a college-age entrepreneur, and a pageant queen.

At the end of each meeting, the girls responded to a prompt about the topic in their reflection booklets. They shared their reflections at home with a parent each week. Parents

responded reactions to their daughters' reflections.

Early in the year, the girls made bracelets to represent their friendship and commitment to KICK. They also served as ambassadors of kindness for their classrooms. Each one sponsored a "Kindness Jar" in the classroom in which every kind gesture earned a "warm fuzzy" in the jar. When the jar was full, the class was recognized as a Certified Kind Classroom with a certificate to display. The Kindness Jars helped improve student behavior, as evidenced by the fact that approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of all classrooms with KICK representatives earned a certificate.

Toward the end of the program, the girls traveled to an elementary school in the area to teach girls in younger grades about what they learned from KICK and the importance of friendship. The KICK girls cherished the opportunity to be positive role models to the young students. The school also reported a 29% decrease in KICK girls' disciplinary referrals.

In the last week of the program, parents were invited to come for coffee and doughnuts to celebrate the completion of KICK. Team photos were given to each girl on a CD along with the book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People for Teen Girls*, by Donna Dale Carnegie.

The principal commented on the positive nature of the program, "... It was heart-warming to see these young ladies demonstrate and model character traits that were learned through the KICK program. They became leaders in our school who modeled kindness, character, and integrity, and who shared their special qualities with others."

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THE R.E.A.L. MALE EMPOWERMENT SUMMIT

WILLIAM S. SANDEL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
COLUMBIA, SC

TYPE 1

At Sandel Elementary, the spirit of change and improvement was in the air. The school is attended by mainly African American students and most are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The principal and teachers set ambitious goals to (1) increase students' reading skills and scores and (2) improve student behavior to eliminate in-school and out-of-school suspensions.

Many ideas for how to help students reach these goals were tried in the past, but missed the mark. Then, the administration, teachers, and Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) made an important decision to draw from the students' families and communities in meaningful ways. The entire faculty read and discussed *Boys in Crisis* to make sure that they understood positive strategies that might help the boys at school. This was important, but there were still some missing links in enabling students make real progress.

School leaders took a more active and inclusive path to partnership. They organized two roundtable meetings—one with community stakeholders and one with students' parents. At the first roundtable, the principal asked community members for their ideas about the challenges that black males face and potential solutions. After a discussion of many good ideas, the principal asked who was willing to help Sandel students. Over 50 educators, organizations, churches, businesses, and other community members pledged to partner with the school to help guide boys toward success in school and out.

At the second roundtable, more than 100 parents participated in an open discussion about how to help the school's male students toward success. Dinner and childcare were provided. The fact that parents brought 70 children to child care showed the school staff how important it was to provide that service for parents

to attend the meeting. The parents' views and ideas were exciting.

The notes from both roundtables led to another partnership activity—The R. E. A. L. Male Empowerment Summit was held to turn good ideas into real action steps. The Relevant Education About Life (R. E. A. L.) Summit was for all boys in grades 3 to 5. It was clear that the students, themselves, were key to a successful plan for successful students. The summit's motto, "Dream It, See It, Do It, Live It," put things in perspective for the students.

At the Summit, the participating adults were encouraged to dress professionally as role models for the students. The students also dressed for success with bowties that were donated by the Mayor. The Mayor and the head of the Board of Commissioners came to the Summit to address the students. The boys were treated to a morning and afternoon motivational speaker, and each student received an autographed book by one of the speakers. At the Summit, all boys set three personal goals to achieve at school. They pledged to make good choices. The school leaders pledged to support the students and help them reach their personal goals.

It is clear that to excel in school, students need to express their own goals and dreams, *and* have teachers, parents, and mentors to support them. Everyone agreed that the discussions and pledge that led to the Summit were important, but they were not the end of the story. Rather, only students' reading improvements and good school behavior could be counted as R.E.A.L. results.

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BEHAVIOR

ALUMNI DOLLARS FOR SCHOLARS

FREDERICK DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL
BALTIMORE, MD

Every year, high schools across America launch thousands of graduates into the world—hoping for good landing spots. At Frederick Douglass High School (FDHS), the administration works closely with the school’s Alumni Association to reward many capable students that cannot attend college due to financial constraints with a scholarship.

Each January, the alumni association distributes scholarship applications to all seniors at the school. The application requires the following:

- A typed essay
- Student’s intended college and major
- Student background (employment, school and community involvement)
- Family background (income, family size, number of children in college)
- Disclosure of other financial aid sources and amounts.
- Two letters of recommendation from faculty or community members.
- High school transcript with class ranking.
- A completed FAFSA

A committee of FDHS counselors and alumni reviews the applications and conducts an interview with each applicant. Striving to be impartial, decisions about scholarship recipients are made collectively by the entire committee. At the end of the 2017 school year, nine graduates received scholarships of \$2,000. These dollars represent a lifeline for students’ further education.

The scholarships are awarded to students on stage on the school’s Alumni Day. The recipients are given certificates and information on how to obtain the financial award after they have officially matriculated in the college of their choice. Those who complete college are invited to return to assist the upcoming FDHS students, just as they were assisted as high school seniors.

On Alumni Day, all graduates (not just the scholarship recipients) are inducted into the

FDHS Alumni Association and receive regular communications from then on. Contributions from alumni help to support the scholarship program, along with contributions from many other local stakeholders.

An important part of the students’ applications is the Federal Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) form. Many FDHS graduates are eligible for federal grants for college programs, but do not receive that support because they do not complete and submit FAFSA forms. The Alumni Association scholarship program prompts many students and parents to complete the FAFSA form. In this way, even if they do not receive an award from the alumni, students can obtain funds from the federal government.

Knowing that some students and parents are intimidated by the FAFSA process, the school partnered with College Goal Maryland, an organization that provides free assistance in filling out FAFSA. One parent said, “I’m very appreciative of the assistance provided with FAFSA completion. I would not have been able to complete the process without the assistance provided.” Similar organizations to College Goal Maryland exist around the country.

The school leaders and Alumni Association recognized that the most difficult part of the application process for students is writing an essay. They suggested that the essay required for the application for an Alumni Award, application to college, and other applications for financial support be added to senior English courses.

The FDHS Alumni Association works hard each year to be a good partner to its alma mater by giving back in ways that help graduating seniors plan their futures.

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HIGHWAY TO HIGHER EDUCATION

SOUTH FLORENCE HIGH SCHOOL
FLORENCE, SC

TYPE 2

COLLEGE AND CAREERS

Solving a problem starts by identifying the problem. At South Florence High School, there was a clear and common problem: Many freshmen who failed to be promoted to become sophomores were overage and were statistically likely to drop out of school. The high school wanted to help these freshmen to believe in themselves and in their ability to finish high school and go on to higher education.

The school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) worked with administrators, teachers, and counselors on a plan for overage freshmen to earn eleven credits and qualify to rejoin their cohort for junior year. They would, then, be eligible to graduate on time or close to on time. The school applied for state recognition of this innovative practice.

Teachers identified students in the rising freshman class who would turn sixteen before December of that school year. Administrators contacted the families of the students who were eligible to travel the Highway to Higher Education. They also met with these families and students to talk about the program and to address their questions.

The students who elected to join Highway to Higher Education were provided with a schedule of courses that would enable them to earn credits needed to move ahead in high school. They were assigned two English classes, two math classes, a lab science, a social studies class, dual-credit business classes, and online electives. The administrators also selected specific teachers for the program. One student acknowledged the program's demands with an air of confidence, "You only deserve what you are willing to fight for."

Throughout the year, teachers and administrators mentored these students and encouraged them to strengthen their academic work habits and school behavior. Their families were invited to a dinner honoring the students

at the close of the first quarter. The students went on field trips, were provided tutors, regularly discussed their academic progress with counselors and administrators, celebrated their progress, and participated in a job interview day. Teachers and counselors maintained close contact with the students' parents throughout the year.

At the end of the year, about one third of the overage freshmen achieved eleventh grade status and over half achieved tenth grade status. In all, 86% of the students in Highway to Higher Education were promoted one grade or two. This was a stark contrast to historical outcomes where most of these students would have dropped out of high school. The students' discipline records were closely monitored. There were very few disciplinary incidents. One student described what the program did for her, "Being in the program helped me get where I am supposed to be and helped me move towards what I want and believe in for myself."

The school funded this program with a state grant, but several core components (i.e., flexible scheduling, dedicated teachers, and dedicated administrators) did not cost anything extra. It was particularly important to select teachers who believed in the potential of all students to succeed beyond expectations, and to have an administrator oversee and encourage the students and teachers. The success to date convinced two other high schools in the district to implement a similar program.

Highway to Higher Education has had short-term successes. Said one participant, "With the right amount of effort and people on your side, you can accomplish anything."

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MY LIFE BEYOND: A CAREER DAY TO INSPIRE STUDENTS AND PARENTS

LAGRANADA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
RIVERSIDE, CA

We know big trucks are impressive. LaGranada Elementary School recognized this and invited a fire truck, dump truck, trash truck, back hoe, CSI vehicle, and military vehicle to park on the school's field. The display of trucks was one part of the school's career day, My Life Beyond. The day was in response to parents' requests to expand children's career awareness with lively ideas about occupations and professions they might think about in the future.

In all, 50 community members came to the school to talk to students about their careers. Along with the interesting vehicles and drivers, the children met doctors, politicians, translators, nurses, teachers, veterinarians, lawyers, accountants, business owners, police, nutritionists, restaurant owners, computer technicians, and pilots. The community members were welcomed warmly by students with hand-made welcome signs, good behavior, and curiosity.

The most powerful feature of My Life Beyond was that the presenters were carefully selected so that they looked like the students. At LaGranada Elementary, nearly 70% of the students are English Language Learners, and nearly all students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Many of the presenters—male and female—spoke Spanish, had brown skin, or wore saris. They came from the students' neighborhoods. Some had special needs, had struggled in school, came from single-parent homes, were economically stressed when they were growing up, but all of them identified their interests and moved forward with their lives.

Parents were invited so that they could hear the same motivational stories that their children heard and the message of "Yes, you can!" Mothers and fathers saw their children try out a stethoscope, climb up on a back hoe, learn about the radar dish on the top of the military tank, and much more. The career awareness activi-

ties could help parents support their children's dreams.

The presenters took questions from students and parents. One police detective was impressed, "These students generated some truly thoughtful questions!" The school counselor met with parents to discuss topics to improve student success. They talked about the importance of the transition to middle school, ways to support reading at home, the importance of regular attendance, and how to help students set their own goals and work to meet them.

The selection of speakers took persistence and commitment of the Action Team for Partnership (ATP) and school counselor. They reached out to speakers in the community, called upon Spanish language businesses, asked friends for recommendations, and made many phone calls. The vice-president of the district school board attended and remarked, "This is such a wonderful event! I just love how excited the students and their parents are about this!"

After career awareness day, students were given time to write thank you notes and draw pictures for all of the community members who gave presentations. One student wrote, "Thank you for this opportunity to learn about such cool jobs!" School staff conducted follow-up activities with a survey for feedback from teachers, presenters, and parents for improving career awareness activities in the future.

It helps to give young students opportunities to see that people like them followed many different paths, met challenges along the way, and reached satisfying career destinations. Such interactions tell students there are no limits to what they can accomplish in life.

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SPRING CRAFT FAIR

FRANCIS HOWELL MIDDLE SCHOOL
ST. CHARLES, MO

TYPE 5

COLLEGE AND CAREERS

Craft fairs are very popular in our community, but most are conducted around the winter holidays with fewer opportunities at other times of the year. The ATP, under the leadership of two parents, with a lot of additional support, conducted a Spring Craft Fair to showcase the talents and products of local businesses, parent and student craft makers, and to raise funds for the school.

The ATP recruited vendors and invited parents, students, and community members to the Fair. They advertised with flyers, e-mail, E-News, Facebook, Remind101 text messages, and other electronic communications. The ATP discussed the Fair and extended invitations during parent-teacher conferences, Band Expo Night, and curriculum nights throughout the year. The ATP also posted invitations on social media sites and online community forums for Craft Fairs, such as Event Lister and Craft Fair Finder.

Vendors applied for a booth and indicated space needed, electricity, and types of items being sold. Payments for small or large booths (including electricity) ranged from \$40-\$55 and were collected through PayPal. Administrators approved the use of the building and hired extra custodial staff to assist in the evening hours. The ATP recruited set-up and close-down parent and student volunteers for the Fair.

The volunteer team of administrators, parents, and students prepared the booths the night before the Fair. They marked the floor of the gym to provide space for each vendor, transported supplies and products to the right space, and help the vendors with their displays. Students strengthened their communication skills as they worked with many adults. The students also learned about craft work and entrepreneurial skills in their interactions with the vendors.

The craft participants included local artists, craftsmen, and small businesses selling items such as handmade soaps, food, jewelry, apparel, home décor, and accessories. A few representatives showcased products from Tupperware, Rodan & Fields, Lu La Roe, Scents, and Tastefully Simple. Some parent and student vendors displayed and sold their own handmade products. A student with Cystic Fibrosis and friends hosted a concessions stand, with all proceeds donated to the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

Throughout the Fair, team members and volunteers checked on the needs of vendors and visitors. Parents, students, and administrators helped take down and clean up after the event.

The Spring Craft Fair not only supported local crafts people, businesses, and the school, but also gave students awareness of the combination of craft talent and entrepreneurial skills in the school community. "It was great to see students assisting and learning from local entrepreneurs," one parent said.

Students earned service-learning hours for volunteer time. Their interactions with vendors and all of the visitors improved the tone and flow of the evening, and showed students the importance of a well-organized community event. The income generated from the Craft Fair of over \$7,000 funded a teacher grant request for the Social Studies department of 1 device cart and 30 Chromebooks that would enrich learning experiences of all 813 students in the school.

The positive results prompted the ATP to set a date for next year's Spring Craft Fair. Several vendors signed up immediately, happy with the way the school and its students worked with the community to benefit all partners.

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TAKE YOUR PARENT TO SHOP DAY & CAREER/TRADE TECHNOLOGY WORKSHOP

A. I. PRINCE TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL – HARTFORD, CT
VINAL TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL – MIDDLETOWN, CT

Prince and Vinal Technical High Schools face the challenge of parents being unaware of what happens inside the classrooms of manufacturing, automotive, electrical, or environmental technology, cosmetology, carpentry, sound production, and other trades. The schools are part of the Connecticut Technical High School System—a district of all technical high schools in the state. As a result, students attend each school from broad geographic regions. This creates another hurdle for organizing family engagement activities, because students and parents live at a distance. The Action Teams for Partnership (ATPs) at Prince and Vinal are up to this challenge. Each school conducted an intriguing activity for parents to come to school to participate in a trade class.

At Prince, activities were scheduled for a half day for parents of sophomores. Parents received invitations from their teens, and from flyers and the school’s auto-dialed phone system. On Take Your Parent to Shop Day, students posted signs to guide parents to the trade and technology areas.

Parents signed in and were welcomed by the principal, who outlined the agenda for the day. The school social worker and 10th grade counselor talked with families about the school’s programs and services, the importance of family engagement, opportunities to join the family engagement committee, and upcoming partnership activities.

After the meet-and-greet, parents attended trade area workshops with their students. They saw what their children were learning in class. The instructors had prepared activities for students to complete with their parents to give the parents hands-on experiences in their student’s trade. “It was interesting to see what my child is already able to put into practice,” a parent said. The culinary department provided refreshments for the day.

At Vinal, the Career/Trade Technology Workshop was for parents with students in 10th and 11th grades. Invitations were sent via social media, PowerSchool messenger, school website, and school mailings. Each student brought home a flyer about the event and a cut-off RSVP.

The principal welcomed parents and discussed the importance of the home-school partnership in students’ education throughout the high school years. Students who are part of Skills USA, a technical student organization, presented information on competitions that students may enter to demonstrate their skills in each trade, and how these activities open options for postsecondary education and training. “It was exciting to discover how many parents are alumni and working within a technology trade,” the principal remarked.

Following the presentations, parents at Vinal joined their students in their trade classrooms. Parents observed the experiential learning style of instructors and how trade skills are taught in today’s classrooms. The parent-student pairs completed various activities that the instructors prepared for the event. Said one mother of a cosmetology student, “I did not realize how much work students do and how long it takes to complete perm winding.” A father said, “I’m impressed with the extensive welding and fabrication set up that the shop offered.”

Each school’s event was attended by 40 to 50 parents. Costs were covered by CTHSS Family Engagement grants. In both schools, the activities helped parents better understand the complex Career and Technical Education (CTE) skills that their children were developing.

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YOUTH BUSINESS INSTITUTE

FREDERICK DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL
BALTIMORE, MD

TYPE 6

COLLEGE AND CAREERS

High School seniors are in a unique position because they will leave high school and take many different roads to their next destinations. Some students will move on to more schooling, others to work, and still others to alternative options. The transition from high school to young adulthood is a challenging time. At Frederick Douglass High School, the partnership team, counselors, and teachers designed and tested an activity to improve students' preparation for their next steps. At this school, just about all students are African American and are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

The school partnered with TJX (e.g., the T. J. Maxx group) that offers a program to prepare young people for the future. The Youth Business Institute was conducted once a week for 12 weeks. First, students and parents attended an informational overview of the Youth Business Institute. Students applied to participate and included parental permission. Last year, thirty students were accepted.

Sessions for students covered topics such as: earning a living, time management, a good resumes, networking and job searching, job applications, dressing for success, how to interview well, mock interviews, thank you notes, getting and keeping a job, and preparation for college. There also was a job shadowing component.

The students went on field trips to observe various occupations. Douglass High School alumni participated as chaperones for these trips. Students had to make up work they missed in regular classes to attend the special sessions. At the conclusion of the program a closing ceremony and celebration was conducted to acknowledge the students' accomplishments. One student evaluated, "I have learned so much about people, attitudes, and work."

The connections with a business partner meant that the school was able to tap extra

resources for students' education. The program also helped students make important connections to adults in the community. There also were standards and requirements for students to remain in the program. Students in the Youth Business Institute were required to participate in the mock interviews, attend all field trips, and complete all assignments given by the business's instructors. Students could be terminated if they were absent twice, used a cell phone in class or in training sessions, or if they were suspended from the high school for other reasons. As the students' progressed from week to week, one teacher remarked, "I have seen positive changes in so many students' behavior and class performances."

The program was rigorous and demanding, but also very beneficial for students. Based on the students' work on assignments, interviews, and interactions, the business partner offered college scholarships to several students. Over 80% of the participants received offers of employment. Said the principal, "This is an amazing program. Where else can you go and obtain a scholarship and a job?"

Douglass High School was grateful to TJX for its leadership in conducting the Youth Business Institute. It should be noted that this kind of program, session topics, and field experiences can be locally organized by any high school. High school teachers, administrators, and counselors could conduct the program or could work in partnership with one or more local businesses. Topics in the curriculum can be designed or adapted for seniors or for younger students to prepare them to take purposeful next steps after high school.

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COMMUNITY RESOURCE FAIR

VISTA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
KENNEWICK, WA

Attendance is high at most Back to School Nights. Parents want to see the school, meet their child’s teacher, and hear something useful about the work planned for the new school year. At Vista Elementary, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and teachers wanted to leverage the popularity of this event to assist families by going beyond the typical orientation to school. Most students at Vista are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Most families are unaware of the many useful community resources that are available to them. These facts influenced the team to redesign Back to School Night to include a Community Resource Fair.

In the traditional way, parents visited the school and met their child’s teacher, but also had opportunities to meet and talk with people from the community who offered valuable resources to families and children. About 15 booths were set up in the gym by representatives of the selected organizations. They answered questions and provided information about their services. Each one recorded the parents’ visits on punch cards. When parents had visited six or more booths, they went to the refreshment booth for ice cream for each family member.

Responses from parents to invitations and other advertising indicated that nearly 300 parents and their children planned to attend—about half of the school’s population. Families who were unable to attend could pick up an envelope with information from the community booths in the front office. This is another way that schools can solve the challenge of getting information to parents who cannot attend a scheduled activity.

The planners limited the number of community booths to ensure that parents would hear from organizations that would best meet their needs. The selected booths focused on food, healthcare, counseling services, and enrichment

opportunities for students and family members. Participating organizations were recruited with input from the County Resource Coordinator and by using 211—the call center in all states dedicated to providing community information and referral services. The ATP at Vista kept careful records of its communications with community organizations. The notes enabled the team to summarize the community resources and services in a useful pamphlet for parents who could not attend the event.

The principal wrote a summary and thank you to the ATP and all teachers: “The Community Resource Fair was a huge success! Several people from the community programs commented on what a huge turnout it was and what great families we had. They commented that folks didn’t just come up and say punch my card! They asked questions, signed up for stuff, and, generally, were very excited to learn about the services. [The representatives] were very pleased and excited to return next year! One asked me how many years we had been doing the Fair and was shocked when I said it was our first year!”

In all, the Community Resource Fair was a relatively straightforward activity that had a meaningful impact for the school and its families. There were no costs (except for the ice cream treats), but families received significant benefits. The combined Back to School Night and Community Resource Fair ensured that families felt welcome at Vista, increased knowledge about the community, and gained access to resources of value.

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HOPE AND HEALING: SURVIVING THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS

HIGHLANDS MIDDLE SCHOOL
KENNEWICK, WA

TYPE 1

Sometimes to understand what is happening, it is necessary to check in with those closest to the action. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Highlands Middle School asked the school counselors about the challenges faced by their current middle school students. The discussion included topics such as preventing drug abuse, depression, suicide and self-mutilation, sexual abuse, dating violence, domestic violence, and online predators. These were serious challenges, indeed.

The ATP, counselors, and teachers agreed that it was important to discuss these challenges to student success in the middle grades with parents, who sometimes avoid talking with their children and with each other about uncomfortable topics. To ensure that the discussion would be responsible, accurate, and helpful, the planners compiled a list of community resources who could help with presentations and information. As organizations agreed to participate, the school counselors worked with them to select the most pressing topics that would be of interest and importance to parents.

The planning was followed by an advertising blitz in English and Spanish on the school marquee, in postcards home, on the school's social media platforms, and on daily announcements to students to encourage their parents to attend. Individual calls were made to almost every student's home to offer a personal invitation to a parent. Because the school has large Hispanic population, care was taken to make each call in the language spoken in the home. The district's Federal Programs Department and bilingual staff assisted the school with these calls. Reminders also went home the day before Hope and Healing: Surviving the Middle School Years.

Over 220 parents attended the discussion. Headsets borrowed from the district's Federal Programs department were available for Spanish translations of all presentations.

As presenters addressed their topics, they also identified the kinds of behaviors students might exhibit if they were struggling with the issues being discussed. The speakers offered coping strategies and shared resources in the community where the families could get confidential and expert assistance. Many brought take-aways (e.g., brochures, contact information, information from presentations) for families. One parent commented, "I was not aware of these resources in our community. It gives me comfort to know I have a place to turn if I or any of my family members need help."

After the presentations, dinner was provided. This enabled parents to meet and talk with each other and with the presenters. Some families used this time to ask the presenters their own questions.

The efforts of the ATP and school colleagues to ask parents to come to school to discuss difficult topics paid dividends in attendance. The principal observed, "It was obvious that the personal phone calls home in multi-languages were effective in getting our families [many of whom are migrant farm workers] to attend."

Although the discussion touched on many heavy themes, the focus on helping students and parents survive—and thrive—in the middle grades was very important. The success of students is the shared goal of teachers, parents, and the students themselves. Therefore, sober, honest, and helpful discussions are needed to prevent problems before they get too serious. Highlands Middle School is establishing itself as a place in the community where everyone feels welcome and where students' safety and well-being are paramount.

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HEALTH AND SAFETY

OPIATE AWARENESS – COMMUNITY SPEAKS OUT

HARVARD H. ELLIS TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL
DANIELSON, CT

It is difficult to start a discussion between students, teachers, and parents about drugs and substance abuse. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Ellis Technical High School addressed this issue directly by collaborating with an organization, Community Speaks Out, to inform and empower students, parents, and teachers about the danger of opiates.

The Opiate Awareness Program aims to educate everyone about the warning signs of addiction and strategies for prevention, assistance, and treatment. Because of the emotional nature of the topic, the ATP and Community Speaks Out did months of planning and conducted widespread advertising in local newspapers and radio stations, and through school flyers, phone messages, and e-mail. One month before the event, students completed an anonymous questionnaire about personal use of drugs and/or alcohol, parent involvement, participation in extracurricular activities, knowledge of peer or community drug use, and perceptions of teacher and administration support for students.

The school social worker discussed the school's plans at a community forum. There, she connected with nine community partners who agreed to have informational tables at the school event to inform and support students and families.

All teachers participated in a professional development session led by the school social worker about helping students understand the Opiate Awareness Program. The faculty discussed the results of the student survey, which showed that the students wanted more communication about the topic of drugs and alcohol at school. The workshop prepared teachers for various responses from students. They also learned about extra support from emergency crisis services in the community.

The school schedule was adjusted to enable every student to attend one of three 90-minute assemblies. Counselors were avail-

able to provide extra support to students, if needed. The assembly also was recorded and posted on the school's Family Engagement Website.

Presentations were made by a former police officer and investigator for the State Attorney's Office, a mother who lost her son to opiate addiction who was a co-founder of Community Speaks Out, two individuals in recovery, and a state trooper. The speakers shared how opiates affected their lives. Students were told about calling the 221 emergency call center for immediate support. The information tables for all assemblies included health, hospital, emergency, and political services in the community.

Students' families were invited to attend a two-hour Opiate Awareness Program session in the evening. They heard the same presentations as the students, along with strategies and resources to help parents talk with their children about opiates and drugs. Parents were invited to ask questions. "The reality of this is so real," a parent reflected. "I appreciated the speakers, their stories, and all of the services." The session for families was supported by a Family Engagement Grant and donations from the Parent Faculty Organization and teachers. Teachers offered various incentives to students whose parents attended the evening session such as free homework passes and other valued rewards.

"It made me very emotional because it hits so close to home," one student shared. "It also helped me realize that if there are reasons for concern, you should say something." A teacher concurred, "The discussions I have had with my students since [the assembly] have been powerful."

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LOUISIANA DAY

MOSS BLUFF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LAKE CHARLES, LA

TYPE 6

Louisiana Day is a day to celebrate of the state’s culture, history, and learning. Students, teachers, parents, and community members brought the fair-like atmosphere to life with presentations and participation. This year, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, and school leaders engaged more members of the community and added activities to spotlight new standards for student learning at each grade level.

At Louisiana Day (from 8:15 a. m. to 1:30 p. m.), students rotated through many activity stations. They started with a grade-specific STEM activity that ran for 45 minutes. Other stations were planned for 30 minutes each. The culminating activity was a Louisiana foot-tasting for lunch.

The learning and activity stations included a school crawfish race. The creatures—identified by classroom--were placed in a circle, and the first crawfish to leave the circle was the winner. Prior to Louisiana Day, students learned the anatomy and actions of crawfish and the work of crawfish farms. They named their class crawfish and cheered them on to win the race.

Students learned about the agricultural community in the area. A local beekeeper taught students about her work. She brought pictures, actual bees, honeycombs at different levels of harvesting, and samples for sweet tasting. For the beekeeper, the sweetest part was being able to give back, as she said, “I enjoyed this so much. Please invite me back next year.”

A local Mosquito Control team came to teach students about the life cycle of a Mosquito. They shared a slideshow on the environments in which mosquitos grow, along with enlarged pictures and specimens to study.

The school custodian provided tractor rides for everyone. The tractor’s trailer was loaded with hay, which led to a discussion about how hay is harvested. He also explained the

various parts of the tractor and its uses in everyday farming.

Local and state police brought their cars for inspection and the Coast Guard brought one of their boats to show. Each group described their jobs and how their equipment worked. A parent brought a bass fishing boat, stocked with species of local fish and fishing equipment. He explained to the students how to fish, what each piece of gear and tackle was used for, and allowed students to catch a fish from his live well. One student exclaimed, “This was so much fun. I never caught a fish before.”

Cajun music and dancing enlivened the day. The music was provided by a Cajun French Music band. The band members explained their instruments to the students and then played traditional Louisiana music. A Mardi Gras Krewe—a traditional parade group—came in traditional dress and danced to the music. Students and staff were invited to join. Even Gumbo Gator, a representative of the city, got in on the fun.

The day was deliberately structured so that each activity was tied to standards for some or all grade levels in Science, Social Studies, Mathematics, or Literature. This required early planning and a good understanding of resources available to the school throughout the community. When someone here asks “Who Dat” who cares about student learning? The answer is: Everyone in the Moss Bluff community!

MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS

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COLLABORATION WITH READY! FOR KINDERGARTEN

KEEWAYDIN DISCOVERY CENTER
KENNEWICK, WA

New babies come with such potential and hope for the future. Who will the baby become? What will the baby do in its life? So much of a baby's future hinges on the opportunities for learning that are offered from the very beginning. With a strong determination to give every child a chance for a good, healthy start in life, Keewaydin Discovery Center (KDC)—a special education preschool serving children with disabilities—focuses on ensuring that children develop to their full potential from birth to 5 years old. The school serves mainly white and Hispanic children, and about 35% of the children and families speak languages other than English at home.

KDC takes seriously research reports indicating that between birth and age 5, children learn at a speed that goes unmatched for the rest of their lives. Studies suggest that more than 85 percent of a child's brain is formed during this early period of development, which sets the stage for later academic, social, and cognitive skills.

Keewaydin partnered with the program called *Ready! For Kindergarten*. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, and school leaders listed all students and their developmental ages and purchased *Ready!*-made notebooks, toys, and learning supplements for each child. For example, regardless of chronological age, a child with a developmental age of six months would receive a kit designed for Birth-to 1-year-olds to advance learning from their own starting point. Parents were grateful and many expressed, "Thank you. These toys will really help me in working with my child."

Over several months KDC teachers set appointments for home visits to meet every parent and demonstrate how to use the *Ready!* materials with their children to play, read aloud, and build skills at the child's developmental level. Teachers could see that with guidance

and encouragement all parents could gently nudge their children toward imitation, repetition, and learning. The children will learn and grow at school, but also in the safe and supportive confines of their own home with people they love and trust. The home visits impressed teachers, as one explained, "It was fulfilling to be able to give children materials that we know will help them learn."

At the end of the visit, parents received invitations to other training sessions at *Ready!* classes at school to gain more in-depth skills and activities to conduct using the kits with their children. There also were sessions of interest to parents with developmentally-delayed or autistic children. The staff at KDC knows that their students' parents often struggle to do things that typically-developing siblings and other children do. It is important to give parents a place at school where they are welcome to discuss their challenges and find ways to teach their children in different ways.

The school staff and ATP had challenges to solve, too, including finding space to store the *Ready!* Kits and have appropriate kits for children who enrolled in the middle of the school year. They are working to be efficient and to predict the materials they will need throughout a school year.

The one-on-one home visits made clear to parents that KDC teachers were available to connect and communicate with them, and that parents were welcome at the school. This investment by the school, teachers, and parents will surely benefit KDC students.

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3

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS



Practices for Types 1-6 in this section involve families and community partners to help create a welcoming, family-friendly school. These practices aim to reach out to involve all families and the community.

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF DISTINCTION

KROTZ SPRINGS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
KROTZ SPRINGS, LA

The Krotz Springs School Building first opened for the 1916-1917 school year—one hundred years ago. It was built on 5.65 acres purchased for \$900. The 2 story school cost \$7,821 to construct. The old building was razed in 1965 to make way for the school's present-day gymnasium. These historical facts are on a custom-made postcard to honor the school's rich history. A copy of the postcard was given to each guest at the centennial celebration.

The school's anniversary was about more than a list of historic facts. The leaders at the school wanted to bring the history, present, and future of the school to life. Retired teachers came to school for a brunch provided by the PTO and to participate in the school-wide celebration. Said one teacher, "We are so happy to come back to school and see old friends. This is like a reunion. Thank you all for doing this for us." The teachers also expressed gratitude for several of the school's traditions that remained intact.

The current faculty enjoyed the spirit of the retirees and reflected on their own experiences at the school. Said one, "This was a great event for the retirees and the students. Maybe they will continue the tradition as time goes by."

In an effort to recreate history, good-humored activities were planned to bring back the original founders of the school. Students in kindergarten through second grade were encouraged to dress up as the founders or as centenarians. The students delivered. Powdered hair, graying goatees, and long dresses were all around.

In addition to the retired teachers, current teachers, staff, and students, the celebration included past graduates of the school (including some students' parents and grandparents), and local officials. It was like a reunion for many parents to reconnect with their own past teachers who had retired.

One current teacher presented a slide show filled with images of the town and school's past; some retired educators offered thoughts about differences in education from the past to the present; and students presented poetry, essays, and art—all created for the occasion. In art, students were asked to look 100 years into the future and draw images of the school, the small town of Krotz Springs, and the future of the world generally. One student explained his mural, "I will have a fast flying car in 100 years." Fostering student creativity through pictures, poetry, essays, and costume design made the review of history and preview of the future very exciting, and deepened the connection of the community with the school.

The organizers of the celebration wanted to help the students at the school see that they had "roots" in history. The Parent Involvement Coordinator cited British Historian Penelope J. Corfield as she explained that the study of the past is essential for 'rooting' people in time. Without knowledge about and connections to the past, we may live rootless lives. This can be a sad state of affairs. Helping students understand the positive influence of the founders of the town and the school will help them feel part of something bigger than themselves. Mission accomplished in Krotz Springs.

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CHIAWANA SPRING CLEANING

CHIAWANA HIGH SCHOOL
PASCO, WA

TYPE 6

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

In thinking about “the community,” it is common to think that this only refers to places outside of the school. However, the school, itself, is a part of the community and can benefit from the care and attention of students, teachers, administrators, and others in the broader community. Chiawana High School’s Action Team for Partnership (ATP) conducted Spring Cleaning to strengthen the sense of community at the school.

One member of the ATP was visiting another school where he observed students cleaning up around the school. When he asked the students what they were doing, they explained that they were donating time to improve the school campus. He brought this idea back to Chiawana’s ATP, where it was added to the action plan for partnerships to improve the school climate and the quality of the general partnership program.

Spring Cleaning was a Saturday morning activity that included students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members. Word spread on the school’s daily Hawk News video, the school and district websites, reader board, and through robocalls and flyers. The ATP also delivered flyers to a variety of businesses in the community to encourage donations and participation.

The businesses agreed and their donations were used to buy donuts, fruit, water, and coffee for all participants. The donations also supported a raffle for 36 small prizes and a grand prize of a \$100 Visa card. All attendees received a raffle ticket, and a winner was announced every 10 minutes. The grand prize was raffled at the end of Spring Cleaning.

Those who attended were split into teams with a leader for each designated area of the school that was on the list for Spring

Cleaning. To make the morning more fun, a community partner brought equipment and served as DJ to entertain the participants with music all morning. The custodial staff provided bags, gloves, and yard tools, and participated by hauling away trash. One spring-cleaner remarked, “Wow, this looks like a great event and, for the first time, brought so many people out. Great job—we need to try this at our school.”

More than 140 students and 40 staff, parents, and community members participated. A retired teacher from a nearby community said it was, “amazing to see such a turnout of students on a Saturday. It’s so organized—like you have done this before.”

The success of Spring Cleaning may be due, partly, to the relaxed “hang out with us” atmosphere that the school managed to create in its advertising. Being with friends at school, with music, and food on Saturday morning hit the right chord with students.

The students, staff, parents, and others who participated gained a good feeling in giving back. They saw that “community service” in the form of time and effort benefitted their school. In return, they could feel a sense of accomplishment. The Chiawana ATP, teachers, and leaders see that this could be an annual activity that includes the larger community and could spread to other campuses. After all, spring comes every year and there always is some cleaning to do.

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CLIFTON’S COMMUNITY CLOSET (DEWANNA’S CLOSET)

J.D. CLIFTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LAKE CHARLES, LA

If it’s true that “clothes make the man – and the woman,” it would help to have closets filled with fashion essentials that students need to dress for success in school. At Clifton Elementary, a classroom-size closet serves students, parents, and teachers with clothes, and with school supplies that would, otherwise, be difficult for many to afford.

Just about all students at Clifton Elementary are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and many students’ families are living below the national poverty level. In looking at school attendance trends, the principal noticed a recurring problem: When students grew and needed new uniforms, some were absent from school. The principal mentioned this pattern to a local TV station that covered the story. The principal explained: “Sometimes when kids don’t have what they need, they fear being bullied, that someone is going to make fun of them or say something. So, having brand new clothes makes my students at J.D. Clifton light up.”

A good community business partner stepped up and donated uniforms and school supplies for students who could not afford them. Officials reported that school attendance rose and bullying decreased. Said the community partner, “Our main goal is to build [students’] self-esteem and help them concentrate on learning and focusing on what they need to be focusing on.”

Then, the idea grew bigger. The business partner wanted to increase donations to serve students and families living in poverty in schools throughout the district. The Community Closet (also named DeWanna’s Closet for one of the founders) is housed in a classroom at the school. Other donors provided financial support or clothing items. J. C. Penney provided clothing, racks, and displays. Office Depot provided some materials and school supplies for the teachers who often paid for supplies out of their own

pockets. Currently, the closet stocks uniforms, shoes, jackets, belts, underwear, backpacks, and school supplies.

Parents are welcome to donate and retrieve items from the closet. Students from elementary, middle, and high schools can find helpful items there. The folks running the closet maintain an active Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/DeWannasCloset/>) where the latest donations can be seen. The social media presence is useful for the families and teachers, including those who do not attend or work at Clifton Elementary. They can stay abreast on inventory and easily tag friends to let them know about new items in the closet.

It was a challenge to organize so many donated goods. The school’s Action Team for Partnership (ATP) took responsibility for preparing and organizing the closet to keep it visually appealing. Advertising for the closet is on-going. To celebrate the opening, school administrators sent home notes with students and flyers were sent to all schools in the district. A meeting was held with all school counselors in the district to provide them with information about the closet and how they might best identify students at their schools who needed assistance. Other meetings were held with the superintendent and with other district and school leaders to describe the new resource for their students, families, and teachers.

When students feel good about their appearance, they are more likely to focus on their work. The superintendent, principal of Clifton Elementary, business partners, teachers, parents, and others attended the formal ribbon cutting to open the closet doors.

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DADS AND KIDS AT THE GYM

SUPERIOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
EAST CLEVELAND CITY SCHOOLS, OH

TYPE 3

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

The idea for an engagement activity for dads and kids at a gym was suggested by another school's report in *Promising Partnership Practices 2015*. Superior Elementary School tailored the good idea to meet its needs. Of course, the goal was to give dads and their children an opportunity to come together in a sporty and fun activity, and help the dads or father figures appreciate their children's growing skills.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and others at the school, including the gym teacher, wanted to create a community experience where dads could observe other dads interacting with their kids at school. Research indicates that the more parents are involved in their child's schooling, the better the outcomes for students, academically and behaviorally.

Superior Elementary School serves students from Pre-K to grade 6 in East Cleveland. The population is nearly 100% African American and just about all students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The school's family and community engagement program is working to improve its comprehensive partnership program, and part of that is to increase the involvement of fathers and father figures in their children's education at school and at home.

The gym teacher joined the ATP in planning and agreed to be responsible for setting up and supervising Dads and Kids at the Gym. Activities included rock wall climbing, riding tricycles, using hula hoops, and shooting baskets. Older students also pitched in to help by setting up the activities and assisting the gym teacher in other ways.

Another teacher volunteered her room, which was near the gym, for the first part of the morning to serve breakfast and for use with board games. Administrators and social workers

provided breakfast of hot and cold foods and beverages to students and their dads or the other male role models who came to school with the children.

The school advertised the event with a flyer stating "calling all men" to encourage dads to plan to take time (from 8:15 a. m. to 9:30 a. m.) for fun at the school gym. Phone calls and other reminders were sent to encourage participation

The principal, special education supervisor, and gym teacher greeted the students and dads when they arrived and explained the available activities. The school leaders agreed that it was a reward to see students and their fathers enjoying themselves and the activities, and interacting with other families.

Children were delighted to be with their dads at school, doing activities that were enjoyable and challenging. They especially enjoyed their dad's support of as they attempted activities that stretched their abilities.

Dads were asked to rate the activities and give ideas for improving Dads and Kids at the Gym. The men indicated that they wanted more such days to repeat the experiences with their children. This reaction was most important because the school wants dads to feel comfortable and needed at school. The ATP sees that fathers, mothers, and other family partners help create a welcoming school climate.

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DADS, DONUTS, AND DISCUSSION

WATKINS-NANCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
COLUMBIA, SC

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Watkins-Nance Elementary aimed to increase the number of fathers and other father figures who were active partners in education at school and at home. Studies and fieldwork show that dads and male role models have positive influences on student learning and behavior. They are wanted and needed in ways that will enrich the school and benefit students. The ATP did not want to conduct a “one and done” event. Rather, the team wants to build strong and sustainable participation by fathers for the long term.

To begin, “donuts” with dads—a common way to meet students’ fathers—came to mind. The ATP elaborated this idea by organizing Dads, Donuts, and Discussion. This would extend breakfast with purposeful interactions to show fathers just how much the school wanted them to be involved. The ATP also reached out to parents and community members for suggestions about how to welcome and engage dads in their children’s education at school and at home.

With good input, the ATP created flyers for students to take home, uploaded event information to the school website, invited local businesses and other potential partners from the community to attend, and sent reminders including Robo-calls to parents.

At Dads, Donuts, and Discussion, fathers first mingled to meet each other. A speaker from the community presented an inspiring talk to the assembled dads about being raised in a single-parent home with less than perfect conditions. He talked with the fathers about breaking the cycle of poverty, redemption, and the importance of fathers in their communities, school, and families. The speaker commented after the talk, “This is what it’s all about. Educating these men so that they may educate their children.”

The visiting fathers were served juice, breakfast casserole, donuts, fruit, biscuits, and coffee. Then, they went to their child’s classroom as a volunteer for from 15-45 minutes, depending on the dads’ schedules. Students enjoyed having their fathers in the classroom almost as much as the fathers loved being there. Teachers reported near-immediate improvements in student behavior and classroom participation. The principal assessed the scene, “This event was great. It was wonderful seeing all the dads and their children’s reactions to having them in the classroom.”

Teachers distributed surveys for the men to complete and were glad to see the dads’ high satisfaction. Several fathers expressed interest in volunteering more often at the school. These positive responses were exactly what the school was hoping for as a first step toward more lasting relationships with students’ dads.

One of the biggest challenges with this activity was finding the best time of day for the most men to attend. The 9 a. m. breakfast time seemed best. Dads were given several weeks advance notice to make this happen. The ATP is considering conducting the activity a few times during the year so that more dads can find at least one convenient time to attend. Dads, Donuts, and Discussion was successful in shining a spotlight on the importance of men’s roles in the school and in their children’s education. It was a good first step for the school to make some good new partners.

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DUDES & DONUTS

CLEVELAND CHILDREN'S DAYCARE ACADEMY
PARMA, OH

Fathers, step-fathers, grandfathers, uncles, older brothers, and other friends all may be important male role models for young children. Cleveland Children's Daycare Academy wanted to spotlight all that these men do for children, and encourage them to become more active at the preschool and in their children's education. Dudes & Donuts brought some men in students' lives in to meet teachers and school staff, build good relationships, and establish stronger partnerships.

During the planning process, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and school leaders sought feedback from parents about the event. Most parents indicated that their busy morning schedules would prevent them from participating. The school listened and moved the event to a Saturday morning—an innovative scheduling decision. If a male role model could not attend, mom, grandma, or another family member could come with the child.

The breakfast promoted two-way communications between teachers and family members. Students and their "dudes" came in for donuts and juice. Then, they went to their classrooms for the visitors to meet the teacher, see the room, and spend time with the child on an activity.

One father on the ATP volunteered to donate the donuts. The school covered the costs for paper products and drinks. The school's business partner, Home Depot, donated project kits for families to complete together, including bird house and toolbox kits.

Children and their visitors also could play a donut ring-toss game, compete in relay races, or try a superhero dress-up station. The fathers indicated that they felt comfortable at the school. One already-active dad commented, "I've seen lots of these guys here before, but they're actually talking and doing things together now."

Advance notice about Dudes and Donuts was sent home about three weeks before the activity to help adults plan to attend. Invitations were sent home with each child. The ATP hung a poster about the activity in the school's main entrance and posted flyers throughout the building. School staff also spoke with families during drop-off and pick-up. The school's social media page actively announced the event, posted periodic reminders, and encouraged RSVPs.

Feedback from Dudes & Donuts was positive. Students loved having their fathers and others come to school to participate in activities with them. The men said they felt at home in the school. Said one grandfather, "I think it's great that you're doing this and making us dads—and granddads—feel like we matter!"

The school hopes that this activity will pay dividends as the participating males come back to school. The ATP and teachers plan to involve dads more regularly as volunteers, in planning meetings, and at all school functions. One teacher reported a change in the social behavior and engagement of fathers after the event. She said, "Some of the dads barely spoke to me when they'd pick up their kids. Now we talk and joke around all the time!"

The increased comfort level between teachers and parents that grew out of this activity translated to academic matters. Teachers reported that their new rapport with students' fathers and father figures made it easier to discuss the children's successes and struggles in the classroom.

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FATHER/DAUGHTER DANCE

RALPH WILSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LAKE CHARLES, LA

It was a fairy tale come true. The young ladies at Ralph Wilson Elementary School dressed up and were treated like princesses. The Title I school serves mostly African American students. To promote cultural awareness and to expose parents and students to a formal dining experience, the school held a special evening for the girls in the school and their dads (or grandfathers, uncles, or other males in students' lives). The Father/Daughter Dance, complete with etiquette training, was selected to add some magic and excitement to girls' school experiences.

The school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) discussed ideas for cultural opportunities that might be useful and enjoyable for students. The team chose to conduct a formal dinner with lessons in etiquette. They worked together with others at the school and in the community to ensure a quality event that the girls would treasure and remember. To start, the ATP sent formal invitations to the Dads or father figures in students' lives. They followed up with personal phone calls to each one.

The dads and their daughters in grades 3-5 were greeted by a hostess and escorted to their reserved tables in the cafeteria, which had been transformed into a winter wonderland. The young ladies' expressions were priceless. Even the parents seemed genuinely excited about the evening. One of the teachers later noted, "I am extremely proud of all the students. They looked great, and all were very well behaved."

A variety of activities were conducted. These included etiquette on meaningful dinner conversations, including current events, recent activities, and students' future goals. A formal meal was catered by a local restaurant and served to the young ladies and their fathers by student waiters in crisp white shirts and black slacks. The meal provided an instant opportunity for families to use the new conversational skills that they had just learned.

Fathers and their daughters were invited to the dance floor for a father-daughter dance. One of the young ladies' exuberant enjoyment was captured when she remarked that the dance, "was so much fun!" The school received countless "thank you" notes from the fathers, as most of them had never attended a similar event. One of the fathers said, "This was the first father-daughter event that we attended. This was definitely a night that I will never forget."

This was an enjoyable evening for students and parents. The principal gave credit to the good planning of "teachers and all committee members [who] worked extremely [hard] to make this event a huge success." In the future, the ATP might change the venue to a community center in the school's neighborhood. A mother/son event is a likely addition.

Most of the cost of the event was covered by donations from community members. The father/daughter pairs paid for a ticket that covered the dinner, lessons, music, and dance. The evening celebrated life, but the event also was a memorial to a classmate who had died a few months before. The payments and donations went to a memorial bench in his name. The good will generated by the event lasted far beyond the evening.

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FOLLOW THE BUS

LINCOLN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
KENNEWICK, WA

As the school bell rang, students at Lincoln Elementary poured out of the school and into their buses to go home. At the same time, 16 members of the school staff (i.e., teachers and counselors) poured out of the school into four cars to travel to their destination. It was the day to Follow the Bus.

Follow the Bus had been in planning stages for a while, and parents knew to expect it. Flyers were sent home to let the families know that teachers would be coming to their bus stop after school to meet them as they picked up their students. The day before they were scheduled to Follow the Bus, teachers put stickers on the students announcing that they hoped to meet parents and family members at the students' bus stop the next day. Teachers also prepared for the trips, including creating plans for drivers, plans for traffic, and plans for conversations with parents.

The cars were ready and waiting for the bus when it arrived at the selected stop. One day, the teachers' caravan followed the school bus to a neighborhood where 40 students lived and many families came to meet the teachers. Teachers brought popsicles to share with everyone. The treats were donated by one of the school's LEAP community partners.

Some students were met by their parents, and some went quickly home and brought their grandparents and siblings back to the bus stop to meet their teachers. Students also shared their favorite toys and new skills (e.g., riding a 2-wheeled bike) with the staff. Some parents invited teachers into their homes. They visited with families, discussed the importance of homework, and were given a tour of where students did their assignments. Parents expressed thanks to the teachers for coming to see them. The visits helped build caring connections between home and school.

The day after the visits, some students related how the teachers came to their neighborhood. Other students asked when teachers would follow their bus to meet their families. The school received donations of candy canes and mittens for teachers to bring along when they followed a bus in the winter.

The school's population is changing to include more students who are English language learners and more students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The changing demographics were instrumental in the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) seeing that teachers needed to actively reach out to connect with their students' families. At Lincoln, Follow the Bus schedules are varied to visit areas where there are many families, and where parent-teacher visits would be most impactful. It was easy to convince teachers to participate because the goal was transparent and the early results were very positive.

At Lincoln Elementary School, Follow the Bus is a good way to connect with families of students and to gain a better understanding of students' neighborhoods and life after school. The teachers are on the road to creating a stronger program of school, family, and community partnerships.

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GOOD SCHEDULES INCREASE PARENT PARTICIPATION

JESSIE ROUSE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SAGINAW, MI

It is a good idea to reward what you want to see repeated. The team at Jessie Rouse Elementary School, a Title I school, took that idea to heart. They hold monthly assemblies to recognize students' academic accomplishments, good attendance, and good behavior because they want to see more good results.

JR (Jessie Rouse) recognition assemblies have been held monthly for many years. They celebrate students who are nominated each month by their teachers for good and improved behavior and accomplishments. Teachers use standardized nomination forms for excellent academic work and for good behavior. Prizes also are awarded for Student of the Month and Staff Member of the Month.

At each assembly, parents are invited to attend and some participate in making the awards. At the end of the assembly, there is a lottery drawing for two \$10 gas cards for parents in attendance. Community support also is strong for the award assemblies. A local foundation (Reyes Osuna Foundation) provides the awards for the Student and Teacher of the Month. Taco Bell and Wendy's donate gift certificates for students with perfect attendance. Other community members donate items for the honored students. The assemblies are appreciated by parents, "It's good that students are being rewarded for their behavior as well as for grades and attendance."

Although many parents attend the student assemblies, not very many attend Parent Advisory Council (PAC) meetings. To increase attendance at PAC meetings, the group scheduled its meetings right after the student award assemblies. In between, the school offers snacks for parents to enjoy while the students make their way back to their classrooms. Then, the Title I teachers and Parent Liaison conduct the PAC meeting. Attendance increased in the

2016-2017 school year to 80 parents—a good turnout attributable to linking the two activities.

The organizers also payed attention to the quality of the PAC meeting by having a clear agenda prepared in advance and targeted discussions on topics important to parents. The PAC leaders also collect feedback from the parents in attendance to keep improving these meetings.

Bundling student assemblies and parent meetings is a good idea. The ATP and school leaders believe that they can "bundle" or link other meetings and events to maximize parents' attendance, support, and participation. The school wants parents' insights on school topics, and parents benefit as well. One parent said, "It's good getting to know what's going on." Of course, the ultimate benefits go to students whose families becomes more engaged in their education.

The ATP and other leaders have continued to make assemblies and meetings important to parents and open for their attendance. The ATP, teachers, and administrators use the school marquee to display dates of the student recognition assemblies and PAC meetings, and other scheduled events. Each month, the school newsletter includes a calendar that highlights the dates of assemblies and meetings. Phone calls are made to parents and students are reminded to invite their parents to the assemblies. With a simple change in schedules, the school created a big shift in parental engagement and support.

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KEEPING KIDS FIRST

THOMPSON MIDDLE SCHOOL
SAGINAW, MI

TYPE 6

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

Thompson Middle School has clear goals to include families in ways that help students improve reading and math skills and scores; improve student behavior; and increase the welcoming climate for strong school, family, and community partnerships. The full program—Keeping Kids First: Family Engagement Support Team/FEST—is a comprehensive approach for continuous improvement of partnerships at the middle school.

One gala activity was developed with support from the district leader for partnerships to engage students, families, and community partners on reading, math, good behavior, strengthening families, and knowing the community. The day, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., was for mainly for the middle school, but invitations were extended to students and families in other schools in the district. There were many learn and do sessions that were repeated all day, and many booths with activities and information.

Financial Literacy. A local bank presented information on budgeting, earnings, mortgages, and savings. Hands-on activities about budgeting and saving money were conducted. Each family received a Visa gift card from the bank.

Cereal Centers. Teachers conducted activities about how parents could reinforce literacy and math skills at home as they conducted daily tasks, such as reading cereal boxes, counting socks in the wash, and playing reading games with street signs, license plates, and more.

Individualized Education Program (IEP). Leaders discussed the IEP process with families: how the components worked together, how to help children get the services they need to be successful in school, and parents' questions.

Families and Restorative Justice. Families were introduced to the language of restorative justice practices as the basis for peacefully resolving family, school, and community conflicts. Attendees conducted role-play activi-

ties, taking the role of parent, child, student, and peer to work out disagreements. Over 100 attendees elected to attend these sessions.

Trauma Drama. Another popular session helped families understand the effects of various life traumas, deal with feelings and behaviors, build safe spaces, connect with others, and serve as an advocate.

Students and families also enjoyed a food station, activities, and over 40 booths on community services. There were hands on activities and games to help students practice and demonstrate reading and math skills. Information was shared on preventing bullying, local University Extension programs, preventing drug abuse, Girl and Boy Scouts, health care, and more. The leaders of booths signed handouts to document family visits.

Families who attended the family empowerment sessions were eligible to win certificates for laptops, leapfrogs, and tablets. Those who attended two sessions and visited booths and activities earned chances to win a turkey—and 200 turkeys were given away throughout the day.

This focus on families and children's learning took good plans, many meetings, exciting advertising, and good partnerships. The hard work of the partnership team and so many others was appreciated by more than 200 parents, 400 students, many community members and teachers. One parent commented on the exit survey, "I had a good time at this event. A lot of information was presented by the vendors and the empowerment classes were very helpful."

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POSITIVE POPS

ST. PHILIP NERI HEAD START CENTER
CLEVELAND, OH

Focusing on students' needs for support from dads, fathers, and other father figures, St. Philip Neri Head Start Center teamed up with the Community Center in the same building to host a Father Walk. The school expanded the idea to conduct a full morning of Positive Pops once the children and their dads got to school. It seemed like a good and friendly combination of walking to school and welcoming dads to the Head Start Center for breakfast, special activities, and time in the classrooms of their young children (aged 3 to 5).

All of the regular communication strategies were used to encourage participation—flyers were sent home and posted in the building and the school arranged a radio spot. Parents relayed information to other parents. The turnout was good. The school serves 90 families and more than half of them participated by having a male role model walk their child to school.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and school leaders made this a memorable day. Students and their escorts were greeted as they arrived. The Community Center set up activities for dads and children to do together including art, hands-on real tool workshops, and a gender friendly obstacle course. The school provided muffins and a photo shoot for the men to snap a shot with their student to better remember the day.

The Community Center supported other activities that would be useful to the men. For example, the school leaders invited the Coordinator of the Job Club to talk with the men about available services such as job training, writing resumes, a GED program, dressing for success, and learning interview techniques. This collaboration of Head Start Center and Community Center strengthened this bond as part of a good program of school, family, and community partnerships.

The children's father figures met each other and created a new network. They discussed whether, why, and how they might come together to talk about important topics and volunteer at the Head Start Center to help with activities, such as early reading with young children.

After the special activities and refreshments, the men were invited to stay and participate in the children's classrooms. This gave them time to see how the teachers work with the children on learning and play activities, and how key concepts are introduced and reinforced. It also gave the teachers some extra hands to assist with the children on various classroom activities. Everyone enjoyed having so many men in Positive Pops activities and in the children's classrooms.

At first, some dads were hesitant to participate in their child's classroom. By the end of the morning, however, with just a little coaxing and encouragement from the teachers, the men got enthusiastically into the mix of things. The Center believes that part of the success of Positive Pops was due to having an active and diverse ATP that includes a mix of parents and staff who had many good and different ideas in planning the day.

Reactions from the visiting fathers were positive. They were pleased with the atmosphere of the building, the professionalism of the staff, and the care and concern for each child. The staff was pleased with the turnout of men and their commitment to come back as school and classroom volunteers.

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WELCOMING LOBBY

WHITE BLUFFS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
RICHLAND, WA

When someone feels welcomed and valued, they are more likely to participate in activities and extend a hand in partnership. As is well known, the difference between ordinary and extraordinary is just that little “extra.”

This was the case at White Bluffs Elementary School, which serves over 700 students, ranging from pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, including structured and extended day resource rooms. It is a busy place. The school leaders knew that their partnership program was strong and growing stronger, but they were always interested in ways to improve the school climate and family and community engagement. To fine tune the program, the Action Team for Partnership (ATP) and teachers asked parents of kindergarteners about their initial experiences at the school and what the school could do even better to welcome them to the school community.

Parents indicated that it would be helpful for the front office to have a sign to identify it. They also suggested that there should be an area where students’ younger siblings could sit and have activities to do while parents addressed other tasks and meetings, or while they and parents waited for older siblings. The ATP agreed that a change in the school’s lobby would be a positive improvement. It was clear that the young children needed some attention and learning opportunities while they waited for parents and siblings.

The ATP conducted a Welcoming Lobby project by purchasing a shelving unit, baskets, board books, and bead toys. They moved the school logo rug to make the area more inviting. The items in the lobby are used daily as parents come to pick up students and wait for dismissal or come to fill out registration papers or other forms. Parents make good use of the time to interact with their children while they wait.

Some select books to read aloud to their young children or play with bead toys. One parent said, “I just love your new space. It’s great to wait here for my preschool student. Jacob and I have something to entertain us while we wait.”

The lobby also benefitted current students who find themselves waiting for their siblings who receiving special services (e.g., speech therapy). And, students with health conditions who are unable to go outside for recess often sit in the new welcoming lobby space and read books or complete other quiet activities.

Teachers remarked on the contrast between the old area and the new lobby, “This looks great now! It was so cold-feeling before.” Community members who come to the school will see the same new warmth in the lobby that teachers observed. The assistant principal was pleased with the change and said, “We now have a defined place for families and community members to wait in an atmosphere that is comfortable and welcoming.”

The school benefitted by reaching out to the new kindergarteners’ parents for their ideas. Redecorating the lobby was, really, a small project that had a big impact. The transformation, however, was real and important for parents, future students, current students, and the community. The cheerful lobby pleased parents and illustrated that the school’s partnership team was open and responsive to good suggestions.

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4

DISTRICT & ORGANIZATION LEADERSHIP



Practices in this section help facilitators in districts, organizations, and states strengthen leadership and assist schools in developing effective programs of school, family, and community partnerships.

BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION: HELPING NEW TEACHERS UNDERSTAND PARTNERSHIPS

KENNEWICK SCHOOL DISTRICT
KENNEWICK, WA

Preparing new teachers to work well with families is a missing component in many preservice teacher education programs. Many new teachers graduate and enter classrooms filled with students from cultures different from their own. Helping new teachers understand the why and how of forming strong partnerships with all students' families is a goal of the district leaders in Kennewick. They created a two-prong program to help new teachers organize effective partnership programs with their own students' families.

The first component was the New Teacher Bag. Given an estimate of the number of new teachers coming to the district, the leaders for partnerships obtained district bags and filled them with some general classroom supplies; a flyer about how to work with district interpreters when communicating with families who speak languages other than English; a summary of the importance of school, family, and community partnerships; and simple steps to conduct these partnerships. The district leaders delivered the bags to the school mailbox of each new teacher at the start of the school year.

The second part of outreach to new teachers was a workshop on the district's approaches to family and community engagement. The leaders for partnerships worked with the Peer Assistance and Resource (PAR) program, which conducts monthly workshops for new teachers throughout their first year. The leaders for partnerships asked if they could provide a session on family and community engagement. PAR teachers, too, wanted to be sure that all new teachers received a strong foundation in partnerships.

The leaders for partnerships planned one-hour workshops for elementary and for secondary teachers. The workshops, conducted in September, included presentations on research showing why partnerships are crucial; a

touching video about the power of a teacher in a child's life; multiple discussion questions; information about how to form partnerships with families; time to share ideas; and time to draft a personal plan.

Feedback from the new teachers, PAR mentors, and building principals was positive. The new teachers were grateful for the training and new resources. One teacher was so enthused that his PAR mentor reported that he had made proactive and positive phone calls to connect with the parents of each student in his class. Principals were thankful that the district office was connecting with new teachers and providing quality professional development.

Early planning helped make both components of the district's approach to new teachers successful. Welcoming new teachers to the district also enabled schools to add new people with new ideas to their school-based Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs). All ATPs are guided by the district leaders for partnerships. Most importantly, the district's approaches helped new teacher learn—right from the start—that family and community engagement are part of the work of all schools and all teachers in the district.

Kennewick continues to increase the diversity of the cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds of its students and their families. Because the percentage of teachers from diverse backgrounds has not grown as quickly, it is imperative for the district to help all teachers establish strong partnerships with all families to increase the chances for all students to succeed in school.

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CLUSTER BUSTERS: KEEP ATPS ENGAGED WITH ENGAGEMENT

SAGINAW PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT
SAGINAW, MI

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

Providing opportunities for schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) to network with each other helps them gather different perspectives and ideas to improve their own programs of family and community engagement. The Saginaw Public School District takes family engagement seriously. It is one of the district's priority goals.

Saginaw's 16 school ATPs meet twice each semester in clusters of four schools to network with each other. At the cluster meetings, the ATPs share good ideas, solve challenges, and receive technical assistance from the District's Family Engagement Specialist. Last year, the ATPs met once in a larger cluster of eight ATPs. All cluster meetings—with four or eight schools—encouraged a free exchange of ideas and feedback about what was working and what was not at the different schools. The cluster meetings were most useful when participants were not afraid to discuss difficult topics that needed to be solved and when they had meaningful conversations with each other about what goal-linked family and community engagement looks like. One teacher who attended cluster meetings said, "These meetings go straight to the point. Our Family Engagement Specialist makes the work feel not so overwhelming." In addition, an NNPS Facilitator provided a follow-up training workshop to ATPs.

Schools like to share their best practices with each other. Having parents who are on the ATP at the cluster meetings made a difference in the quality of interactions. Their presence was crucial for connections to be made and true partnerships to be forged. One parent happily shared, "I feel like I belong as part of the team. These meetings brought us all together on one page for my child."

The district's Family Engagement Specialist followed up cluster meetings with individual visits to each school. She met with

the ATP chairs or co-chairs, the building principal, parent liaison, and others. At the individual school meetings, participants discussed what had been learned at the cluster meetings and what was unique about their own school's path to improve family and community engagement and student success. Said one principal, "I liked the fact that we were able to share our plans and [were] given a model from our school district."

The leader for partnerships was placed on the agenda of the district's Administrator Council Meeting. There, she could talk with all principals in the district at the same time. It gave her an opportunity to provide principals with some tips to support the school's ATP and other family engagement activities. Topics included how principals (who are on the ATP) can follow up the actions taken after an ATP meeting, see that a budget for partnerships is allocated, obtain support from community partners, and monitor the school's progress on family engagement. One principal understood the whole picture: "Excellent opportunity to share ideas and see how the NNPS model can fit our district and school needs."

Cluster meetings and the district leader's discussions with principals are helping Saginaw's teachers, administrators, parents, and community partners view each other as partners in addressing the needs of the whole child, whole school, and whole community. As one noted, they have been able to "bust out" and "dig in" to partnership work. The schools are guided by the district's priorities, and well-functioning ATPs are working to engage more families and help more students succeed in school.

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CLUSTER MEETING: FOCUSING ON HEALTH

LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT
LITTLE ROCK, AR

Many hands make light work, wrote John Heywood about 500 years ago. These wise words are still true. District leaders for partnerships in Little Rock are testing what many hands can do with clusters of school teams.

Cluster teams are groups of geographically linked school-based Action Teams for Partnerships. There are three clusters of schools in the district—Central-East, South-West, and West. Each cluster team is working to improve the connections of educators and parents at the schools in its area. The district leader for partnerships asked each cluster to conduct two all-school events—one in the first quarter of the first semester and one in the first quarter of the second semester. All schools in the cluster are invited to participate in planning, conducting, and participating in the planned activities.

Cluster leaders took responsibility for all aspects of their events. This included planning the focus, finding a venue, identifying community partners, communicating with parents, selecting topics, organizing speakers, and identifying door prizes. The cluster leaders worked with active parents on all parts of the plan. One activity was a back-to-school event to motivate students at the start of the new school year. Knowledgeable speakers including teachers, community members, and parents on topics such on-line resources for parents and students, STEM standards, report card grades, and community resources.

The cluster meetings in the second semester focused on student and family health, as well as student transitions to new grades, new schools, and from high school to college or careers. Topics included information for parents and students on standardized tests, healthy eating, exercise at home, and cyber safety.

Some features were common across the first and second semester cluster activities. For example, district leaders asked the cluster teams to include information and resources on health and safety at school, at home, and in their communities. Also, community and college organizations provided information booths and exhibits for parents and students. Some clusters invited their high schools' bands, choirs, cheerleaders, jump rope teams, and other student groups to perform and participate at the events that served schools in the clusters. All of the cluster events featured door prizes, including 12 refurbished desktop or Netbook computers.

It was not easy to find dates for activities that were convenient for all schools in the cluster, but the schools worked together create the best possible schedule for cluster events. The decision to ask parents across schools in the cluster to be involved in planning the activities and to serve as speakers on topics that tapped their expertise helped increase the attendance of other parents.

In all, the cluster meetings encouraged about 300 parents from around the district to attend the planned meetings in their areas. The area meetings were more convenient for most parents than one meeting for the whole district at the central office. The activities were conducted on Saturday mornings to minimize the conflicts. Said one parent, "I enjoyed spending my Saturday morning with other parents who share my thoughts about the importance of being involved our children's education."

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EVERY DAY COUNTS

BRIDGEPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT
BRIDGEPORT, CT

In school, as in life, the first ingredient for success is to show up. Leaders in Bridgeport School District documented students' waning average daily attendance (ADA) rates and adopted a district-wide campaign—Every Day Counts—to improve attendance. The slogan and actions to support it were shared and spread throughout the district.

In practice, the campaign had many components, including increasing awareness of attendance requirements, encouraging creative work by involving the students, offering incentives for improving attendance, and recognizing progress. For example, the district conducted an essay and poetry contest for students to think creatively about the importance of good school attendance. Students at all grade levels were invited to submit their poems and essays. The written work was reviewed by a committee of staff, parents, and community members. Winners were selected from each grade. All students who entered the contest received participation certificates. The winning students were recognized at the end of the year at a Board of Education meeting and presented with trophies. A few award winners were asked to read their poems or essays at this meeting.

Raising awareness about the importance of regular, on-time attendance was a district-wide goal. Posters were created that emphasized the importance of making every day count. Because the awareness campaign was aimed at both students and parents, the posters were displayed around the community in schools, stores and businesses, and even on public buses and in the train station.

As another awareness strategy, each school reported its ADA in its monthly school newsletter. The district newsletter highlighted the three elementary schools and two high schools with the best ADA from the previous month. Each school implemented its own

activities to improve attendance. The Board of Education took time at each meeting to applaud individual school successes. Parents and students kept track of their school's attendance rate. One student explained, "I like seeing my school listed as one of the top three for attendance."

Students with perfect attendance for the year were entered into a lottery to become Superintendent for a Day. Last year, the randomly-selected student was a young man in the third grade. He spent the day with the Superintendent, enjoyed a lunch out, and, with his very supportive mother, was honored at the Board of Education meeting that evening. He received a trophy and his mom was given a bouquet of roses. The Superintendent was pleased with how the event was handled and acknowledged that the boy's mother, "was very proud."

This many-faceted campaign was initiated by the members of the district partnership team. The facilitator, also Key Contact to NNPS, reached out to all schools and the community to support the essay and poetry contests, gathered ADA data for newsletters, and encouraged parents to implement promising practices in their schools that were suggested in the *NNPS Attendance Sampler*. The district leaders were supported by the actions of many others.

Everyone knows how important it is for students to be in class every day and on time. And, everyone pitched in to improve attendance, including teachers, students, families, the board of education, the superintendent, and the community. Early indicators suggest that many students will reap the benefits of improved attendance, making every day count.

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FAMILY ENGAGEMENT EMPOWERMENT DAY (F.E.E.D.)

SAGINAW PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT
SAGINAW, MI

One of the hallmarks of a good educational leader is the ability to identify strengths and weaknesses in school programs, praise the strengths, and guide improvements. Good leaders know how to help others use available tools and make necessary adjustments so that their programs overcome challenges and get stronger. The district leaders for partnerships in Saginaw noticed that some schools needed to improve their partnership programs with better marketing, and by linking family and community engagement to goals for student learning. To help the schools, the district leaders worked to model a welcoming activity on Family Engagement Empowerment Day (FEED).

At FEED, the district aimed to activate the six types of involvement in the NNPS model and show how they could be applied to school improvement goals, including academic achievement, behavior, climate or school culture, and growth of community and family partnerships. As they planned a district day of information and participation for parents, the district leaders made sure that diverse parents were part of the planning process. They conducted a focus group with parents to identify their views and concerns, and used that input to guide the design and content of session topics at FEED. The information from parents indicated that families in Saginaw were hungry for knowledge and support.

The district modeled good advertising by distributing flyers about FEED to all 16 schools to send home with students. The flyer also was posted on the district website and social media pages, and publicized on the local radio station. Members of the marketing team distributed flyers in the community at local grocery stores, laundry mats, churches, and other family gathering places. A reminder was sent to all families on the day of the event.

At FEED, parents could visit up to 45 community agencies and groups who distributed resources about their services. Participants included local colleges, financial institutions, human service agencies, behavioral and mental health, youth development, health and wellness, faith based organizations, counseling services, academic support groups, and others.

There were scheduled breakout sessions every hour from noon to 5 p.m. on topics to help parents understand their children's school programs. These included STEM, literacy, multicultural competencies, college and career readiness, and family engagement. One parent was impressed, "You covered everything. I left feeling empowered to build my family up and support my children's schools."

Community partners provided funds for FEED, which were used for refreshments for all attendees. These partners also donated door prizes and incentives including laptops, ipads, bikes, televisions, and gift cards. Families had a chance to win a prize after visiting vendors.

FEED was a successful district conference for parents. More than 300 families attended for a total of about 1,000 people. Said one parent, "We needed this. I am so glad Saginaw Public Schools did this for us so we know what to do to help our own kids and whole family." After FEED, more than three-quarters of the district's 16 schools saw an increase in parental involvement. In addition, many new community partnerships were formed. The superintendent described the success best, "I have not seen this level of involvement among our families in our district and community in decades."

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DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT GOOGLE CLASSROOM

CONNECTICUT TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM
MIDDLETOWN, CT

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

The Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS) exists as a unique district. The high schools are spaced geographically to serve regions across the whole state. Connections between and among schools can be difficult because of distance. When polled, the schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) overwhelmingly indicated that they would value having more contact with colleagues from the other high schools to share ideas, solve challenges, and learn from each other.

Staff liaisons from the schools gathered together four times a year with district leaders for regular cluster meetings, but even these had some limitations. The schools' ATPs wanted more direct access to each other to share examples and ideas. In an age of technology, this was possible—enter the internet. There are many options for instant, face-to-face, and other meetings that were not available to educators a few years ago.

One online service is the Google Classroom. This free online tool acts in a similar way to other learning management systems such as Blackboard, Canvas, or Moodle. In our work, we set up one virtual “classroom” that our schools' ATPs could join from their own locations. When connected, the teams could quickly download and upload documents, view a shared calendar, and send messages.

Document accessibility made “paperwork” much easier. Every form that the district required of its schools was available for download. Completed forms and documents could be easily uploaded. This also helped the leaders for partnership at the district office because all schools could turn in reports on time.

Google Classroom also was linked to a useful partnership calendar. Each ATP could upload its activities to the calendar, making sure to include the official name of the activity and if any funds were needed. The calendar made it

possible for district leaders to look at least one month ahead to ensure that funding was set up for schools' partnership activities in a timely way.

The documents and calendar enabled ATPs in schools across the state to learn what other technical high schools were doing to develop their programs of school, family, and community partnerships. They could adopt or adapt each other's activities, or ask someone for more information. When questions came up, everyone was available via e-mail in the Google Classroom messaging system. The ATPs responded positively, saying that the system helped them feel in close communication with others and that these connections helped them improve their own programs. A district-level leader agreed, “This makes it easy for us to stay organized and know what is going on with each school's program,”

As with any software, there were a few bumps in getting the online classroom started. For example, it helped to know that to modify or create activities on the calendar, the person had to be listed as a “teacher.” Each classroom supports only 20 “teachers.” This meant that one person from each of the district's 17 technical high schools' ATPs could be listed to enter new information, along with three district leaders.

The online Google Classroom did not totally replace all face-to-face meetings, which were scheduled on a regular basis. Instead, Google Classroom was one way for a spread-out district to supplement regular meetings with more communications that enabled ATPs to learn from each other.

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FATHERS, UNCLES, COUSINS, BROTHERS, AND OTHERS

CALCASIEU PARISH
LAKE CHARLES, LA

The district leader in Calcasieu Parish is always looking for resources to support the efforts of ATPs in 42 Title I schools who are members of NNPS. She often uses NNPS books of *Promising Partnership Practices* to see what other districts and schools are doing on goals that match those in Calcasieu. One district goal for good partnerships is to help schools engage more fathers and father figures in activities at school and at home. The district leader knew that research indicates that children with more involved fathers experience fewer behavioral problems and are more academically successful.

The district leader explored the 2015 and 2016 books of *Promising Partnership Practices* and compiled 18 practices that focused on engaging fathers, grandfathers, brothers, uncles, and others in children's education. She reasoned that if Calcasieu's schools learned about good examples of practices engaging male role models, they would adopt or adapt the designs to fit their students and parent populations, and add the ideas to their One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships to strengthen their partnership programs.

The mini-collection of practices was compiled, printed in booklet form by the district print shop, and distributed to the 42 Title I schools' ATPs. In this way, each school could keep the collection of ideas neatly in place and consider which, if any, would be useful in their own schools. Feedback from the ATPs indicated satisfaction with this resource. One counselor on an ATP wrote in the feedback form's comment section, "Love all the ideas to involve dads in the schools."

The increased focus on involving father-figures in partnership activities is very popular with parents. Commonly, mothers attend school activities, but everyone recognizes the importance of involving both parents in children's learning and development. Said one parent, "The

involvement of a father or male figure is powerful!" In addition to specially designed activities for fathers, just about all partnership activities can include invitations and content to engage fathers as well as mothers.

The district leader will continue to encourage ATPs to think of ways to increase the involvement of fathers and father figures in all engagement activities. The schools also can use the mini-collection of ideas from other schools, new ideas in the next books of *Promising Partnership Practices*, the NNPS *Sampler* called *Involving Fathers in Partnership Activities*, and other NNPS resources, or design new activities to specifically increase father engagement.

The district leader plans to provide copies of the collection of ideas for father involvement to all schools in the Parish, not just those that receive Title I funds. Copies will be given to the District Superintendent, Chief Academic Officer, and School Board Members at the next update presentation on Federal Programs.

The Calcasieu Parish district leader smartly explored what other schools' ATPs had done to engage more fathers and father-figures in partnership activities at school and with their children at home. In no time, Calcasieu Parish will have a new collection of activities from its own schools that have been tested and shown to increase the involvement of fathers and other important men in students' lives.

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FIRST RATE IDEAS: WELCOME POWERPOINT

PASCO SCHOOL DISTRICT
PASCO, WA

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

These days, facts and examples of just about everything are stored electronically—on computer files, on a disk, or in a “cloud.” When documents and film clips are stored electronically, they can be accessed instantly and shared with others.

In Pasco, the district leaders for partnerships gathered good ideas as they attended schools’ monthly ATP meetings. When they convened quarterly cluster meetings of the ATPs of groups of schools, the district leaders used the PowerPoint slides to spotlight good, creative, and effective activities conducted by schools in each cluster. Other schools could consider whether to add the same activity to their plan for partnerships, adapt it to fit the culture and needs in their school, or dismiss the idea as not useful in their location.

This year, district leaders revived and revised the idea of sharing best practices in a Welcome PowerPoint. At quarterly cluster meetings, the PowerPoint runs in a continuous loop as attendees arrive and during breaks in the meeting. This allows attendees to focus on some great ideas for engagement activities without taking up meeting time. And, because the schools that conducted the activities are identified, other ATPs can ask their representatives about the activities that were featured.

Creating the PowerPoint is a labor of love. The district leaders discuss what they saw or heard reported during their previous week’s site visits. When an outstanding idea is discussed, is added to the Welcome Power Point for the next cluster meeting. For example, here are four examples of what a slide may say:

Chess Elementary—Changin’ Up the Meeting Time: Evening meeting times were not fruitful in the 2015-16 school year, so this year the ATP conducted short meetings with parents before school starts. Many parents drop off their students at school and are willing to stay

for a short meeting since they are already there.

McClintock—Awesome Alliteration: Authors are not the only ones gifted with the words. McClintock ATP jazzed up a reading engagement activity calling it *Fiction with Family and Friends*. A creative event title may spike interest—and it is fun to say.

McLoughlin—Principal’s Minute: During each ATP meeting, the principal gives a brief update on something important at the district or school level. At the last meeting her minute was about how the new Math Curriculum was going, and she answered question that ATP members had.

Pasco High—Student and Parent Participation—ATP Chairs invited students and parents to the first ATPS meeting of the year. Chairs introduced what ATP is and how member can support it. Parents and students participated in creating the team’s norms and filled all of the team’s roles. This fostered a cold team culture.

One reason for reviving the Welcome Power Point was to have a communication tool to quickly share best practices and to acknowledge stellar partnership work. Well-planned cluster meetings have taken the place of the end-of-year meeting. Therefore, the year-long accomplishments of every team in each cluster are collected and added to the Welcome Power Point. The slides promote questions and discussions, and remind everyone that all schools are working toward the common goals of engaging all families and promoting the success of all students.

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ONE BOOK-ONE DISTRICT: LEMONADE WAR

LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT
LITTLE ROCK, AR

Many of us remember that special feeling of having our parents, older siblings, or teachers read to us. As part of its One District-One Book activity, Little Rock School District addressed two goals for student learning: improving reading skills and the love of reading, and building financial literacy. A pamphlet for parents emphasized the importance of students' reading for pleasure at each grade level. The booklet also presented dramatic data on children's and adults' need for financial literacy skills (e.g., saving money, using credit cards, banking).

To address these serious topics in a fun way, the district guided all students in grades K-5 in all elementary schools to read the same book, *The Lemonade War* by Jacqueline Davies. The book was chosen because it tells a funny and emotional story that children can relate to—sibling connections, sibling rivalry, entrepreneurial power, and coming to terms with different talents. Community partners paid for a copy of the book to be given to every student.

The kickoff to *The Lemonade War* featured simultaneous assemblies at each elementary school. On a video, the district superintendent sent an encouraging message to students, parents, and teachers about the book. Parents were encouraged to join their children in enjoying book at home over one month. They could read the book aloud with their children in the evenings and on weekends. Pamphlets with a few questions to guide parent-child conversations about each chapter at each grade level were sent home so that age-appropriate discussions were conducted (K-1, 2-3, 4-5 Family Guides).

The pamphlets also included clever ideas for parents to conduct with their children on financial literacy. They could create lemonade war videos or photos and put them on Facebook or Twitter, using the hashtag #LRSD1District-1Book. Users of those social media platforms

were asked to vote for their favorite photos or videos. Many students made their own lemonade stands. One teacher was glad to see how students were thinking about the lessons from the book. She reported, "These kids are selling lemonade today to help a young lady who is fighting cancer."

Schools encouraged student participation through creative songs (some of which included lemons) and discussions about the book. Teachers kept students on schedule as they read chapter by chapter.

The district posted videos on its website in English and Spanish. Local celebrity readers (i.e., the mayor, business leaders, local media personalities) read one of the 14 chapters. The Governor and First Lady provided an overview of the book. So, all students and parents could listen to the chapters as they read them at home, or they could read them aloud themselves.

The idea for all students and others (i.e., teachers, parents, community members) to read one book together is championed by the *One District, One Book Program*. Little Rock's participation with Lemonade War caught the attention of that program's director, and he came to see things in action. He reported that the activity seemed to create, "an excitement here in the community."

There was a lot of enjoyable reading and financial action going on for one month in the elementary schools in Little Rock. The program culminated with \$5 certificates from a local bank for all children who opened a savings account.

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PARENT INVOLVEMENT IS NOT LANGUAGE SPECIFIC

KENNEWICK SCHOOL DISTRICT PAC
KENNEWICK, WA

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

Each year, the Kennewick School District conducts four district-level family engagement activities. In the spring, parents select the topics they would like to learn more about and the district leaders for partnerships plan how they will address those topics in the upcoming school year. In the past, the district focused on providing information and support to parents in English and Spanish. However, now, more than 20% of the districts' 2,800 English Language Acquisition students speak a different language than Spanish. Recognizing the diversity of languages among students' families, the leaders expanded language support services to include all families in the four district-sponsored family engagement activities.

Leaders began working with a local interpreting business. The interpreters are well trained, and families are comfortable with the interpreters and feel that they can ask more questions. Several district colleagues help things go smoothly. For example, for each activity, the district's Immigrant and Refugee Parent Liaison greets the interpreters and goes over the content of the event with them.

Presenters are given tips on how to present a session with an interpreter. They are guided to speak slower and in relatively short segments to allow the interpreter to translate the information; avoid idioms and acronyms; use simple words if possible; avoid changing ideas mid-sentence; avoid asking more than one question at a time; use humor carefully; speak directly to the parents, not the interpreters; and limit the number of words on PowerPoint slides.

Sometimes, a small number of parents can sit in proximity to an interpreter, which encourages parents to ask questions more easily. Sometimes, a large number of parents speaking a single language are best served by headsets. The district has been requesting interpreters for 2-5 languages at each activity over the past year.

Interpreters make a big difference. One teacher noticed that parents' changed their expressions, and remarked, "It's amazing to see how happy parents are when they're able to express their opinions and share their ideas." The district has seen an increase in the engagement of diverse parents. More parents know how to check grades in PowerSchool and more are able to set up conferences with their child's teachers.

Students also benefitted from their engaged parents. One parent reported, "Now that we get flyers in our language we know that we can attend these meetings. When the messages were only in English, we didn't know the meetings were for us." Parents' increased engagement has led to observed improvements in student behavior in several schools. The children know that teachers can communicate with their parents regardless of language differences.

Kennewick's schools have followed the district's lead in working with interpreters, borrowing headsets, and encouraging the participation of all families. Hearing information in their own language is simply a game changer for many families.

Enabling families to connect with their child's school with interpreters and translation services is the first step for engaging parents in their children's education. Many of the families begin to learn English and, over time, no longer need translation services. Some begin to help newcomers and other families in their language group. Opening lines of communication with all families definitely increases parents' engagement at school and at home.

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PARENT SPEAKER SERIES

FRANCIS HOWELL SCHOOL DISTRICT
ST. CHARLES, MO

The leaders in Francis Howell School District (FHSD) are always working to improve their schools, the success of all students, and their partnerships with families and the community. An overarching goal is to provide families with information, experiences, and connections to assist them in rearing successful children. Last year, FHSD sponsored a Parent Speaker Series for parents and educators in the district that was adapted from a similar series conducted at the school level.

The Parent Speaker Series was conducted on three nights during the school year. Topics were selected from those requested on a survey of parents. At each meeting, an invited expert from the community presented interesting and useful information on the selected topic for about an hour, with 30 minutes for questions from the audience. The three topics of most interest to parents last year were current trends in drug abuse prevention, the use and safety of social media, and empowering youth.

At the meeting on drug abuse prevention, the speaker discussed signs and symptoms that parents should be aware of and strategies for talking to one's children about the dangers of drug abuse. The session on social media included a lively discussion of how students today may define friendship, education, and self-worth differently from their parents' generation. Popular apps were discussed, including apps to avoid. The third topic, empowering youth, identified 40 important assets (e.g., positive peer relations, managing homework time) that help children prepare—socially and academically—for life. The assets are worth developing and strengthening at school and at home.

Parents responded to the district's invitations to the event on a Google RSVP form. An e-mail reminder was sent the day before each presentation. Because not all interested parents were able to come, the district uploaded all handouts and information from the presenta-

tions to the District website.

The series was evaluated through a parent survey, which also asked about other topics parents wanted to hear about in a future series. One parent echoed other comments, "I think it was fabulous."

FHSD also conducts a district-wide Parent University to share information with parents in another way. Last year, 14 workshops were conducted one morning to introduce parents to school and district programs and services including: **academic support** (e.g., preparing for kindergarten, transitions to middle school, understanding middle school math, literacy at home, how to use the school's library resources from home); **21st century learning** (e.g., apps for learning, challenges and opportunities in today's society); **health and wellness** (e.g., nutrition, age-appropriate discipline, managing stress, substance abuse prevention); and **preparing for college** (e.g., preparation for the ACT, college financial aid, planning courses in middle and high school). All sessions were offered twice.

Throughout the morning, parents could select three different workshops. Advance registration enabled the district leaders to estimate attendance for each workshop session and make appropriate preparations. To pay for this large meeting, local community agencies and businesses purchased space at the event. About 30 community partners paid the vendor fee.

FHSD's Parent Speaker Series and Parent University were well received by the parents, according to surveys and exit evaluations. The district-sponsored workshops and presentations supplement meetings held at individual schools to strengthen connections between parents and the school district.

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AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL ACADEMY

RIVERSIDE COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION
RIVERSIDE, CA

Leaders of the Riverside County Office of Education (COE) observed that often, in the past, groups of parents or community members would meet once, create a long list of conditions in their schools that need to improve, and demand action. This was not an effective change strategy. To correct past practice, COE designed an Academy consisting of a series of workshops on an important topic that parents wanted to improve. The plan was to meet regularly, focus clearly on one important issue, make a plan for action, and implement that plan.

One important topic was the need for the effective functioning and plans for action of district and school-based African American Parent Advisory Councils (AAPACs). The AAPAC Academy included training, assignments for attendees to conduct at their schools, and creating opportunities to take action for school improvement. The three foci of the workshops for AAPACs were as follows:

Part 1—Starting and Maintaining your AAPAC. A Review of Models and Best Practices. Participants examined and critiqued alternative structures or models that might strengthen the work of AAPACs. The best practices were gleaned from well-functioning AAPACs around the country. Participants also studied and discussed aggregate academic and behavioral performance data for African American students. These data generated discussions about school practices that often affect the learning opportunities of African American students and that need to change including disproportionate discipline, special education overrepresentation, low expectations, and lack of affirmation.

Part 2—Effective AAPAC Actions. Connecting Your AAPAC to Student Achievement. The second workshop, conducted by an NNPS Facilitator, engaged participants in conversations about family engagement that

has been shown to increase achievement and improve behavior of all students, including but not limited to African American children. This session included discussions of how to connect AAPAC goals with Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) priorities.

Part 3—Action Teams for Partnerships. Developing an Action Plan for 2016/17. The third workshop provided participants with strategies for organizing effective Action Teams for Partnership (ATPs) and guiding ATPs to write goal-linked Action Plans for Partnerships. Attendees worked together to write draft Action Plans for Partnerships for their schools for the upcoming school year.

Feedback to the AAPAC Academy was positive. Participants made the connection between LCAP priorities, school goals, and AAPAC activities that could improve student success. Some Academy attendees came as a team, which they noted was important. Teams could make progress by sharing information about their school and by conducting planned actions together. Participants also saw that good plans can, over time, engage all parents, improve the school climate for all families, and increase all students' success in school.

Riverside COE knew that the AAPAC Academy was addressing a sensitive topic – the experiences and struggles of African American students and their families. The topic had to be discussed honestly, based on facts and data, and with appropriate authority. For AAPACs, this was a good topic. It was important to the participants, to families they represent, and could result in real change to improve African American students' school experiences and opportunities to learn.

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PARENT TEACHER LEADERSHIP ACADEMY: PARTNERSHIPS AND PROJECTS

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA PARENT TEACHER LEADERSHIP ACADEMY
TUSCALOOSA, AL

The University of Alabama Parent Teacher Leadership Academy (PTLA) is a unique program. It provides research-based professional development to parents and teachers who were selected by the principal as potential leaders for school improvement. The program also provides a structure to help attendees apply the knowledge and skills they gain at PTAL at their own schools. The program started for parents only in 2007, expanded to include teachers, and grew to include a Hispanic Parent Leadership Academy and Pre-K Parent Leadership Academy. PTLA changed again in 2015 with joint sessions to build strong and effective parent and teacher teams.

PTLA continues to improve, and successfully transitioned last year with new leaders. There was an emphasis on how school teams can work collaboratively on projects linked to goals in their own school improvement plan. This year, PTLA leaders included a focus on school, family, and community partnerships. Participants attended a workshop on the NNPS framework of Six Types of Involvement, how to work as an Action Team for Partnerships, how to link partnership projects to school improvement plans, and how to connect the work to the Alabama Continuous Improvement Plan.

One project was planned and implemented by parents and teachers at PTLA even before the end of the Academy. This was a Type 2-Communicating activity to involve parents who could not come to meetings at the school. The rural Buhl Elementary School used Facebook for Class Family Meetings hosted by “Betsy Bulldog,” the school mascot. Each week a different question was asked based on a survey of parents’ interests. Teachers and parents took turns answering the question. All Class Family Meetings are archived so that parents at school or at home can “attend” the meetings. One parent reported, “It is so nice to get informa-

tion whenever and wherever I want. Answers to these questions are exactly what I’ve wanted to know.”

Another project of the team of teachers and parents from Meadow View Elementary School focused on Type 6-Collaborating with the Community. The team wanted to increase school and family partnerships and connect parents and students with various community partners. Have a Ball with Learning welcomed parents and students with “swag bags” containing educational materials to use at home. These included books, math games, a list of educational websites, notebooks, a deck of cards, and a free pass to the local high school’s basketball game. At Have a Ball with Learning, the elementary school’s students and parents came to meet the high school coaches and athlete, see their equipment, and play games with them in basketball, softball, baseball and soccer. Everyone met everyone as they played ball. The spirit of this activity prompted the principal to state, “This is one of the best events we’ve ever had. This makes you want to come to work every day.”

These were just two of many projects initiated by PTLA teams, with guidance provided by the University of Alabama program leaders. The Academy enabled the teachers and parents to think about partnerships in ways they had not considered before taking the course. They learned that they can plan and implement activities for the six types of involvement to engage more and different families and help more students succeed in school.

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VIRTUAL COACHING

PENNSYLVANIA TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NETWORK (PaTTAN)
PITTSBURGH, PA

PaTTAN's mission is to support initiatives of the state's Bureau of Special Education and to build the capacity of districts to serve students who receive special education services. PaTTAN guides schools to improve their programs and the success of students with special needs and all students. One area of interest is school, family, and community partnerships. Last year, PaTTAN implemented a grants program to help schools strengthen their programs of family and community engagement to increase students' academic and behavioral success.

The organization and the schools and districts that received grants to improve partnerships became members of NNPS. The leaders activated a new NNPS contractual service-Virtual Coaching—to help ATPs review their plans and practices of family and community engagement.

Virtual Coaching is an electronically-based meeting (e.g., Go-to-Meeting or Skype) where school ATPs share their successes and challenges with an NNPS Senior Program Facilitator. The organization or district leaders and school ATPs ask questions, discuss challenges, raise issues of interest, and plan next steps. The PaTTAN leaders believed that this kind of customized connection would help schools move forward with their partnership programs. The program leader noted, "Having webcams turned on at each site made the session engaging. We could see each ATP and respond and interact easily because we could see each other."

Recipients of the PaTTAN grants from across the state of Pennsylvania have regular meetings that encourage ATPs to network with each other and share information on their plans and progress. The PaTTAN leaders and the regional consultants who directly assist school ATPs agreed that an additional meeting toward the end of the school year with an NNPS Facilitator would give the grantees an opportunity to

talk about their plans for the next school year to strengthen and sustain their efforts.

The Virtual Coaching sessions enabled members of the school-based ATPs to join the discussion from their own schools and districts. One member appreciated, "Virtual Coaching allowed us to gain information without having to leave our building!"

The 90-minute Virtual Coaching sessions were held in three regions with PaTTAN leaders and the grantees. The leaders worked with the NNPS Facilitator to identify two or three objectives. They planned an interactive agenda to assist the school ATPs focus on their goals for student success and their plans for family and community engagement to meet those goals. PaTTAN's regional facilitators also attended the Virtual Coaching sessions to encourage the school team members to participate, to facilitate small group discussions, trouble shoot technology, and continue the conversations.

The agenda for the three regional meetings included a review of the components of the NNPS model and resources available. After each component, the ATPs shared examples of their successes and challenges. They discussed ideas with their own ATP and then with the group as a whole. Said one attendee, "I so appreciated the virtual coaching sessions that I participated twice!"

Virtual Coaching offers face-to-face technical assistance while lowering the cost of training. District and organization leaders also benefit from this process. They co-lead and interact with the NNPS Facilitators and their schools throughout the session. It is clear that Virtual Coaching can help leaders and their schools strengthen partnership programs linked to their goals for student success.

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