

# PROMISING PARTNERSHIP PRACTICES



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

Johns Hopkins University

# 2020

Edited by

Brenda G. Thomas, Briana S. Bostic, and Joyce L. Epstein



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## MEMBER BENEFITS

- » *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action, Fourth Edition*
- » Excellent website: [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org)
- » Monthly *E-Briefs* from NNPS Facilitators
- » *Promising Partnership Practices* (annual e-book)
- » *Partnership Awards* for national recognition
- » On-call technical assistance by phone, e-mail, and website
- » Annual evaluation of program quality (*UPDATE*)
- » Leadership Institutes
- » NNPS Webinars
- » Research results, tools, and materials to meet Title I / ESSA requirements for parent and family engagement
- » *Type 2 Blog*

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at Johns Hopkins University**

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**Harrison Elementary School, Lakewood Early Childhood Program, Lakewood, OH/Non-Academic Section**

**Pasco High School, Stevens Middle School, Robert Frost Elementary School, Pasco, WA/Climate Section**

**Richland County School District One, Columbia, SC/District and Organization Section**

### **Special Photos with Activities**

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**Brockman Elementary School: *Make Your Mark--Family Literacy Night*, Richland County SD One, SC**

**Carver Magnet Elementary School: *Reading Under the Big Top*, Florence District One, SC**

**Delmae Elementary School: *Read to Lead*, Florence District One, SC**

**Leonville Elementary: *Veterans Day Celebration*, St. Landry Parish Schools, LA**

**UPK-Starting Point: *At Your Service*, Universal Pre-K of Cuyahoga County, OH**

**Westwood Elementary School: *Drive-Thru Celebration*, Calcasieu Parish Schools, LA**

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# INTRODUCTION

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## *Promising Partnership Practices 2020*

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

The 2019-20 school year was a year like no other. Things started out like any other year, but in March 2020 most schools across the country quickly closed their doors and directed students to learn from home. COVID-19 put school, family, and community partnerships at the top of every school's agenda. In nearly 100,000 schools and 14,000 districts, it was imperative for teachers, parents, and students to communicate and collaborate with each other about children's well-being and learning.

Some people said that parents were "home schooling," but that is not correct—not the way that a small number of families elect to teach their children at home. Parents were quick to say, "I am not a teacher. I need information to guide my child's learning." Teachers were working hard—mostly from home—to provide online classes or paper packets for students with no computers or Internet access at home. It was very clear that teachers, parents, and students were the true "essential workers" every day through the end of the school year.

The COVID-19 crisis was unprecedented, unexpected, and unwelcome. Yet, there were some very creative COVID-partnerships, as reported in this collection of *Promising Partnership Practices 2020*. NNPS is eager to share these online and off-line silver linings. Take a look at the partnership activities that schools, districts, and organizations implemented when challenged by the COVID closures. Here are a few:

At the preschool level: **ZOOM to the ZOO** took students, teachers, and parents on a "field trip" from Cleveland to the San Diego Zoo (Tremont Montessori).

At the elementary school level: **Drive-Thru Celebration** celebrated the end of the school year and "graduation" on decorated wheels (Westwood Elementary).

**Hawthorne's Hangout** is a full account of the many actions by the school and district to meet students' needs with meals, Chromebooks, and E-Chats with parents with diverse backgrounds (Hawthorne Elementary).

At the middle school level: Teachers and staff conducted frequent Student Wellness Checks to determine students' and parents' well-being and needed services (Sanders Middle School).

At the high school level: The Tiger Academic Support Center (TASC) turned a tutoring program from in person to online to ensure that students pass their classes (Central High School).

In district leadership: **All Hands on Deck** gave active roles to everyone for various activities including "I Miss You" videos and posters for students and parents, and small group and one-on-one meetings with students and/or parents for personalized attention (Saginaw Public School District).

**Meals for Children** reports the systematic way that the district organized the distribution of free breakfasts and lunches when school doors closed (Richland District One).

In organization leadership: NNPS's partner in Scotland conducted Parent Surveys in Scotland on COVID19 to learn how parents felt and what they needed to guides their children's learning from home (Partnership Schools Scotland).

**At Your Service** was planned to engage preschool students and parents in service learning to solve a community problem. COVID19 changed the multi-school activity to **Virtual Photo Album to Show Gratitude for Essential Workers** (Universal PreK-Starting Point).

See these and many other thoughtful activities pre- and post-COVID-19 in all sections of this collection. Your program may adopt or adapt the activities to strengthen your program of family and community engagement.

### **This Collection . . .**

Take a look! There are four Tables of Contents (TOC) to help you find goal-linked activities for your program of family and community engagement.

**1. GOALS FOR PARTNERSHIPS.** See the list of activities by **academic goal** (i.e., reading, STEM, other subjects); **behavioral goal** (student behavior, health, multicultural awareness, and plans for college or career); and the goal for a **welcoming school climate** for all partners in children's education.

**Also, see excellent activities from districts and organizations** to strengthen leadership and guide schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs).

**2. SIX TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT.** See the list of activities on **parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community.** Although each activity is identified with *one* main type of involvement, each practice may activate more than one type.

**3. SCHOOL AND POLICY LEVELS.** See the list of activities by school level—**preschool, elementary, middle, and high school.** Remember—many activities may be used or adapted at other school levels. Also, see activities for **district, organization, and state leaders.**

**4. CONTRIBUTORS.** See the list of contributors to this book, **by location, city/state, and title of activity.** Activities developed in one community (urban, suburban, or rural) may be adapted to meet conditions and interests in other locations. This year, activities before and after COVID closures, came from 30 schools and 10 districts and organizations in the U.S., Ireland, and Scotland

**Also see . . .**

**NNPS WEBSITE.** Due to COVID19, this is the first year since 1997 that NNPS produced an E-BOOK: *Promising Partnership Practices 2020*. Members of NNPS received advance notice of the E-Book and its link on the NNPS website. The collection is posted at [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org) in the section Success Stories. Readers may print the full book in color or black and white, or share the e-copy.

**NNPS SAMPLERS.** Eighteen (18) NNPS *SAMPLERS* provide an easy way to review ten good activities from prior years' books of *Promising Partnership Practices*. The *Samplers* focus on family and community engagement 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/assessments,** and for improving partnership programs in **pre-schools, 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 2009 to 2020 and **all *Samplers* using the NNPS Members-Only-Code.** The code changes each January for active members who renew membership from year to year. NNPS reminds members about the Member-Only Code in the monthly *E-Brief*.

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## 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 improve 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 forms an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), writes a goal-linked partnership plans, and conducts partnership practices using the framework of Six Types of Involvement to engage all families in their children's education in different ways and in different places.
- 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 with each other to improve the school climate, engage all families, and increase student success in school.

For more information, visit [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org).



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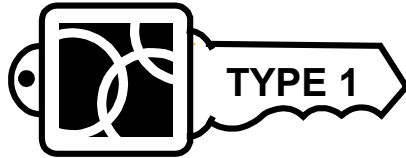
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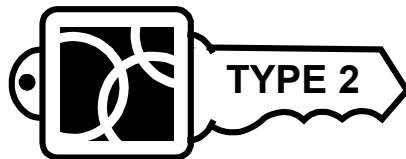


# THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

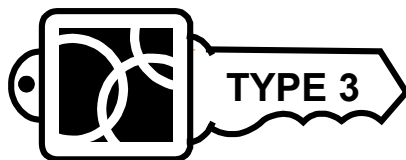
## EPSTEIN'S SIX TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT



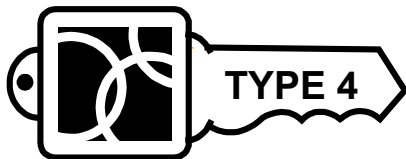
**PARENTING:** Assist families in understanding child and adolescent development and in setting home conditions that support children as students at each grade level. Assist schools in understanding families.



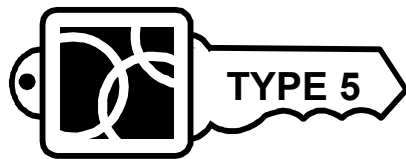
**COMMUNICATING:** Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.



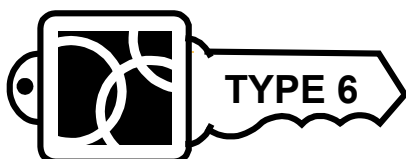
**VOLUNTEERING:** Improve recruitment, training, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school and in other locations to support students and school programs.



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



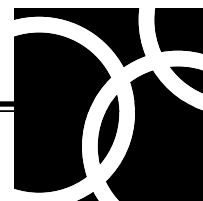
**DECISION MAKING:** Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, action teams, and other parent organizations.



**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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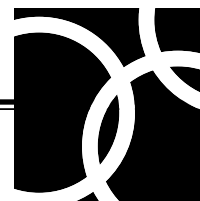
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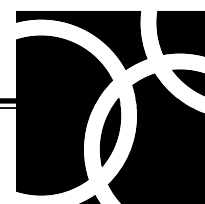
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# 1

## 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.



## BOOK BORROWING CLUB

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GEARITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS, OH

One of the best ways to improve children's early reading, literacy, and language skills and prepare for kindergarten is for schools to guide parents in feasible and fun ways to talk and read with their preschoolers at home. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and teachers at the Gearity PreK program planned to improve connections with parents to help reach school reading goals. PreK is part of the elementary school, and serves students and families with diverse racial, economic, and linguistic backgrounds.

In class, PreK teachers often read and reread a good story to children through the week. Children love a familiar story. Increasingly deep discussions of a good story help children build vocabulary, concept knowledge, and language skills. Teachers knew that students and their parents would enjoy reading favorite books at home, especially with guidelines and activities for parents to conduct with their child.

Teachers identified many good books that they read aloud in class, and added recommendations from the local librarian. They ordered needed copies, introduced the Book Borrowing Club to families, and invited them to participate. Parents could sign up for the Club throughout the year.

At least once a month, teachers chose one book that they read in class. They created a home packet for parents consisting of the same book, ideas for parents to introduce the story, and an activity with good questions that would be fun to discuss with the child. Teachers signed out books to parents and sent messages that the book was coming home. Families kept each book for one week and returned it with the completed activity and their own comments. Some activities were posted in class for students to see the "work" they did at home.

The main participants in the Book Borrowing Club are the students. In class and at home, students help tell the story, read aloud, and share their thoughts. Having fun with books helps students strengthen their love of books, vocabulary, and thinking skills.

Teachers evaluated the program based on the books sent out and activities returned. They could tell that children had more close-up-and-personal experiences thinking about each story one-on-one with a parent at home. The children told teachers that it was fun to read the stories at home. Families were "in the loop" with new ways to help students reach school improvement goals for children's early reading skills. Just about all parents reported that they enjoyed reading and talking about stories with their child, and appreciated the linked activities to prompt their child's thinking.

Challenges may arise. A few families lost the book, and a few could not cover the cost of replacements. The Book Borrowing Club purchased copies as needed. Gearity PreK plans to continue the Book Borrowing Club and expand its collection of books with recommendations from the Speech Language Pathologist and other specialists to include books that will strengthen the skills of students with special needs.

The Book Borrowing Club is one of Gearity teachers' favorite ways to partner with families. It bridges the gap between home and school and includes many families who cannot come to meetings at the school building. With goal-linked engagement in reading, the Book Borrowing Club helped Gearity strengthen school and family partnerships that mattered for student learning and preparation for kindergarten.

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*D\_Foran@chuh.org*

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## CARVER MOVIE NIGHT

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CARVER MAGNET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
LITTLE ROCK, AR

TYPE 4

**W**hen a district adopts a new curriculum, parents need to know how their children’s work and learning will change. Carver Magnet conducted Movie Night to introduce a new district-wide literacy curriculum with parents and students. The new approach across grade levels was selected to be effective for all students, and to improve reading skills of students with dyslexia.

Carver Elementary (PreK-5) is a Title I school, serving about 250 students. Most are African American, with a few white and Latino students. The school is building a strong partnership program by communicating with and engage all families. For Movie Night, invitations were sent via fliers, phone calls, other school communication systems such as ClassDojo, Blooms, and ClassTag, and from the PTA.

On Movie Night, the school was decorated by volunteers to resemble a movie theater. There was popcorn at the door, and a photo booth with props. First, parents and students went together to the cafeteria to hear from the Principal and teachers about the new literacy curriculum. They heard how the program would help increase students’ reading and literacy skills and scores.

The Principal explained, “We can’t just ask students about the characters and setting anymore when our kids are reading. We’ve got to go deeper than that. [We will be asking about] the mood of the story, how it made you feel, why the setting was important to the story, and so on.” He noted that parents can ask similar questions, which also are included on state reading tests. Students must be comfortable about thinking about what they read.

Then, children went to the movie room, while parents went to their child’s classroom to experience a mock lesson using the new

approaches. Parents acted as “students.” Teachers taught phonemic awareness and phonics lessons, and parents asked questions and shared reactions and comments. For example, parents experienced “cueing” strategies that help students unlock the new words by drawing meaning from an illustration, from prior knowledge, from letter sounds, or from a combination of these cues.

Parents went to another mock lesson, which helped those who had more than one child in different grade levels. Parents and children reconvened in the cafeteria and were served a family meal. A large turnout demonstrated that Carver’s parents were eager for useful and important information and good communications with the school.

Movie Night was conducted early in the school year so that families became familiar with the new curriculum and how to support their students at home. By experiencing mock lessons, parents could see the types of questions they could ask their children when they read a bedtime story or listen to their children read aloud. Students benefitted by having parents who could support reading and spelling in ways that mirrored their school experiences.

The reading curriculum was new for everyone—teachers, students, and families. This set an exciting agenda for a learning community. Everyone was going to figure out how to improve reading instruction and students’ learning. Parents were positive about the information they gained. Said one, “I’m glad that I came tonight because this helped me understand how I can help my child with reading at home.” Another agreed, “I will start using some examples of good questions at home.”

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READING & LITERACY

## ***DROP EVERYTHING AND READ (DEAR)***

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PULASKI HEIGHTS MIDDLE SCHOOL  
LITTLE ROCK, AR

**M**iddle schools across the country are working to encourage students to read for pleasure and strengthen reading skills. At Pulaski Heights MS, this important literacy goal is featured in the school improvement plan and in the school’s plan for school, family, and community partnerships. Parents and other family partners can support students’ reading and talk with their children about what they are reading and learning. It’s a partnership thing.

The staff at Pulaski discussed students’ literacy skills and scores. The school serves about 650 students in grades 6-8. Teachers in the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program wanted to ensure that students in grade 8 moved on to high school with strong literacy skills and scores—ready for high school-level work. This would help students succeed in grade 9, which is known to affect students’ chances of graduating from high school on time. Other teachers agreed and extended the need for students at all grade levels to increase reading for pleasure.

To take action on this goal, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and many teachers discussed the Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) program and adopted it in their classrooms. DEAR gives students a head start on reading for pleasure with a “10-minute policy.” In every class at the same time, everything stops. Students log in to their individual online reading selections or use paperbacks from the school library to read for 10 minutes. Some put on headphones and have their e-books read to them. All students can continue to read their favorite books or other reading matter in free time and after school at home.

All teachers of core, elective, and enrichment classes were trained in how to organize this

“good interruption” to their classes. Students benefitted from the uniformity of treatment across classes. One student admitted, “I’m glad we were required to read. I use to read all the time, but forgot how much I enjoyed it.”

Pulaski MS conducts the Accelerated Reader (AR) program to motivate students to continually improve literacy skills—reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In AR, students are awarded points for reading a book and passing a quiz about that book. At the end of every 9-week marking period, students who meet their AR goals attend a party to celebrate success. DEAR fit well into the AR philosophy and activities.

Parents are key partners in encouraging students to meet their weekly AR goals and pass a weekly progress test. One parent commented, “This is an interesting approach and definitely is making a difference to encourage students to read for fun.” Community partners also are important. Central Arkansas Library Systems (CALs) provided tech cards for all students allowing them to access its database catalogue free of charge.

Due to the COVID-19 closures, students did not take the state achievement test this year. But, with information from AR weekly tests, teachers reported that Pulaski’s students—including 8th graders—advanced their reading skills. Whether schools are open for in-person education or students continue remote learning, the ATP and teachers agreed that they will continue DEAR. Also, the school will feature one core and one elective class on a school communique to reinforce the positive reading experiences of students, teachers, and parents due to this program.

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## FAMILY GAME NIGHT

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WESTERN HILLS ELEMENTARY  
LITTLE ROCK, AR

**F**amily Game Night aimed to build students' reading and vocabulary skills and help families see that they are important partners for children's progress in reading. As in most schools, teachers at Western Hills work hard to help students master reading and vocabulary skills every year. They also know that learning can be fun with reading and vocabulary games that students and parents play together.

Game nights at school are not new, but Western Hills wanted to conduct activities to model how parents and students could organize reading game nights at home. Students played a big part in this activity. They were essential for showing parents how to play the games.

Parents received warm invitations to spend a cold day in January playing games with their child at school. They returned RSVPs to inform what supplies and refreshments were needed. The Parent Facilitator and others researched popular reading and vocabulary games for different grade levels. They considered games they liked to play with their own children at home. Selections had to meet important standards to encourage parents and students to talk and laugh together while learning.

The school chose *Guesstures*, *Taboo Kids vs Parents*, *Headbandz*, *SpeakOut Kids vs Parents*, *Apples to Apples Junior*, *Monopoly Junior*, *Classic Boogle Word Search*, *Boggle Junior*, *Candy Land*, and *Phase 10*. Some of these games focused explicitly on vocabulary building. For example, *Taboo* included "kid cards" and "parent cards." Players try to get teammates say the "guess" word on the card without saying the "forbidden" word on the card. They must take care to think about subtle differences in word meanings. For *Headbandz*, players ask "yes" or "no" questions

for their partners to guess the figure on the picture card that is attached to their special headband. The picture might be an animal, food, or other object.

On Family Game Night, the school's Tech specialist talked with parents as a group about the school's new website and about how to use school library cards. Then, parents and students went to their game rooms. Prek and 1st grade families were in one room with the *Headbandz* games. The 2nd and 3rd graders were in a room with *Guesstures*. Parents with 4th and 5th graders played *Taboo Kids vs Parents*. After 30 minutes, parents and students visited their own child's classroom and teacher. Then, everyone met in the cafeteria for food and a survey. Games were distributed to all students and families by grade level for playing at home. Finally, door prizes were awarded, just for fun.

Many partners helped create a successful Reading Game Night at Western Hills. The PTA donated food, and community partners contributed door prizes. Planners ran out of games for families to take home because more parents attended than expected. That is a good problem, which is easy to solve by adding a few extra games to the list. At Western Hills, the Principal supplemented reading games with some card games that also generated talk and laughter.

The game players gave clear reactions. One parent summed up everyone's opinion: "This was great!" A teacher added, "This was a great idea, I enjoyed playing *Taboo*." Parents and students learned how engaging word games can be. "Use your words," took on a whole new meaning on Family Game Night.

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## ORCHARD OWLS ARE WISE TO READ

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ORCHARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
RICHLAND, WA

**R**eading can be enjoyed by anyone, any place, and in any language. Last year, Orchard Elementary conducted a summer reading series at the clubhouse of a local apartment complex for families with low incomes. This gave many parents who had not come to meetings and events at school a comfortable place to meet teachers, strengthen partnerships, and focus with their children on improving reading skills and attitudes. The program also aimed to reduce the loss of students' reading skills during the summer.

Parents and teachers worked with the apartment manager to conduct the meetings. ATP funds from the district paid teachers for two hours of time to set up, conduct activities, and clear the space for the next meeting. Each Wednesday, the teachers met at the clubhouse with food, books, and an educational activity for students.

Teachers walked with students around the apartment complex and invited other students and parents to the reading clubhouse. Students read to each other, to parents, or to siblings and listened to a teacher read a story aloud. The students and parents ate snacks and completed a reading/craft activity together. There was a reading theme each week. For example, one week everyone focused on reading about owls (for the Orchard Owls) and created a related craft activity. Parents had time to connect with other parents and staff members in a relaxed setting.

A local Reading Foundation (The Children's Reading Foundation of Mid Columbia) donated books so every child who attended every week was able to take a book home to read for pleasure. The students (toddlers to teens) who attended the Owls meetings were given books at their reading levels for their home libraries to read throughout the summer. A major coffee chain and grocery story donated pastry and snacks each week. The planners noted that obtaining donations takes

some work, but can be successful with good partners and good projects.

There were some extra benefits. Some older students became reading teachers or tutors to younger siblings and neighbors. Parents met and talked with other parents, were given food to take home, and appreciated the books that were given to their children. Teachers made strong connections with many parents that they had not met before. They encouraged parents to feel welcome to attend meetings at the school.

One parent participant stated, "Bringing summer enrichments opportunities to students and their families was a great way to break down barriers and build relationships. I saw 2-year-olds crawl up into teachers' laps to hear a story.... This program kept learning alive all summer."

By the end of the summer, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), PTO, reading teachers, and school administrators observed improvements. They made strong connections with parents at the apartment complex. The students and parents conducted many reading activities at and after the meetings. It was clear that reading activities in a neutral and convenient community setting broke down barriers between home and school.

The good work conducted last year was thwarted by COVID-19 closures. The ATP, teachers, and many partners at Orchard Elementary are redesigning reading meetings as a new whole-school series that will help students from all neighborhoods have strong family and community support, books to read, and food to eat to encourage summer reading.

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## READ TO LEAD

DELMAE HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
FLORENCE, SC

TYPE 4

READING & LITERACY

**D**elmae Heights ES is a school where children read, read, read! As they do, they are guided to develop Delmae’s character traits-- perseverance, determination, and responsibility. Delmae’s goals are for students to enjoy reading and gain personal qualities that make them good students, good friends, and good citizens. Students take *responsibility* for learning, *persevere* in advancing reading skills from year to year, and are *determined* to succeed in school.

The school—a multi-year NNPS Partnership Award Winner—keeps improving its program of family and community engagement. Its action plan is based on the NNPS framework of six types of engagement to involve all families in different ways and different places. All schools in South Carolina are guided by a state goal to help all students read well through the elementary grades in preparation for secondary school.

Read to Lead mixed attention to students reading skills and character development. Students at each grade level who completed their reading logs each week had their names placed in a lottery. A reading-leader was randomly selected at each grade level and awarded Delmae Dollars, which could be spent in the school store.

At the end of the month, one student’s name was drawn as “Principal for the Day.” This student conducted several tasks to understand the principal’s job and build leadership skills. The student-principal conducted a morning show, observed a lesson in a classroom, created a “student rule for the day,” had lunch with the principal and the other grade-level reading leaders. At the end of the day, the student-principal debriefed all students about what was learned about leadership, and debriefed the

principal about the experience, as well.

All students participated. They were challenged to read six books during the month. They recorded their weekly progress in reading logs, and had their names entered into grade level leadership lotteries. The school newsletter, e-mails, texts, and letters for parents explained Read to Lead, and asked parents to encourage reading at home, sign their child’s reading log, and discuss Read to Lead activities with their child. Community mentors acted as partner readers to encourage students to complete their logs. Students who were selected to represent their grade levels each week were announced via social media to all families. One parent whose student was Principal for the Day shared, “He had a blast! He told us all the details and enjoyed every minute.”

The ATP and teachers learned that they could organize this activity effectively and encourage all students to read for pleasure. Teachers kept count of students’ reading logs to evaluate the students’ accomplishments. The activity motivated more students to meet these standards than in the past. One teacher reported, “So many students worked hard on this reading initiative. In my class, the winner boosted his confidence as a leader and as a leader. [He said that this] was one of his top 3 favorite things from the school year!”

The challenge to read, read, read, and to have a leadership experience as Principal for the Day motivated students to persevere and dedicate time to fulfill the challenging goal of reading six books over one month. This challenge seemed to increase students’ stamina—grit—character and school spirit.

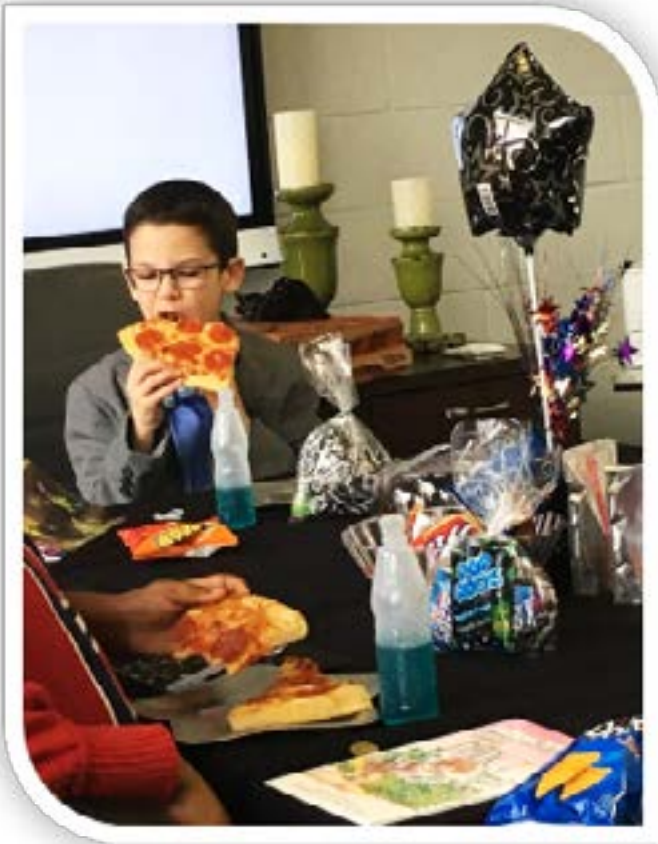
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TYPE 4



READING & LITERACY

## READING UNDER THE BIG TOP

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CARVER ELEMENTARY MAGNET SCHOOL  
FLORENCE, SC

TYPE 2

The School Improvement Plan at Carver Elementary Magnet School set a clear goal to increase students' reading scores across grade levels on the state's STAR achievement test by 10% over last year. Teachers focused on specific instructional strategies to improve students' reading comprehension in class lessons. They also shared some feasible and fun ideas and grade-specific reading materials with parents to reinforce reading skills at home. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and reading teachers believed that together—teachers and parents—could help students achieve at a higher level and help the school attain its reading goal.

Carver is a K-4 school attended by near equal percentages of White and Black students, with about half eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The school is working to engage all parents in their children's education, with special attention to parents whom they did not see often at school.

In the previous year, Carver conducted a Reading Caravan in a community park in a community where many students lived and where families were not as engaged in children's education as some others. This year, the goal was to create a reading event on a grander scale in the Big Top of a carnival.

With the goal of community outreach, the ATP and teachers at Carver invited another school with similar goals (Davis Elementary) to collaborate on Reading Under the Big Top—a carnival of reading activities, family and community outreach, and fun. The reading gala was supported by both schools' Title I funds. It was held in the cafeteria and multipurpose room of a preschool in a neighborhood where many students lived. The Big Top welcomed all families, but made extra effort to engage the families with low incomes. The combined activity for two schools conducted in a community location opened participation to many more families.

The PTO sent invitations and reminders to parents and community members via flyers, Facebook, and newsletters. The School Improvement Council and ATP had many suggestions for good activities. Educators and parents divided tasks, purchased supplies, set up stations, ordered reading books and materials for reading activities, and obtained carnival food. The planners prepared clear and enjoyable reading tips for parents and students to conduct at the carnival and, then, to practice at home.

Students demonstrated for parents how they use reading in science and math classes, and how reading helped them think, collaborate with others, and work creatively on subject-specific projects. Parents could see that reading is important for student success in all subjects.

At some stations, teachers demonstrated for parents how to ask students good questions about what they were reading, how to gather student opinions about a story or report, how to help students use new vocabulary words, and other reading and learning skills.

All students received a free book for their home libraries. Parents completed an evaluation of the Big Top. They summararily enjoyed the activity and gained ideas for supporting reading at home.

Scheduled for March 12, Reading Under the Big Top was one of the last gatherings before COVID-19 closed school doors. As such, it was an important way to strengthen school and family connections that would be important for the extensive communications needed when students were learning from home.

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READING & LITERACY



TYPE 2

READING & LITERACY

## FAMILY EGG DROP

JAMES MCGEE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
PASCO, WA

STEM  
TYPE 4

**M**cGee Elementary continues to strengthen its program of family and community engagement and its focus on activities that support student learning. This year, the Family Egg Drop was added to the school’s STEM night as an activity for students and parents to work on together at home—just for fun—and then share with others at STEM night—just for fun.

For this interactive science experience, parents and students researched ideas and created designs for scientific “covers” or “containers” to protect a raw egg from breaking when dropped from a height of 12 feet. Students and parents used the science of Sir Isaac Newton’s laws of motion in their designs. They considered concepts of force of landing and acceleration from height to ground in their designs. Students and parents imagined protecting a raw egg with padding to soften the force of impact on landing. Or, they created “bounce-ability” or some kind of “parachute” to slow an egg’s acceleration to the ground. Or, they designed other innovative protections. They used materials at home such as toothpicks, straws, cotton balls, balloons, string, and other items to protect an egg from cracking on impact. Then, they brought their devices to the Egg Drop station on STEM night.

McGee’s STEM night was conducted with support from several community partners. There were many STEM Stations with activities for students and parents to explore and conduct on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. The Egg Drop, an idea shared by a school in Texas, was added this year to the February STEM celebration, which occurred prior to the COVID closures.

A local farmer donated a crate of eggs for the good of science on STEM night. Volunteer tutors at the school tracked the contest entries and recorded whether the containers that students and parents created resulted in cracked eggs or successful landings. Students and parents assisted as volunteers, including taping plastic sheets to the floor to protect it from eggs that cracked on landing.

The Action Team for Partnership (ATP), administrators, and the school district approved the Egg Drop activity, as there was some danger involved. The PE teacher took each student’s project egg up a ladder to 12 feet. Then students and all audience members watched the “drop.”

The ATP learned that anyone using an oversized ladder had to complete a ladder safety course, which the PE teacher did. One ATP team member looked up fun egg facts, which students turned into posters that were hung at the Egg Drop station. The custodial staff assisted with the ladder, seats for viewing the Egg Drop at a safe distance, and clean up.

As STEM night proceeded, two teachers hoisted the eggs in their containers up to the PE teacher, who dropped each one from 12 feet off the ground. The volunteers retrieved successful drops or cleaned up any mess.

In some families, one child worked with mom and the other with dad to construct their containers, which they, then, tested at STEM Night. Some families did research on YouTube to inform their designs. The Family Egg Drop introduced a different kind of activity for students and parents to have fun at home and that brought STEM night to life.

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STEM

# STEM AT THE SETTLEMENT

THE CLEVELAND MUSIC SCHOOL SETTLEMENT  
CLEVELAND, OHIO

**I**t is never too early to introduce students to STEM subjects—science, technology, engineering, and math. At The Cleveland Music School Settlement (TMS), the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and teachers regularly introduce preschool and kindergarten students to early STEM skills. They wanted to alert family and community partners to the importance of STEM and age-appropriate STEM activities for young children.

The school earned a grant from PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers accounting and financial services) to create STEM programming for children aged 3-8 with community partners, including local engineers and scientists, a construction firm, and university music students. The school, PwC, and community partners were interested in learning how much young children could do in STEM subjects. Together, teachers and STEM partners planned a series of engaging and playful STEM activities for families and children.

The grant supported staff salaries for planning and conducting sessions. Funds also covered the costs of materials for monthly topics: States of Matter; Building and Construction; Coding; Light; Pitch, Pattern and Play; and others. Some materials for the STEM sessions for parents and children could, then, be used in class STEM lessons with all students. For example, Cubetto, the coding robot, was very popular at STEM events and in class.

STEM sessions were scheduled twice a month through the 2019-20 school year. Each session was offered on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings to allow families with varying schedules to attend. The planners used fliers, e-mail, and social media to invite families to participate and to remind them to attend. Wednesday evenings were attended mainly by families with children over three years old. Saturday mornings were selected mainly by families with young children three years old or younger.

At each meeting, activities and explorations

were set up in two rooms at the school. Teachers applied their child-centered, hands-on teaching strategies to the activities for parents and children. Students and parents moved between rooms to conduct activities. Each area was monitored by multiple teachers and PwC volunteers who engaged with families to explain concepts and answer questions at each activity station.

The year-long plan was disrupted by COVID19 closings. The school's Science Specialist replaced the in-person sessions with weekly YouTube experiments for families to do with their children at home on the scheduled topics.

The STEM sessions helped promote school, family, and community partnerships. New families were introduced to the school's play-based, creative programming. TMS leaders agreed that STEM at the Settlement helped them expand the school's connections in the community.

The activities were evaluated by tracking parents' behavior of continuing to attend Wednesday or Saturday sessions, their online "likes" of activities, and a survey of parents' responses. Children who attended with a parent gave their reactions during regular class time. One parent expressed the enthusiasm of others, "We look forward to STEM Saturdays each month! My child loves the variety of activities and engaging with his teachers outside of a regular school day."

STEM is an important combination of school subjects for children of all ages. At The Music Settlement, activities were expertly created for children in preschool and the early elementary grades. It will be possible to build on this year's work with in-person or remote-learning activities to continue to capture the interest of even the littlest scientists.

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TYPE 4

STEM

## STEM NIGHT AT PORT BARRE

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PORT BARRE ELEMENTARY  
PORT BARRE, LA

**S**TEM Night at Port Barre aims to increase students' learning and positive attitudes about Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) subjects. It also helps parents participate in and understand the STEM agenda.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), School Improvement Team, and teachers selected three activities for students and parents to enjoy and learn together: Tallest Tower, Making Slime, and Float Your Boat. Families signed in, received an agenda with locations of each STEM station, and moved from one station to the next every 20 minutes. At each place, participants had 15 minutes to think and work together and 5 minutes for cleanup. The activities were repeated, so families could choose which activity to visit and rotated at a signal. One parent noted this feature, "I liked the flexibility in choosing the order of the activities we worked on."

The Tallest Tower station was guided by Pre-K and Kindergarten teachers. Here groups of six parents and students were given 1 yard of masking tape, 1 yard of string, 20 spaghetti noodles, 1 large marshmallow, and 1 pair of scissors. The groups were challenged to use the materials to design and build the tallest free-standing tower that they could. The only rule was that the whole marshmallow had to be at the top of the tower.

The Slime station in the cafeteria was guided by 1st and 2nd grade teachers. Parents and students made slime with ingredients provided in two bowls. They combined ½ cup of Elmer's Glue, ½ cup of water, food coloring, and (optional) glitter in one bowl, and 1 teaspoon of Borax and 1 cup of water in the other bowl. Then, they mixed the materials together, stirring and

kneading the slime with their hands. When time was up, each student was given a Ziploc bag to take their slime home.

Float Your Boat was set up outdoors, guided by 3rd and 4th grade teachers. Students and parents were challenged to use foil, straws, Styrofoam cups, and tape to create a boat that would float holding as many pennies as possible without sinking. Students counted the pennies into their boats to test capacity. Some used a cup as the base of the boat. Others used foil—creating more raft-like boats—with straws at the edges for float-ability. Some parents and students tried more than one design to see which boat would hold the most pennies. Students recorded how many pennies their boats held, and compared boats at their own grade level. They began to see science, engineering, and buoyancy at work!

At the end of STEM night, students were given a bag of grade-appropriate STEM learning materials (e.g., books, flashcards, manipulables). In reviewing STEM Night, teachers and administrators reported that they were impressed by the parents' and students' levels of concentration and participation. One parent appreciated the way the activities suited all ability levels, "We were able to be with of our children even though they were on different grade levels."

There were no right or wrong answers in the STEM activities—just trials, some errors, and rethinking to make slimier slime, build taller towers, and develop more floatable boats. The challenges at each station called for clear and creative thinking, and the activities were fun for everyone.

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## ZOOM TO THE ZOO

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TREMONT MONTESSORI PRESCHOOL  
CLEVELAND, OH

**A**fter school doors closed, programs of school, family, and community partnerships took new forms. At Tremont Montessori, teachers and the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) wanted to take students and parents on a field trip, which was impossible due to COVID-19. Teachers of one class designed a creative plan for a science lesson on zoo animals with students, teachers, and parents traveling by ZOOM.

Tremont is located in a large, urban elementary school. It is attended by children with diverse racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. The school's Montessori program is very "hands on." COVID-19 dramatically changed the nature of children's activities that would have been conducted every day in school.

The virtual trip to the zoo was conducted in partnership with a local TV channel (WUAB-Channel 43). Parents were invited to "chaperone" the trip, caring for their own child's attendance and well-being. Parents turned off background noise and helped their children take turns "raising their hands" on Zoom to ask questions. The children made make-believe Zoom "binoculars" to help them see the animals up close.

The teachers planned zoo lessons carefully to support students' active learning. In preparing for the trip they asked parents to send a note with the name of an animal that their child wanted to see at the zoo. They opened the trip-meeting, greeted the children, and sang a "Hello" song. Then everyone went to the San Diego Zoo. From Cleveland, this was quite a trip!

The class visited each animal and talked about its habitat. Teachers asked students questions to help them think about what they saw, and then moved along to the next animal. The teachers,

students, and parents sang a "Goodbye" song about animals. Children were asked to follow-up the trip by drawing a picture of their favorite animal and sending it to their teacher.

Some students and parents did not have working computers or Internet access at home. Some were given necessary technology; others could not come on the trip. This serious challenge must be solved if school closures continue in the fall. Tremont leaders concluded that it will be imperative to ensure that all students have access to adequate, working technology. Tremont's leaders are looking into assistance from the preschool organization that guides its program and with support from Donor's Choose.

The zoo was a wonderful virtual experience for students, parents, and teachers. Parents were able to support their child in a Zoom meeting. They enjoyed thinking and talking about the animals with their youngster. A visiting teacher found Zoom to the Zoo captivating. She said, "I want to do this with my class too." The main teacher advised that two adults are needed to run a Zoom meeting—one to navigate and one to mute and un-mute speakers. A visiting administrator of preschool programs praised the project, "This went really well! You guys did a great job! The kiddos were very engaged. And it was nice to see the parents!"

Closing school doors and requiring all children to learn from home created serious deficits for children's social and emotional well-being. One great benefit of Zoom to the Zoo was that the Tremont preschoolers were able to see their teacher and friends (as well as the animals), and have some fun together.

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## FAMILY ROUND UP

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ROCKEFELLER ELEMENTARY  
LITTLE ROCK, AR

TYPE 1

**R**ockefeller Elementary conducts many activities to increase family and community engagement at school and in children's education at home. The school serves mainly Black students with small percentages of white and Hispanic students in grades PreK-5. Rockefeller emphasizes developing students' talents in music and art, and guiding all students to advance their skills every year in reading, math, and other core subjects.

Family Round Up was a creative family and community engagement activity last year. This upscaled Open House combined information for families, a book fair for children, and time for parents to visit classrooms and participate in lessons. The Round Up was conducted during the school day to maximize family and community participation.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) helped plan this elaborated Open House. Parents on the ATP took many leadership roles. They contacted families to invite them to attend, obtained donations such as gift baskets from business partners, and escorted student classes to the gymnasium to meet with families and participate in Scholastic Book Fair. Over 100 parents participated at Round Up.

Community partners including businesses, services, and organizations set up booths in the library. They shared information with parents about their purposes and products that could assist parents in many ways. Also, the annual Scholastic Book Fair was held in the library. Parents, grandparents, and students could seek and find books to read for pleasure. The library, next to the Parent Center, made it easy for parents to visit all of these resources in a timely way.

In addition, mini-workshops for parents were conducted every 30 minutes for parents to

select topics that interested them. Workshops were repeated twice or three times to enable parents to organize their schedule to cover all Round Up offerings. The workshops addressed topics such as public library services, encouraging reading at home, computer use and computer games, and internet and tech safety.

Lottery drawings of gift baskets were also scheduled through the afternoon at the Book Fair. As part of this multi-purpose day, parents could visit their child's class to join interactive lessons that would help them see, experience, and understand teachers' instructional practices in different school subjects. Parents who visited around noon could eat lunch with their child just for fun.

Teachers are considering one more addition to the busy and multi-faceted day. They want to include time for students to conduct personal, mini-portfolio conferences with their parents to share their work and progress in learning. This would be a 10-15-minute interaction focused on students' work samples in a specific subject. This would put the students in charge of an important interaction with a parent during the school day.

The Round Up was, in fact, a collection of opportunities for parents to participate in students' classes and workshops for parents, gather information at community booths, shop for books for children, and connect with other parents and teachers in partnership. Parents evaluated Family Round Up on an Exit Ticket. Parents reported that the resources and activities were easy to access and expanded their understanding of the school and community.

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OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

## HAWTHORNE'S HANGOUT

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HAWTHORNE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
SEATTLE, WA

**H**awthorne's Action Plan for Partnerships includes many activities to engage all families in their children's education. The FEAT (Family Engagement Action Team—partnership team) has worked for several years to increase connections with parents with different racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. The goals were to help all parents feel welcome at school, take leadership roles, and have opportunities to share their ideas and concerns.

This year, the school planned to continue a series of cultural- and language-based coffee chats—Hawthorne Hangout—to meet with and hear from diverse groups of families. In March, life changed instantly when COVID19 closed school doors. Ironically, this made family engagement even more important. All teachers and all parents had to communicate about how to support students' remote learning activities.

The district took some important actions. Most importantly, the district identified locations for families to pick up meals for students and paper packets for student learning. The district obtained new Chromebooks for some students who did not have computers at home, issued directions in multiple languages on how to use the laptops, and set up a tech support line for students and parents' questions. The district also obtained Free Wi-Fi from Xfinity, and distributed 500 hotpots throughout the district for students in need. These actions helped some—but not all—students at Hawthorne. Tech inequities remain a challenge that must be solved if remote learning continues in the new school year.

Hawthorne's leaders, teachers, staff, and parents conducted other outreach activities to support all families and student learning. They communicated with families in multiple languages about how to help their children attend classes via Zoom and MSTeams. They provided information about how students without computers at home could obtain and submit paper packets of weekly learning activities.

At the school level, classroom teachers updated lists of parents' phone numbers and e-mail addresses. School and parent leaders distributed grocery gift cards, learning packets, information about online classes, and books for children. The school and public librarians collaborated on story times and discussions with students of books on race, equity, and social justice.

Hawthorne teachers captured students' interests with enrichment activities in art through YouTube projects, weekly music and singing lessons, and fun learning games. Special classes were provided for students with special needs and for English Language Learners. A community partner offered free online yoga and mindfulness classes, and other business partners provided books for K-5 students to read during the summer to prevent reading loss.

As the school year ended, the PTA and partnership leaders obtained funds for online graduation ceremonies, a school yearbook, photos of school activities prior to closure, along with photos of all teachers. In short, Hawthorne's teachers and partnership leaders assisted families with food assistance, tech assistance, translations, and ongoing basic and enrichment activities to help students keep learning.

Students, parents, and teachers shared the message: "We are all in this together." Hawthorne's group chats in previous years for parents with diverse backgrounds set a base of good partnerships on which to build during COVID-19. Even during COVID, the partnership team conducted Hawthorne Hangouts for families to join online. Families asked the partnership team to continue these chats on a regular schedule. Hangouts were conducted every two weeks through the end of the school year.

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## MAKE YOUR MARK: FAMILY LITERACY NIGHT

BROCKMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
COLUMBIA, SC

TYPE 2

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

A creative twist helped Brockman Elementary School—a Montessori School of Choice—celebrate National Read Across America Day. Parents and children gathered to enjoy literature and art—a visual literacy night where students and parents conducted unique interactions featuring stories and the arts. This combination supported school improvement goals to increase family engagement and improve students’ emotional, affective, and behavioral development.

At Brockman, over 300 children attend school in fifteen multi-age classrooms. Early education classes serve children who are 3-5 years old. Lower elementary classes include students in grades 1-3. Upper elementary classes serve students in grades 4-5.

Make Your Mark: Family Literacy Night featured interactive stations with exciting activities to spark students’ creative thinking. At each station, volunteers guided students to show how they could make their mark on the world through music, art, drama, and/or verbal expression. The volunteers were teachers, staff, ATP members, other parents, and community partners. They set up and hosted the stations and helped clean up at the end of the evening.

Parents and students received a brochure outlining all activities, which were scheduled in seven 20-minute sessions. Families rotated to the various stations featuring art, writing, music, and/or storytelling. For example, Make Your Artistic Mark was led by a local artist who talked with the students and families about art and various techniques. He demonstrated how to draw and then students recreated their interpretations of his picture.

At the African American Drumming station, the drummer taught students and families about the different shapes, sounds, and patterns of African Drums and how to play drum rhythms. This activity also made its mark. Said one parent, “OMG, the African Drum station was absolute-

ly amazing. My kids enjoyed every second of playing the African Drums.”

Make Your Expressive Mark focused on storytelling with a volunteer from the public library. Make your Dramatic Mark, Book Fair, and Family Photo Booth rounded out the interactive stations that guided students and parents in creative activities. At the end of the evening, everyone gathered to enjoy a musical strings performance and a healthy dinner prepared by a local restaurant. A raffle featured artwork by a local artist.

The Action Teams for Partnerships (ATP) and many others at Brockman worked to invite all families with postings on the website, phone messages, newsletter, and school marquee. Make Your Mark was scheduled just before COVID19 caused school closings in South Carolina. Attendance was high. Quite likely, this memorable activity was one of the last to be conducted before the virus closed school doors.

Students benefited by celebrating reading with their families, and by linking reading with the arts. They experienced many ways to make personal artistic, expressive, and dramatic marks on the world. Together, students and their families focused on reading in new ways. One parent and community partner agreed: “We had a wonderful time at Make Your Mark: Family Literacy Night. We enjoyed the storytelling and the art paintings.”

Brockman Elementary School has a welcoming climate and a thriving family engagement program. This activity brought families and teachers closer together with talented community partners for an evening of reading, art, fun, and fellowship.

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TYPE 2

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

## STUDIES AT HOME

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GREEN ROAD EARLY LEARNING CENTER  
HIGHLAND HILLS, OHIO

**L**ike schools everywhere, when COVID-19 closed schools, teachers at Green Road had to communicate quickly with all families about students' learning from home. This meant that teachers' messages about the school's goal for student learning merged with the school's goal to strengthen its program of family and community engagement.

Because preschool children must rely on a parent or family partner to help them navigate learning from home, teachers framed clear Guided Learning Plans, set realistic schedules for Zoom or Team meetings with parents, and designed feasible and enjoyable activities that all parents could understand and conduct with their child.

The school's Mentor Teacher and the UPK Family Engagement Coach conducted professional development sessions to help teachers design effective activities for learning at home and communicate with all students' families. School leaders initiated the Studies at Home Project. One parent in each teacher's class was invited to join the Studies at Home group to explore topics and ideas, try out experiments, provide feedback to teachers, and raise questions that would assist all parents on the learning at home activities.

In their Guided Learning Plans, teachers focused on three study units that would have been conducted in the spring term if school were open for face-to-face learning: Clothing, Recycling, and Celebrating Learning. These units were well-suited for hands-on learning at home. They focused on topics that were familiar to children and families, regardless of family income or background.

Teachers wanted students to gain the same skills as in school. These included making predictions, testing ideas, and drawing conclusions. The Studies at Home parents were mobilized to see if this ambitious goal was feasible. The group started working with teachers in May. The parents

and teachers communicated each day for 10-20 minutes by Zoom, phone, ClassDojo, Facebook, and other platforms.

Teachers posted one video learning activity on the school's Facebook page every day for four weeks. For example, on the first day (Monday) of the unit on Clothing, family members brought a few pieces of clothing to the room, had a fun clothing swap, and talked about how clothes "fit" using words like snug, tight, loose, and baggy; colors; and letter sounds of clothing pieces. By Friday, discussions focused on clothing patterns and shapes, reading stories that featured clothing, and taking family photos related to the topic. See all unit plans at <https://teachingstrategies.com/blog/at-home-exploring-and-learning/>.

Teachers monitored if parents were able to conduct the activities easily, support students' academic and social-emotional learning, and enjoy hearing their child's ideas. The parents asked questions that other parents were likely to ask, and offered suggestions to make activities short, clear, and translated for parents, as needed.

Green Road assessed the results of the Studies at Home project. Teachers reported that the parent representatives helped them communicate more effectively with all parents about the learning activities for young children. One school leader noted that the parents' feedback helped teachers think outside the box to shorten activities to respect parents' busy days. Teachers also explored and used new computer software applications and programs. The Studies at Home project strengthened the relationships between teachers and all parents, and should help more students maintain school skills to prepare for the next school year.

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TYPE 2

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

## TIGER ACADEMIC SUPPORT CENTER (TASC)

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CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL  
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

**P**artnerships in high school differ from those in the elementary and middle grades. At the high school level, students are increasingly responsible for their own behavior and learning. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, and administrators at Central High School knew that students must be active participants in developing and conducting the Tiger Academic Support Center (TASC).

Central High has a racially diverse student body of over 2000 students, with 60% eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch. Families speak more than 25 different languages. In Parent-Teacher Conferences, interpreters are available, as needed. The TASC project, supported by Title I funds, serves over 400 targeted students. TASC offers students in grades 9-12 one-on-one and group tutoring before and after school and during lunch breaks to improve students' skills and scores in English, Math, Science, Social Science, and foreign languages.

The Center is a uniquely positive service—not waiting until students fail a course to strengthen skills. TASC takes a preventative approach to maximize student success. TASC also includes a Test Make-Up Center. With teacher approval, students who missed tests can make them up instead of adding failing grades to their records.

Parents were informed and engaged with students in TASC, by encouraging their child to participate regularly. One replied, “Love the free tutoring to help students.” Some parents volunteered at school throughout the school day. Students knew parents were important at school as participants in Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS), which tallies volunteer hours and rewards parents' contributions to their schools.

During the COVID crisis, tutoring was supported by online programs such as Alternate Method of Instruction (AMI) and Edmentum, so that TASC special tutoring services could continue for targeted students. Some students did not fully participate online. Teachers e-mailed students to

remind them to attend the extra-help sessions. Teachers and administrators called parents if students were off task. Most students fulfilled their responsibilities and gained new skills. Some become peer tutors of other students.

The TASC program continued throughout the school year. Ninth graders receive tutoring services in the Freshman Academy in early August, before the school year starts. The freshmen are given Chromebooks to continue working at home. Teachers used an array of tutoring programs, such as Google classrooms, Zoom conferences, Remind.com, and web seminars with smartboards. Students were able to contact teachers with questions using their chrome books or phones.

Teachers planned their supplementary lessons linked to state goals in each subject, checked students' work and learning in each 9-week grading period of the school year. Teachers noted: “This program helps with tests and does not take away from our classroom teaching.”

TASC was not boring work for students. For example, to spark students' science learning, community partners sponsored the Science Engineering Communication for Math Enrichment (SECME) program. Students were tutored and entered competitions in robotics. If or when school doors open, students will be able to see robots in action at a local company that produces pipes for oil and gas.

The Principal shared, “We have a wonderful TASC program.” Title I funds and grants from the PTSA and Tiger Foundation were used to fund TASC services. Students' work and accomplishments in competitions were shared with educators, parents, students, and the public in annual reports.

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TYPE 4

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.



# CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE WORKSHOP

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ST. PETER'S CHILD CARE CENTER  
LAKEWOOD, OH

**M**any preschools in the Universal Pre-K group implement Conscious Discipline to help all teachers in a school encourage students' positive behavior using consistent messages, activities, and responses in their classrooms. By reinforcing good behavior in the same way, teachers aim to help students understand what is expected in preschool. As their work proceeded, St. Peter's teachers and administrators wanted parents to know the goals of Conscious Discipline, and how they could reinforce similar behaviors and messages at home.

Conscious Discipline is a research-based curriculum that integrates teachers' classroom management with strategies to strengthen children's social and emotional skills, interactions with other students and teachers, and content learning. Discipline strategies for positive behavior help students focus on their own thoughts and actions.

Conscious Discipline aims to provide "brain-friendly, trauma-informed, research-backed strategies" that help each student understand that they are important and worthy individuals who can think wisely about their own behavior, and increase students' self-control and self-regulation. The goal is for the school as a whole to be a "safe place" for students who will make mistakes as all youngsters do as they grow up, but from their teachers' and parents' responses, children learn to make better choices about their future behavior. Teachers know that students' good behavior contributes to a peaceful and calm climate at school that enables all students to learn and fewer disciplinary incidents.

Conscious Discipline strategies at different ages and grade levels, starting in preschool, aim to build seven key skills: composure, encouragement, assertiveness, choices, empathy, positive intent, and understanding consequences. As youngsters become more aware of how they react to success, growth in learning, and friendship, as well as conflict, distress, or disappointment,

they begin to shape their own positive behaviors. Teachers and parents are guided to respond to students who misbehave with kind—yet firm—messages about expected behavior in school and at home.

At St. Peter's, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, and administrators discussed how to share information on Conscious Discipline with students' parents. First, parents completed surveys to indicate their interest and registered for various workshops, including the topic of Conscious Discipline. A community partner presented this workshop, which included dinner for parents and teachers to meet and talk with each other. Along with a PowerPoint presentation and related handouts, the presenter organized role-playing situations for parents to enact common preschool misbehaviors and consider alternative ways to treat problems using Conscious Discipline techniques to help students make good choices about their behavior.

As children learn to express their own feelings, take helpful actions, think about others' feelings, use kind words, listening ears, helpful hands, watching eyes, and other good behaviors, they are likely to discover that they and their classmates are able and valued members of their school. The program establishes a "safe place" where young children who are upset or who misbehave can go to compose themselves and consider positive options for future behavior. At school or at home, this may be a chair, beanbag, throw rug or pillow—a kind of "time out" space for reflection.

One parent reported others' experiences, noting: "Listening to other parent's challenges gave me a sense of camaraderie." Another commented, "There was a lot of great content that I can implement today!"

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TYPE 1

BEHAVIOR

## PAINTING ON PURPOSE WITH PARENTS

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NORTH CHARLESTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
NORTH CHARLESTON, SC

TYPE 1

BEHAVIOR

One of the most enjoyable family engagement activities involves parents and students doing art together. It is just fun when the creative spirit takes over. At North Charleston Elementary, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) wanted to engage families in a new way to ensure that parents and students would benefit from a shared experience.

Painting on Purpose with Parents linked art work with behavioral goals of the school's PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) program. An art activity reinforced the underlying goal of PBIS to support students' positive behaviors and positive emotions about their own skills and talents. In a relaxed setting, art projects may boost students' self-esteem and good behavior as they explore their creativity. With a parent partner, students also gained immediate family support and encouragement during a fun experience.

The art teacher took the lead for the activity. She gave step-by-step directions for students and parents to plan a painting. Students showed parents skills that they learned in art class, as they paid attention to lines, shapes, colors, and blending techniques. The experience helped students practice PBIS-related behaviors such as taking turns waiting for supplies, developing patience as paint dried, and completing their paintings. Most important, the students practiced persistence. They did not give up even if their painting did not turn out exactly as expected. Some students encouraged their parents and friends to demonstrate this kind of stick-to-it-ness.

The ATP knew that painting would inspire students to share deep feelings, and that parents love to see—and even participate in—students' art projects. Painting encourages a relaxed, open environment in which participants feel safe to explore their own creativity and to appreciate

the artwork of others. Art encourages a unique mix of individual talent development and strong partnerships. In addition, the friendly climate was enhanced by light jazz background music, and snacks of cheese, fruit, cupcakes, and sparkling grape cider.

North Charleston ES includes about 450 students with diverse racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. About 95% of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Painting on Purpose with Parents was advertised in many ways at school, with flyers sent home and distributed in the carpool lane, and with information on the school's website, ClassDojo, and at the afterschool program.

Although there was bad weather on the scheduled evening, many families ventured out based on the friendly invitations they had received. One intrepid parent explained, "I'm not going to miss time well spent with my daughters." The attendees included several parents who did not attend most meetings at school. Because they were with their children to share a positive art experience, they may have been comfortable about coming to school.

The ATP, teachers, and school leaders evaluated Painting on Purpose with Parents with an eye to the future in case the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect school activities. For example, if school doors open, art activities, easels, and materials can be organized with adequate space between attendees to ensure recommended social distancing, and attendees can wear masks. Or, if school doors are closed, the art teacher can guide the activity via Zoom to help parents and children conduct a shared art experience at home.

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## PBIS LEADERSHIP AND FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

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BROOKLYN PRESCHOOL  
BROOKLYN, OH

**B**rooklyn Preschool adopted the *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)* program to strategically and systematically help students develop social and emotional skills in a safe and positive environment. With PBIS, all teachers and other adults—including parent volunteers—use similar positive, non-judgmental discipline practices to help students learn good school behavior without embarrassing punishments. Brooklyn Preschool wants the school to be a welcoming and effective learning environment for everyone. Teachers set goals for students to feel confident about themselves, comfortable and cared for at school, and work well with other students and teachers. These school-linked social and emotional behaviors help preschoolers become aware of the responsibility of being a “student.”

Brooklyn Preschool serves families with diverse socioeconomic, racial, and linguistic backgrounds. Most families qualify for reduced tuition based on income. Many students are English Language Learners, with home languages of Spanish, Aramaic, and Vietnamese.

The school has a strong partnership program and an active Action Team for Partnerships (ATP). School leaders knew it would be a good idea to include parents with educators on a PBIS Leadership Team to ensure parent input to decisions about how to communicate with all parents about student behavior. The school planned to extend the PBIS program from “Tier 1” or “universal activities” that guide all teachers’ discipline practices and all students’ good behavior, to later phases (i.e., “Tier 2”) to assist students who need extra attention. The PBIS Leadership Team received training to understand program goals. Each member accepted a particular role on the team for the year, such as facilitator, recorder, data coordinator, staff liaison, monitor, time keeper, and administrator. The PBIS Leadership Team met monthly to review and update the program goals and progress, and outreach to parents.

At the preschool level, PBIS guides students to be kind, helpful, safe in school hallways, and aware of their own and other’s feelings. Students learn to take turns, share toys, listen to other’s ideas, keep hands to self, understand other’s differences, make good choices, be a good friend, solve problems, and conduct other basic social and emotional behaviors. The Leadership Team posted charts in school hallways and classrooms to help all adults—teachers, parents, and other volunteers—take similar steps to support good behavior and correct errors or misbehaviors at school and at home.

In their assessments last year, Brooklyn’s leaders found that at least 80% of students understood school safety rules within two months of the beginning of school. They also reported that fully 100% of parents agreed that they enjoyed volunteering at the school and that they were able to implement similar positive discipline practices at home.

The principal recognized these school and family ties. She noted, “It is a joy to walk into any of our classrooms and know that I am going to see consistency in how our students are supported in their social-emotional development. I’ve also heard from parents that they continued these practices at home based on the training and support provided by our staff. This has helped develop stronger, happier children.”

This kind of progress by students on school behaviors makes academic activities and social play at school more enjoyable for everyone, with fewer discipline problems and disruptions. The early evidence at Brooklyn Preschool suggests that PBIS will help students have positive preschool experiences, and make a successful transition to kindergarten.

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## RUMBLE IN THE JUNGLE

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STEPHENS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
LITTLE ROCK, AR

TYPE 1

**A**t Stephens Elementary School, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, and administrators recognized some “rumblings” or challenges that needed to be solved to increase student success and good behavior at school, improve family engagement, and strengthen the school’s welcoming climate. Rumble in the Jungle invited teachers in core subjects and the arts, students at all grade levels, and all families to address the rumbling challenges with ideas and solutions.

Students felt some rumblings as they worked to solve social and emotional challenges at each grade level. Some felt overwhelmed by schoolwork or uncertain about their skills, which affected their learning and effort. In Rumble in the Jungle, students were invited to express their feelings through the arts (i.e., art, music, dance, theater). On a huge mural in the cafeteria, students listed challenges that disrupted their learning and painted jungle plants and animals to illustrate their feelings and ideas of how to increase their success in school. The mural—with its colorful jungle of challenges and solutions—became a place for family and community photos—a tribute to students’ creative thinking.

In the students’ jungle, the music teacher used drums to represent the challenges that students outlined, and encouraged students to present culturally diverse music and dance to represent solutions to the challenges. Students also were introduced to “step” dancing to learn how working as an effective unit may produce amazing group behavior.

Families felt some rumblings as they worked to support their child’s learning and development at each grade level. They wanted to improve communications with teachers and feel more confident about this partnership. Teachers and parents created a life-size mural on which they listed challenges and ideas to work better together to improve student learning and behavior,

and to promote a welcoming climate for all partners at school.

Teachers felt some rumblings as they worked to improve school guidelines. The school’s Five Star Curriculum listed qualities that teachers were working to strengthen in students: respect, responsibility, integrity, sacrifice, and courage. Teachers wanted help from parents in reinforcing these behaviors at home. The school also set STAR goals to ensure that school was **S**afe, **T**houghtful, **A**ccountable, and **R**espectful for teachers, students, families, and community partners.

The ATP reported progress on calming these rumbles at the start of the school year before COVID closed school doors. Teachers observed that student behavior improved. Evaluations showed that parents’ appreciated changes in Math and Literacy Family Nights that added activities that families conducted with their children at school and then were able to conduct to help their child practice the skill at home.

By defining, discussing, and working to solve these rumblings, the school set a positive course of action to improve partnerships with more families and to help more students meet achievement and behavioral goals. Rumble in the Jungle made it easier to communicate with parents during the COVID-19 closures, as teachers and parents had already established their shared interest in solving challenges to help students do their best in school. All partners were aware that, even from home, teachers, parents, and students have important responsibilities for students’ learning and behavior. Further, even at home student behavior, confidence, and learning may benefit from the arts – music, art, dance, and drama—as students continue to develop their creative talents.

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BEHAVIOR

## CELEBRATE AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURE

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BULLARD-HAVENS TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL  
BRIDGEPORT, CT

Every year, schools across the country celebrate Black History Month. The Bullard-Havens Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and other faculty discussed how the school's Celebration of African American Culture could be expanded to advance students' learning and development. They planned a program focused on the spoken word and local artwork to enable students to express themselves creatively. The planners integrated career awareness activities in the arts to enrich the students' experiences.

Some students and teachers signed up to present spoken-word selections that represented African American Culture. These included presentations based on the writings of Maya Angelou, Rosa Parks, and several poets, as well as students' original songs, dances, and the Pep Squad.

The planners invited a local artist and dance company to present, perform, and interact with students and families. The artist spoke to the group and showed and discussed her art. A student was amazed at the artwork displayed by the local artist, remarking, "This inspires me to continue my art. I didn't know we had a place for art in Bridgeport."

The Connecticut Dance Conservatory performed hip-hop dances and addressed students' and parents' questions. Students were on their feet during the performances. They enjoyed watching people about their age dance choreographed numbers to songs they listen to.

Other participants included an Olympics gymnastic coach who spoke about the importance of school for any career path that students selected. He conveyed a clear message that he was proud that his women's gymnastics team was doing well in the NCAA, but he was more proud that they were successful scholar athletes in their college courses.

Families attended to support students' performances and to share delight in the arts. They were invited via ParentSquare—the school's communication portal with families. Posters

and announcements at the school in English and Spanish invited all families to join the celebration. Students in the Culinary Arts department made light refreshments to serve families and guests. This cost about \$500 for the planned 200 people.

Students benefitted by hearing presentations about African American culture and by learning about professional talents in the local art community. They gained information on literary expression, art, and dance that might encourage them to develop their talents or consider one of many career paths in the arts.

Parents appreciated the student and professional performances. They had questions for the invited speaker about the links of students' talents in high school sports, college admission, and success in college courses. Said one parent, "There were many powerful pieces and the talents of the staff and the students were nice to see."

The planning group evaluated how to expand participation in the future with parent presenters, additional students, and more artists showing, demonstrating, and discussing the different mediums they use. As a trade school, Bullard-Havens could invite other local businesses to share information with students on many paths to success in the work world.

Bullard-Havens partnership team and teachers were delighted that the students, invited speaker, and art and dance representatives showed clearly that there were many talented African Americans in the local community. Celebrate African American Culture set a good example for future programs in Black History Month and for celebrations of the contributions and talents of other cultures and groups in the school.

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## PRESCHOOL DAD'S DAY

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HARRISON ELEMENTARY-LAKEWOOD EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM  
LAKEWOOD, OH

Fathers and father figures play important roles in children's education and development. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Harrison-Lakewood Preschool organized *Preschool Dad's Day* to celebrate the end of a unit on nutrition and fitness. In their classes, students learned about the major food groups, the parts of the body, and the workings of the circulatory system, digestive system, muscular system, and nervous system. The topics were linked to focus on healthy foods to help a body grow.

One student's father—a dietician and executive chef for a professional baseball team—took leadership for the activity. The students and their parents experienced several exciting activities. One major delight was a scavenger hunt to find ingredients to make an ABC pudding (i.e., Avocado-Banana-Chocolate pudding—an easy-to-make snack). Dads served as leaders of six teams that, in turn, hunted for the odd-but-healthy ingredients.

The students, dads, some moms, and others discussed the nutritional value of the recipe's ingredients for everyday energy. Then, each team made the vegan, gluten-free, delicious pudding treat. Students put avocado, banana, honey, vanilla, and ground cacao nibs in a bowl and then mashed it up with a potato masher.

Harrison preschool serves a very diverse population, including immigrant families from Nepal, Sudan, Myanmar, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, Afghanistan, Jordan, and others. Many students are English Language Learners. Just about all students (95%) are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Dads, grandfathers, uncles, stepdads, and other male family partners were welcome. Moms could come, too. All participants visited their child's classroom, where teachers reinforced the importance of their engagement at the school

and at home in their child's education.

Students whose dads or moms could not attend were supported by a teacher or paraprofessional so all students could participate. One student commented, "I liked searching for the food and I found it! Mixing was hard. The pudding was so yummy."

Parents on the ATP served as mentors for other parents on how to integrate healthy foods into easy meals at home. The scavenger hunt promoted students' social skills with peers and adults, as the students were the key hunters for the ingredients. The students also saw their fathers and father figures engaged in a school activity. They saw how dads enjoyed their time at school with them, their teachers, and other parents.

One teacher reviewed the day, "It was so neat to see fathers having fun with their kids and other students. The children were so excited to have their dads there. The scavenger hunt peaked student interest and they were highly motivated to complete the activity. The children were proud of the food they made and enjoyed eating it. I was surprised they ate the uncommon ingredients (avocado, honey, cacao nibs) that they've never tried before."

Parents on the ATP evaluated the experience. They learned the importance of good publicity to encourage parents' attendance, including traditional flyers and Remind App messages. "We had a blast planning and leading this event. We are very pleased with the preschool experiences [at Harrison]. The teachers are outstanding." All members of the ATP were aware that a well-planned, goal-linked activity benefitted all participants.

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## STUDENT WELLNESS CHECKS

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W. G. SANDERS MIDDLE SCHOOL  
COLUMBIA, SC

**W**hen COVID-19 closed school doors, Sanders Middle School leaders knew that students and families would feel stressed and confused. They formed a School Wellness Team to create a plan and a Wellness Document to monitor the well-being, concerns, and needs of over 550 students and families at the school. Sanders Middle School is about 83% African American, and all of its students are eligible for free lunch.

The Wellness Team adopted a “tiered” approach to monitor student and family wellness during COVID-19. Tier 1 checked in with all students to see how well they were coping with learning from home. Most students and families reported a minimum degree of stress and anxiety. Tiers 2 and 3 identified students and families with serious health concerns, deaths due to COVID-19, or high anxiety about the challenging conditions of learning from home. The Wellness Team arranged school, district, and community services to meet student and family needs.

Teachers received training on how to conduct a positive phone inquiry of students and families. They contacted every student twice. The basic message was, “We (the teachers) are calling to check in with you. How are you doing? Is there any way that I can help? Do you need anything? How are the lessons? Is your Internet working? Is your laptop working?”

All responses were recorded in the Wellness Document. The most common questions and needs were about food distribution or laptop services. Tier 1 or general requests included messages from students such as, “I need help getting Outlook.” A teacher might probe a student, “Do you need any support with finishing up Geometry?” A parent replied to a teacher’s phone call: “Thank you so much for checking on her. We appreciate it!”

Community partners agreed to help, including the cable company, Food Lion, Trader Joe’s, and others. For more serious concerns, a social worker or administrator was contacted to provide needed support. The students were the best informants. They let the Wellness Team know about their own, their families’, and their friends’ well-being or needed services.

Based on data collected, the Sanders Middle School partnership leaders, teachers, and administrators designed and conducted two activities to help reduce student and family anxieties and concerns. First, Related Arts Wellness Fridays brought educators, parents, and students together to strengthen relationships in arts classes. Second, five Parent ZOOM Rooms were conducted through May for parents to chat with educators and each other and to gather needed information.

Student Wellness Checks took a great deal of work, but the results were impressive. One important result was that at the end of the very unusual school year, 100% of students passed their classes. Another important result of the personal phone calls and delivery of needed services was that teachers increased their communications and improved relationships with students and families.

Student Wellness Checks were valuable for all partners—students, parents, and teachers. When the principal solicited more Wellness Team members if COVID-19 continued to require learning from home, she received an overwhelming number of teachers and staff willing to keep this responsive work going. This approach will continue to be important at Sanders whether school doors are open or students continue learning from home.

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TYPE 2

HEALTH AND SAFETY

## INTERNATIONAL WALKABOUT

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HANDLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
SAGINAW, MI

TYPE 3

MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS

**H**andley is an International Baccalaureate (IB) Elementary School. IB schools aim to help students think critically, take responsibility for their own learning, and explore global issues that affect everyone's lives. The International Walkabout at Handley celebrated the cultures and heritages of the diverse students and families at the school.

The school of about 400 students, grade K-5, is racially diverse with White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, and other students. Families come to Handley from many nations with diverse socioeconomic, cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. Almost half are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Students at each grade level have are guided to make choices, solve problems, and exercise decision making as individuals and with their peers. Teachers help students find meaning and personal interest in core subjects and in visual and performing arts, technology, and physical education. In IB classes, students may move ahead of grade as quickly as they master the curriculum. All classes emphasize experimental, hands-on learning to build higher-level thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Families and members of the community are important resources at Handley. They enhance school programs by assisting students as mentors, volunteers on field trips, and experts in career education. The school's program of family and community engagement recognizes diversity as a strength of the student population and curricular content. Activities that honor, explain, and celebrate cultural differences give students a sense of pride in their own culture and an opportunity to respect and learn from others. The cultural diversities and exchanges reinforce the school's philosophy to help students become

more open-minded and knowledgeable about the world around them.

The International Walkabout extended the school's program of school, family, and community partnerships by celebrating the cultural diversity at the school. Parents signed up—as individuals and as groups—to create a table or station to present cultural artifacts and other materials on their native country. In the gymnasium, parents and students set up their stations with trifold boards, games, slideshows, dress, dance, music, and food tastings. Students and families were invited to tour the stations at their own pace to learn from and enjoy all of the displays and presentations.

Students helped their parents create informative displays on the family's country of origin. Parents and students told family histories and shared the pride they felt in their family backgrounds. Most importantly, students were interested in their friends' family showcases. Everyone was eager to learn something new. Tasting samples were particularly popular.

A few lessons were learned about logistics. The gym had plenty of space, but getting in and out of the Walkabout was a challenge. In addition, the planners found that fans were needed to improve airflow in the gym. These climate issues will be corrected for the next Walkabout.

Parents who were not engaged at school in the past, were present, active, and important for student learning. One parent said "I am so happy that I don't have to try to fit in....because I feel my family is able to be themselves." A member of the school staff agreed: "It was nice to see (student) so excited about sharing his culture."

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## POSADA IN PASCO

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PASCO HIGH SCHOOL, STEVENS MIDDLE SCHOOL, AND ROBERT FROST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
PASCO, WA

**P**asco School District serves over 70% Hispanic students and families who are proud of their culture, language, history, and contributions to the Pasco community. A set of linked “feeder” schools—elementary, middle, and high school—with from 70-90% Hispanic students collaborated to celebrate a favorite cultural tradition.

A Posada is traditionally conducted in Mexico mid-December as a prelude to the Christmas holiday. It includes festive decorations, a nativity set, songs, a parade, refreshments, and the fun of a piñata. In Pasco, the Posada took a new form to bring together students, parents, and educators across cultures and across grade levels.

At this Posada, teachers, parents, students, and community partners showcased Hispanic culture and students’ talents. One overarching goal was to strengthen school and family partnerships at the three schools that children and their siblings attended from preschool through high school. These schools are working to continually improve their programs of family and community engagement for student success in school.

The schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) of teachers, parents, principals, and students on the high school team jointly planned and supported the Posada. They served as hosts, distributed agendas, obtained donations from the community for food, beverages, desserts, and raffle prizes. For example, businesses that are *Partners in Educating All Kids* (PEAK) with the schools provided donations and set up stations or tables to explain their products and services in the community. A local university, bank, and other community organizations also participated. Five parents from Pasco High’s ATP solicited gift items from community partners for parents and students to be raffled off at the Posada.

The three schools invited all parents and students to participate via the schools’ Robo Call systems, flyers, and social media. The local Spanish radio station helped promote this event

and provided the audio support and music during Posada. The Spanish TV station promoted Posada. Over 300 students, parents, teachers, and community members attended. By working together, the three schools resolved challenges of funding, donations, and community support.

Families received a program, lyrics to join in all songs, and a candle for each member of the family to light as part of the celebration. The program started with an overview in English and Spanish of the meaning of a Posada. Then, students’ talents were featured, including School Mariachi Student Performers (Mariachi Reyes de Pasco), Pasco High Folkloric Dance (Multi-Latino Estelar Folklorico), and Stevens Middle School Chamber Orchestra. There were piñatas for the young children and plenty of food including tacos, tamales, sweet bread, water, hot chocolate, and coffee.

Everyone enjoyed a traditional Posada parade, songs, candle light, and family fun. One teacher summed up the community’s appreciation, “It is always great to see a diverse community come together. It really warms my heart when I see people rejoicing with one another while sharing different cultural perspectives.”

Many students from the three schools served as volunteers, as well as actors, dancers, and musicians. They learned new cooperation and leadership skills in organizing and coordinating a successful festival. All participants learned the cultural significance of the Posada in Latin-American cultures. They also learned that it is important to have celebratory activities that bring together the K-12 schools that are officially connected as partners with parents for the success of 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.



## DRIVE-THRU CELEBRATION

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WESTWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
WESTLAKE, LA

**C** OVID19 caused many problems for educators, families, and students when schools across the country closed their doors. Amazingly, some creative activities emerged in response to the challenge of children learning from home. Top of every list of activities is to keep students, teachers, and families healthy and safe.

Over the spring term, Westwood’s teachers, staff and volunteers put signs in students’ yards, paraded through neighborhoods waving at students, distributed meals at the nutrition centers, and more. Students completed their assignments at home, and looked forward to getting back to school. Parents reported that their children missed the activities and celebrations commonly enjoyed at the end of each school year.

In response, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, and staff at Westwood planned to conduct a Drive-Thru Celebration that met requirements for social distancing, and that would be fun for everyone to celebrate the end of this challenging year. Plans were made using various social media platforms including the school’s website, Teachers’ Blackboard, text, phone calls, Bloomz, and others. Some business partners used their electronic signs to advertise the Drive-Thru Celebration.

Students at each grade level were assigned a day and time for their family to travel up and around the school car ramp for their Drive-Thru Celebration. As they arrived in their own well-decorated cars, students saw that the school’s car ramp was decorated with balloons, signs, and music playing. Each student’s name was announced on a loud speaker as they drove down the ramp. Each teacher met their student’s car and awarded a Bucket of Learning, which contained many items for students to continue learning through the summer.

One committee solicited donations and

community funding to purchase supplies for Buckets of Learning for every student. In addition to preparing the buckets, teachers collected and packaged personal items that students left in their desks and classrooms when school doors closed. Festive tables beside the car ramp enabled teachers to distribute the Buckets of Learning and personal items efficiently.

Westwood is a K-2 school. Teachers and parents wanted to honor 2nd grade students as they prepared to “graduate” to a new school for grade 3. The 2nd graders Drive-Thru Celebration Day added noisemakers to the decorations and special materials for the graduates.

There were challenges to student and family participation. The planners made individual arrangements for families without transportation, families with multiple children in different grade levels, and those who were out of town on the Drive-Thru Celebration Days. Some home deliveries and individual celebrations were conducted, as needed.

One of the most important results of Drive-Thru Celebration was the real joy it brought to the students and their families. Students and teachers were able to see each other and have a good socially distant interaction. One dad wrote to the teachers, “Wow, thank you, Westwood. You are always so “extra,” but the best part was being able to see in your faces and smiles and tears that you genuinely care.” Said one PreK’s parent, “Nothing beats seeing a child’s face beaming with happiness.”

Drive-Thru Celebration helped reinforce the school’s commitment to good partnerships. The activity demonstrated the strength of teachers, parents, and students at a time of hardship and uncertainty at the end of an extraordinary year.

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## MARDI GRAS CELEBRATION AND PARADE

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PARK VISTA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
OPELOUSAS, LA

**N**ot many things build community spirit as a Mardi Gras. Park Vista Elementary used this theme to engage parents and the community as partners in education. In addition, all students learned about local culture and experienced the spirit and fun of Mardi Gras. Park Vista, in southwest Louisiana, has a diverse student population with over 60% Black students, over 25% white, and other students from 12 countries. Families speak many different languages at home.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, parents, and volunteers created committees to conduct the many aspects of the Mardi Gras Celebration and Parade. Teachers contributed to students' education with lessons on Mardi Gras and Cajun culture in the weeks before Mardi Gras. They also selected and sold Mardi Gras T-shirts, which students could wear on parade day. Many community partners donated materials and talents for Mardi Gras. The local police and community leaders handled the parade route.

For the Mardi Gras parade, the planning team recruited the bands of nearby schools to entertain. They also combed the community for donations and support. Each grade level of students, with teacher and parent assistants, decorated trailers or trucks for the Mardi Gras parade.

A "Krewe" is an official club in charge of Mardi Gras celebrations, dating back to the 1850s. A famed Krewe came from Mamou, Louisiana to make the Park Vista celebration more memorable. This Krewe took charge of the Chicken Run—a popular part of the history of Mardi Gras. The Krewe released a chicken for preschool students to chase down the parade route. Historically, the chicken became part of Chicken Gumbo for dinner. At Park Vista, that

was not the point. Rather, it was an historic and fun tradition that students and parents learned about at the parade (and no harm came to the chicken).

The Park Vista parade started with an official reception in the school library to welcome a Parade Marshal and many community and business leaders. For the parade, each student dressed in Mardi Gras attire, brought beads to toss to the crowd of parade enthusiasts. The youngest students in PreK-1 rode on the trailers. Students in grades 2-4 walked behind their grade level trucks. The bands from the local middle schools, junior highs, and high schools marched and played in different parts of the Mardi Gras parade.

The project planners and family and community partners reviewed the day's events. They noted that students were on their best behavior, and demonstrated good social skills as they took their places in the parade. Parents helped on planning, construction, and costuming for the parade. They also were excited about their children's participation in the parade.

This activity was all about fun. The schools Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, and administrators believed that the community celebration would help families feel welcome and comfortable about coming to school meetings in the future. Over 300 parents and grandparents, teachers and staff, and community partners came together for the celebration and parade.

The parade was scheduled for the Friday before the official Mardi Gras school break. Park Vista recognized that Mardi Gras was an important activity that brought school, family, and community together for a shared celebration shortly before COVID19 closed school doors.

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## PARENT SUPER SATURDAY

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HAND MIDDLE SCHOOL  
COLUMBIA, SC

**H**and Middle School continues to improve its program of school, family, and community partnerships. Parent Super Saturday is a day of activities to inform, exchange ideas, empower, and inspire parents to take active roles in their child's education at school and at home. Students also attended to participate in many activities for fun and learning. Hand serves a racially and socioeconomically diverse population of over 800 students from a forty square mile attendance zone.

Last year, Hand Middle conducted a day-long "Parent University." Parent Super Saturday continued this tradition as a collaboration of the middle school, the University of South Carolina Parent Advocacy Group, and the local faith-based community. It was held at the school, but was open to parents and students from the school's "feeder" pattern of four elementary schools and high school in the Dreher Cluster.

Many community partners presented useful information to parents at Super Saturday sessions. Presenters were from the USC Parent Advocacy Group; USC Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Carolina Family Engagement Center; Save the Children Action Network; Columbia Urban League; Richland County Sheriff's Department; and Richland County School District One. Local faith-based organizations provided gift cards for parents and donated funds for lunch. They also assisted with registration, games for students, and distributing lunch to attendees.

Parent Super Saturday was advertised at Hand Middle School with posters, e-mail, phone calls, and the school website, and registration forms and reminders were sent home. A local radio station conducted an interview with the Principal and with the organizer from the Parent Advocacy Group. The elementary schools and high school in the Dreher Cluster posted information on their websites.

At Super Saturday, parents could select

sessions on Best Practices for Families of Dual-Language Learners; The Role of Parent as Advocate; and Dealing with Difficult School Scenarios. Workshops for parents and students to attend together included The Making of a College Athlete and Gang Awareness. Workshops for middle and high school students included Aiming High: Focusing on Academics and Our Character & Our Future Careers. A special session for Latino families focused on their interests and concerns. Students in grades 3-5 selected literacy or arts and crafts sessions that were hosted by the Dreher High School Teacher Cadets.

The parent organizations and other community groups shared information at tables outside the cafeteria. Music set the mood for a combination of fun and information. All participants were served lunch in the school cafeteria.

The variety of speakers introduced parents and students to important resources in the community. For example, the session on Gang Awareness enabled students to interact with law enforcement in a positive manner. Students took the spotlight at the end of the day with A Uno Tournament, Three Point Shooting Contest and a Free Throw Shooting Contest.

In their evaluations, parents requested more workshops with information on how to guide student learning at different grade levels and how to best help students with special needs. They also wanted sessions for parents who speak languages other than English at home, and whose children are English learners. Students requested information on how to handle difficult school situations, NCAA eligibility, and school academics. The parents and students were not shy about making their requests for another super Super Saturday.

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TYPE 2

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

## VETERANS DAY CELEBRATION

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LEONVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
LEONVILLE, LA

TYPE 6

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

**V**eterans Day is a serious matter at Leonville Elementary School, PreK-8. The celebration honors citizens in the area who served in the military. It not only teaches students about the holiday, but also strengthens the school as a community. Leonville continues to improve connections of school, family, and community to support all partners in children's education.

A teacher whose husband is a retired veteran took the lead in organizing Veterans Day Celebration, along with an active committee. Members conducted key functions: marketing, decorating, hospitality, community outreach, sponsorship, and logistics. The marketing group posted flyers on the school's social media and sent them home with students. The hospitality subcommittee secured donations of refreshments and supplies for the pre-program reception.

The community outreach subcommittee invited many stakeholders to attend, including school board members, guest speakers, the mayor, local religious leaders, police chief and officers, volunteer firefighters, and fraternal groups. They also contacted the veterans who were to be honored, and coordinated transportation and special seating for the honorees.

The sponsorship group obtained donations from local businesses. The logistics committee organized student volunteers, created the program agenda, ordered supplies, and coordinated the efforts of the administration, cafeteria staff, and custodial staff. Many teachers were active in updating and improving various lessons for students' classes.

This year, students took more active roles in the celebration than in the past. They made

decorations for the school and cards for the veterans. Some acted as "ambassadors" and stood outside during the morning drop-off time with signs advertising the event. Many students participated in the program.

At the celebration, students decorated the campus, supervised by parent volunteers. They lined walkways with flags and adorned the reception area in the cafeteria with students' artwork. Another group of students set up chairs, the sound system, and added decorations in the gymnasium. Some students signed in guests, noting their military affiliation and years of service. They gave each veteran an American flag lapel pin and escorted veterans to their seats. During the reception, students and parent volunteers served cake and coffee and visited with guests. Teachers and students distributed gifts donated by local businesses.

For the program in the gymnasium, guests were greeted by patriotic music and an aisle of first grade students waving American flags. Third-grade students led the Pledge of Allegiance, and a sixth-grade student sang the National Anthem. An eighth grader served as mistress of ceremonies. The program included a welcome from the committee Chairperson, a guest speaker, grade-level performances, and performances by the student chorus and band. Student volunteers also assisted with clean up and storage of all program materials.

The committee reviewed the results of the celebration. They noted how the program improved over last year and gathered ideas for the future. As an unusual addition, the program committee and some students visited the nursing home where some of the veterans who were

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TYPE 6

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

## THANKSGIVING PARADE BALLOONS OVER TREMONT

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TREMONT MONTESSORI PRESCHOOL  
CLEVELAND, OH

**B**alloons over Broadway is a children's book about the famous Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City. Teachers attended a professional development session on the book, and one staff member thought that Tremont's preschool children would like to create their own parade at the school.

The students listened to the story and brainstormed ideas on how their class could make a float or create a marching band. They drew pictures to show how the class float or band would look. Then, they explained their ideas to their classmates and teachers.

Each classroom selected a design for its float or marching band for the Tremont Thanksgiving Parade. Teachers reached out to parents for donations and volunteers to help the students. Parents and children collected materials for the floats: shoe boxes, string, stickers, glitter glue, and other odds and ends. PNC, a strong community partner, donated art supplies and construction materials for the project. Classes that chose to form marching bands used the rhythm instruments from the school's *Grow-up Great Symphony* partnership.

To understand the structure of a parade, the marching bands practiced walking while playing their instruments. Other students practiced walking along with the class float. Students learned that a parade must be well organized to be enjoyed by spectators.

Tremont serves students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals, but the leaders set high standards to encourage students to be "curious, compassionate and committed." Students may go on from preschool through grade 8. The school has a very strong program of school, family, and community partnerships with good two-way communications of teachers and parents and a very welcoming school climate.

The school's office team printed color-

ful flyers to post at school and for students to take home to invite parents to celebrate the students' work. Plans were set for the parade route and for the chance of bad weather. Parents came to school at the scheduled time prior to dismissal to line the parade route and chat with other families. Over 70 parents attended. They represented nearly all of the preschool student population.

The teachers and staff solved challenges that arose along the way. They had to find a graceful way for all classes to join the parade with some sense of order around the school's dismissal time. The children were guided to walk the parade route a couple of times to add each class's float or band to the parade.

The students' activities fit the hands-on learning philosophy of Tremont Montessori Preschool. Their reactions to *Balloons Over Broadway* sparked their thinking and plans. They worked on their class floats by taking turns in small groups over several days. With teachers' and parents' help, the students worked together to realize the projects they planned. Their floats and bands were parade-worthy, and were cheered by all who attended.

This collaborative activity was something new and different for our community. Surveys of teachers, staff, and parents confirmed the success of the parade. Said one student, "This was the best day ever!" The parade took teamwork and strategizing to move from a good idea to a good result. It took teachers, staff, students, parents, and community members to create a partnership-parade and to give thanks for everything and everyone at Tremont.

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# 4

## DISTRICT, ORGANIZATION, & STATE 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.



## ALL HANDS ON DECK

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SAGINAW PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SAGINAW, MI

**W**hen COVID-19 swiftly closed school doors last March, leaders of the Saginaw Public School District (SPSD) took deliberate and collaborative actions to bring All Hands On Deck to help children keep learning from home. District leaders, principals, teachers, and staff knew that they had to communicate well with each other and with all students and families. Without these connections, learning from home would not work for students.

At the district level, the Superintendent and other leaders connected with all departments on the work needed to support students' remote learning. Leaders shared information using various technologies to reach all families including e-mail, Google Voice, phone calls, posters, flyers, Zoom meetings and workshops, conference calls, house calls, and verbal communication. The district's Family & Community Engagement Specialist planned ways to guide all schools to connect with students' families and community partners.

At the school level, principals guided all teachers and teams to communicate with all parents to motivate students to continue reading every day, and to complete assignments and homework. Educators completed monthly activity logs on their connections with students and families. Parent Liaisons also completed activity and phone logs on how they communicated weekly and monthly with families.

Teachers worked together to compile homework packets, make phone calls, send e-mails, and set "office hours" to respond--live--to questions from parents. They made I Miss You videos and posters for students and parents. They set up small group and one-on-one meeting with students and/or parents for more personalized attention.

Parents played important roles in their child's well-being and on-going education. They were able to e-mail, phone, or use social media to connect with teachers, principals, the Family Engagement Specialist, and others. Parents asked questions

about Chromebooks, homework packets, and family needs. Students followed teachers' guidelines for remote learning. Most were able to work at their own pace to complete assignments and activities.

Many community partners joined All Hands On Deck. Several tech companies provided Chromebooks, free broadband services, and video apps for some students. Others revised payment schedules for services for some families. Faith-based locations, community centers, fast food businesses, and others contributed to the district's plans to provide families with masks, food, and other household supplies.

Some challenges were not fully resolved. District leaders identified next steps to assist schools in obtaining correct phone numbers and e-contacts for all families, and providing computers and Internet access for all students including those whose families are in shelters or other unstable housing

Superintendent Roberts pledged, "During this unprecedented crisis, Saginaw Public Schools is committed to providing a high-quality education, sufficient meals, and social/emotional support to our students and families. ... It is imperative that we provide our children with stability and support in these trying times." He not only emphasized maintaining students' academic skills, but also their life skills and readiness to deal with unexpected challenges that they will meet throughout their lives. His message rang true. As one Principal noted, "I try to stay positive for those around me, especially for my family and my staff when they reach out to students' families."

Saginaw is showing that with All Hands On Deck, district and school leaders, ATPs, and families can work together to help more students meet the challenges of learning from home.

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*Family & Community Engagement Specialist*

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DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

## BUILDING SYSTEMIC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS IN ALL SCHOOLS

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TUCSON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
TUCSON, AZ

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

**T**he Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) adopted a district-wide policy on school, family, and community partnerships. The district's goals are to ensure a welcoming climate in all schools for all partners in children's education, and to strengthen partnership activities that contribute to student success in school. In addition to having an official policy, TUSD has a helpful department of Family and Community Outreach and staff to guide all schools to enact the policy in their own programs of family and community engagement.

TUSD is the largest school district in Arizona. It is working to conclude a Desegregation Order to create equitable educational programs in all schools and for all students. This directive recognized confirmed results of countless research studies showing that students do better in school when their parents are actively engaged in their education.

The Director of Family and Community Outreach and the department's Coordinators are working to help all schools implement the district policy on partnerships. They attended professional development sessions with NNPS and other leaders to strengthen their knowledge, skills, and strategies on family and community engagement. The district hired additional Coordinators to guide clusters of its 86 schools to implement site-based partnership programs aligned with the district policy.

The office of Family and Community Outreach began by building positive relationships with principals, teachers, staff, parents, and others to introduce the district policy and to share their enthusiasm about helping each school strengthen its program and practices of family and community engagement. This helped educators and parents "buy in" to the plan to strengthen their own school's partnership programs for student success.

The Director and Coordinators provided professional development to help the educators

and partnership teams in all schools complete site-based partnership plans. The staff's enthusiasm and services for schools created a domino effect across the district. Just about all principals agreed that family engagement is important for student success. One parent and community liaison in an elementary school expressed others' agreement, "I love my job and it's nice to finally feel validated."

With consistent and enthusiastic assistance, district leaders brought the majority of district colleagues and school teams on board. The Coordinators collected and reviewed monthly reports from their cluster of schools outreach activities and parents' responses. They offered support to schools that needed extra attention.

Teachers reported that when families were partners, students were more likely to follow school behavior goals, more actively participated in class, and more often asked teachers for help. Parents were particularly interested in meetings and activities that focused on how they could help their children at home.

It was important that TUSD not only had a clear district policy on partnerships, but also had a way to guide schools to customize their plans to engage parents in appropriate ways at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The school-based plans and activities are helping more parents see that their child's school recognizes and values them as important partners in their children's education.

It is challenging to implement an official policy for partnerships in all schools in a large district. TUSD is confident that its step-by-step approach to facilitate the implementation of the district policy will result in effective, equitable, and on-going programs of family and community engagement in all schools.

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## ***RICHLAND ONE STRONG: MEALS FOR CHILDREN WHEN SCHOOLS CLOSED***

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RICHLAND COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT ONE  
COLUMBIA, SC

**W**hen COVID-19 quickly closed school doors, the top priority for most districts and schools across the country was to ensure that children who received free meals at school would receive free breakfasts and/or lunches every day. For many children, school breakfasts and lunches provided balanced meals and a major part of their daily nutrition. Not even a pandemic could be allowed to eliminate this essential service for students.

Like other districts, Richland One designed its “Grab and Go” system to distribute meals to students. To help the Nutrition Services staff know how many meals to prepare, parents in Richland One completed an online survey on the children who received free breakfast and lunch at school. The surveys and the meal distribution schedules and locations were publicized on local news stations, district/school websites and social media, and calls to parents. District staff reviewed and grouped families to ensure that they knew where to pick up a week of meals for their children, or to make arrangements for meals to be delivered their homes.

Many district departments collaborated to design and administer the surveys of parents, develop menus, pack meals, and check family addresses. Collaborators included Student Nutrition; Office of Strategic Partnerships; Student Services; Accountability, Assessment, Research and Evaluation; Office of Federal and State Programs; and others.

The first step was to alert parents about the system for pick up or delivery. Leaders revised the original daily pick up schedule to a weekly schedule. Each Monday, parents could pick up a packet of meals for 7 days.

The weekly schedule helped reduce the number of trips families had to make to pick up meals, and improved health and safety by reducing crowds of families that gathered every day.

All children 18 and under were eligible to receive the free meals. In addition, the policy applied to all students in the county whether they attended Richland One schools or not. Families came by the carload to pick up the packs of weekly meals from ten sites across the district. Also, each week over 27 community groups went to the district’s central kitchen to pick up and deliver meals to over 1,000 families who could not get to the district’s distribution centers.

Parents drove to the delivery location. They remained in their vehicles as the district staff and volunteers distributed the meals curbside. Pick-up hours were from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Mondays. Children had to be present to receive the meals.

The district’s Director of Student Nutrition reported that in the first week, “...We were able to serve over 43,000 meals on Monday, and, based on the list I received today, a little over 1,000 more students have been added!” After about two months, the district estimated that over 500,000 meals had been picked up or delivered.

The district extended its meals program to include the summer months. The program will continue if schools remain closed at the start of the new school year.

It was clear to district leaders that what sounded simple—deliver school meals—was a multi-stage process and a multi-partner project during school closure.

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

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# SUMMER LEARNING DURING COVID-19

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LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT  
LITTLE ROCK, AR

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

Summer School was cancelled due to COVID-19, but summer learning was still important to reduce the "summer slide" in reading and other school skills. The Parent and Family Engagement (PFE) Specialist for Little Rock School District (LRSD) guided teachers to share resources with students and parents for summer learning.

When face-to-face summer school was prohibited for safety reasons, LRSD leaders noted that the district's Parent Center had many resources that could be used and enjoyed by students during the summer. The PFE Office conducted a Google Survey of parents whose children were scheduled for summer school. They found that parents were eager for resources that they could use to help their children keep learning during the summer. On the surveys, parents indicated the names and grade levels of their children so that resources could be customized for the students

Working together, PFE, Title I, Translations Office, and others selected two teachers to create Summer Resource Kits for students K-8. The teachers hosted six Zoom sessions in morning and evening times to introduce the Summer Resource Kits to the parents of students in grades K-8 who were scheduled for summer school. In addition, the teachers conducted three morning and three afternoon sessions in English and in Spanish twice a week for two weeks to address students' and parents' questions. The LRSD Superintendent supported this approach to summer learning with a note of appreciation to the teachers and leaders for the creative solution to a serious challenge.

The summer learning kits included 1 or 2 books with specific discussion questions at each child's reading level and a journal for student writing. Depending on student needs,

the summer kits also included math card decks, colored pencils, a family portrait activity, and a literacy card deck.

The kit for secondary students contained a book for reading for pleasure, a journal, a To-Do Calendar for Planning College or Career, and a set of college and career pamphlets for parents. The kits also included a list of websites that students could access for additional learning and practice activities.

Parents and students picked up their personalized Summer Resource Kits at the Parent Center on two distribution days. They followed CDC health and safety guidelines of wearing masks and staying a safe distance apart from others. The Title I staff delivered the kits to their vehicles so that parents did not have to enter the building. Packets were mailed to parents and students who did not to pick up the resources in person.

District leaders will evaluate the investment in summer learning by examining the students' online returns, journals, and activities returned at the end of the summer. A survey will be sent to the participating parents at the end of the summer to learn their reactions to the program.

The purpose of "regular" summer school is to help students make up needed skills or advance skills to prepare for the next school year. LRSD continues to work to improve and extend goal-linked parent and family engagement. With customized resources for each student who was scheduled for summer school, parents were guided to be engaged in productive ways in their child's learning through the summer.

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## TELLING OUR STORIES OF PROMISING PRACTICES

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LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT  
LITTLE ROCK, AR

**L**ittle Rock School District continues to strengthen family and community engagement at the district level and in all schools. Some activities help parents become school leaders and advocates for their child's education and well-being. Other activities engage all families in ways that increase their child's success in school.

LRSD Leaders for Partnerships guide three Cluster Leaders who facilitate three groups of schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) in the Central-East, Southwest, and West sections of the district. District Leaders met with Cluster Leaders and schools' ATPs via Zoom to hear how they kept a spotlight on family and community engagement in the spring during the COVID lockdown. For example, in LRSD:

- ATPs in all three Clusters used online media (e.g., Zoom, ClassDoJo, Its Learning, Edmentum) to communicate with parents about how to assist their children with learning from home. Parents used social media (especially Facebook) to stay in contact with the district, other parents, and their child's teachers. Also, LRSD's Title I Family Service Liaisons communicated with Families in Transition (homeless families) to ensure that they had the resources and support they needed to encourage their child's learning from home.

- LRSD distributed many Chromebooks and other items for online learning from the district's Alternative Methods of Instruction (AMI) site. Leaders sent letters to parents in English and Spanish on how to obtain a Chromebook, and how Comcast, AT&T, Sprint, and Verizon were offering free Internet services to homes.

- Children in LRSD (up to age 18) obtained breakfast, lunch, and/or dinner at selected schools, libraries, or community centers on school days and, often, over the weekend. Families were offered free public bus transportation to the meal-sites. Community transportation services

distributed meals to the homes of students with special needs.

These are a few examples of how, during the COVID-19 closures, LRSD implemented Type 2-Communicating, Type 4-Learning at Home, and Type 6-Collaborating with the Community activities of the NNPS Framework of Six Types of Involvement. This information was shared with other districts and schools across the country in the NNPS April *E-Brief*.

At the end of prior school years, the district hosted End-of-the-Year Training and Reflections meetings. This year, COVID-19 prohibited face-to-face sessions. The district and cluster leaders for partnerships conducted sessions online to hear how each school worked with its students' families during this challenging period. They conducted sessions to guide schools' ATPs to select, write, and submit a best practice for consideration in the NNPS book of *Promising Partnership Practices*.

Some schools' ATPs were not sure their work was good enough to share with the nation. The NNPS Senior Facilitator met via Zoom with LRSD Clusters and school ATPs. She helped them think about what they learned from the family and community engagement activities that they conducted before and after the COVID closures. She told all ATPs that the lessons they learned by designing and conducting various engagement activities would be of interest to other schools in NNPS. The result is that LRSD schools submitted strong activities to "tell their stories" of how they are working to strengthen family engagement to create a school community and increase student success in school. NOTE: See the engagement activities of several LRSD schools in this edition of *Promising Partnership Practices*.

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DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

## ONLINE TEAM TRAINING WORKSHOP IN IRELAND

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PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS IRELAND  
DUBLIN, IRELAND

**T**o increase the number of schools with well-functioning Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs), Partnership Schools Ireland (PSI) developed a comprehensive online Team Training Workshop. The workshop was designed to serve as an initial workshop for new schools that join PSI, and as a “refresher” for teams with new members or that want to review the research-based structures and processes that guide their work. PSI—currently with about 40 school members across the country—is a joint initiative of the National Parents Council Primary (NPC), the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN), and Ireland’s Department of Education and Skills (DES).

A working group of PSI leaders gathered research-based information for the one-hour online workshop, including the structures and processes for effective programs from NNPS. They contracted with a digital learning development company to design and produce the online training module. PSI planners checked and edited the script to include the voices of all members of ATPs—principals, teachers, parents, community members and students. One of PSI’s customized designs is to have students on all ATPs in elementary and secondary schools.

The online workshop addresses the following topics: *Partnerships and Healthy Schools*. This section summarizes the results of research on the importance of school and family partnerships and the theoretical model of Overlapping Spheres of Influence. *Partnerships with Parents*. This section explains Dr. Joyce Epstein’s Framework of Six Types of Involvement.

*The Who, What, and How of an Action Team for Partnership (ATP)*. This section outlines the members of the ATP and the team’s responsibilities. It also discusses the importance of a One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships to strengthen the school’s welcoming climate for all partners in education, increase student success, and evaluate the quality, progress, and next steps for continually improving each school’s partnership program.

*Developing Your One Year Action Plan for Partnerships*. This section zeros in on how to write SMART goals in the One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships, schedule the implementation of specific activities, share leadership of activities, and identify resources needed for the planned practices.

PSI will evaluate the reactions of ATPs that “attend” the online workshop to learn if team members understand the research and theory behind PSI; the six types of engagement; team members’ responsibilities; and how to write goal-linked plans for partnerships to ensure a welcoming climate for all partners in education and to improve student achievement, behavior, and other important student outcomes.

PSI reported that its main challenge is to provide on-going support for current and new schools that join the PSI network. As Ireland’s leading organization for partnership program development, PSI aims to provide benefits and services to support the work and progress the PSI network of schools, just as NNPS does in the U.S.

The online workshop was developed to facilitate the upskilling and support of new ATPs across Ireland, to enhance the induction of new team members on existing ATPs, to ensure the continued fidelity and sustainability of the Partnership Schools Ireland model in schools across Ireland.

PSI publicized the online workshop with ATPs at two Regional Support Meetings and in messages to all principals and ATPs to inform them of the availability of the training module on the National Parents Council website at <http://www.npc.ie/primary/partnership-schools-ireland>.

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## PARENT ENGAGEMENT VIRTUAL SUMMIT

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RIVERSIDE COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION  
RIVERSIDE, CA

**W**hen COVID-19 closed schools, Riverside County Office of Ed. (RCOE) knew that most parents had many questions about children’s learning from home. RCOE leaders developed an online Parent Engagement Virtual Summit to talk with parents about available resources, and to hear from parents about their needs and concerns to guide their children in the unusual COVID circumstances.

The Summit built on RCOE’s experience in conducting leadership workshops for parents. The new conference took the form of a week-long series of interviews and presentations, with time for attendees to discuss parents’ questions about the resources and support available to students and families during the COVID crisis. One of many partners—the 23rd District PTA—assisted in identifying topics for discussion, presenters, and advertising to invite parents to attend.

A Virtual Summit takes a great deal of planning. RCOE started with a survey of parents asking: “What types of support do you need to be successful with distance learning now and in the future?”

Parents wanted information on how to deal with their children’s and their own anxiety about COVID19, and how to support their children’s social and emotional well-being. They wanted clear information on how to support students’ learning; help with reading; guide high school students with college applications; meet the needs of homeless families and students; and other topics. Parents were feeling overwhelmed by the demands of learning from home.

Over seven weeks of preparing the Virtual Summit, RCOE’s leaders obtained commitments from speakers, collected speakers’ biographies, photos, social media links, developed interview questions for each speaker, and compiled resources for parents. The presenters included county and district family engagement leaders, district superintendents, early childhood experts, National and

State PTA leaders, Board of Education members, and parenting experts.

The organizers used Zoom to conduct and record the presentations. They developed the content of the sessions, created a registration form, and publicized the Summit to parents, educators, PTAs, community partners and related groups of stakeholders in the county. The content of the Summit was placed on YouTube and Weebly, and was archived for others to “attend” later.

Attendance was high. Over 12,000 educators and parents registered for the Summit, and more than 25,000 attended over time. Participants provided feedback to RCOE via e-mail. RCOE’s leaders, staff, and partners debriefed based on the feedback they received and their own ideas about the challenges and successes in developing and implementing the Summit. They considered archiving presentations by topic rather than by day of the week. They discussed whether to conduct mini-summits on one topic at a time with a few presenters.

RCOE tested the idea of a mni-summit with an on-line meeting to address questions about athletic programs for student athletes during COVID-19. This was well attended by parents, students, athletic directors, coaches, administrators, and others.

Although time to develop the Virtual Summit was short, the results were promising. There was a “silver lining” to RCOE’s efforts to address parents’ immediate questions. The Summit revealed the promise of online conferencing. Because of easy archiving, the Summit was not a “one-and-done,” activity. Rather, online conferences enabled many parents and educators to attend on their own schedules.

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## PARENT SURVEYS IN SCOTLAND ON COVID-19

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PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS SCOTLAND  
EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

ORGANIZATION LEADERSHIP

In April, after Scotland's schools were closed by COVID-19, *Partnership Schools Scotland (PSS)* surveyed parents. Leaders asked: "How are you doing?" Over 1500 families in 29 of 32 local government areas responded, including parents with children in preschool (7%), primary (64%), secondary (27%), and other (2%) schools. About 60% of parents reported they had the information they needed to support their children, but many of these parents and all others had questions and concerns about children's learning from home.

**Communications from school leaders and teachers.** Parents' reactions varied across schools and grade levels. Some were concerned about a lack of contact and the need for clear assignments from their child's school. Others complained about an "overload" of schoolwork. Parents wanted information "in clear language," and more details about how to guide students at the secondary level. The responses suggest how schools may improve communications with parents and students whether schools are open or remain closed.

**Children's learning.** Parents were least confident about guiding their child's learning in math and other core subjects. Parents stated that they were not teachers, and that they needed more guidance from teachers on "how to motivate my child." They worried that their child could be "falling behind academically" and that this would affect future learning. Some questioned if there was too much review work and too few new lessons to advance students' skills. They were aware of many inequalities. One commented, "My child will be behind in learning while others who have better circumstances... will be ahead."

**Health and well-being.** Parents were most confident about providing emotional support and guiding their child's health and well-being. They also were concerned that their child missed their friends and the social interactions that are so important in school. They wondered if this had

a significant impact on children's mental health.

**Technology and equipment at home.** A large percentage of parents reported that their children lacked computers, tablets, and/or Internet access, printers for assigned activities, and some books. Some reported that parents who were working from home had to share devices with their children. The tech challenge was significant.

**Reflections.** Leaders of partnerships at Partnership Schools Scotland noted that many families across cities in their project are struggling to balance their own employment, family life, and children's learning at home. Families with low incomes and those whose children had special needs struggled more than others.

Many of the Scottish survey topics showed that parents were aware of inequalities in the quality of communications across schools and across families. Their comments and experiences alert educators to serious challenges that all schools must solve whether schools reopen or remain closed in the new school year.

Parents also noted some silver linings, such as having time to interact with their children's learning, and time to enjoy conducting creative and fun activities at home. One thing is clear: COVID-19 put family and school partnerships on everyone's agenda as an important topic for students' success. Most parents wanted to be consulted on whether and how officials reopen schools or continue remote learning. Just like parents in the U.S. and other countries, Scottish parents put safety first.

Partnership Schools Scotland conducted a follow-up survey in June. See reports on both surveys of Scottish parents at: [www.connect.scot](http://www.connect.scot).

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## 2020 VIRTUAL SUMMER INSTITUTE SERIES

FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY-CENTER OF EXCELLENCE  
FLORENCE, SC

**F**or many years, the Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty (COE) at Francis Marion University conducted a popular Summer Institute with professional development activities for educators in South Carolina. Topics helped teachers understand the effects of poverty on students and families, create curriculum to improve teaching classes for these students, and strengthen programs of family and community engagement to include and welcome families with low incomes.

In South Carolina, districts range from 24% to 99% of students in families with low incomes. Across the state, educators are challenged to advance students' skills and engage families and community partners in students' education. Professional development at Francis Marion University has helped many teachers to increase and improve their skills and lessons over the years.

When COVID-19 closed schools, limited travel, and prohibited large group meetings, COE went into design mode and turned its face-to-face Summer Institute into a large virtual conference for educators in South Carolina and beyond. The organization used its monthly newsletter, *Facebook*, and *Twitter* connections to advertise the Virtual Institute. It was a challenge for the COE staff to organize and conduct a Virtual Summer Institute working from home. With hard work and many e-mails, the project was successful.

COE leaders scheduled and recorded 17 speakers from prior Summer Institutes. They updated information and messages about teaching students and engaging families with low incomes. The speakers provided practical, research-based information on the untapped potential of students and the importance of family engagement in under-resourced schools. Topics included turning high-poverty schools into high-performing schools; increasing student leadership for student learning; understanding brain-based learning; reopening schools after COVID; improving programs of school, family, and community partnerships; and

guiding students to fulfill their potential and take pathways to success. The series was offered over two weeks at no cost to participants. Due to high demand, COE extended opportunities to attend the Institute throughout the summer. Subscribers could access presentations and materials for a \$25 registration fee (see <https://learn.fmucenterofexcellence.org/>)

COE advertised the Institute on its website and on its many partners' websites. Over 3000 educators (administrators, teachers, media specialists, guidance counselors, and others from all school levels) from South Carolina, other states, and a few other nations attended the Virtual Summit. They gathered ideas to improve school programs whether schools opened for in-person attendance or continued remote learning.

Attendees evaluated each presentation on an e-mail survey or chat box review. They reported that they gained many research-based strategies to improve their teaching and outreach to engage parents who were hard-to-reach. Attendees also gained new ideas on how to improve online teaching strategies and learning activities for students during the COVID-19 crisis. One attendee echoed evaluations of past summers, "COE Summer Institute always opens my mind to wonderful ways to teach. [Again, this year,] I will reflect on many ideas to see how I can apply the practices in my teaching." Another reported that the most important statement she heard in one presentation was a critical message for students who live in poverty: "Your condition is not your conclusion!"

COE learned important and surprising lessons in conducting a big Virtual Institute. It is possible that an online conference is the best way to share new ideas and new knowledge with more educators across the state and nation.

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## UPK AT YOUR SERVICE

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CUYAHOGA COUNTY UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN  
CLEVELAND, OH

**S**ervice learning is usually a way that students in middle and high schools are guided to make valuable contributions to the community. As they offer service, students learn that they can help solve problems and that their activities are valued. Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) leaders adapted service learning for preschool students and families to contribute to their communities.

Each year with input from schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs), the UPK Family Engagement Coordinator chooses a theme to strengthen schools' programs of family and community engagement. Last year, the theme—UPK at Your Service—was selected to guide all 67 preschools in this project to identify a problem to solve in their own community. UPK also selected one issue that all schools could address together in the broader UPK community. These projects aimed to strengthen parents' leadership skills, introduce children to community service, and encourage everyone's compassion and empathy for others.

At the Orientation meeting for ATPs at the start of the school year, the Coordinator shared a list of potential family service-learning projects to spark the ATPs thinking. Each ATP selected a project to benefit a local family, group, or organization in their own community. Studies indicate that when people perform acts of kindness, they not only gain empathy and understanding of others, but also improve their feelings of confidence and self-worth. Each ATP used fliers, social media, newsletters, and reminder phone calls to invite parents, students, and staff to participate in the selected project.

Some ATPs completed their good work prior to the COVID-19 closures. For example, teachers, parents, and students at one school created and delivered Valentine's Day cards to show love and appreciation for residents of a local senior citizen's center. Another school collected pennies to buy supplies for a local animal shelter. Some

teams collected food or clothing for families in need. At another school, families and children visited a local nursing home to sing to residents and pamper them with some sweet-smelling toiletries.

Some ATPs revised their plans and projects after the COVID-19 closures. For example, families and students collected and donated funds or obtained masks for essential health workers in the area. The All-School-UPK project, originally scheduled for April 2020, was redesigned to raise the spirits of essential workers who faced dangers to benefit the community.

Children and families across UPK schools contributed to a Virtual Photo Album to Show Gratitude for Essential Workers. Parents and children contributed art and photos to recognize the work of health professionals, grocery staff, trash collectors, police, firefighters, and many others who stayed at work to help the children and their families during COVID19. Some parents photographed their children with the essential workers; others drew or painted their experiences. The online photo album and art portfolio were shared with essential workers throughout the Cleveland area.

In each At Your Service project, teachers guided students to work cooperatively, build social skills, and practice math and language skills such as sorting, categorizing, counting, writing, and drawing/coloring. The children learned that community helpers are, indeed, "essential." They also learned that even preschoolers have great "power" to help their community. One preschool administrator summed up how all of the different service learning projects produced one common result, "Service projects bring out the best in everyone."

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## Virtual Photo Album for Essential Workers



ORGANIZATION LEADERSHIP



