



National Network of Partnership Schools

Promising Partnership Practices 2021



PROMISING PARTNERSHIP PRACTICES



An annual collection from the members of the
National Network of Partnership Schools
 Johns Hopkins University

2021

Edited by

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



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NATIONAL NETWORK OF
Partnership Schools
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

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 - » *Partnership Awards* for national recognition
 - » Leadership Institutes
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 - » Annual evaluation of program quality (*UPDATE*)
 - » Research results, tools, and materials that help meet Title I requirements for family involvement
 - » Website: www.partnershipschools.org
 - » *Type 2 Blog*
-

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Photo Credits

Thanks to the following members of NNPS for photographs of partnership activities.

COVER: North Charleston Elementary, Charleston County School District, North Charleston, SC

PHOTOS WITH 2021 ACTIVITIES

Hawthorne Elementary School, Seattle School District, WA: *Hawthorne's Quarantine Academy,*

McMillan Early Learning, Cuyahoga County Universal Pre-Kindergarten-Starting Point, OH: *Virtual Sip and Paint for Families/Preschoolers and Essential Workers,*

North Charleston Elementary, Charleston County School District, SC: *Read Bowl: The World Championship of Reading,*

Old Brooklyn Horizon Education Center, Cuyahoga County Universal Pre-Kindergarten-Starting Point, OH: *Build an ATM/Piggy Bank & Decorate It 2021*

Port Barre High School and Middle School, St. Landry Parish School Board, LA: *Healthy Lives*

St. Peter's Child Care Center, Cuyahoga County Universal Pre-Kindergarten-Starting Point, OH: *Family Fun Night: Moving and Engaging Together,*

Little Rock School District, AR: *Leaders for Partnerships Meeting (Pre-COVID-19)*

PHOTOS TO CELEBRATE NNPS 25TH ANNIVERSARY

(from prior books of Promising Partnership Practices)

READING

**Dolby Elementary School, Calcasieu Parish School Board, Lake Charles, LA
Voorhis Elementary School, Mountain View School District, El Monte, CA**

MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

**Louis Stokes Early Learning Center, Cuyahoga County Universal Pre-Kindergarten-Starting Point, Cleveland, OH
Miramonte Elementary School, Mountain View School District, South El Monte, CA**

HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Ellis Technical High School, Connecticut Technical High School Systems, Danielson, CT
Saginaw Public Schools, Saginaw, MI**

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

**Herig Elementary, Saginaw Public Schools, MI
Park Middle School, Kennewick School District, Kennewick, WA**

DISTRICTS AND ORGANIZATIONS

**Alvord Unified School District, Corona, CA
The University of Alabama, Parent-Teacher Leadership Academy, Tuscaloosa, AL**

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INTRODUCTION

Promising Partnership Practices 2021

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

COVID-19 continued to challenge educators, families, and communities throughout the 2020-21 school year. Across the country and around the world, teachers, administrators, and parents made decisions about how to educate students safely and well. States, districts, and schools customized schedules and gave parents and students options. Some students returned to school for in-person classes. Others continued remote classes and learning at home. Still others followed “hybrid” schedules with some days in school and some days at home. To complicate matters, schedules changed from time to time during the year. Everyone had to be flexible.

From the day school doors closed in March 2020, school, family and community partnerships were critical for ensuring student attendance, learning, and progress over the school year. It was clear that, along with health professionals and community workers, teachers, parents, and students were *the essential workers* in every school and every district. School leaders and Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) became increasingly creative about connecting with students and families. *Zoom* was everyone’s best friend. Often, when they *zoomed*, teachers and ATPs communicated with more families than ever before.

This year, 2021, is the 25th Anniversary of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University. We celebrate a quarter century of guiding educators, parents, and others to use research-based approaches to organize effective and equitable programs of family and community engagement. We also celebrate 25 years that we, at NNPS, have learned from all of our partners in the field about what works and what must improve to engage all families in their children’s education. Working together, we have built a knowledge base on partnership program development.

In this e-book edition of *Promising Partnership Practices 2021*, schools in NNPS report how COVID-19 required creative communications to ensure a welcoming school climate and to support student learning in reading, multiple subjects, and health. District and organization leaders share ways to support and improve their schools’ partnership programs and practices.

- Read how a preschool used *Zoom* to extend everyone’s knowledge of the contributions of Black inventors and artists during Black History Month.
- Learn how teachers, families, and nutritionists in an elementary school conducted virtual cooking classes that resulted in *real* dinner, and in family conversations about good things to eat.
- Consider how a middle school used school buses to visit neighborhoods instead of conducting an Open House Night to meet students and families face-to-face. They also distributed school supplies at the start of the school year.
- See how PE coaches at a combined middle and high school developed YouTube videos to get students to exercise when learning from home. They demonstrated techniques for a complete body workout, including weight lifting with household items such as canned goods, water bottles, books, and milk jugs.
- Discover how district and organization leaders planned professional development sessions that guided school ATPs to zoom in and out of main rooms and breakout rooms to learn new partnership strategies, share best practices, and learn from “in house experts.”

In honor of the NNPS 25th Anniversary year, we added a few activities in each section from prior books of *Promising Partnership Practices*. These activities—just a few of hundreds of our favorites—remind us that good ideas inspire. They do not expire.

There is creative work on every page of this e-book! There are two Tables of Contents (TOC) to help readers find ideas to adopt or adapt in their school’s One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships or in their district or organization Leadership Plan for Partnerships.

1. **GOALS FOR PARTNERSHIPS.** This TOC lists activities by specific goals to engage family and community partners with students in Reading, Multiple Subjects, Health, and in ensuring a Welcoming School Climate. Also, see activities to strengthen District and Organization Leadership.

Each activity also identifies one of the Six Types of Involvement in the NNPS framework: **Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision Making, and Collaborating with the Community.** Remember: Most practices activate more than one “type” of engagement

2. **CONTRIBUTORS.** This TOC lists contributors by **title of activity and location.** There are 52 activities from 34 schools and 18 districts and organizations from 14 states. Remember: Activities designed and conducted in one community (urban, suburban, or rural) may be adapted to other locations. Also, activities implemented in preschools, elementary, middle, and high schools may be adapted for use at other school levels

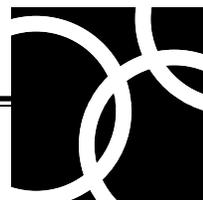
Promising Partnership Practices 2021 is posted at www.partnershipschools.org in the section Success Stories. Readers may print the full book in color or black and white, or share the e-copy. Members of NNPS have access to more than 10 years of prior editions of *Promising Partnership Practices* from 2009 to 2021 using the NNPS Member Only Code. NNPS reminds members of this resource and code in each month’s *E-Brief*.

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) is celebrating its 25th Anniversary in the 21-22 school year. NNPS provides professional development and on-going technical assistance to enable schools, districts, organizations, and state departments of education to develop and sustain research-based partnership programs.

- Each partnership school forms an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and writes an annual goal-linked partnership plan to engage all families in their children’s education at school and at home. ATPs work to ensure a school climate that welcomes all families. Using the Framework of Six Types of Involvement, ATPs engage family and community partners in different ways and in different places to support student success in school and in life.
- Each partnership district, organization, and state identifies a leader who supports the enactment of the official policy on partnerships. Leaders directly facilitate school-based ATPs to organize, implement, evaluate, and continually improve their programs of family and community engagement.

All members of NNPS benefit from on-going research and development at Johns Hopkins University on school, family, and community partnerships. In annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices*, members share best practices to celebrate good ideas and learn from each other. For more information, visit www.partnershipschools.org.



Contents

1: READING AND LITERACY

Literacy Night – Under the Big Tent3
Play and Learn Family Sessions4
The Reading Patrol and Sheriff’s Office5
Read Bowl: Championship of Reading6
Spring Into Virtual Literacy Night8



Celebrating NNPS 25th Anniversary. . .

Books and Basketball Family Literacy Night (2013)9
Cultivating a Culture of Reading: Dinner and a Book (2016)10
Read for a Bead (2017).....11

2: OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

Black History Month Celebration15
Build An ATM-Piggy Bank16
Financial Literacy Summit: Making \$ense of Your Coins18
Virtual Cultural Fair / One Book One School19
Sip and Paint to Thank Essential Workers20



Celebrating NNPS 25th Anniversary. . .

Art in Bloom - Early Childhood Annual Art Show (2017)22
Curriculum Nights (2013).....23
Egg Stravaganza! (2014).....24
Science and Social Studies Soiree (2018).....25
STEM 4 R Night (2014)26

3: HEALTH AND SAFETY

| | |
|---|-----|
| Healthy Lives | .28 |
| Moving Together: Family Fun Night | .30 |
| Parking Lot Lunch and Learn | .32 |
| Virtual Cooking Class | .33 |



Celebrating NNPS 25th Anniversary. . .

| | |
|--|-----|
| Fun Run (2014) | .34 |
| Healthy Alternatives for Families on the Go (2015) | .35 |
| Suicide Prevention: What You Need to Know (2019) | .36 |

4: CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIP GOALS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Boo With You! Annual Meeting with Parents | .39 |
| Hawthorne's Quarantine Academy | .40 |
| Passport to Partnership | .42 |
| Roll Through Fall with Family Fun | .43 |
| Virtual Slumber Party Camp Out | .44 |



Celebrating NNPS 25th Anniversary. . .

| | |
|---|-----|
| Eagle Expo (2013) | .45 |
| Keeping Kids First (2017) | .46 |
| Parents, Pizzas, Policies, and Procedures Night (2010)..... | .47 |
| Room Parent Program (2012) | .48 |

4: DISTRICT, ORGANIZATION, & STATE LEADERSHIP

District

| | |
|--|-----|
| ATP Champion Ideas for Today’s Leaders | .51 |
| Family and Community Engagement—FACE to Face | .52 |
| Family Engagement Award—It’s a Celebration! | .53 |
| New Tech System: Parent Awareness and Support | .54 |
| Virtual Workshops for Clusters of Schools on Family Engagement | .55 |
| What’s for Dinner? Healthy Food and Good Conversations | .56 |

Organization

| | |
|--|-----|
| Colleagues Connect: Virtual Meetings for District and Regional Leaders . . | .57 |
| Graduate Study: Partnerships in High Poverty Schools | .58 |
| Ohio Statewide Virtual End-of-Year Celebration | .59 |
| Virtually Engaging: Lessons in Family Engagement | .60 |



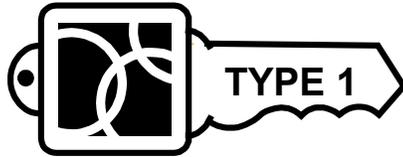
Celebrating NNPS 25th Anniversary. . .

Districts and Organizations

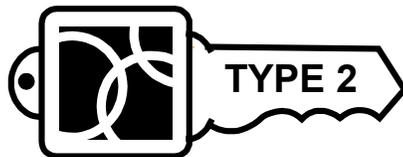
| | |
|---|-----|
| Celebration Time – Sharing Best Practices (2016) | .61 |
| Cluster Busters (2017) | .62 |
| Fathers, Uncles, Cousins, Brothers, and Others (2017). | .63 |
| Future Focus 203 (2014) | .64 |
| It’s a Family Affair (2018) | .65 |
| Learning on the Go with ReadyRosie (2016) | .66 |
| Richland One Parent and Family Involvement Calendar (2012). | .67 |
| Road Map to Success (2012) | .68 |

THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

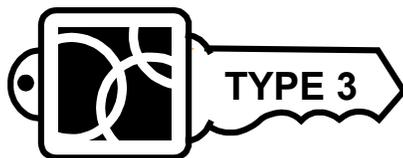
EPSTEIN'S SIX TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT



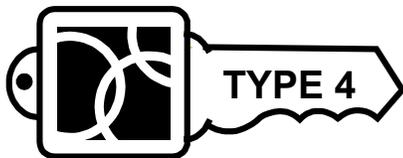
PARENTING: Assist families in understanding child and adolescent development and in setting home conditions that support children as students at each grade level. Assist schools in understanding families.



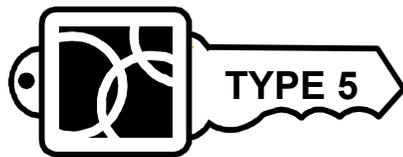
COMMUNICATING: Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.



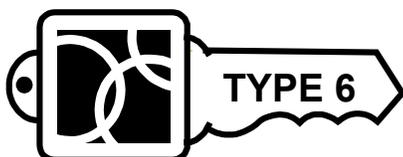
VOLUNTEERING: Improve recruitment, training, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school and in other locations to support students and school programs.



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

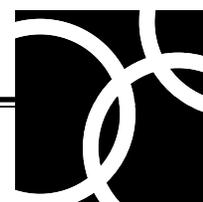


DECISION MAKING: Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, action teams, and other parent organizations.



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.

ALPHABETICAL INDEX OF CONTRIBUTORS



| | | |
|---|---|-----------|
| Carver-Lyon Elementary School <i>Columbia, SC</i> | Parking Lot Lunch and Learn | 32 |
| Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty <i>Florence, SC</i> | Graduate Study-Family & Community Partnerships in High Poverty Schools | 58 |
| Cuyahoga County Universal Pre-Kindergarten <i>Cleveland, OH</i> | Virtually Engaging: Lessons in Family Engagement | 60 |
| H. B. Rhame Elementary <i>Columbia, SC</i> | Virtual Cooking Class | 33 |
| Hawthorne Elementary School <i>Seattle, WA</i> | Hawthorne's Quarantine Academy | 40 |
| Hopkins Middle School <i>Hopkins, SC</i> | Literacy Night - Under the Big Tent | 3 |
| Horizon Education Centers Old Brooklyn <i>Cleveland, OH</i> | Build An ATM-Piggy Bank | 16 |
| Ladson Elementary School <i>Ladson, SC</i> | The Reading Patrol and Sheriff's Office | 5 |
| Little Rock School District <i>Little Rock, AR</i> | New Tech System: Parent Awareness and Support | 54 |
| Little Rock School District <i>Little Rock, AR</i> | What's for Dinner? Healthy Food and Good Conversations | 56 |
| LR Southwest Magnet High School <i>Mabelvale, AR</i> | Financial Literacy Summit: Making \$ense of Your Coins | 18 |
| Mabelvale Middle School <i>Mabelvale, AR</i> | Roll Through Fall with Family Fun | 43 |
| McMillan Early Learning <i>Cleveland Heights, OH</i> | Sip and Paint to Thank Essential Workers | 20 |
| Noble Elementary School <i>Cleveland Heights, OH</i> | Passport to Partnership | 42 |
| North Charleston Elementary School <i>North Charleston, SC</i> | Read Bowl: Championship of Reading | 6 |
| Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center <i>Columbus, OH</i> | Colleagues Connect: Virtual Meetings for District and Regional Leaders | 57 |
| Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center <i>Columbus, OH</i> | Ohio Statewide Virtual End-of-Year Celebration | 59 |
| Opelousas Junior High School <i>Opelousas, LA</i> | Boo with You! Annual Meeting with Parents | 39 |
| Orchard Elementary School <i>Richland, WA</i> | Virtual Cultural Fair / One Book One School | 19 |
| Pasco School District <i>Pasco, WA</i> | ATP Champion Ideas for Today's Leaders | 51 |

| | | |
|--|---|-----------|
| Port Barre High School and Middle School <i>Port Barre, LA</i> | Healthy Lives | 28 |
| Prospect Academy <i>East Cleveland, OH</i> | Play and Learn Family Sessions | 4 |
| Richland County School District One <i>Columbia, SC</i> | Virtual Workshops for Clusters of Schools | 55 |
| Riverside Office of Education <i>Riverside, CA</i> | Family Engagement Award - It's a Celebration! | 53 |
| St. Peter's Child Care Center <i>Lakewood, OH</i> | Moving Together: Family Fun Night | 30 |
| Tucson Unified School District <i>Tucson, AZ</i> | Family & Community Engagement - FACE to Face | 52 |
| Urban Community School <i>Cleveland, OH</i> | Virtual Slumber Party Camp Out | 44 |
| W. G. Sanders Middle School <i>Columbia, SC</i> | Spring Into Virtual Literacy Night | 8 |
| William Patrick Day Early Learning Center <i>Cleveland, OH</i> | Black History Month Celebration | 15 |



*Celebrating NNPS 25th Anniversary. . .
A few favorites from the past.*

| | | |
|---|--|-----------|
| Calcasieu Parish School Board (2017) <i>Lake Charles, LA</i> | Fathers, Uncles, Cousins, Brothers, and Others | 63 |
| Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty, Francis Marion University (2016) <i>Florence, SC</i> | Celebration Time - Sharing Best Practices | 61 |
| Cuyahoga County Universal Pre-K; Starting Point & Invest in Children (2016) <i>Cleveland, OH</i> | Learning on the Go with <i>ReadyRosie</i> | 66 |
| Delmae Heights Elementary (2017) <i>Florence, SC</i> | Read for a Bead | 11 |
| Edison Elementary School (2014) <i>Kennewick, WA</i> | Egg Stravaganza! | 24 |
| Edison Middle School (2013) <i>Janesville, WI</i> | Eagle Expo | 45 |
| Francis Howell Middle School (2019) <i>St. Charles, MO</i> | Suicide Prevention: What You Need to Know | 36 |
| Greenwood Elementary School (2010) <i>Princess Anne, MD</i> | Parents, Pizzas, Policies, and Procedures Night | 47 |
| Indian Community School (2012) <i>Franklin, WI</i> | Room Parent Program | 48 |
| James McGee Elementary School (2014) <i>Pasco, WA</i> | Fun Run | 34 |

| | | |
|---|--|-----------|
| Krotz Springs Elementary School (2018) <i>Krotz Springs, LA</i> | Science and Social Studies Soiree | 25 |
| Lee Central Middle School (2013) <i>Bishopville, SC</i> | Books and Basketball Family Literacy Night | 9 |
| Little Rock School District (2018) <i>Little Rock, AR</i> | It's a Family Affair | 65 |
| Naperville Community School District (2014) <i>Naperville, IL</i> | Future Focus 203 | 64 |
| Norwich Technical High School (2015) <i>Norwich, CT</i> | Healthy Alternatives for Families On the Go | 35 |
| Pasco School District No. 1 (2012) <i>Pasco, WA</i> | Road Map to Success | 68 |
| Richland School District One (2012) <i>Columbia, SC</i> | Richland One Parent and Family Involvement Calendar | 67 |
| Saginaw Public Schools (2017) <i>Saginaw, MI</i> | Cluster Busters | 62 |
| St Andrews Middle School (2013) <i>Columbia, SC</i> | Curriculum Nights | 23 |
| The Music Settlement (2017) <i>Cleveland, OH</i> | Art in Bloom - Early Childhood Annual Art Show | 22 |
| The Urban Assembly School for Applied Math and Science (2016) | Cultivating a Culture of Reading: Dinner and a Book | 10 |
| Warren Elementary School (2014) <i>St. Peters, MO</i> | STEM 4 R Night | 26 |
| Willie E. Thompson Middle School (2017) <i>Saginaw, MI</i> | Keeping Kids First | 46 |

1

READING AND LITERACY



Dolby Elementary School, Calcasieu Parish School Board, LA, 2012



Voorhis Elementary, Mountain View School District, CA, 2018

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.

LITERACY NIGHT—UNDER THE BIG TENT

HOPKINS MIDDLE SCHOOL
HOPKINS, SC

In the 20-21 school year, Hopkins Middle School knew that its popular family night had to change to fit the times. The school included some students attending in person and some learning from home. Literacy Night was redesigned to enable everyone to participate. The English Language Arts (ELA) Department Chair, School Curriculum Resource Teacher, and others shared ideas for a combined face-to-face and virtual Literacy Night—Under the Big Tent. Parents, students, siblings, and others were invited to attend. RSVP forms identified those who would attend in person and those who would attend from home.

Teachers in various departments designed opportunities for student presentations, family games, and resources for students and parents based on a circus and carnival theme. For example, science teachers asked students to explore how circus performers use their bodies in unique ways in various acts—as on a flying trapeze, tight rope, clown antics. Students created presentations on the unusual physical abilities of the performers they studied.

Social studies teachers helped students learn about carnivals and festivals in Africa, adding a world-wide spirit to student’s presentations. Math teachers added an activity on the calorie count of carnival refreshments in students’ studies of fractions and percents.

ELA teachers taught students the elements of poetry and guided students to write original poems that recognized students’ favorite contemporary poets and singers who write their own lyrics. The Literary Magazine Club contributed poetry and drawings representing students’ diverse cultural and personal expressions or identities. At Under the Big Tent, students recited their own poems and some from favorite books.

Leaders filled “swag bags” with free books that matched students’ individual reading levels. The bags included information for parents on the school’s reading program (Lexia Power Up),

bookmarks, and ideas for parents to encourage children’s reading at home. The partnership team and school council decorated the building. Community partners posted flyers in their businesses. In addition, Big Tent refreshments—hot dogs, chips, sodas, popcorn, and cotton candy—were individually packaged. Families of students learning from home picked up the treats and swag bags on a school drive-thru schedule. All materials were funded by Title I and the school’s general fund.

The virtual link enabled students and parents to view all presentations and resources from home in real time. You can see elements of the evening and students’ poems at: https://wakelet.com/wake/d_19gYK2yyRBn6MgeLi3K.

At Literacy Night—Under the Big Top, students presented examples of their creative science, math, social studies, and ELA projects. Parents could see that reading and literacy were not restricted to spelling or writing essays in ELA classes. Rather, they saw that students exercised critical and creative skills in all subjects.

The principal welcomed everyone to Under the Big Top. Students were encouraged to share the books in the Swag Bag and to talk with their families about how the Lexia program works to advance their reading skills. At the end of the evening, the principal, parent engagement specialist, and president of the school council gave closing remarks to the in-person and at-home attendees, shared the weblink, and asked for evaluations of the activities using web-based surveys. One parent summed up the comments from many: “There were some good strategies that I can use to help [my child] improve her reading at home.”

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PLAY AND LEARN FAMILY SESSIONS

PROSPECT ACADEMY, EAST CLEVELAND, OH
CUYAHOGA COUNTY UNIVERSAL PREKINDERGARTEN – STARTING POINT

TYPE 4

READING & LITERACY

Prospect Academy—like most other schools in March 2020—closed its doors in response to COVID-19. Teachers and administrators set about educating students remotely. They wanted to ensure that the school’s instructional program for remote learning was meaningful, enjoyable, and effective. They also wanted to continue to strengthen school and family partnerships.

Play and Learn Family sessions supported a goal in the School Improvement Plan of providing engaging reading and literacy instruction to prepare students for a successful transition to kindergarten. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), school leaders, and teachers submitted a proposal for funding from the Ohio Literacy Cooperative to conduct weekly *Zoom* activities with parents and children on early literacy skills. Prospect was awarded a grant to create and obtain age-appropriate materials for Play and Learn Family Sessions.

Opportunities to join reading-related *Zoom* activities were introduced to all families at a partnership team meeting. A representative of the Ohio Literacy Cooperative described the weekly topics and materials that would be distributed to each child for each session. Parents received phone calls and fliers with detailed information on all Play and Learn Sessions. They could choose to “attend” at either 9 a.m. or 6 p.m. to match their best family schedules.

The activities for Play and Learn were captivating. They included literacy activities linked to guided virtual tours of the Cleveland Zoo, Cleveland Aquarium, Holden Arboretum, and Natural History Museum. In some sessions, representatives from the public library conducted read-aloud sessions with participants.

All students received copies of the selected books to add to their home libraries. Parents picked up the books and materials at the school, including letter cards and stamps, building blocks, play dough, and number cubes. They were

given supplies for activities including crayons, markers, pipe cleaners, and more. Participants also received free family passes to the Holden Arboretum and Natural History Museum to visit in person over the summer.

As a family, they *Zoomed* in to Play and Learn. Each session included friendly demonstrations that mirrored teachers’ class lessons. With friendly examples, parents and students used the books and manipulatives for each activity. Then, having tried things out with a session leader, parents and students could enjoy the books and materials on their own as often as they liked at home.

The free books and supplies were great incentives. There was one important challenge to solve. Some families wanted to participate but lacked technology to connect to Play and Learn sessions. The school and community worked to obtain laptops, tablets, and hotspots for these students and parents.

Learn and Play online sessions were very welcoming. Families were enthusiastic. They said they became *Zoom* users and gained important tech skills. One parent noted, “We learned that we could interact and learn outside of a classroom.”

This was an easy activity for everyone to like. Prospect Academy was fortunate to earn a grant to conduct Play and Learn as a remote family engagement activity. The idea of well-planned weekly reading and literacy experiences—about one hour long—to increase students’ reading and literacy skills at home can be adapted at low or no cost by other preschools and elementary schools.

Shawna LeSure
Principal

Cuyahoga County Universal PreKindergarten
– Starting Point
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READING PATROL AND SHERIFF'S OFFICE

LADSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LADSON, SC

COVID-19 was still in charge at Ladson—a preK to grade 5 elementary school in a highly diverse community. It was not possible to bring large groups of parents into the school building for a typical family engagement activity. Instead, the partnership team, teachers, and local sheriff's office planned a unique family reading night.

At Ladson, the Reading Patrol—an on-going partnership activity—encourages children to read for fun at home. For a few years, instead of homework, some teachers ask students to read at home each evening. Students keep reading logs to record minutes spent reading for pleasure, including reading aloud with parents or siblings. Although parents are aware of the daily reading assignment and their child's log, some find it difficult to encourage their children to complete the on-going assignment. The Family Service Advocate, partnership team, and teachers discussed taking a different path to encourage families to enjoy reading at home this year.

Before the winter break, they selected a timely book that children and parents would enjoy reading together, *The Biggest Snowman Ever* (by Steven Kroll and Jeri Bassett). Working with the local sheriff's office, the partnership team and Master Deputy created a video that could be enjoyed by everyone at home. They enlisted the talents of the Social Media Coordinator for the Charleston County Sheriff's Office—a community partner with the school. He filmed, edited, and recorded the video online. The video is posted on YouTube along with school announcements at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vx5jvRCHm3w>.

Together, teachers and several deputies prepared their presentation of the book—page by page. At the end of the video, one deputy added a Winter Break Safety Wrap Up and a few physical exercises that everyone could do at home to stay fit.

The planning group publicized the read-aloud using e-mail, letters to parents, and the school's website and Facebook page. All students were provided copies of the book, funded by Title I and general school funds.

Students brought home evaluation forms for their parents to complete. Some reactions from the students and parents were unusual. They said the video was “awesome,” and they wanted the officers to come to their homes to read with them! Students developed positive and friendly opinions of their local police officers. One student cheered, “Police Officers are cool!” Parents remarked that the video was a great motivator that encouraged their child to read and for the family to read together. Said one, “With my kids, it has made reading and story time at home much better.”

In their assessments, parents requested more family reading activities at the school and more materials they could use at home to assist their children with reading. They asked for books to have at home. In response, the librarian and teachers donated books to families in need. A few parents said their children reenacted the story by reading just as the officers did.

The Reading Patrol and Sheriff's Office created a positive family reading experience. A video to share reading aloud was a good way during the COVID-19 challenge period to make reading fun and to encourage learning at home. The partnership team is considering how to “grow” this design to feature family reading videos with other community helpers and public safety partners, including the fire department, dispatchers, EMS, and other partners.

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TYPE 4

READING & LITERACY

**READ BOWL: CHAMPIONSHIP OF READING
NORTH CHARLESTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
NORTH CHARLESTON, SC**

TYPE 4



READING & LITERACY

READ BOWL: CHAMPIONSHIP OF READING

NORTH CHARLESTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
NORTH CHARLESTON, SC

Based on popular football bowl games such as the Rose Bowl and Sugar Bowl, and the one and only Super Bowl, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at North Charleston Elementary captured students' and parents' attention with the Read Bowl: Championship of Reading. The goal was to encourage students to read for pleasure at school and at home.

The school of over 300 students serves mainly Black and Hispanic students and families. It is committed to building a partnership program that supports all students' learning and development. Read Bowl supported an on-going school improvement goal to increase the reading skills and positive attitudes about reading of all students, K-5. The online learning activity was conducted over one school quarter during the 20-21 school year.

Students kept track of what they read and their time reading. Teachers recorded the students' reading activities and time in their weekly Read Bowl Playbook. Parents assisted by helping students keep track of their reading at home in books, magazines, family read-alouds, instructions, games, recipes, and other content. In other words, all reading activities "counted" to score points in the Read Bowl.

The principal—new to the school—brought the idea for Read Bowl from her previous school where it was a good way to connect teachers' reading goals and learning standards with family engagement and students' skills and attitudes. The activity also interested the school librarian, teachers at all grade levels, and others eager to promote reading and meaningful family engagement with students in specific academic subjects.

The partnership team, teachers, and others publicized the Read Bowl with a flyer in English and Spanish, phone calls, posters in the school and community, on the school's website, Facebook, and in meetings with parents.

This was a multi-platform communication campaign to inform many partners about the Read Bowl activity and to enlist them in supporting students as readers.

The principal, teachers, and other administrators tracked and graphed progress weekly. Classrooms and students with top reading points were recognized along the way. Students were praised for improving their reading time and for increasing their confidence in reading. Prizes were provided by a local faith-based community partner.

Students enjoyed the friendly competition across classrooms and students. The participating classes vied for 3rd place—a book and ice cream party; 2nd place—a book and pizza party; and 1st place—a pizza and ice cream party, and an autographed book for the class from author Malcolm Mitchell of *My Very Favorite Book In The Whole Wide World*.

For the championship celebration, about 30 students, their parents, and teachers came to school for dinner with all the fixings provided by a local restaurant and community partner. The "buzz" at the dinner was very welcoming. Many parents had not been inside the school for more than a year due to the abrupt closure due to COVID-19.

Parents completed a survey about the student and family experiences with Read Bowl. One reported, "I am pleased with the communications and great support teachers and staff provided to my family for this activity. I love how my boys are known personally [at the school] and the many resources provided. Families are welcomed here with open arms." There was a spirit of good partnerships in the "super" Read Bowl.

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SPRING INTO VIRTUAL LITERACY NIGHT

W. G. SANDERS MIDDLE SCHOOL
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

Sanders Middle School's partnership program reinforces a major goal in the School Improvement Plan to increase students' reading skills and positive attitudes about reading. School leaders and teachers of all subjects know that reading is key for student success in the middle grades to prepare for success in high school. They also agree that school, family, and community partnerships are key for helping students attain their reading goals.

Despite COVID-19 challenges, the school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) forged ahead with plans for family engagement with students on reading. They designed Virtual Literacy Night that combined good information from multiple presenters with active learning. Using the *TEAMS* platform, the ATP planned the activity and outlined potential presenters and fun reading activities.

Each presenter submitted an outline of the content for their session and a related reading activity that would be fun for families and students. The ATP met with each presenter to practice using *Microsoft TEAMS* so that Virtual Literacy Night would proceed smoothly and on time.

Teachers sent a flyer, registration form, and reminders to all families via teacher posts, e-mail, and the school's website. Parents and other family members completed a few preliminary questions aligned with each session. Parents and students were guided to participate creatively in activities that combined active listening, reading skill-building, and art.

The presenters shared expertise and discussed services and products available to families in the community. Students interacted easily with their peers, parents, and presenters on *TEAMS*. They learned about and watched demonstrations of *CRAFT Kits*, free tutoring opportunities, and how to use creative writing skills to create their own visuals with *Microsoft's Paint 3D*. Students and families gathered information from the public

library about getting a library card online and using over 1,000 DIY videos for craft projects at home. They took notes on summer programs, including activities with *CRAFT kits*, free tutoring to increase literacy skills, *DYI space* for students to bring their own projects, and other resources for students, parents, and teachers.

Authors from *2Land Comics* talked about the ins and outs of comic book writing. They explained how they moved from loving to read comic books, to wanting to see characters that looked like them and represented what they stood for, to writing their own comic books. Then, students and parents interviewed the comic book artists with their own questions.

Students and parents participated throughout Virtual Literacy Night by using the chat box to ask questions and make comments. They interacted with each other in open discussion and activity periods. Most interesting, participants created art based on a read-aloud activity, and shared their creative work with others using the "share screen" feature.

Virtual Literacy Night was a mix of good information from experienced presenters and honest exchanges of questions and comments from student and parents. One teacher observed, "I loved the energy, enthusiasm, and interactivity!" A parent wrote: "This was amazing! The comic artists' session was super informative. My youngest child is really excited about the drawing tool." As a bonus, students and parents become familiar and facile with *TEAMS* technology. They showed that presenters, teachers, parents, and students could participate together without coming to the school building.

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BOOKS AND BASKETBALL FAMILY LITERACY NIGHT

LEE CENTRAL MIDDLE SCHOOL
BISHOPVILLE, SC



The Lee Central Middle School community loves basketball. To take advantage of this passion, the school’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) used the sport as a draw for its Family Literature Night.

At the event, nearly 100 attendees played a friendly game of Books and Basketball. Family teams gathered on the basketball court and competed to answer trivia questions about popular children’s literature. When a team answered correctly, a player earned the chance to win extra points by making a free-throw basket. It was a great way to let the families’ enthusiasm for basketball spill over into excitement about reading.

The basketball game was just one part of an evening devoted to literacy and community. Family Literacy Night also featured a spaghetti dinner donated by a local restaurant and small group literacy sessions. While the families enjoyed the meal, the ATP educated them about the reading exams their students would be taking and shared student reading goals. They also distributed fun reading-related door prizes: book baskets and reading night lights.

After dinner, the families broke into small groups according to student grade levels and learned reading strategies from teachers that they could reinforce at home. They also received folders containing activities they could use at home to help their children improve reading skills.

Next, every student—including those who could not attend the Family Reading Night—received a book of his or her own at an appropriate reading level.

The books, which had been collected by parent volunteers, community businesses, and faith-based organizations, provided students with interesting at-home reading material and a sense of ownership over their reading skills.

Books and Basketball Family Literacy Night wasn’t the only way that the school encouraged reading at home. The ATP also asked the school staff to distribute weekly literacy tips via the school’s telephone communications system. These automated calls served as regular reminders to parents to take time to help their children improve their reading skills.

Finally, the principal fostered additional appreciation for books among the student body by founding a reading club. She met with students twice a month and students shared the number of books they had read along with intriguing facts about them.

Students relished the personal attention. “Thanks for starting the Principal’s Reading Club,” one sixth-grader said. “Now I have a reading partner.”

Altogether, the initiative cost \$776. Funding was provided by a grant from the Frances Marion University Center of Excellence.

The ATP’s efforts to encourage reading at home were a slam dunk. Teachers reported that their students read and wrote more, and that test scores improved. (NNPS, 2013)

TYPE 4

READING & LITERACY

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CULTIVATING A CULTURE OF READING: DINNER AND A BOOK

THE URBAN ASSEMBLY SCHOOL FOR APPLIED MATH & SCIENCE
BRONX, NEW YORK



TYPE 1

To improve home reading habits of its middle school students, the Urban Assembly School for Applied Math & Science (AMS) put reading for pleasure in a spotlight with an elegant workshop called Dinner and a Book. The school serves grades 6 through 12, but this event was aimed at the middle grades—6, 7, and 8. The Action Team for Partnerships and the humanities teachers wanted to strengthen the “reading culture” in the middle grades. Parents and students were invited to come to the school for dinner at 5 p.m. to start a the well-planned activity that celebrated reading. After dinner, parents and students dispersed to different classrooms to attend teacher-led workshops.

The event was empowering for the teachers who creatively developed their topics and presentations. Teachers modeled how to make time for reading at home, and how parents and students could talk about the books and other material that they read for fun. They discussed how the *Degrees of Reading Power (DRP)* tests measure students’ reading comprehension. They reviewed the many literacy skills covered on state tests.

All workshops were designed to encourage parents and students to ask questions. They learned and practiced different techniques and tools. The activities were not designed to ask parents to “teach” reading, but to support the school’s commitment to helping students read more to strengthen their reading skills and attitudes.

The dinner and workshops provided 30 parents and over 100 students with useful information about literacy. Parents enthusiastically rated workshops as “very helpful.” Students who attended could win new books to take home.

Students and parents learned about various technologies that they could use at home to support reading. They also saw, first hand, that reading was celebrated by teachers, parents, and by high school students who came to help with the event.

This was the school’s first reading night. The planners faced the common challenge of how to encourage parents and student to attend. They knew that the goal was important—to increase reading for pleasure. They also knew it was important to organize the event well, send invitations home, and have incentives to attract busy parents. The organizers collected RSVPs to know how many parents and students planned to attend. Teachers connected with students to encourage attendance. Teachers knew that the more they were involved, the more their students and parents would participate. If run again, AMS will add community partners, such as the local public library to the featured resources, and will schedule the school’s book fair to coincide with the workshops for parents and students.

At the end of the evening everyone gathered in a large group for a raffle with great prizes—Nooks, books, and gift cards. Dinner and a Book was supported by a grant from the Expanded Success Initiative (ESI) that guides the school with its program.

AMS believes that there is an important connection between students’ reading at home and the growth of reading abilities that affect student success in all subjects. Dinner and a Book made these connections more real to students and their parents. (NNPS, 2016)

READING & LITERACY

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READ FOR A BEAD

DELMAE HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
FLORENCE, SC



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

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

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

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

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

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

Delmae Heights serves one of the most culturally diverse populations in the district. The well-organized project was a hit because everyone—students, parents, teachers, and business partners—understood the importance of reading. The manager at Barnes & Noble summed things up noting that reading is important for all students and for the future of the community. (NNPS, 2017)

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2

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS



Louis Stokes Early Learning Center, Cuyahoga County Universal Pre-Kindergarten/
Starting Point, OH, 2017



Miramonte Elementary, Mountain View School District, CA, 2018

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.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATION

WILLIAM PATRICK DAY EARLY LEARNING CENTER
CLEVELAND, OH

The Action Team for Partnership (ATP) brainstormed to plan the Patrick Day Center's Black History Month Program. Using *Zoom* to meet COVID-19 conditions, the ATP and school leaders wanted to engage children and their families in active learning and enjoyable interactions. Parents on the ATP took leadership for redesigning the celebration of Black history as a strong, exciting, and memorable occasion.

The ATP created a colorful flyer, and posted it on *ClassDojo*. Parents just clicked to register to receive the *Zoom* link for the Black History Month Celebration. One parent served as emcee to guide the *Zoom* session. Other members of the team led several activities.

In one session, the leader guided children and families to create a traffic light to learn about safety on the street. A Black inventor, Garrett Morgan, developed the 3-position traffic light in 1923 in Ohio. The light improved the red/green light invented in London in 1868. By adding a yellow light, cars were given a warning to stop on red, which prevented many accidents.

This invention and others by Garrett Morgan showed how this ambitious and talented young man—the son of freed slaves—succeeded in the early 20th century. He used the profits from the sale of the design of the traffic light to start the *Cleveland Call*, which was one of the most important African American newspapers in the country. Most students, parents, and teachers did not know about Garrett Morgan's contribution to Black History in America.

The children of the parent leader for the session created an interactive YouTube video on constructing a traffic light. They showed how to cut red, yellow, and green circles for the 3-position lights. Then, they demonstrated how to glue the circles on construction paper to complete the traffic light.

They talked about the meanings of red, yellow, and green lights. Then, children and parents practiced crossing a street as their lights turned different colors. It was an active *Zoom* time.

Children and parents used their large and small motor skills in other activities. They exercised and moved about watching a *Tooty Ta* video. The children love the song and the physical activity. They had more exercise accompanied by the *Black Panther Workout* video, and talked about the song and the theme of Black History Month.

One member of the ATP led an activity focused on the life and work of Alma Woodsy-Thomas, a teacher and an acclaimed African-American artist. Woodsy-Thomas is known for her abstract paintings in bright colors of the natural world and space. With the *Zoom* session leader's guidance, children created their own art on the same themes. The children's artwork was formatted for an art auction slide show, with proceeds donated to the Head Start Dollar Per Child Campaign.

With strong teamwork, the ATP at Patrick Day Center combined good ideas and shared leadership to create a balanced array of active listening, participation, and movement for students and families. The celebration offered thematic learning activities that strengthened children's cognitive, social-emotional, and motor skills.

The activities introduced the preschoolers and parents to famous African Americans whom they did not know about before. Parents and other family partners evaluated the celebration in real time on *Zoom*. The chat box and comments were unanimous: *Amazing! Loved it! Fantastic!*

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BUILD AN ATM-PIGGY BANK
OLD BROOKLYN HORIZON EDUCATION CENTER
CUYAHOGA COUNTY UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN /
STARTING POINT, CLEVELAND, OH

TYPE 6



OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS



BUILD AN ATM-PIGGY BANK

OLD BROOKLYN HORIZON EDUCATION CENTER
CLEVELAND, OH

Old Brooklyn Education Center’s preschool is building a strong partnership program to engage all families in students’ early education. Teachers work at every age and grade level to help students develop readiness skills to prepare for a successful transition to kindergarten. The school serves students and families with diverse racial, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds from communities on the eastside and westside of Cleveland.

Old Brooklyn’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) is working to implement and continually improve its program of school, family, and community partnerships. Their activities aim to engage all families in ways that support students’ academic, social, and emotional development. They do so in ways that are enjoyable for students, families, and teachers, too.

During the COVID-19 year, one goal was to increase the involvement of fathers and other important male figures in children’s lives, and to enable moms and other family partners to conduct unique engagement activities at home. One activity guided parents to talk with their child about the importance of saving money. This involved completing a related project—making an ATM-Piggy Bank for use at home for fun and profit.

One teacher on the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) learned that Home Depot offered free ATM kits for families to put together. Pre-COVID, families went to Home Depot for in-store project-building workshops. Last year, the store workshops were cancelled, and the chain gave the kits away for families to use at home.

The Brooklyn Center’s Action Team for Partnerships was interested, and obtained the free materials from Home Depot. The ATP publicized the project with fliers and with the Remind app. Parents on the team spread the word and 10 families signed up to participate.

Parents picked up the kits when they picked up their children at the end of the day. A note

from teachers gave a flexible timeline so that each family could complete the kit and take a photo of the finished project for display at school.

The kits—in English and Spanish—come with suggested conversation topics about saving money. There were clear instructions of how to engage young children safely in putting the ATM-Piggy Bank together. Home Depot offers a certificate of completion—in English and Spanish, a project apron, and other tokens for children “makers.”

All members of the family talked about saving—even pennies—to use the new bank. The project produced conversations, fun, learning, and a useable bank. Children strengthened their vocabulary, and cognitive, social, and motor skills as they talked with their parents and siblings. They practiced following directions and using tools safely as they cut, glued, painted, and decorate their banks. Then, they took photos to show the results of their work together. One student told the teacher, “I got to use a hammer. It was so fun!”

This construction project was a new way to increase school and family partnerships and active learning by students. It increased family participation on other partnership activities at home, as the COVID months continued through the school year. There are several reports from students and parents on YouTube for others to see how the ATM project proceeds. For one example, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uhwxZM7P8WY>.

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FINANCIAL LITERACY SUMMIT: MAKING \$ENSE OF YOUR COINS

LR SOUTHWEST MAGNET HIGH SCHOOL
MABELVALE, AR

Financial Literacy is a critical skill that increases in importance for high school students and families who are preparing for college or work. At LR Southwest Magnet HS, the partnership team, teachers, and staff with skills in the field of finance developed Making \$ense of Your Coins—a Financial Literacy Summit.

Southwest serves over 2000 Black and Hispanic students who are preparing for life after high school. They have high aspirations and need to be wise about many money issues. The one-day school and family engagement activity aimed to provide opportunities for students, parents, and others to hear from experts from the community and discuss important financial literacy topics and behaviors.

The project team identified speakers and gathered donations. They guided speakers in preparing and timing their presentations. Prior to the summit, the planning group creating videos about the speakers and session topics. These introductory videos—Meet the Experts—gave students and families an overview of the speakers’ backgrounds. This saved time in all sessions so that speakers could proceed with their presentations.

The planners publicized the summit using the school’s social media and e-mail list. They created and distributed a modern and appealing flyer. Students and families registered for the Zoom summit. The school’s banking and financial partners provided speakers, donated gift cards for meal vouchers from Chick-Fil-A and door prizes ranging from \$25-\$150, and provided financial literacy books for students. This was a community-supported summit.

Students were encouraged by their teachers to attend the Financial Summit and to bring a parent or family partner.

The team knew that COVID closures made it difficult—but more important—to help high school students and parents gain good information about many money issues. The Summit

ran from 9 am to noon on a Saturday morning. There were two whole-group presentations and five breakout sessions on special topics. Presenters shared their expertise and advice on savings, myths about credit cards, guidelines for buying a home, internet safety and identify theft, facts about insurance, 529-college savings plans, how to make plans and set financial goals for the future.

Attendees at Making \$ense of Your Coins asked the speakers questions before and after the sessions using the online platform. They zeroed in on issues that were important to them for reaching their own goals, and for addressing their own situations. Throughout the Summit, the organizers checked the chat box for questions. A tech leader was available to solve problems with sound, video, and access.

Attendees appreciated the experience and sent comments on a follow-up survey. One community partner reported, “The Financial Summit was well-planned. I learned a lot of great information.” A parent evaluated the experience, “My son and I enjoyed the classes and wished we had more time to attend all the workshops offered. I hope that you will do this again.”

The Summit was not as well attended as planners expected, but it was the first effort to offer comprehensive and expert coverage of challenging topics to both students and families. The planners aim to increase efforts to translate invitations for Hispanic families, and to provide interpreters during the summit for their questions.

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VIRTUAL CULTURAL FAIR/ONE BOOK ONE SCHOOL

ORCHARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
RICHLAND, WA

To make up for COVID cancellations in the prior school year, Orchard Elementary combined two successful family engagement activities this year. One Book One School and Cultural Fair, together, emphasized the school's commitment to a welcoming school, strong family engagement, and community connections—all supporting student success.

The partnership team, PTO, teachers, and others discussed which book would excite students at all grade levels, and interest teachers, family, and community partners. They selected *All Are Welcome* by Alexandra Penfold and Suzanne Kaufman. The book represents the school's philosophy that students with different backgrounds grow and learn together in a welcoming school. They saw that the book's illustrations would guide students' conversations and activities at all grade levels, K-5.

This book even includes illustrations of school, family, and community partnerships at a cultural and science fair at the story's school. There is a display of flags of families' countries of origin. Parents are shown enjoying students' projects. *All Are Welcome* seemed to be written expressly for Orchard's combined activity of One Book One School and Cultural Fair.

One Book One School was conducted online for one week with different readers every day. Students and parents could log in to see and hear each day's reading. There was a question each day for students at all grade levels, which linked the book, Cultural Fair, and the school's emphasis on developing students' character traits of Respect, Kindness, Gratitude, Perseverance, Integrity, and Compassion. For example, one day students were asked, "We can show respect and kindness when we say 'All are welcome.' What is one way you can make someone feel welcome?"

If students answered the question of the day and submitted their ideas, their name was entered into a drawing for daily prizes and recognition from the principal. The questions also become

prompts for family conversations. One parent reported, "The book was a wonderful read for my third and fifth graders. The activities and interactive webpage helped us discuss how WE can be welcoming to all."

There also were activities linked to classwork. For example, students were given 4x4 paper squares to draw something that would teach others about their family's culture, traditions, abilities, or other features. The squares were collected, made into a paper quilt, and hung at the entrance to the school.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and other teachers and staff created interactive links using *Google Classroom*. They provided Orchard's students and families with other websites where they could visit countries around the world and learn about the food, clothing, talents, and scenery of those countries.

A culminating activity, Spirit Week, combined messages from the book and cultural activities. Spirit Week proclaimed: "What makes us different, makes us special." Families and teachers took photos of students conducting activities. Students created signs saying "Welcome" in their families' language of origin. Some students wore clothing and submitted recipes to represent how all are welcome at Orchard Elementary. Students' work was uploaded to the *Google Classroom* for all to appreciate.

Orchard Elementary is a community of many cultures, beliefs, and talents. The school's diverse students and families were represented in all activities on One Book One School and the Cultural Fair. The inspired design showed how a set of well-connected activities can lead to many good results for students and to stronger school and family partnerships.

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SIP AND PAINT TO THANK ESSENTIAL WORKERS

MCMILLAN EARLY LEARNING
CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OH

TYPE 4

Sip and Paint took on a new look this year due to COVID-19 safety requirements, but—look!—it became more exciting as a virtual activity. Some components remained the same as when it was conducted at school. It still focused on engaging families with teachers to increase preschool students’ skills and attitudes. Now, on *Zoom*, Sip and Paint asked families and children to think about the essential workers in their communities.

Previously, the ATP and teachers at McMillan Early Learning conducted Sip and Paint at school to meet parents and to help them and their preschoolers enjoy and art activity together. It was a joyful gathering at school, as children created paintings that everyone loved. This year, COVID-19 restrictions prevented large group meetings at school. It was necessary to redesign Sip and Paint. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) turned the activity into a thoughtful way to thank community helpers who were important to students, families, and the school.

Under COVID-19 conditions, preschool children faced unexpected social, emotional, cognitive, and physical challenges. The school wanted to understand and reduce student and family daily struggles by conducting activities to strengthen students’ thinking skills, coping mechanisms, social interactions, and—at the same time—have some fun with art.

The ATP and school leaders publicized Sip and Paint with flyers and by calling parents to invite them to participate. Teachers gathered art materials and refreshments for all families that registered. On the school’s playground, volunteer parents filled Sip and Paint bags with a canvas, paint, brushes, cups, tea, and juice boxes. Parents picked up the supplies at school a week before Sip and Paint day.

Parents also were given a helpful page of questions to talk over with their preschooler at home. They discussed their favorite essential workers in the community—what they did,

where they worked, and how they helped them and other people in their neighborhood. Through conversation, children built their vocabularies with new words such as “essential,” “community,” and “virus.” They used math skills by counting the colors in their paintings. They conducted meaningful conversation by discussing what was happening in their paintings. Some families played music as they painted and sipped tea and juice to create a calm and supportive family time.

A parent on the ATP led the virtual *Zoom* meeting. Students and parents were invited to show their paintings and share ideas. The children brought their paintings to school. Members of the ATP framed the artwork and took some to the community workers featured in the pictures.

The recipients were truly appreciative about being recognized and remembered. Their feedback was memorable and important to the ATP, school staff, students, and parents. An Assistant Store Manager at a grocery store said. “You and the families and students ... will never know just how important this really means for all of us. Just to know that our daily efforts have been recognized.” The manager at a big-box location replied, “We will place this on our ‘love board’ in the staff room. Saying thank you is not enough.”

Students not only developed school skills, but also extended social and emotional skills. They expressed their appreciation for people in the community, and took time to think about others. Sip and Paint is a creative, stress-reducing activity for participants that also produced priceless art and valuable messages for community partners.

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OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

**SIP AND PAINT TO THANK ESSENTIAL WORKERS
MCMILLAN EARLY LEARNING, CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OH
CUYAHOGA COUNTY UNIVERSAL PREKINDERGARTEN / STARTING POINT**



TYPE 4



OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

ART IN BLOOM—EARLY CHILDHOOD ANNUAL ART SHOW

THE MUSIC SETTLEMENT
CLEVELAND, OH



TYPE 5

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

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

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

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

On the day of the art show, volunteers checked the displays and installed a red carpet area for photos.

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

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

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

(NNPS, 2017)

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OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

CURRICULUM NIGHTS

ST. ANDREWS MIDDLE SCHOOL
COLUMBIA, SC



When a survey indicated that parents of students at St. Andrews Middle School wanted to better understand what their children were learning in class, the school responded by sponsoring a series of four Curriculum Nights. The evening sessions were designed to improve student achievement by engaging parents and community members in the educational process.

The school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) began planning the Curriculum Nights by asking parents for specifics: What did parents want to learn more about? What times would be convenient for parents to attend the workshops?

Parents offered input. Furthermore, parents who were already closely involved with school activities (such as sponsors and boosters of the orchestra or cheerleading team) agreed to reach out to parents who were, presently, less active to invite them to participate.

The students were tasked with engaging their parents. If their parents attended Curriculum Nights, students received 100 extra- credit points.

The personal recruitment efforts, combined with automated phone calls and e-mail announcements, resulted in excellent attendance. Each Curriculum Night drew at least 200 parents and 100 students. To make the sessions especially convenient to attend, local community members brought food so that families did not have to think about cooking dinner on workshop evenings.

The workshops focused on important by subject matter. There was a Math Night, Social Studies Night, Science & Technology Night, and Family Literacy Night. At each event, families were given an overview of content area standards.

After each orientation, parents and students were invited to participate in hands-on activities related to the topic. Teachers also distributed lists of test dates, educational websites, and test-taking strategies.

Students enjoyed sharing their work in the different subjects with their parents. They also led parents on guided tours of classrooms and the

media center. A highlight of the Curriculum Nights was an exhibit of science fair projects. "Yeah! My momma got to see that I won the science fair!" exclaimed one student. "I like this!"

The Curriculum Nights earned rave reviews from others as well. "This was great!" one parent said. "It appeared that all the parents really enjoyed themselves. Great job!" Of course, Curriculum Nights were planned after asking parents what they wanted to know more about. This was a good way to respond to parents' needs and ensure their satisfaction with the workshops.

Curriculum Nights required no extra funds to implement. When the series concluded, the ATP sent a survey to parents for their feedback. School staff noted better student behavior in class after so many parents came to learn more about the school curriculum. They also analyzed students' class grades and test scores later in the semester to determine if classroom teaching and workshops for parents combined to improve students' test scores for the year. Finally, the school showcased Curriculum Nights by sharing a photo-story on the district's television network. (NNPS, 2013)

TYPE 4

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

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EGG-STRAVAGANZA!

EDISON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
KENNEWICK, WA

TYPE 6

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

There are many designs for Family Science Nights, where parents learn about the school’s science curriculum and students and parents enjoy hands-on science activities together. A parent on the Edison Elementary School Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) had a creative idea—an Egg-Stravaganza based on challenges linked to the common egg. The design spotlighted the importance of STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and math) with a unique focus on E for Engineering (and E for Edison).

The ATP invited all fourth and fifth graders and their families to spend an evening using recycled materials to build carriers that would prevent eggs from breaking when dropped. The families spent an hour constructing carriers out of donated materials such as cereal boxes, egg cartons, rubber bands, and cotton balls that had been collected over the previous month.

Ten teachers came, too. Earlier in the day, they fueled students’ interest in Egg-Stravaganza by conducting an entertaining egg drop demonstration on the playground. One teacher created a superhero cape for her egg, while another added a parachute to his. Afterward, they distributed stickers to the students to wear on their shirts to remind their families to attend. The families had already received invitations in both Spanish and English. More than 100 students and their parents participated. “I was so tired after work and really wanted to stay home,” said a parent, “but now that I’m here, I’m really glad I came.”

After the students and families engineered their egg carriers, they turned them over to local firefighters. The firefighters took the carriers to the top of a fire ladder on a truck in a safety-zone on the school parking lot. They dropped each carrier from the same height, as the students and families watched with great expectations.

A local Eagle Scout kept track of which egg carriers successfully protected the contents. Students ran to pick up their carrier after impact

to see if the egg was unbroken. The classroom with the greatest number of effective egg carriers was declared the winner.

“Students benefited by being inspired to engage in hands-on science experiments with their families,” explained the ATP Co-Chairs. “They learned that science and engineering activities don’t require expensive equipment—just common household materials and imagination!” “I can’t believe my egg survived!” exclaimed a student. “Look how far it fell!”

The egg drop wasn’t the only fun event of the evening. An engineering student from a local university ran an activity in the gym involving eggs and catapults. The principal supervised a station where students competed in building a life-sized Lincoln Log Cabin. An “egg-sticle” course set up by a teacher was popular. Students navigated the obstacles while balancing an egg on a spoon.

The eggs used throughout the evening were near expiration and had been donated by local grocery stores. Egg-Stravaganza was a community effort, from the donation of the eggs and recycled materials to the participation of the Eagle Scout, firefighters, and university student.

Edison’s ATP noted that since the school started implementing family science activities, students’ scores on standardized tests have risen nearly 20%. Egg-Stravaganza was an engaging way to teach students and their families basic engineering principles and to strengthen relationships of home, school, and community.

(NNPS, 2014)

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SCIENCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES SOIREE

KROTZ SPRINGS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
KROTZ SPRINGS, LA



A soiree is a fancy evening affair (from the French *soirée*). Krotz Springs Elementary School science and social studies teachers hosted their kind of soiree to encourage students to submit a project to the annual science and social studies fairs. This was a planning meeting for students and parents from grades 3 to 8 to learn about conducting successful research projects. The gathering took place two months in advance of the science and social studies fairs to give students enough time to develop and complete their projects.

First, students, parents, and teachers met in the gym to outline the purposes of the fairs and to browse a gallery of past projects for inspiration. Students, parents, and teachers in the “even grades” (4, 6, and 8) attended a breakout session for social studies where teachers described and discussed nine social studies categories for projects for the fair. These included history, economics, anthropology, archaeology, and other fields of interest. To introduce each category in a fun way, a student dressed up as a historical figure related to the category (e.g., Statue of Liberty, Amelia Earhart, Cleopatra, Louisiana Indian). The “mommarazzi” took many photos!

Students, parents, and teachers in the “odd grades” (3, 5, and 7) attended a breakout session for science, led by a retired science teacher. She discussed safety when conducting science projects and steps of the scientific method. Students conducted hands-on activities with various materials common in scientific experiments. The presenter modeled the various steps of a complete science fair project from asking a question, identifying materials, conducting an experiment or exploration, writing up results, and so on.

About 98 families received a project board. Light refreshments were served. Students received a ticket for a free jeans day for attending the Soiree. Parents completed surveys, talked with teachers, and left the soiree with very motivated children.

Two months later when the social studies and science fairs were held, Krotz Springs had more entrants and entries of higher quality than in previous years. Several projects advanced to the district fair, a few advanced to the state fair, and one placed in the state competition.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and all teachers were pleased that the Soiree involved students and parents in thinking about a good project, and this led to many students participating in the fairs. Students had an opportunity to study a topic in a systematic, scientific way and build new skills. They activated their curiosity, creativity, and ingenuity in the projects they selected.

The principal noted, “When we are able to inspire students through interactive educational means, they typically respond well and exceed our expectations.” Students conducted the projects. Parents’ role was to reinforce the project guidelines discussed by the teachers at the Soiree. As students planned and conducted their projects, they entered many good conversations with their parent guides at home.

The Soiree was planned and organized by the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), and the science and social studies teachers. Parents were alerted to the Soiree via the school’s apps, website, and social media, the Krotz Springs Town newsletter, weekly flyers, and in the daily general assembly announcements. A parent noticed the hard work and commented, “Well planned and very informative!” (NNPS, 2018)

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STEM 4 R NIGHT

WARREN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
ST. PETERS, MO



TYPE 2

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

4R Nights at Warren Elementary School strengthen the school's core values of Respect, Responsibility, Relationships, and Results, linked to the character education curriculum. Last year, the STEM 4 R Night was particularly popular, with its focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education. Students, families, and school staff gathered at the school to build rockets, practice computer coding, engineer LEGOs, and complete other educational activities that also were fun.

The school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) advertised STEM 4 R by distributing flyers and by posting announcements in the school newsletter and on the website. Students made signs that were posted around the school. Over 150 students, 117 parents, 25 teachers, and 4 community members attended STEM 4 R Night.

Attendees received family passports at the welcome table in the lobby. The forms guided them to record something interesting that they learned at each activity station organized by STEM category.

Science activities included a rocket launching station. Students built rockets out of paper tape and launched them through a hula hoop using a pvc and bicycle pump pressurized chamber. At a butterfly station, students used their art skills to color pictures of butterflies to accurately represent specific species, and learned how insects and animals use natural coloring to blend into the background to remain safe from predators. Families learned about surface tension in an activity that required students to put drops of water on a penny.

Technology activities included a coding station, where students used a computer code to create Valentine's Day cards on Chromebooks. They were guided by two web-based tutorials: code.org and codeacademy.com.

Engineering activities featured a marshmallow architectural challenge. Families were invited to build structures out of marshmallows, spaghetti, masking tape, and string. A judge used an iPad to chart the results. The family with the tallest structure at the end of the evening received an award. Another activity challenged students and families to design a package for a single Pringle chip that would withstand dropping and stacking.

Math activities required estimating, measuring, and calculating skills. For example, students calculated their age in seconds, days, months, and years, and guessed the number of items in various different-sized containers.

Two more STEM activities were organized. Volunteers from the St. Louis Children's Museum set up a science exhibit where students could learn about magnets and electrical circuits. Fifth-grade students organized an area where students could demonstrate robotics and engineering using their LEGO-building skills.

The event was supported by many parent volunteers and school staff members, and cost just \$125. "This is a low cost event, but it builds strong parent-child connections within our school community," a school administrator noted. "Students benefited from building relationships and learning about STEM concepts and challenges." The students put it simply: "More STEM! It was great!" (NNPS, 2014)

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3

HEALTH AND SAFETY



H. H. Ellis Technical High School, Connecticut Technical High School System, CT, 2015



School District of the City of Saginaw, Saginaw, MI, 2018

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.

HEALTHY LIVES

PORT BARRE HIGH SCHOOL AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

PORT BARRE, LA

TYPE 4

HEALTH AND SAFETY

In middle and high school, students are key to the success of school, family, and community partnerships. Port Barre Middle School and Port Barre High Schools are on the same campus and share teacher-coaches in the Physical Education Department. In their health classes, the coaches asked students for their questions about how to live healthy lives during a pandemic. Two common questions were about healthy foods and exercise. Working together, the coaches created videos to address students' questions.

For Episode 1, Coaches Adams, Aymond, and Delahoussaye generated a Fact vs. Fiction List of ideas on healthy foods and nutritious diets. They videoed themselves in a conversation answering students' questions. They edited the video and posted it on *YouTube* for students and families to view, talk over, and ask more questions in the chat box.

In Episode 2, Coaches Lanclos and Stevens addressed students' concerns about the lack of gym equipment and resources for play and exercise during the COVID-19 closures. They created a video demonstrating proper techniques for a complete body workout using household items. For example, canned goods, water bottles, books, half-full and full milk jugs all can be used for systematic weight lifting. The coaches led students and families in exercises for each muscle group, and discussed the functions of each muscle. They edited the video, posted it on *YouTube*, and invited more questions in the chat box.

The coaches used the videos with their virtual health classes for real-time discussions with students and parent at home. Other teachers used the videos to add virtual "brain breaks" through exercise with their students during their online lessons.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), and others publicized the videos beyond health classes for use by other teachers, students, families, and members of the community. By posting the videos on *YouTube*, others could access the information and talk over the ideas at home. This is one of the "silver linings" of remote learning. Good materials online can be viewed at any time of the day or evening, not just in class time.

The coaches and colleagues knew that students who are learning from home should not be on "screen time" all day. They knew that research confirmed that students who are physically active tend to have better grades, attendance, memory, confidence, and classroom behavior. In addition, they knew that even short bouts of exercise improve health conditions, students' moods, and time for fun.

Students had positive reactions to Video #1 on healthy foods. One reflected, "I did not realize the amount of water (8 glasses or 3.7 liters) I need to take in daily." Another wrote, "The conversation about water vs. Gatorade really made me realize how much sugar I was taking in."

Video #2 was an eye-opener. A student commented in the chat box, "I never realized that I could use a book bag to do various exercises like squats and calves." A parent reported, "We worked out together using canned goods from our pantry. We laughed so much that it didn't feel like exercise!"

According to the Assistant Principal, the Healthy lives series will continue on other topics from student surveys, such as yoga, Pilates, and kid-friendly cooking.

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HEALTHY LIVES
PORT BARRE HIGH SCHOOL AND MIDDLE SCHOOL
ST. LANDRY PARISH SCHOOLS, LA



TYPE 4



HEALTH AND SAFETY

MOVING TOGETHER: FAMILY FUN NIGHT
ST. PETER'S CHILD CARE CENTER
CUYAHOGA COUNTY UNIVERSAL PRE-K/STARTING POINT
LAKWOOD, OH

TYPE 3



HEALTH AND SAFETY



MOVING TOGETHER: FAMILY FUN NIGHT

ST. PETER'S CHILD CARE CENTER
LAKEWOOD, OH

St. Peter's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) was eager to get back to face-to-face group meetings and activities. After months of COVID-19 restrictions, it was time to get moving—literally—to have some healthy fun. The ATP and others at the early childhood center discussed this goal in January 2021, and took steps to develop Moving and Engaging Together—a new design for a Family Fun Night.

The team created a flyer and hung it at school for families to see. They publicized the invitation by e-mail, on Facebook, and through word of mouth. About two weeks before the activity, teachers brought previews of Moving Together into their lessons for children and invited families to list their names and encourage other families to attend.

With information on attendees, St. Peter's leaders organized existing equipment and purchased a few new items for the event. They set activity stations at a safe distance from each other, following CDC guidelines for school meetings. At first, the plan called for conducting Moving Together outdoors. That changed at the last minute due to inclement weather. The planning group was able to maintain social distancing indoors by placing the activities in different areas of the school.

Each station was clearly labeled with a sign so families could find all of the activities. For example, parent volunteers created a Fruit and Vegetable Sensory Table, led by an ATP member who is a licensed dietician. She shared information and gave parents handouts on many ways to introduce healthy new foods to their children.

Other activities included an interactive Bear Hunt, Bowling, Partner Ball Bounce, Bean Toss, Yoga, Basketball Toss, Balance Beam, Squish Ball Toss, and Golf. Wow! It was a veritable Early Childhood Olympics!

Families signed in and received a raffle ticket, map of locations of activities, and the exercise and physical education skills at each station. As they arrived, teachers and staff assigned families to start at different activities to maintain safe social distancing. Each station was timed to keep families moving from activity to activity. Students and parents were able to try all of the different ways of moving and exercising together. This produced a mix of physical education, chatter, and laughter.

Everyone was moving! Parents not only conducted the activities with their own child, but also met and talked with other parents of children at St. Peter's. Children met other students—some they had not met before. A raffle drawing for donated prizes also kept everyone engaged.

At the end of the evening, children received Bubble Wands to take hope to keep moving with bubbles—something everyone enjoys. Families were given an exit survey to provide feedback on Moving Together. Responses were uniformly positive. Some parents had a favorite. One commented, “The activities were fun, and it was especially nice to do yoga together.” Many agreed, “We loved getting to meet the other families and we loved making exercise fun.”

The ATP assessed the event at its next meeting. The school exceeded its goal of 35% participation with 56% of families attending. Moving Together was the first in-person activity at the school since the COVID-19 closure. Parents delighted in observing their children playing games that promoted both fine and large motor skills, all of which could easily be played at home.

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PARKING LOT LUNCH AND LEARN

CARVER-LYON ELEMENTARY
COLUMBIA, SC

TYPE 1

Lunch and Learn for parents and teachers at Carver-Lyon Elementary School needed some tweaking due to COVID-19 conditions in the 20-21 school year. The partnership team and school leaders wanted to connect with families on how to support their child’s development, and respond to parents’ questions about their children’s progress. In prior contacts, parents requested information about online learning, returning to class, and about their children’s social-emotional well-being.

Students were attending school in person, but meetings and gatherings with parents were not permitted under COVID rules. The school parking lot was a good outdoor space for a new kind of workshop.

The school’s partners at Communities in Schools presented information in response to parents’ questions. In addition, counselors at the school—also experts on child development—discussed strategies that they use at school to support students’ social-emotional development.

Parents drove up to the school to receive an agenda, session materials, and lunch. Then, they had the option of parking in the school parking lot or taking lunch home and logging in on their electronic devices to attend online. The lunch was real; the learning was virtual via *Zoom*.

Teachers encouraged students to invite their parents to attend. The planning group created a flyer and registration process for parents to RSVP. They publicized the unique lunch session by e-mail, auto-dial calls, Twitter, and *ClassDojo*. The Parent and Family Engagement Specialist followed up by calling the registrants to obtain their sandwich choice for lunch. The deli lunches were purchased at a discount from a local school-community partner.

The presentations included ideas that parents could use with their children at home. One strategy focused on a variation of *UNO* cards—*UNO: Zones of Regulations*. This game uses the four colors of *UNO* cards for teachers or parents to

guide students in discussions and examples of their emotions. The game encourages students to discuss and manage their emotions and feelings in positive and healthy ways. The conversations also help children understand how other people feel.

Parents played the game as part of Lunch and Learn. The game asks players to take turns flipping the cards and answering questions on common emotions—happiness, sadness, anger, frustration, making friends, and more.

Teachers use the game in class to teach children self-regulation skills as part of social-emotional learning. By talking through their emotions, students learn problem solving skills, social awareness, perspective taking, and coping strategies. The knowledge may transfer from the game to positive behaviors at school and at home.

Parents received a deck of these cards to use with their children at home. The presenters also discussed how parents may follow up on their child’s responses to the *UNO* game. They also discussed how to know when to reach out for medical help for more serious concerns such as depression.

Parents, teachers, and the partnership team evaluated the unique session using *Goggle.Doc*. One parent reflected, “I was able to see how to use play to better acknowledge and understand our son’s emotions.” A school counselor commented, “The websites shared by the presenters are great and I plan to use them.”

The innovative Lunch and Learn was one way to demonstrate the school’s welcoming climate and to show how the partnership program responds to parents’ requests and concerns.

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HEALTH AND SAFETY

VIRTUAL COOKING CLASS

H. B. RHAME ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
RICHLAND, SC

Can a virtual cooking class lead to real dinners? Rhame Elementary School's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) worked with the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) on a family engagement activity to strengthen the school's welcoming climate—even though, due to COVID-19, families could not come to the school. The ATP and DHEC collaborated on Virtual Cooking Class to share information with families on health and nutrition, and to bring students and parents together to cook something good to eat.

DHEC sponsored weekly nutrition and cooking classes for six weeks. There was a limit to the number of participants permitted, and 13 Rhame families—parents and students—signed up. The Education Team at the DHEC in the county includes Nutrition Specialists who are trained to teach cooking classes to children, teens, and adults.

The Action Team for Partnership (ATP) at Rhame hosted the meetings. The team sent out flyers to recruit families to the unique series of meetings, and sent reminders to registrants to attend.

The sessions included about 30 minutes on nutrition education for students and parents to participate in a fun and interactive way. This included a Q & A period when participants could ask their questions. Then, it was time to wash hands, prepare food items, get measuring cups and utensils ready, and last—but not least—cook dinner. Families were encouraged to have their cameras on while cooking and many did so. They displayed their cooked meals at the end of class—evidence of success!

The DHEC instructors provided participants with fresh ingredients each week for all recipes. Rhame leaders for family engagement distributed the ingredients at the school to participating families and hosted the Zoom classes.

Students strengthened academic and behavioral skills. They listened actively, asked and answered questions, measured mathematically, and cooked collaboratively with a parent. They strengthened behaviors that contribute to success in school. For example, they demonstrated discipline by following instructions. They practiced teamwork by working with siblings and parents. They strengthened time-management by being on time and staying on task during the virtual class.

Virtual Cooking Classes also enabled parent and teachers to connect and communicate. In addition to the cooking class time, parents, and Rhame teachers, administrators, counselors, and parent engagement leaders attended weekly sessions on nutrition for family health.

By focusing on realistic recipes, parents and students were seriously engaged with each other. "This is really good for me and my kids," wrote one parent. "We really bonded as we cooked." Another noted, "Yesterday was the first time we cooked rice in a bag. It turned out nice."

The Parent and Family Engagement leader reported, "I was totally blown away by how much the families engaged. They truly enjoyed the experience and their kids were racing to answer questions during the nutritional Q/A portion of the classes."

At the end of the series, parents and students attended a virtual "graduation" and received additional give-aways from the DHEC. Home, school, and the community came together for the Virtual Cooking Classes. The classes were virtual, but dinner was real and delicious!

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FUN RUN

JAMES MCGEE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PASCO, WA



A parent called the school reporting that her child came home saying that Fun Run was the best day ever! Another parent agreed, sharing, “It was so much fun to watch how excited the students were to get outside and run in the fresh air. It was amazing to hear the students encouraging each other and to see the teachers and staff participating with the students.” What caused such a joyful reaction from students and parents?

A group of parents at James McGee planned and organized the Fun Run from start to finish. The goal was to increase students’ physical fitness and to promote class teamwork. The parent leaders had heard that other schools in the area had conducted similar activities with good results.

The Fun Run was also a fundraiser. Students recruited sponsors to support the number of laps they completed. The proceeds were to be used to pay for items needed at the school, such as new technology, playground equipment, field trips, and books. At the end of the race, the top 10 student fund raisers received awards such as gift cards, prizes, and the opportunity to do a fun activity with the principal. The classes with the most participation and the most laps run earned an ice cream or pizza party. It is important to note that prizes were earned by students and classes at all grade levels, from K-5. By the end of the first week after the Fun Run, over \$5,000 had been raised.

Teachers worked with the parents and offered support to excite the students in advance of the Fun Run. The principal approved the event and helped parents with logistics such as where to put the track and how to procure enough wheelchairs for disabled students to participate.

Flyers were sent home with students three weeks in advance of Fun Run to make sure everyone was aware of the opportunity and could begin getting sponsors. Other notices were sent periodically.

On the day of the Fun Run, each participant was reminded to aim for their personal best, whether walking, jogging, or running. The physical education teacher and a parent had marked a track of approximately a quarter mile on the field outside of the school. Parents were on hand to time the classes and hand out rubber bands for each lap completed. Each class ran for 10 minutes, encouraged by their peers, teachers and parent volunteers. Some parents chose to run with their student’s class. Wheelchairs were provided for students who could not walk. Laps were counted for runners, students in wheelchairs, and the people pushing them.

It was clear that students, volunteers, and staff had a great time participating. It was especially good to see students encouraging their peers to press on to do their best. Students benefitted from teachers’ and parents’ discussions of fitness goals. The Fun Run demonstrated that it is good to be healthy and fit at James McGee Elementary School!
(NNPS, 2014)

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HEALTHY ALTERNATIVES FOR FAMILIES ON THE GO

NORWICH TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL
NORWICH, CT



At a time when many students and parents go from activity to activity, they often eat on the go or have limited time for meals. Norwich Technical High School conducted an educational, entertaining, and delicious evening filled with healthy eating tips and free food samples. Healthy Alternatives for Families on the Go was a unique opportunity to consider the challenges of eating healthy, design solutions, gather information to take, and take actions that could benefit whole families.

At Healthy Alternatives, students and families met at a local restaurant. There, the chef prepared and shared samples of healthy eating alternatives, discussed food to avoid when on the go, and suggested substitutes for unhealthy foods or empty calories. He listed “power foods” that can be eaten by people with busy schedules. Students in the Culinary Arts department helped the chef prepare and serve the samples, which were free to students, families, and teachers.

The menu of good choices was divided into three meal categories:

1. Breakfast—Protein smoothies with fruit, yogurt, and orange juice, and a low-fat version of the McDonald’s egg sandwich.
2. Lunch—Mediterranean grain salad and wraps.
3. Dinner—Chicken and rice, buffalo chicken mac and cheese, and roasted vegetables.

Attendees took home recipes, including food preparation methods, portion yield, and other cooking tips. A final information sheet titled *Add These Foods to Your Diet!*, recommended power foods like apples, berries, asparagus, squash, lentils, brown rice, and others.

The idea for Healthy Alternatives for Families on the Go arose from a discussion between the school social worker and the principal. They discussed how busy today’s families are, and how many of them eat in a hurry between sports and club practices, homework, and other school demands.

To illustrate the situation, they scheduled Healthy Alternatives after sports practice time and prior to dinner time. In this way, a professional chef, students, and parents could discuss and taste quick and nutritious meals that are easy to prepare.

Norwich Tech’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) used the school’s Family Engagement funds to cover the \$50 cost of food samples. The enticing flyer, which included RSVP information, featured colorful photos of fruits and vegetables, along with the message: “Come see Chef Bentley demonstrate dishes and sample them!” The workshop promised recipes and grocery lists of needed ingredients for all of the dishes that are demonstrated, and many good ideas for healthy eating. Attendees also were promised a list of power foods to work into your diet and a list of foods to avoid.” One parent agreed, “This was a really good event. It opened my eyes to how to make healthier meals, quicker.” Another added, “[The] chef did a great job—he was entertaining and informative.”

When the activity is repeated, Norwich Tech ATP expects even more attendees, based on word of mouth. Plans may include other experts to share lifestyle information, such as mindfulness and exercise. At Healthy Alternatives for Families on the Go, even the busiest families took a few minutes to relax, share some good food, and chew on some good ideas. As the foodies say, “Bon appétit!” (NNPS, 2015)

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SUICIDE PREVENTION: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

FRANCIS HOWELL MIDDLE SCHOOL
ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI

TYPE 1

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Students' mental health contributes to their academic success in school and to their leading happy and healthy lives. In the middle grades, early adolescent development can be something of a mystery to many parents. A good partnership program helps parents understand key stages of children's development, including early adolescence.

Francis Howell Middle School's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) includes administrators, teachers, parents, and student representatives. It is known as the Family and Community Engagement Team (F.A.C.E.). The team follows a strategy of organizing discussions and presentations on topics that are of interest and importance to parents, students, and teachers.

One student member on the team suggested the importance of parents being able to understand suicide prevention strategies and to identify the signs of teen depression. Parents on the team and other parents agreed. Many wanted to know more about how to identify, prevent, and address signs of depression and thoughts of suicide in their children. Some questions concerned how to talk with a middle grades student about these sensitive topics.

The F.A.C.E. Team, administrators and counselors, organized a Parent Speaker Series to address parents' interests in and questions about their middle school students. Monthly meetings of the Parent Speaker Series focused on topics requested by parents.

The F.A.C.E. Team advertised each session with flyers, school social media, and the school marquee. Additional electronic advertisements were sent in a digital newsletter, online district advertising, and e-mail. Presenters included a school counselor and two experts from community organizations that address issues of community health and suicide prevention.

The F.A.C.E. Team surveyed students in their Character Connection class to determine the relevance of the topic to parents. They found that 43% of students reported feeling very sad some of the time; 21% of students reported feeling hopeless about the future some of the time; and 4% reported considering suicide at some point in time. The student surveys revealed the importance of helping parents know more about how to discuss these topics with their early adolescents.

Parents attending the Speaker Series wanted to improve their knowledge and skills to identify and prevent suicide and thoughts of suicide in their teens in middle and high school. This is a difficult topic to discuss, but parents knew that the school was a good, safe place to learn more and ask questions. Over 25 parents and caregivers attended this topic session. F.A.C.E. Team funds (about \$50) were used for materials and refreshments.

The counselors and parents discussed many resources that were available in the school, district, and community that could help families help teens discuss problems and find solutions to problems that they face in growing up. The presentation helped to destigmatize the sensitive issues of teen depression and suicide. One attending parent said, "This presentation opened doors for me to be able to have a conversation with my child should I ever feel a concern."

Although results for students of a workshop and discussion with parents cannot be directly measured, the organizers of the Parent Speaker Series believe that starting conversations on suicide prevention and other important issues in early adolescence is one way to strengthen the bond between school and home and promote the mental health of students. (NNPS, 2019)

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4

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS



Park Middle School, Kennewick School District, WA, 2013



Herig Elementary, School District of the City of Saginaw, MI, 2019

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.

BOO WITH YOU! ANNUAL MEETING WITH PARENTS

OPELOUSAS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
OPELOUSAS, LA

Opelousas Junior High’s commitment to strengthening school, family, and community partnerships reflects the official mission of St. Landry Parish. All schools in the district are expected to ensure high quality instruction and strong collaborations with families and the community to “maximize every student’s potential.” The School Improvement Plan and Annual Plan for Partnerships address this mission with goal-linked activities that engage all families in ways that support their young adolescents’ success and preparation for high school.

Opelousas serves about 400 students in grades 7 and 8. Most students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The school boasts many afterschool clubs and sports to develop students’ skills and talents.

Each year, Opelousas conducts an Annual Meeting for parents and stakeholders to share information on the state of the school and its students. This year, after months of COVID-19 closures, the partnership team, teachers, and leaders planned their first face-to-face meeting with families, students, and community partners. They followed health and safety requirements for indoor meetings.

The planning group redesigned the Annual Meeting for parents. Instead of only presenting information *to* parents, the school wanted to hear *from* parents. They added activities for families and students to present their ideas to teachers and administrators on how to improve the school. Community partners were asked for ideas on how they might help the school, families, and students. The process reflected the school’s partnership goals for real two-way communications.

As Halloween approached, the planners added some “Boo!” to the Annual Meeting—a costume contest and prizes. This was going to be a very spirited exchange. The planners started

by publicizing the Annual Meeting on the school marquee, on social media, and with flyers that were distributed at local businesses. Over 150 students, 100 parents, 25 teachers, and key community partners attended.

The partnership team, teachers, and administrators listened to parents’ and students’ ideas. Attendees discussed which suggestions were realistic and would improve the school program for all students. They assessed whether the school would need district or community support to put particular suggestions into practice. They identified several that could be added immediately to the School Improvement Plan and to the annual Action Plan for Partnerships.

In their evaluations, parents appreciated the surprise design of the meeting. One reported, “This is the first time that we have had our concerns addressed in a positive way.” Students identified academic and behavioral issues that could be turned into actions to improve school programs and opportunities. For example, one suggestion was quickly implemented by school leaders to ensure that all visitors were welcomed to the school. Students saw the point. One noted, “We are excited to see positive changes at our school. We just want to learn like other students.”

The planners were pleased with the result of the new design for a traditional meeting. They had more participation from parents than in the past. Parents and students contributed a list of ideas and strategies for school improvement. In the process, the meeting demonstrated that the school valued an exchange of ideas to strengthen its partnership program.

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HAWTHORNE'S QUARANTINE ACADEMY

HAWTHORNE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SEATTLE, WA

TYPE 6

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

During the COVID-19 closures, Hawthorne's partnership team conducted virtual coffee chats with parents. Parents said that they missed the monthly schoolwide family engagement activities that were held pre-COVID. Even though some families lost their jobs and were struggling financially, they wanted to maintain some of normal connections and community-building that defined the school. They asked the partnership team to conduct family-friendly activities that included ideas that they could do at home with their children.

At the start of the 20-21 school year, the Action Team for Partnerships (known as Family Engagement Action Team-FEAT) discussed ways to meet parents' requests. Working with community partners, Hawthorne launched the Quarantine Academy—a series of six monthly online meetings with families and students. Topics included:

(1) Bringing Mindfulness Home. This session was conducted by Space Between—a community partner—to help students reduce stress and learn mindfulness strategies to increase satisfaction and success in class.

(2) Birds & Bees & Kids-Deeper Dive. An expert health educator helped parents talk with their children and youth in easy and fun ways about challenging and important topics. The online session included resources for family discussions about growing up and sex education.

(3) Family Cooking Night. The partnership team worked with a school partner—Seattle Cucina Cooking School—to bring parents and children a fun night of cooking and eating. Hawthorne and Cucina provided the food ingredients for a nominal fee for families to cook spaghetti with red sauce, broccoli, garlic bread, and strawberry dessert. Families picked up the ingredients at the school at designated times. Then, on *Zoom*, everyone cooked together to enjoy a family dinner.

(4) Family Capoeira Night. The Seattle Capoeira Center, a community martial arts program, introduced Capoeira—an African cultural program from Brazil. Children and parents learned various

physical and mental exercises that help increase achievement, leadership, and a sense of community.

(5) Family Drawing Night. Hawthorne worked with a community artist from the school's after-school enrichment program. The PTA purchased art supplies that students and families picked up from the school. With the artist's guidance, students and family partners created self-portraits.

(6) All-School Virtual Hawthorne Movie Night. Students received a school tote bag with various movie snacks to enjoy with their families at home while watching an online movie.

One parent took the lead in publicizing the Quarantine Academy sessions. The partnership team created e-flyers and e-RSVPs linked to social media and e-mail lists. The ATP also advertised with robo calls, e-mail, and text messages in multiple languages using Talking Points and Remind apps.

The Quarantine Academy reinforced the school's commitment to ensuring a positive school climate for all families, and strengthening academic skills and positive attitudes of all students. Over 450 students and 450 parents and other caregivers participated, along with more than 75 teachers and community members. Parents' reactions were uniformly positive. Said one, "Thank you for organizing these virtual events! It was a fun way to stay a bit more connected to the Hawthorne community. I love that you worked with our after school enrichment vendors!"

Some parents reacted to specific topics: "Our family thoroughly enjoyed the drawing class. The artist-instructor was fun and engaging." Another noted, "The cooking meeting was fantastic." The Quarantine Academy could be easily renamed and combined with in-person activities at school.

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HAWTHORNE'S QUARANTINE ACADEMY
HAWTHORNE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SEATTLE SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1, SEATTLE, WA



TYPE 6

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

PASSPORT TO PARTNERSHIP

NOBLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OH

TYPE 2

Passport to Partnership at Noble Elementary celebrated the end of the 20-21 school year in an unusual way. Some restrictions due to COVID-19 were lifted, and students, families, and teachers could meet face to face. The event was held out of doors, with masks required to keep everyone safe. The in-person activity was the first opportunity for many students to meet their teachers in person. It was just what was needed to confirm that the hard work of a virtual school year was supported by a strong commitment to strengthening school, family, and community partnerships.

At Passport to Partnerships, each table or station featured an important subject that students study and one of the school's goals for school, family, and community connections. For example, at the Math Table, students and teachers showed parents how they use playing cards for math games to strengthen math skills. Then, attendees received a deck of cards and a book of math activities to play at home.

At the Literacy Table, students and teachers demonstrated reading activities and discussed the work of the Library Bookmobile. Students received a good book to take home for summer reading.

Other tables were led by the PTA and community partners on specific family engagement activities. For example, the Exceptional Children's Advocacy Group distributed information on their support group for parents and services for children with special needs.

Brightly colored fliers were sent home with students and posted on the school website. Parents received invitations and reminders via *ClassDojo*—the school's multi-language communication app. The PTA publicized the activity, paid for materials at several tables, and provided the raffle prizes that were distributed during the evening.

At school, everyone was made welcome and encouraged to connect with teachers and

with other families. They received a "passport" that listed the various tables and activities. The passports were stamped at each table to show participation. Students brought their completed passport to the PTA table for a toy or prize.

The passport encouraged parents to make new contacts by (1) introducing themselves and exchanging phone or contact information with two new parents that they did not know before, and (2) saying hello to a teacher or staff member to share a dream they have for their child. Then, parents and students were able to enjoy the fun and learning games at each table.

Passport to Partnerships, then, was a new way to encourage families to make new social connections, learn about the school's curricular program and partnership goals, and have some fun. The reverse side of the Passport offered families a discount coupon from a local BBQ restaurant across the street from the school. This community partner is an alum of schools in the district and is always a strong supporter of partnership activities.

Toward the end of the evening, students in the 21st Century After-School Program performed a dance program, and got other students, teachers, and families to dance along. Also, students could sign up for summer reading programs conducted by the school and library. Finally, students presented the principal with a "Best Principal Ever!" award.

Passport to Partnerships was well attended by more than 75 students and 50 parents. The activities evoked tons of smiles and laughter. This activity, by design, reinforced the school's commitment to continually improving its goal-linked program of school, family, and community partnerships.

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CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

ROLL THROUGH FALL WITH FAMILY FUN

MABELVALE MIDDLE SCHOOL
MABELVALE, AR

Mabelvale Middle School conducted its first family activity in the 20-21 school year—Roll through Fall with Family Fun. COVID-19 demanded creativity. Rather than an event at school, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and other leaders and teachers took a new approach. They brought fun and learning to their students' neighborhoods.

This required some planning. Bus drivers provided information about which bus stops served the largest number of MMS students. They noted which locations could be accessed safely by students, parents, and other family members. The MMS partnership team, teachers, and staff boarded the busses to meet and greet students, families, and others. They wanted to talk with students and address parents' questions face-to-face.

Maplevalle is a Title I school with about 600 students, including about 85% Black and 13% Hispanic students and families. All students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. In the 20-21 school year, there were some face-to-face (F2F) students and some virtual students who continued learning from home.

It was Halloween, October 31. During the pandemic, regular Halloween activities were restricted. Roll Through Fall was a good way to bring school supplies, activities, and treats (no tricks) to students and families. The team distributed math and reading resources, games, and activities for student learning at home. They brought the school supplies and goodies in backpacks for the students. Some community partners donated materials. Other costs were covered by Title I funds.

The planning committee publicized the Roll Through Fall bus trip to neighborhoods via the school's messaging system, e-mail, Schoology, and using other notifications. School leaders wanted to reinforce that learning was important even during COVID-19.

There are Face-to-Face and Virtual Students at MMS. The school's policies recognize all families as partners with teachers in their children's education. Roll Through Fall was a neighborly way to meet parents safely—out of doors—at the start of the new school year.

Students and parents welcomed the school bus as it rolled into their neighborhoods on a scheduled stop. The principal reflected, "The smiles on students' faces when the school bus pulled up brightened the world at a very uncertain time for us all."

Teachers met parents and students in person, some of whom they only had seen virtually in class. These connections—with over 75 students and 35 parents—were true celebrations of the "real" and "live" school community. Over 20 educators and community partners participated. Said one teacher, "I don't know who was rewarded more—the students or the teachers."

Parents evaluated Roll into Fall. They were unanimously grateful for time to meet the teachers. The planning committee also assessed the event. They agreed that this was one good way to create real and important school and family connections at a time when other meetings were prohibited by COVID-19.

Roll into Fall was one way to demonstrate the Maplevalle vision of a supportive and innovative community where students learn and grow because of school, family, and community partnerships. A bus traveling to students and families with math and reading resources and treats on Halloween during a pandemic? Innovative, indeed!

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VIRTUAL SLUMBER PARTY CAMP OUT

URBAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL
CLEVELAND, OH

Can a school meet its goals to increase school, family, and community partnerships while following COVID-19 safety standards? That was the question before the Urban Community School's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP). They wanted a fun, safe, and meaningful way to connect teachers, parents and students toward the end of the 20-21 school year.

Urban Community School serves a highly diverse population of white, Black, Hispanic, and other students and families, originally from many parts of the world. Over 80% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The school aims to partner with all families and the community to ensure an innovative, individualized, and challenging programs for all students from PreK through grade 8.

Last year, the school conducted a hybrid instructional program with some students attending in person, and others learning from home. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) discussed ideas for an activity to reinforce the school's welcoming climate. Team members knew that they had to go-virtual so that all families could participate from the comfort of the homes.

One team member had recently attended an enjoyable Zoom activity—a virtual music trivia event with a local DJ. The ATP considered how to adapt the idea for PreK-grade 8 students. The ATP chair contacted a local DJ—a community partner—about his availability and ideas for an interactive Zoom event for students, parents, and teachers.

The ATP selected the theme of a Virtual Slumber Party Camp Out. Attendees could relax in their favorite pajamas and engage in some get-to-know-you activities. A planning group created a fun list of music-related games and activities.

The team and school leaders publicized the Camp Out with flyers, on the school website, in weekly newsletters to families, and on the school's weekly Good News show on Zoom. The planners asked parents to RSVP, and requested a small voluntary donation to help cover refreshments and expenses. Attendees picked up a packet of graham crackers, chocolate, and marshmallows for s'mores. These true-camp ingredients were used to toast the school midway through the evening.

The DJ created a Zoom link for all who registered. The ATP welcomed everyone, and the DJ took over as MC for some fun. Some students and families camped indoors and others outside. Students were invited to create videos wearing their favorite PJs for a Fashion Show. Attendees were grouped in teams for friendly competition on trivia and music games including TV themes, Lip Sync, Silly Trivia, Finish the Lyric, Name that Tune, Musical Chairs, and Sing Along. There also was a Dance Off, and time for s'mores.

Parents completed a follow up survey, which indicated that their families enjoyed the unique activity. Somehow, they felt connected to the school at home. One preschooler chimed in, "I loved the dancing and the s'mores!" Other students noted that their family and school were connecting "in pajamas!"

At this Slumber Party – nobody fell asleep. It was a spirited activity that brought home, school, and community together.

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EAGLE EXPO

EDISON MIDDLE SCHOOL
JANESVILLE, WI



From a youth sports league to a forensics club to a job center, Edison Middle School and its community partners have important educational enrichment opportunities for students and their families. To increase awareness of the wealth of resources, the school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) collaborated with an AmeriCorps volunteer to coordinate an evening showcase—Eagle Expo. More than 300 students, parents, teachers, and community members gathered at the school for two hours to learn about the school and local organizations.

The planners promoted the Eagle Expo by posting flyers at local businesses and churches and by submitting advertisements to newsletters, the school website, and the local gazette. Students and families from neighboring elementary and middle schools in the district were also invited to attend.

The ATP further encouraged participation by organizing a raffle and offering free sandwiches to the first 150 people to arrive. The sandwiches were donated by Jimmy John's, and other food items including bananas, apples, and bottled water were supplied by local grocery stores. Attendees who brought a canned good to the Expo to donate to the local Food Bank received a raffle ticket and a chance to win a new swing set or an Android tablet.

The Edison community appreciated the ATP's outreach efforts. "You did a great job getting this out to the people," said one local resident.

Upon arrival at the expo, participants explored booths of several dozen exhibitors. There was something for everyone. Families learned about summer youth programs offered by the Boys and Girls Club, the Salvation Army, and the YMCA.

Students met representatives from local scout troops and a youth orchestra. Older teens chatted with recruiters from nearby technical colleges. Parents collected information about the public library, Head Start, the performing arts center, a food bank, a literacy organization, a nutrition nonprofit, and other important groups.

Contacting all of these organizations, the ATP said, required significant preparation time. They began planning Eagle Expo more than a month in advance, and tracked exhibitors using a spreadsheet. They targeted organizations that they thought offered valuable information and would appeal to students and their families.

The Expo was effective in increasing family and community engagement, and earned praise from exhibitors, attendees, and school administrators, alike. "I think the Expo reflected well on you and Edison and my son enjoyed being part of the engineering exhibit," said a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) member.

Parents of fifth-graders who will attend Edison Middle School in the fall found the Expo particularly valuable. The resource fair gave them the opportunity to see the school and become familiar with its extracurricular offerings, from the jazz band to the creative authors club.

The Expo cost nothing but time to produce, and was an excellent way to identify the school's welcoming climate and strengthen the Edison Middle School community.

(NNPS, 2013)

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KEEPING KIDS FIRST

THOMPSON MIDDLE SCHOOL
SAGINAW, MI

TYPE 6

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

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

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

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

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

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

Families and Restorative Justice. Families were introduced to the language of restorative justice practices as the basis for peacefully resolving family, school, and community conflicts. attendees conducted role-play activities, taking the role of parent, child, student,

and peer to work out disagreements. over 100 attendees elected to attend these sessions.

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

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

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

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

(NNPS, 2017)

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PARENTS, PIZZAS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES NIGHT

GREENWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCESS
ANNE, MARYLAND



Alliteration may have been on the minds of leaders at Greenwood Elementary School when they developed Parents, Pizzas, Policies, and Procedures Night. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) wanted to conduct a meeting early in the school year to welcome families, share important information about school, and answer parents' questions about the new school year. They wanted to make this as easy on families as possible, so the School Improvement Team added dinner and child care to the evening.

The goal of the PPPP Night was to inform parents about the school's discipline policy, special education programs, Title I funding, PTO, testing, volunteering, and daily expectations of students. In the past, these topics were covered in four meetings. This was too demanding on families' schedules and created gaps in the information they received. Having a mega-information night seemed like a good idea.

Organizing the evening was a group effort. The ATP asked staff members to present information about their roles. Each grade prepared packets of information and activities for students and families to use at home. Parent volunteers made phone calls and arranged car pools to increase attendance. A Spanish-speaking assistant volunteered to serve as an interpreter for parents during the event. She also went into the community to invite Spanish-speaking families to attend and provided transportation for some.

The evening began with dinner of pizza and salad, served buffet style. After dinner, children enjoyed time in the art and music rooms where teachers had prepared age-appropriate games for them to play.

In the meeting for parents, school speakers highlighted their work and its connections to student achievement, including the Title I and Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) programs.

The guidance counselor told families about monthly incentives and other awards for children's positive behavior. She also explained consequences for inappropriate behavior. The principal shared information about school uniforms and offered assistance to families who could not afford to buy them. The PTO president discussed projects families could support and invited them to join. The chairperson for coordinating volunteers talked about the importance of volunteering and asked parents to think of ways to share their time, talents, and knowledge with students.

After a stretch and seconds on dessert, the School Improvement Leader described the School Improvement Plan, and how families could help the school meet its goals for student success. She also provided information on the various tests students take throughout the year. The Technology Team Leader highlighted the ways that technology is infused into instruction. She talked about computer lab access for parents, and how parents could view student grades, communicate online with teachers, and use the school's web site. Parents asked questions and got acquainted with the school staff and with each other.

About 140 parents and 45 students attended. "I liked having everything on one night so we didn't have to be here for several nights and see fewer people," said one teacher. The \$500 investment paid off as parents gained valuable information and learned about the many ways they could be involved. They also saw that they were important members of the Greenwood team.

(NNPS, 2010)

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ROOM PARENT PROGRAM

INDIAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL
FRANKLIN, WI

TYPE 5

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

Indian Community School enrolls Native American children, for whom *family* is an extremely important part of culture. To represent family values in the school building, the Family Resource Center (FRC) implemented the Room Parent Program, designating volunteer parents to serve as liaisons to connect the teachers, parents, and students in class.

Parent volunteers become parent leaders for an assigned classroom. Their first task was to compose a letter to introduce themselves and the program to other parents of students in the class. They acted as the voice of other classroom parents and got to know the students and staff at school. Throughout the year, Room Parents had several opportunities to contribute to students' learning.

They asked all parents to provide their best contact information and asked about their interests in volunteering and participating in school activities. A short handbook, *Guidelines for Room Parents*, explained, "Include all parents in your assigned class. You do not have to do [all of this work] alone."

During the school year, Room Parents made substantial contributions to their classrooms. They read to students, helped with math or social studies, assisted classroom-based activities, coordinated volunteers when needed, and helped teachers communicate with other parents. Room Parents maintained weekly contact with their assigned teachers by phone, e-mail, or in person.

Room Parents' leadership paid off in the classroom. One teacher said, "My Room Parent was so helpful this year and my students...really liked having her in our classroom. They would get so excited knowing that the Room Parent was coming in to help."

Indian Community School supported its parent leaders in many ways. FRC staff held an open information meeting at the beginning of the school year to give curious parents information about program. Only parents who wanted to make a commitment to the program signed an agreement.

The agreement outlined the responsibilities of Room Parents. They were asked to be available on a weekly basis. They were expected to respect all students and their families equally. They were not to purchase supplies for classroom activities nor supervise students on their own. The initial guidelines helped clarify Room Parents' roles. Monthly meetings with FRC staff enabled Room Parents to share their joys, ask questions, and discuss concerns.

One of the challenges that the FRC faced was organizing childcare that allowed the Room Parents to meet in person. The FRC asked parents to identify their childcare needs so that plans for this service could be arranged. The program planners aim to recruit volunteers before the start of the school year and will ask retiring Room Parents to recommend their replacements.

The Room Parent program offered parents an opportunity to give back to their children's school by taking on vital and much-appreciated leadership roles. Students in each classroom gained a mentor and friendly adult on whom they could rely for help with classroom projects. Room Parents brought home and school together in highly visible and important ways.

(NNPS, 2010)

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5

DISTRICT AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP



Alvord Unified School District, 2014



The University of Alabama Parent-Teacher Leadership Academy, Center for Community-Based Partnerships, 2018

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.

ATP CHAMPION IDEAS FOR TODAY'S LEADERS

PASCO SCHOOL DISTRICT
PASCO, WA

Leaders in the Pasco School District are known to cross every “t” and dot every “i,” as they continue to strengthen partnership programs in all 25 elementary, middle, and high schools. This year, they worked to help Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) improve their One-Year Action Plans to engage all families in ways that contribute to a welcoming school climate and student success.

The district leaders examined data from the prior year’s workshops for ATP chairpersons. Team leaders requested more information to improve outreach to all parents and to increase parents’ responses and participation. They wanted to hear from fellow ATP Chairs and Co-chairs who were successful in increasing the engagement of all families. In other words, the ATPs knew that they could learn from each other—as “in-house experts”—about effective family and community engagement strategies.

The district Superintendent welcomed ATP chairpersons to the annual summer professional development workshop. She commended them for their leadership and teamwork to meet the goal in the district’s Strategic Plan for strong school and family engagement for students across the grades. Family and community engagement is one of the district’s “Outrageous Outcomes” in its *Strategic Plan*, along with goals to advance students’ reading, math, and other important skills, extra-curricular participation, on-time graduation, and personal development. The Superintendent discussed the central role of strong partnerships for meeting other district and school goals for student success.

Leaders for Partnerships invited elementary, middle, and high schools with Champion Ideas to share their successes at the summer professional development workshop for ATP chairpersons. Among other Champion Ideas, attendees heard about the following solutions to some challenges:

- Emerson Elementary School’s “Video Invitation” featured several students who created personal videos to invite parents, community partners, and other students to attend a family engagement activity. The videos were in English and Spanish. Staff

and students collaborated to use innovative features of *ClassDojo* to spotlight the students—always a good way to increase family engagement.

- Ochoa Middle School’s “At a Glance” showed how they prepare and distribute a simple one-page calendar of all family engagement activities scheduled throughout the school year so that parents and community partners can plan their schedules to attend. This also helps the ATP “see at a glance” the goals and variety of activities in their One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships.

- New Horizons High School’s “Changing It Up!” gave its ATP a local name that translated well in English (Families Connecting with Educators) and Spanish (Familias Conectadas con Educadores) (FCE). The team communicates with parents in both languages to ensure equal access to information and services. See the friendly bilingual face on the school’s website at <https://www.psd1.org/domain/177>. The school also changed its newsletter for families to an e-form using Microsoft Sway. They called it 20/20 to refer the high school’s “clear vision” and its street address.

Other activities included how to conduct the first family engagement meeting of the year, and how one school’s teachers shared their deepest feelings, “We LOVE your students just as much as you do! That’s why we need you on our team [and we need] your input.”

Evaluations indicated that ATP chairs adopted or adapted some Champion Ideas in their next action plans. District leaders for family engagement aim to continue to share Champion Ideas to equip ATPs in all schools to conduct effective and equitable partnership programs.

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FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT—FACE TO FACE

TUCSON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
TUCSON, AZ

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

In the 20-21 school year, Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) set clear goals to create opportunities for all schools to conduct high-quality academic programs for students, and to ensure that all families received needed services during the pandemic. There were many challenges for schools and for families throughout the year, but the district worked persistently to resolve problems.

The Family and Community Engagement (FACE) office is responsible for guiding all schools to strengthen their partnership programs to engage all students' families. From the earliest days of the pandemic, TUSD provided food boxes for families at Family Centers located throughout the city. There are four Family Centers that serve clusters of schools in their regions. Each Center houses a clothing bank, food pantry, and a computer lab for families to use. All Family Centers connect families to health services in the community. TUSD leaders know that when family stress is reduced, parents do more to support their children's learning,

The Family Centers also conduct free classes for parents and guardians, and provide childcare for non-school age children. During the COVID-19 closures, all classes from the Family Centers were on *Zoom* and were recorded for parents to access at convenient times. This enabled some parents to take advantage of these services who could not do so when they had to go to the Centers in person.

Family Center Liaisons often were the main contacts for families. They made personal phone calls to see if families needed particular resources. They listened to parents' concerns about their children, online learning, problems with technology, and family health problems.

The FACE office, which oversees the Family Centers, used the district communication system, *Parent Vue*, to send messages and a monthly newsletter to families. FACE maintained a live communication platform, *FACE-to-Face*, for parents to send their questions and concerns, and

for the district to respond. District leaders, staff, and community partners were invited speakers in *FACE-to-Face* sessions for families to gain information and ask questions. Over 100 parents participated in various online sessions with the FACE office during the year.

The online channel also provided information and learning resources for families to use at home with their children. *FACE-to-Face* sessions reinforced the district's commitment to strengthening partnership programs and practices in all schools and with all families, regardless of students' grade levels or families' racial, socioeconomic, or linguistic backgrounds.

FACE conducted four professional development sessions last year for Community Liaisons who connect with families and with schools. The training and information sessions on family engagement may be accessed online at any time by TUSD teachers and staff. FACE also offered ideas to teachers on how to use *Zoom* to connect with more of their students' families than in the past. District leaders created a Facebook page for schools to share videos and other communications with families. These activities aim to ensure that everyone in TUSD is aware of the district's policy on and commitment to strong partnerships with all students' families in ways that support and advance student learning.

All members of the FACE staff played important roles in advancing partnerships, including the Director, Coordinator, Family Center Liaisons, and tech support and custodial staffs. During the COVID-19 year, FACE considered itself the district's "heart department." It was there that the district demonstrated its care for each other and for the students and families in TUSD.

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FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AWARD—IT’S A CELEBRATION!

RIVERSIDE COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION
RIVERSIDE, CA

The Parent Engagement Leadership Institute (PELI) in the Riverside County Office of Education created the Distinction in Family Engagement Award to recognize outstanding efforts by leaders for partnerships in the 23 districts in the County. The award recognized partnership work at the district level and in schools that included parents, other family members, and community partners as co-creators, co-leaders, and active partners in programs and practices of school, family, and community partnerships.

The County’s 400 schools serve families and students with diverse socioeconomic, racial, and linguistic backgrounds. Most qualify for free or reduced-price meals. During the COVID year, districts and schools made extraordinary efforts to engage families in ways that supported students’ academic progress, social development, and health. It seemed fitting to create an award to recognize particularly strong and successful efforts.

PELI distributed an award application to all district leaders for partnerships in the County. Applicants documented their partnership work during 20-21. They described in detail how they improved family engagement activities based on topics that PELI presented at its professional development meetings during the year. These sessions featured three important qualities of family engagement programs discussed in the *Family Engagement Playbook* from the Global Family Research Project: *Change Mindsets*, *Build Relationships*, and *Transform* the organization to advance good partnerships.

In short, *changing mindsets* requires teachers and others to overcome implicit biases that result in stereotyping families as engaged or not engaged. When programs *build relationships*, they ensure that educators and parents respect and trust each other, listen to each other, conduct true two-way communications, and reach agreements. These qualities enable school and family partners to share leadership, appreciate each other, and feel confident that they are *transforming* their district and/or school into a “partnership place” to engage all families and support the learning and development of all

students.

These approaches value families as true partners in education—especially those who are most marginalized in society. The NNPS approach is one example of how structures and processes of teamwork, goal-linked plans, and shared leadership may change mindsets, build relationships, and transform districts and schools into “partnership places.”

PELI reviewed district applications for the new award based on these qualities. Awardees were honored in May at PELI’s Virtual Meeting of all districts’ family engagement leaders. Certificates were sent by mail to the recipients. The honorees were announced at other district and county meetings, and through various newsletters and websites.

The honorees were very appreciative. One district leader gave credit where due, “What an honor. [Our leader] is amazing! We are beyond blessed to have her as our director!” Another district leader explained, “In her role... as Community Engagement Specialist, [our leader] has been instrumental in coordinating district-wide Action Teams for Partnerships Trainings for all school sites to greater equity in family engagement and greater cohesiveness within the district. . . . [She] intentionally engaged parents from diverse backgrounds, school staff, students, and community members in this training.”

One lesson that has been learned over the years is that strong district leaders for partnerships make a difference in whether all schools conduct effective and equitable partnership programs with all students’ families and communities. An award for excellent district leaders in Riverside is an important incentive to encourage these advances.

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NEW TECH SYSTEM: PARENT AWARENESS AND SUPPORT

LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT
LITTLE ROCK, AR

Little Rock School District (LRSD) implemented a new Learning Management System (LMS) called *Schoology*. A new system is always a challenge for teachers, administrators, and staff, and especially for parents and students. *Schoology* aims to increase communications among these partners in education, but all partners first need to learn how to use the technology in easy, comfortable, and meaningful ways.

At school, teachers attended *Microsoft TEAMS* training sessions, and had individual follow up meetings. To reach parents and students with information about *Schoology*, district leaders supported several training sessions. They publicized Facebook Live Town Hall meetings on the district's website, LRSD TV, and Parent Link/Blackboard. These sessions were well-attended. They gave families a friendly, virtual place and space to learn and ask questions about how to use *Schoology*.

Parents were encouraged to attend the training sessions with the promise of many gift cards distributed randomly to session attendees. Prizes for attendance included refurbished laptops and an Amazon Fire Reader from Comcast Internet Essentials. Even more important than prizes, parents learned how *Schoology* would enable them to better monitor and guide their children's learning and progress in school.

LRSD created a back-up system to address parents' individual questions. A certified teacher responded to parents' questions about students' homework, technology issues, and the new *Schoology* system on a dedicated *Zoom*-line from 4-7 p.m., Monday through Thursday. A second academic and technology helpline that included a Story Time option was offered to parents and students in the elementary grades. The presence of many helpful staff members made many parents feel safe in asking questions about the new *Schoology* systems.

Title I and district operational funds supported the stipends for teachers and staff who presented the helpful sessions on *Schoology*, and the help-line services.

Sessions for parents on *Schoology* were scheduled on *Zoom* once a week from 5 to 6 p.m. over two months. Some parents became leaders themselves. They used the "share screen" feature to assist other parents with their skills and questions. Parents also could sign up for a *Schoology* Parent Support Group for questions and tech assistance. In addition, parents were told of several other online sessions they could attend about how the district works and about the reading, nutrition, mental health, and physical fitness programs at their child's school. As a result of COVID-19 closures and requirements, LRSD organized an array of online opportunities to share information and answer parents' questions.

Parents were appreciative and thanked LRSD for the opportunities. "I will be logging in every week to learn something new," one parent reported. Another wrote, "This resource [*Schoology*] is very much needed, especially during the pandemic and uncertain times." Still another said, "Wow! I did not know I can have my own account. Now, I don't have to ask my child for her login or ask her to login to show me what I wanted to know." It was clear that parents were getting used to the new system.

Across the country, many school districts have tech-based information and communication systems like *Schoology* that are designed to be helpful, but that are poorly used by many parents. LRSD's activities to orient parents, students, and teachers to the new system aimed to enable them to obtain important information on school programs and students' progress.

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VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS FOR CLUSTERS OF SCHOOLS ON FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

RICHLAND COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT ONE
COLUMBIA, SC

Richland County School District One consists of seven clusters of schools linked to each other in “feeder patterns.” That is, within each cluster, elementary school students move on to the cluster’s middle school and, then, on to high school. The clusters are named for their high schools—clearly setting a goal for all students to move successfully through the grades to graduate from high school.

Each cluster is guided by a Family Engagement Specialist who gives individual attention to each school’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and program of family engagement. The Specialists also foster connections among schools in their clusters. The district’s *Strategic Plan* includes an over arching goal for strong school and family partnerships in every school to advance student learning at all grade levels.

Last year, under COVID-19 conditions, district leaders worked together to plan family and community engagement activities to unify efforts and reduce duplicative work. At the same time, the cluster leaders wanted to be responsive to the unique needs of families in schools in their clusters.

Guided by the district Coordinator for Family Engagement, each Specialist created a list of the needs and interests of students, parents, and ATPs in their schools. Then, they selected topics for a series of virtual workshops for teachers, staff, and parents. They divided tasks to create agendas, set up online platforms, obtain speakers, create flyers, seek business and community partners for prizes for parent attendees, and create PowerPoint presentations.

The Specialists met weekly to report progress, solve challenges, and complete details for the workshops. They left room to customize or tailor the workshops for the parents in their own cluster of schools. For example, one cluster added an exercise period and invited students to attend the workshop with their parents.

Teachers, administrators, and community partners served as speakers on their topics of expertise. The Specialists and speakers practiced their presentations to ensure that the workshops would run smoothly and on time.

Over 200 parents attended the combined cluster workshops. Many discussions focused on how parents can support and encourage students with learning at home, social-emotional learning, developing interests and talents, and having fun during the COVID-19 challenging period.

Parents had particularly positive reactions to sessions on district and community summer programs for children. The principal of one cluster’s high school noted, “The cluster workshops were an excellent way to continue building bridges between home, school, and community. They increased the sense of community throughout the Lower Richland Cluster.”

District leaders and invited speakers also reflected on the quality and benefits of the Cluster Workshops. One Specialist reported, “. . . I wanted to make sure the workshop was perfect for our parents and met the needs of the families in the AC Flora Cluster. Everything worked out so well because of the team’s effort.” A community partner from the Military Child Education Coalition enjoyed participating as a workshop presenter: “Thank you for inviting me. . . We are mindful of and grateful for the ability to bring this information to our communities.”

This approach—planning for workshops across clusters and customizing information within clusters—is one example of teamwork that saved time and benefitted from many good ideas. Efficient and effective leadership for partnerships is a win-win-win for the district, schools, and families.

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DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

WHAT'S FOR DINNER? HEALTHY FOOD AND GOOD CONVERSATIONS

LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT

LITTLE ROCK, AR

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

As COVID-19 continued to affect schools and families, the leaders for partnerships in Little Rock School District (LRSD) worked with other partners to offer parents and students information and resources on health and wellness. An on-line activity aimed to strengthen connections with families as part of the district's on-going program to improve school, family, and community partnerships. Health and wellness, of course, are prerequisites for student learning, development, and success in school.

In conversations with staff and parents from several schools, LRSD leaders for partnerships heard questions about promoting good physical and mental health at home, nutritious meals, and topics for conversations with students. As everyone coped with COVID-19 restrictions, parents asked for workshops that were enjoyable to attend and that provided useful information.

The district designed What's for Dinner?—three weekly workshop to bring parents, students, educators, and community partners together to address that common question. About 75 families registered, including parents and students.

The district Superintendent welcomed attendees to the first *Zoom* workshop, along with the district's Health Services Director. They shared a video on healthy practices during the pandemic.

The district staff worked with several partners to plan and conduct What's for Dinner. They obtained useful materials for parents from Family Leadership, Inc., including a workbook for parents and an interesting placemat and spinner to start family conversations at the dinner table. LRSD leaders also collaborated with the Central Arkansas Library System (CALs) Be Mighty Program, AR Hunger Relief Alliance (AHRA), the Little Rock PTA Council, and Rock City Kitchen (RCK). These partners provided free and discounted meals and information to every family that registered for the workshop.

- CALs Be Mighty presented a virtual cooking demonstration and provided bags of all ingredients for its meal. Parents picked these supplies up at a library of their choice.

- The LR PTA Council provided free family pizzas from a local restaurant.

- RCK provided a discounted healthy meal with support from Title I.

Other partners also participated. AHRA added information on nutrition and rewarded attendees with grocery store gift cards, recipe cookbooks, and a virtual tour of a grocery store. The AR Local Food Network contributed door prizes of fresh produce and dairy baskets. M&M, a local promotional company, gave free t-shirts to all family members who attended all three dinner sessions. The district contributed additional door prizes with six refurbished laptops for lucky attendees. The incentives were well-received by families.

LRSD's Parent & Family Engagement Specialist, Parent Trainer of Trainers, and Federal Programs office publicized What's for Dinner? They distributed flyers in English and Spanish via multiple communication platforms—TV, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Schoology. A tech team assisted in solving *Zoom* challenges, and a translator assisted parents as needed.

At What's for Dinner? sessions, students discussed their opinions, hopes, and concerns with parents and others at the dinner tables. All parents appreciated the ingredients, demonstrations, discussions, and prizes. Teachers and parents wrote that their interactions were awesome, informative, uplifting, timely, and fun. One community partners noted: "The parents who participated were so very appreciative." It was clear that What's for Dinner? was a good start to conversations at the dinner table.

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COLLEAGUES CONNECT: VIRTUAL MEETINGS FOR DISTRICT AND REGIONAL LEADERS

OHIO STATEWIDE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CENTER
COLUMBUS, OH

The Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center (OhSFEC) is located at The Ohio State University. Its leaders conduct Colleagues Connect meetings to bring regions and districts in its project together to discuss recent successes, challenges, solutions, and resources that are useful for guiding schools to implement programs of school, family, and community partnerships. OhSFEC's project includes three cohorts of up to 48 districts and 96 schools in the state's 16 regions. A large project like this needs mechanisms for participants to come together to discuss questions and find solutions to emerging challenges before they become serious problems.

The Center Director, Project Lead, Coordinator, and Manager organize Colleagues Connect meetings. They distribute the year's schedule for meetings and send out reminders. Although e-mail may be a useful tool, leaders thrive when they can talk to others in similar roles. At the near-monthly *Zoom* meetings of about one hour, the Center reminds regional and district leaders about deadlines, data collections, and opportunities to participate in NNPS networking activities to share their work with others across the country. The meetings are recorded for those who cannot attend in real time.

At the meetings, OhSFEC presents a short PowerPoint on issues and updates. The Center staff prepare several conversation prompts to start attendees' discussions about their current activities and emerging challenges. For example, attendees may be asked: "How are your schools' One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships coming along?" or "How have you helped your schools recruit replacement members for their Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) next year?" In some meetings, no prompts are needed because the regional and district leaders came with questions for each other.

In one meeting, OhSFEC leaders started with examples from the NNPS *Handbook for Action* of activities for the Six Types of Involvement that

enrich partnership programs at different grade levels. They discussed how schools may activate multiple types of involvement to engage families and community partners to help student achieve a specific goal—such as increasing reading skills and attitudes, or improving student health. Attendees at Colleagues Connect shared many examples of how this worked for their schools at different grade levels. The regional and district leaders can use the OhSFEC materials in their meetings with their own schools' ATPs.

In another meeting, a district leader asked others for ideas about when their Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) were holding team meetings. Schools in one area were having trouble finding time for families and teachers on ATPs to meet. Another district leader asked how others' schools recruited teachers for the ATP, and how they oriented new members to the team's work. These specific questions generated immediate feedback from colleagues. One district leader commented, "I found the meetings to be valuable because I made contact with other district leaders and learned additional ways to support my school teams in this very important work."

Colleagues Connect provides a small, but important window into how the regions, districts, and schools in the project are doing. The meetings help regional and district leaders gain knowledge, skills, and confidence to move forward with plans for effective partnership programs in their offices and with their schools. The large project could isolate participants. Colleagues Connect is one way OhSFEC is building close ties and a sense of community across the state. There is a strong and important partnership network growing in Ohio.

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GRADUATE STUDY: PARTNERSHIPS IN HIGH POVERTY SCHOOLS

FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY
FLORENCE, SC

ORGANIZATION LEADERSHIP

Francis Marion University developed and conducted a course for graduate students on how to organize programs of school, family, and community partnerships in schools in high-poverty communities. The comprehensive course focused on research-based approaches and their applications in practice. Some readings familiarized students with research on teaching in high-poverty schools. Other assignments provided examples of how research translates to practice.

The one-semester course consisted of nine modules with assignments for students. Topics included attitudes and beliefs about schools in high-poverty communities; understanding family and community engagement; research-based frameworks, including the NNPS Six Types of Involvement; understanding the demographics and conditions of high-poverty families and communities; beliefs, attitudes, and expectations of teachers, parents, and community partners; creating a welcoming school climate; developing plans for programs to engage all families and support student learning and behavior; conducting in-school action research; and discussing how their attitudes changed due to the course.

This course is required for an *Add-On Certification for Teachers of Children of Poverty* in South Carolina. The certificate includes an introductory course, one on teaching and assessing, one on language, literacy, and poverty, and this comprehensive course linking research and practice.

The Center of Excellence (COE) developed the syllabus in ways that support goal-linked partnership programs guided by the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University. It was offered to educators in a district eager to strengthen all schools' programs of family and community engagement. The district contributed financial support for teachers to obtain this certificate.

Teachers attended the course online via Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions. They had electronic access to all course materials. Using flexible templates, students conducted action research

in their own schools, and tested activities and approaches with own students' families. The challenges of online instruction were real, but also opened new options for students in the course. They reported, for example, that because of the COVID-19 closures and restrictions, they needed new ideas to engage families with students who were learning from home.

COE assessed the new course by examining students' grades on assignments and assessments of their understanding of concepts, their applications to strengthen their school's climate of partnerships and to engage families with children to improve academic skills, attitudes, and school behavior.

The last assignment asked students to respond to the statement: "I used to think . . . Now I think ..." to reflect on what they learned in the course. They reported important shifts. One student wrote, "As a high school PE teacher, I never thought about family and community partnerships. I was wrong." Another reflected, "I know that I would have lost (student) if I had not connected with his grandmother because of this course. I am sure there are others I could have helped if I had known how to connect with the family." Students reported that they deliberately applied what they learned to strengthen partnerships at their school. An important "change" was the realization that family and community engagement was not "extra" or "optional," but a critical and necessary component of school organization that can help increase student success.

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OHIO STATEWIDE VIRTUAL END-OF-YEAR CELEBRATION

OHIO STATEWIDE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CENTER
COLUMBUS, OH

The 2020-21 school year was the first year that Ohio's Statewide Family Engagement Center (OhSFEC) completed all training workshops for its first cohort of regional, district, and school project participants. The schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) were ready—guided by their district leaders for partnerships—to implement their plans and practices for family and community engagement linked to school goals for student success.

Dr. Barbara Boone, Director of OhSFEC, and her team of project leaders, coordinators, and tech supporters planned a virtual end-of-year celebration for all districts and schools in Cohort 1. They wanted to honor the time and hard work by regional and district leaders and school ATPs who helped the project start on the right track. They also wanted to collect examples of the good work that schools were doing to engage families and community partners in children's learning and development.

OhSFEC leaders knew it was important to celebrate progress on school and family partnerships. NNPS recommends that all districts recognize their schools' efforts and share best practices at the end of each school year. In Ohio, it was important to start with a regional celebration for all districts and schools in the project. This would model how each district might conduct similar activities in the future.

The end-of-year celebration was hosted on Zoom for about two hours. Dr. Boone welcomed everyone. The State Superintendent, Paolo DeMaria, addressed the group with a very supportive message: "I want to thank all of you for attending—not only to celebrate the great and amazing work that you are doing, but also to learn from each other. That is really the power of this kind of convening. . . . I love the fact that each of you

made a choice to be part of this network and to dive into what strong, effective family engagement looks like."

Dr. Epstein, Director of NNPS, conducted an interactive session based on NNPS "basics." Attendees shared what they did and plan to do—Now, New, and Next—to conduct five essential program components: Work as an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), Write a One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships, Use the Framework of Six Types of Involvement, Solve Challenges to Engage ALL Families, and Evaluate Progress.

After a short break, Dr. Boone presented data on OhSFEC's work with Cohort 1 over the past year. Then, school and district leaders and regional coaches went into breakout rooms for 30 minutes to share details on one partnership activity from their One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships that they were most proud of this year. A timekeeper ensured that everyone was able to report their work so that others could consider whether to adopt or adapt the activities. Dr. Meredith Wellman, Project Leader, created a slideshow of all schools' best practices at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbovngwbCAo>. All Cohort 1 partners reconvened in the Main Room for information about upcoming surveys, training, and other support from OhSFEC in the coming school year.

Due to COVID-19, it was a tough year to start an ambitious initiative that is scheduled to grow to include two more cohorts of schools in districts across Ohio. The End-of-Year Celebration was an important way to recognize progress in all regions, districts, and schools. The uplifting occasion recognized the importance of teamwork to implement plans with impactful engagement activities. It was a year worthy of celebration.

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VIRTUALLY ENGAGING: LESSONS IN FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

CUYAHOGA COUNTY UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN - STARTING POINT
CLEVELAND, OHIO

One important feature of the UPK-Starting Point Family Engagement Program is that the Coordinator selects a theme each year to guide all schools with their work on school, family, and community partnerships. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, the Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) asked for ideas for effective uses of online communications with parents. The Coordinator selected the theme “Virtually Engaging” to guide ATPs and other teachers to use various technologies to connect with each other and with students’ families.

This year, Starting Point continued to scale up its program—now more than 60 preschools in the county. They hired more staff—Family Engagement Coaches—to assist clusters of schools, teachers, and ATPs with programs of family engagement.

At the start of the school year, the UPK Coordinator and Coaches gathered information from all teachers in all of their preschools. They found that most teachers were not fully aware of their own school’s ATP, the Family-Centered preschool and partnership programs, and UPK/Starting Point’s connections with NNPS. Most ATPs conducted school-wide partnership activities, but individual teachers were not comfortable engaging the families of the children in their own classrooms in ways that linked to age- and grade-specific student learning and development.

After discussing these challenges with the new Coaches, the Project Coordinator designed a Zoom-based series: *Lessons in Family Engagement* to help all Coaches provide similar and consistent technical assistance to their assigned preschools. The “lessons” covered basic topics for strong partnership programs including: Virtually Engaging; Parenting; Communicating; Volunteering; Learning at Home; *ReadyRosie*; Decision Making; Parent Leaders; Collaborating with the Community; Involving Fathers; Family Service Learning; Effective Communication in Family Engagement; and Teacher Leadership in Family Engagement.

In the lessons, the Coordinator and Coaches demonstrated online techniques that teachers and ATPs could use or adapt to connect with their own school’s families. Specific topics included children’s vocabulary development (Virtual Family Literacy Nights), motor skills (Virtual Family Exercise Classes/Dance Parties), social emotional skills (Virtual Lessons on Taking Turns and Practicing Self Control), and Preparing for Kindergarten (Virtual Family Science Fairs and Virtual Math Nights).

Teachers new to UPK and those who needed a refresher on partnership strategies were asked to attend at least one of the lessons. Over 450 teachers, administrators, and ATP members participated during the year. In the sessions, the Coaches demonstrated how teachers and ATPs could Zoom with parents to send handouts, share video clips, and conduct discussions with families in small groups or one-to-one. Each Coach also followed up with all teachers and ATPs at their schools with additional information and resources.

On post-surveys, teachers reported that the lessons helped them understand topics of family engagement, their school’s ATPs, and research-based strategies to use with their students’ families. Said one teacher, “The session on virtual communications really helped me realize different ways to reach out to families.” Another reflected: “I never thought of some of these (ideas), but now my wheels are turning. . . I can’t wait to try them!”

It is not easy to provide professional development online on many aspects of family engagement to a large number of teachers and ATPs that include parents, teachers, and administrators. Looking at the bright side of things, the UPK Coordinator concluded that the online strategies will transfer well back to in-person connections, with the added benefit of reaching those who cannot come in-person to school meetings.

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CELEBRATION TIME: SHARING BEST PRACTICES

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE TO PREPARE TEACHERS OF CHILDREN OF POVERTY
FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY, FLORENCE, SC

One important feature of the UPK-Starting Point Family Engagement Program is that the Coordinator selects a theme each year to guide all schools with their work on school, family, and community partnerships. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, the Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) asked for ideas for effective uses of online communications with parents. The Coordinator selected the theme “Virtually Engaging” to guide ATPs and other teachers to use various technologies to connect with each other and with students’ families.

This year, Starting Point continued to scale up its program—now more than 60 preschools in the county. They hired more staff—Family Engagement Coaches—to assist clusters of schools, teachers, and ATPs with programs of family engagement.

At the start of the school year, the UPK Coordinator and Coaches gathered information from all teachers in all of their preschools. They found that most teachers were not fully aware of their own school’s ATP, the Family-Centered preschool and partnership programs, and UPK/Starting Point’s connections with NNPS. Most ATPs conducted school-wide partnership activities, but individual teachers were not comfortable engaging the families of the children in their own classrooms in ways that linked to age- and grade-specific student learning and development.

After discussing these challenges with the new Coaches, the Project Coordinator designed a Zoom-based series: *Lessons in Family Engagement* to help all Coaches provide similar and consistent technical assistance to their assigned preschools. The “lessons” covered basic topics for strong partnership programs including: Virtually Engaging; Parenting; Communicating; Volunteering; Learning at Home; *ReadyRosie*; Decision Making; Parent Leaders; Collaborating with the Community; Involving Fathers; Family Service Learning; Effective Communication in Family Engagement; and Teacher Leadership in Family Engagement.

In the lessons, the Coordinator and Coaches

demonstrated online techniques that teachers and ATPs could use or adapt to connect with their own school’s families. Specific topics included children’s vocabulary development (Virtual Family Literacy Nights), motor skills (Virtual Family Exercise Classes/Dance Parties), social emotional skills (Virtual Lessons on Taking Turns and Practicing Self Control), and Preparing for Kindergarten (Virtual Family Science Fairs and Virtual Math Nights).

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(NNPS, 2016)

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CLUSTER BUSTERS: KEEP ATPS ENGAGED WITH ENGAGEMENT

SAGINAW PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT
SAGINAW, MI



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

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

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

The district's Family Engagement Specialist followed up cluster meetings with individual visits to each school. She met with the AtP chairs or co-chairs, the building principal, parent liaison, and others. At the individual school meetings, participants discussed what had been learned at the cluster meetings and what was unique about their

own school's path to improve family and community engagement and student success. Said one principal, "I liked the fact that we were able to share our plans and [were] given a model from our school district."

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

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

(NNPS, 2017)

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FATHERS, UNCLES, COUSINS, BROTHERS, AND OTHERS

CALCASIEU PARISH
LAKE CHARLES, LA



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

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

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

The increased focus on involving father-figures in partnership activities is very popular with parents. Commonly, mothers attend school activities, but everyone recognizes the importance of involving both parents in children's learning and development. Said one parent, "The involvement of a father or male figure is powerful!" in addition to specially designed activities for fathers, just about all partnership activities can include invitations and

content to engage fathers as well as mothers.

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

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

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

(NNPS, 2017)

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FUTURE FOCUS 203

NAPERVILLE COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT 203
NAPERVILLE, IL



Naperville Community School District 203 is always working to improve its schools and engage its families and the community in important ways. District leaders initiated Future Focus 203 to obtain ideas and suggestions for on-going improvements. A new Superintendent was settling in and a redistricting plan was settling down. The Superintendent was eager to have a better understanding of family and community values and priorities about education. His goal is to establish a positive, transparent, and collaborative decision-making process going forward in order to use resources effectively, serve an increasingly diverse population, and maximize student success.

He assembled a diverse group of 20 family and community members to plan and host a series of engagement forums for citizens across the district. The Facilitation Team was led by Co-Chairs who scheduled five community engagement sessions. Invitations were sent by video and flyers. The leaders met with local reporters, parent leaders, business partners, unions, and other key community stakeholders to encourage their participation and share their voices. The recruitment efforts were successful—nearly 500 families, students, staff, and community members attended at least one session.

Each meeting opened with a short presentation by members of the Facilitation Team. Each session was devoted to a different discussion topic including the state of the district, defining student success, programs of study, finances and resources, and facilities for learning. Attendees worked in small groups to discuss each topic, ask questions, voice concerns, and make recommendations. “By interacting in work groups, stakeholders learned from each other,” a Co-Chair explained. “They learned about different needs and concerns of parents with children at different grade levels.” A parent commented, “This process was pure genius!”

After each session, notes and videos of the presentation were posted on the District’s website

for all members of the community to review. The meetings were filmed by a videographer and later edited into a 32-minute documentary. Future Focus 203’s meetings, summaries, and video cost about \$30,000.

Students also were included as important stakeholders with ideas about school improvement. Focus groups were held at each high school to gather students’ ideas on defining student success. From the students’ feedback, it was clear that they were eager to have their social and emotional needs met while pursuing success in high school and plans for college or careers. Student success, they emphasized, should not just be measured by test scores.

The Facilitation Team analyzed the data from all sessions and presented their findings to the Superintendent and at an open forum. “Now, my job and the job of the District is to develop a plan with short and long term goals to show this community that we are listening,” he said.

Future Focus 203 required long hours from all involved, but was a valuable way to involve the community in decisions and directions for maintaining the district’s reputation for excellent education for all students. District leaders gained an understanding of diverse viewpoints that can be addressed with creative policymaking. They aim to use the results of this process to strengthen community support, ensure positive school climates, and promote positive academic, social, and emotional experiences for all students.

(NNPS, 2014)

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IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR—BUILDING AND SUSTAINING PARENT LEADERS THROUGH PARENTING PARTNERS

CALCASIEU PARISH
LAKE CHARLES, LA



In one well-known regimen—trainer of trainers—groups or individuals who receive training pass along their knowledge to another group. This model was used by Little Rock School District (LRSD) to enable school-based teams help more parents become partners in their children's education. District leaders explored the Parenting Partners program. The Title I Parent & Family Engagement Specialist took the lead and prepared a Title I Coordinator to conduct workshops for school teams who could, then, conduct workshops for parents. Ten schools elected to participate in this program (i.e., 5 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, 1 high school). One district-level group also participated.

Each school sent teams of 4-8 members for training. They included administrators, school parent liaisons, teachers, parents, and community members. Most of the participant also were members of the school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP). Parenting Partners conducted the workshops for the initial leadership teams to show them how to work with their students' parents. The teams gained knowledge, skills, and a number of activities. Then, using flyers, electronic messaging, and personal phone calls, each team of "trainers" invited their students' parents to attend a series of 5-7 workshops during the school year to become more aware of school programs and how guide their children's learning. The workshops for parents were conducted in English and, as needed, with Spanish translators.

Topics included activities using the NNPS Framework of Six Types of Involvement to support student with math and reading/literacy skills. Parent participants received a Parenting Partners Handbook to take home. The workshop leaders encouraged parents to review the workshop materials and use the strategies with their own children at home. One parent attending the workshops reported, "I never would have bonded with other parents like this before attending these classes."

The district's Title I Department hosted a gradu-

ation for the parents who completed the training. The participants were encouraged to invite their families to It's a Family Affair. At the closing exercise, the LRSD Superintendent and Title I Coordinator welcomed the participants, congratulated them, awarded certificates, and named them "LRSD Ambassadors" who could, then, share their knowledge and workshop activities with other parents. Other awards were presented to recognize special talents and perfect attendance. The LRSD Communication Department photographed the participants with their certificates and awards. The completion ceremony was filmed and shown on LRSD-TV, Facebook-Live, and other media outlets. One parent shared, "The graduation was special to me because I have never worn a graduation gown before!"

It's a Family Affair was a win-win experience for all involved. It benefited parents who gained good information at the sessions and who built positive connections with other parents. Teachers and district leaders benefited by strengthening their connections with families and by increasing the number of parents who learned ways to support their children's learning. As one teacher who was part of the team of trainers said, "After facilitating the sessions, I will incorporate some of the activities in my class with my students and their parents." It's a Family Affair helped many parents become confident and engaged parents who can help their children succeed in school.

(NNPS, 2018)

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LEARNING ON THE GO WITH READYROSIE

CUYAHOGA COUNTY UNIVERSALPRE-KINDERGARTEN-
STARTING POINT AND INVEST IN CHILDREN
CLEVELAND, OH

DISTRICT AND ORGANIZATION LEADERSHIP

Each year, the leaders of Universal Pre-Kinder-
garten (UPK) in Cleveland’s Starting Point
and Invest in Children programs choose
a theme to guide the work of more than thirty
preschools that are members of NNPS. The schools
conduct innovative activities for families to help
their preschool students build basic skills to prepare
for a successful transition to kindergarten.

UPK leaders learned about *ReadyRosie* technol-
ogy and selected *Learning on the Go* as the theme for
the year to increase family engagement in children’s
early education. One goal of *ReadyRosie* is to alert
families to opportunities to help children learn new
skills *anywhere* and at *any time*.

ReadyRosie is a subscription-based, online
program that provides daily activities in English or
Spanish in text and videos for parents to conduct
language and math learning opportunities with
their children wherever they may be. The inter-
actions help preschoolers build vocabulary, ask
questions, use complex sentences, and give their
own opinions.

The Director of Invest in Children raised funds
to implement *ReadyRosie* in UPK schools. She invited
the creator of *ReadyRosie* to introduce the program
at the UPK Staff Orientation before school started.
Each school was given information and training,
including handouts to orient parents to participate
with their children. At monthly staff meetings, UPK
staff members were updated with additional infor-
mation. The UPK Communica- tions Manager creat-
ed a spreadsheet for schools to collect data to see
how children progressed through the year and how
families were engaged.

The Family Engagement Coordinator attended
meetings of schools’ Action Teams for Partner-
ships (ATPs) to address emerging questions about
ReadyRosie. Teachers also used some *ReadyRosie*
activities in their classrooms and communicated
with parents about how to reinforce these practic-
es with their children at home.

One challenge in low-income communities was
collecting current e-mail addresses or cell phone

numbers from families so that they could receive
ReadyRosie communications. Another challenge was
how to provide ideas in traditional forms if families
did not have online connections. At the same time,
the UPK Director noted, “We have so many parents
who are addicted to their devices and technology,
let’s use it to our advantage.”

UPK teachers and administrators encour- aged
family members to use the *ReadyRosie* videos with
their children. The short 2-minute videos illustrate
“real-world” parent-child interactions at home,
in the park, grocery store, and other common
locations. For example, one video guides parents to
have fun with vocabulary and math at the grocery
store by talking with the child about “more vs. less”
by weighing different fruit. Another video guides a
parent help the child count out 10 snacks and place
them by 2s on a plate. The parent asks the child to
close his eyes and eats 3 snacks. Then, the child must
tell how many snacks were eaten. It’s math that also
requires language skills—and is funny and fun. One
child said to her parent before bedtime, “We have to
do the video before I go to sleep.”

UPK is working to complete its data collection
and to secure funds to continue *ReadyRosie*. This
project is showing that parents respond eagerly
when they are guided to conduct easy and useful
activities for their children to learn wherever they
go.

(NNPS, 2016)

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RICHLAND ONE PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT CALENDAR

RICHLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT ONE
COLUMBIA, SC

Richland School District One has some outstanding student artists in its schools. The district and school leaders decided to showcase these students to accomplish two strategic planning goals: (1) increase parental involvement across elementary and secondary levels and (2) create a tool to keep district employees abreast of important dates. These goals were met with the Richland One Parent and Family Involvement Calendar—a large-scale project that produced a copy of a calendar for every family in the district.

The Strategic Plan Team thought it would be wonderful to create a wall calendar featuring student artwork from across the district. The calendar would note important district dates such as testing and family engagement events. It was hoped that the calendar would be more than a date repository. The leaders wanted to include some creative ways to encourage and track parental involvement.

Monthly coupons in the back of the calendar included questions derived from other information in the calendar. If parents answered the questions correctly, signed, and submitted the coupons, their student was entered in a monthly prize drawing at their school. Schools received envelopes to collect the coupons, directions for conducting a drawing, and prizes for the winners. Then, the coupons from all schools were returned to the district office to learn more about the patterns of parental involvement throughout the district.

Delivering the calendars offered another opportunity for family engagement. A member of the Strategic Plan Team and the district Superintendent delivered calendars to the featured artists. They were joined by a camera crew from Richmond One TV. Students from the elementary and secondary levels were thrilled to become published artists.

The Professional Development Consultant recalled, “One little boy had his parent present at the visit. This particular child has learning obstacles, and his success with being selected as an artist for the calendar really made him proud.” In addition to making home visits to the artists, the Strategic Plan

Team mailed a calendar to every family in the school district, and supplied schools with extra calendars in case families did not receive one by mail.

Many Strategic Plan Team members from several district departments collaborated on the calendar. The process included proposing and designing the calendar; soliciting and selecting student artwork; collecting and organizing important dates to list in the calendar from across the district; developing the interactive coupons and questions; researching cost; securing artwork permissions; printing and delivering calendars; and advertising the project via auto-dialer and Richland One TV. Strategic Plan funds covered the cost of the calendars, which were sent to thousands of families.

The Parent and Family Involvement Calendar allowed students to encourage parents to use the calendars to complete the interactive coupons each month. This helped students, families, staff, and district board members understand and plan for important district activities that would engage families in many ways that contributed to student achievement and success in school.

(NNPS, 2012)

DISTRICT AND ORGANIZATION LEADERSHIP

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ROAD MAP TO ATP SUCCESS

PASCO SCHOOL DISTRICT
PASCO, WA



If you don't want partnership programs to be a secret in your district and schools, then it is necessary to raise the flag, use the bully pulpit, toot some horns, spread the word—in short—send clear messages about the importance of family and community involvement in children's education. In Pasco School District, leaders for partnerships help all schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) create awareness about their plans and scheduled activities for family and community engagement. With good information, teachers, families, and community partners can, indeed, work together to increase students' positive attitudes about school and learning.

One way to create awareness and strengthen partnerships is to publicize scheduled activities. One school's ATP created a Road Map to help team members keep track of scheduled activities for family and community involvement. Pasco's district leaders wanted to share this useful tool with all schools. They developed their own district Road Map to ATP Success with the theme Wizard of Oz/ Yellow Brick Road. The path through the school year included district-level partnership activities and meetings, and NNPS deadlines and opportunities for networking.

The district leaders encouraged the ATPs to create their own Road Maps showing the dates of the activities in their One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships. They agreed to provide snacks for one ATP monthly meeting for teams that completed their Road Maps and posted them in their schools for all to see.

Teams were creative. One APT went digital and created a PowerPoint presentation that ran on a TV in the front office. Another used the school's theme for the year—In It to Win It—and included their ATP co-chairs' pictures in a hot air balloon traveling across the road as each month's partnership events came up. Road maps ranged from poster size to one that filled an entire wall.

They helped ATPs visualize, record, keep track of, and share their schedules of planned partner-

ship activities. Many ATPs enjoyed the district's promise of nutritious snacks at a monthly team meeting.

The ATP chair at Pasco High shared that a security guard stopped to look at the road map. The chairperson saw the opportunity for recruitment, and how the guard is considering joining the ATP. At an elementary school, students viewed the road map on their route to the cafeteria and could remind their families of upcoming activities. This school also posted pictures after the events of the children and their parents at the activities.

In monthly e-mail messages, district leaders for partnerships reminded principals and ATP chairs about keeping their Road Maps up to date and front and center in their schools. The district's monthly ATP Connection newsletter featured a school and the way it used the Road Map as an attractive way to publicize partnership activities.

Pasco's school-based ATPs know that their district leaders for partnerships always find new ways to help them improve their programs and share good work. In this district, schools learn from their district leaders, who, in turn, learn from their schools.

The Road Map for ATP Success was one strategy for helping ATP members pace themselves as they planned their work. It also served as a communicating tool to create awareness for everyone at the school about upcoming activities. The Road Map for ATP Success turned out to be a simple, yet effective, way to keep Pasco on the path to partnerships.

(NNPS, 2012)

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