

PROMISING PARTNERSHIP PRACTICES



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

Johns Hopkins University

2022

Edited by

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



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PHOTO CREDITS

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

COVER: Western Hills Elementary School, Little Rock School District, AR

READING and LITERACY

Chicora Elementary School, Charleston County School District, SC

MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

School District of the City of Saginaw, MI

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Hawthorne Elementary School, Seattle School District, WA

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

North Charleston Elementary School, Charleston County School District, SC

DISTRICT and ORGANIZATION LEADERSHIP

Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty,

Francis Marion University, Florence, SC

Little Rock School District, AR

PHOTOS WITH 2022 ACTIVITIES

READING

Cypress Cove Elementary, Calcasieu Parish School Board, Sulphur, LA

Ladson Elementary School, Charleston County School District, Ladson, SC

MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

Carl B. Stokes Head Start Center, Universal Pre-Kindergarten/Starting Point, Cleveland, OH

Frasch Elementary School, Calcasieu Parish School Board, Sulphur, LA

Preschools in Gearity Professional Development School, Noble, and Oxford Elementary Schools,

Cuyahoga County Universal Pre-Kindergarten/Starting Point, University Heights, OH

Hawthorne Elementary School, Seattle School District, WA

McMillan Early Learning Center, Cuyahoga County Universal Pre-Kindergarten/Starting Point,

Cleveland Heights, OH

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Columbia High School, Richland County School District One, Columbia, SC

Dreher High School, Richland County School District One, Columbia, SC

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

North Charleston Elementary School, Charleston County School District, SC

Orchard Elementary School, Richland School District #400, Richland, WA

For more information:

National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University, www.partnershipschools.org.

INTRODUCTION

Promising Partnership Practices 2022

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

It seems to us at NNPS that many of the activities in *Promising Partnership Practices 2022* are among the most creative and most effective engagement activities ever! That's saying a lot, because every book every year includes wonderful ideas from members of NNPS for others to adopt or adapt.

Why are this year's activities noteworthy? It may be because COVID-19 required everyone to use their creative energies to engage families and the community when meetings could not be conducted at school. Everyone learned to use *Zoom* in ways that were—at times—more effective in reaching more and different families than the “old” way of requiring attendance at the school building.

You could almost hear a national sigh of relief this year—or shouts of joy—as schools reopened for children to return to class. Another shout sounded when restrictions were lifted to permit parents, families, and community partners back in school. Think of it—in some locations some students were seeing their classrooms and meeting their teachers and classmates face-to-face for the first time since 2020. And, their parents and other partners had never been inside their children's schools. You can feel this joy on the pages of *Promising Partnership Practices 2022*.

Schools, districts, and organizations met COVID and post-COVID conditions in the 2021-22 school year in different ways.

Online. Some schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) move cautiously. They continued well-developed online activities. Read, for example, how three preschools collaborated to create seasonal *Home Learning Kits for School Breaks* to engage parents with students on fun learning activities in reading, crafts, and physical education during vacations.

Outdoors. Some schools took small steps in back-to-school activities by conducting interactions outside on school grounds. In *Thrive with the Hive*, a middle school reestablished connections with all students, families, and teachers by organizing games, dances, music, refreshments, and time to meet and talk together on the parking lot, athletic field, and basketball court.

In the school building. Other schools took giant steps and brought families and educators together in school. Learn how dads and local police officers became reading-buddies with fifth grade boys to boost positive attitudes and skills in reading and to strengthen school-community relations.

Inside and Out. Some schools cleverly mixed indoor and outdoor activities. For example, at the STEAM Showcase and Carnival, an elementary school celebrated students' science, math, and art projects in the cafeteria. Community scientists conducted demonstrations in the library. And, food, games, and entertainment were enjoyed outside on the playground.

District and Organization Leadership. Read how district and organization leaders continued professional development activities on *Zoom*. Lessons learned to meet COVID restrictions were clear. It still was easier to bring many school team chairpersons and district leaders together online to share ideas and solve challenges than requiring them to travel.

The good news is that there are creative ideas in all sections of this e-book!

See two Tables of Contents (TOC) to help find activities that interest you:

1. GOALS FOR PARTNERSHIPS. This TOC lists activities by specific goals to engage family and community partners with students in Reading, Other Academic Subjects, Health and Safety, and to ensure 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, Communicat- ing, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision Making, and Collaborating with the Community.** Remember: Most practices activate more than one “type” of engagement.

District and organization activities identify one leadership strategy guided by NNPS: **Create Awareness, Align Program and Policy, Guide Learning and Program Development, Share Knowledge, Celebrate Milestones, and Evaluate Progress.**

2. CONTRIBUTORS. This TOC lists the locations of contributors. There are 39 activities from schools, districts, and organizations in nine states and Ireland. Remember: Activities designed and conducted in one community (i.e., 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 2022 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 a link to the e-book with colleagues at no cost. Members of NNPS have access to more than 10 years of prior editions of *Promising Partnership Practices* from 2010 to 2022 using the NNPS Member-Only-Code. NNPS reminds members of this resource and code in each month’s *E-Brief*.

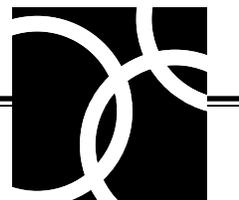
National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University

Established by Dr. Joyce L. Epstein and her colleagues at Johns Hopkins University in 1996, the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) celebrated its 25th Anniversary last year, and continues its important mission. 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 programs of school, family, and community partnerships.

- 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 learning and development.
- Each partnership district, organization, and state identifies a leader to guide the enactment of the official policy on partnerships. These 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.



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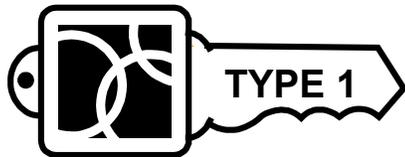
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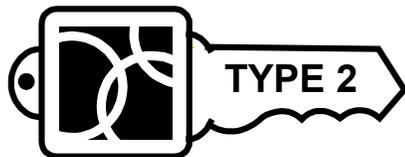
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THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

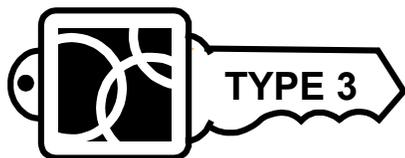
EPSTEIN'S SIX TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT



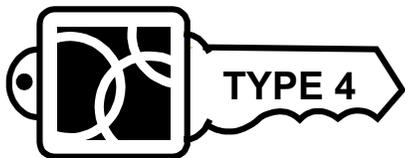
PARENTING: Assist families in understanding child and adolescent development and in setting home conditions that support children as students at each grade level. Assist schools in understanding families.



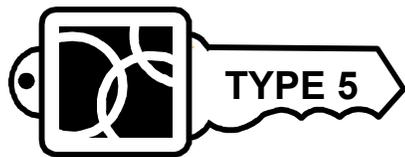
COMMUNICATING: Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.



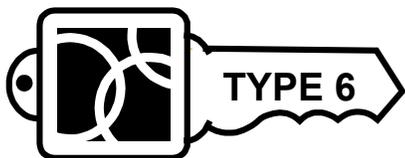
VOLUNTEERING: Improve recruitment, training, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school and in other locations to support students and school programs.



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

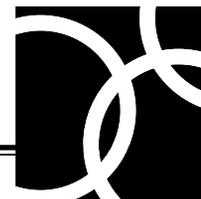


DECISION MAKING: Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, action teams, and other parent organizations.



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

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1

READING AND LITERACY



Practices for Types 1-6 in this section involve families and community partners to help students meet academic goals in reading and literacy.

CHRISTMAS @ THE COVE

CYPRESS COVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SULPHUR, LA

Vacations are for rest and fun, but that does not mean that students should stop reading, thinking, and sharing stories. Cypress Cove Elementary School’s partnership program set a goal to encourage students and families to share reading experiences. Christmas @ the Cove—a student and family reading night—contributed to this goal.

COVID-19 restrictions were still in place last year, so Christmas @ the Cove was a “drive-thru” reading activity in the school’s pick-up and parking areas. Each page of a selected picture book was enlarged on a poster machine and attached to cardboard. Dressed in holiday attire, two teachers teamed up to read each giant-sized page of the story as each car drove through the reading line. Teachers also inserted reading comprehension questions for students as their car drove through the story, page by page. Students and parents met their teachers face to face, which some had not done due to COVID.

After the last page of the story was read, there was a Cookie Station. Each family member received a chocolate chip cookie and a hot chocolate packet and water. The area was decorated with holiday lights and seasonal inflatables. The next stop was “Santa’s Workshop.” In this area, teachers dressed as elves were collecting letters that students wrote to Santa as a letter-writing assignment, adapted for students at each grade level. Here, a teacher took photos of families with Mr. & Mrs. Claus. These were posted on the school’s social media page. Each student received a book for holiday reading, purchased with Title I funds. The books were wrapped by parent volunteers and labeled by reading level.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), other parents, and teachers contributed to the fun. Some wrapped the books for students to take home. Others donated the holiday inflatables, refreshments, and other supplies.

Community partners added funds, decorations, extension cords, generators, and other

equipment to make the drive-thru area festive and safe.

The ATP promoted the drive-thru on the school’s social media platforms, website, newsletter, and with inside/outside banners. Over 450 students and siblings and about 150 parents and caregivers, more than 50 teachers, and as many community partners came to read together and prepare for the winter vacation.

The biggest challenge was that the huge response from families made traffic back up on the main road in front of the school. The school has a long driveway and plenty of space for the activity stations, but traffic issues will be resolved for future drive-thrus.

Over the past two years, other schools in NNPS held “drive-thru” activities due to COVID concerns. These included drive-thru movies, graduation, and welcome back to school. Christmas @ the Cove added another design to share a story, encourage reading, and enable parents, students, and teachers to meet face to face.

Families received a QR code to address a few questions about Christmas@ the Cove. Overwhelmingly, families raved about the creative way that teachers read them a story. One community partner summed up “Our favorite parts were the story, pictures, and cookies.”

The principal reported, “This event brought our community of students, families, and teachers together at a time when so many factors created a distance. This was just what the school, family, and community needed to simply get together around reading – a spirited success in the spirit of the season!”

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**CHRISTMAS @ THE COVE
CYPRESS COVE ELEMENTARY
CALCASIEU PARISH SCHOOL BOARD
SULPHUR, LA**

TYPE 4



READING & LITERACY



COPS AND POPS

CHICORA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
NORTH CHARLESTON, SC

Cops and Pops brings fathers, father figures, and members of the local police department to school to read and talk with male students in the 5th grade. This creatively-designed activity aimed to increase students' positive attitudes and skills in reading, and strengthen school-community connections with the local police.

This was a “one book” activity where students, volunteers, and many parents read and discussed the same book together. The book, *The Stars Beneath Our Feet* by David Barclay Moore, tells the story of Lolly—a boy growing up in Harlem who is entering adolescence and who faces many challenges. The story focuses on the importance of friendship, caring relationships, creativity, and hope for the future. These factors help Lolly—and all children—overcome many of the challenges of growing up.

Chicora's parent advocate proposed this idea to the school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) for feedback and approval. Meetings with the local police department sealed the deal. These partners resolved details about the activities and time periods for Cops and Pops.

The planners selected fifth grade boys for the pilot program because the book matched their developmental stage. Title I funds paid for the books, which were ordered in the languages needed for readers. Interpreters also were on hand.

Parents were contacted by ClassDoJo and other calls to give their sons permission to participate in the reading groups that met before school started at 8 a.m. Some dads volunteered to meet with the 5th graders. All parents were encouraged to discuss the book chapters that were assigned for each meeting with their students.

A community partner provided a good breakfast at school for all of the early participants. The dads and police department volunteers read two chapters at a time to discuss, individually, with their student partner. The volunteers were

guided by teachers to introduce new vocabulary words. Teachers also provided questions for open and judgement-free conversations such as: “How would you react in that situation?” or “Have you or anyone you know ever experienced this?”

The goal was for students to feel safe in discussing their opinions. At the end of each session, everyone was asked if they wanted to return to discuss the next two chapters. This reinforced their interest and commitment to the project.

Over 50 students were matched with over 50 parent volunteers and police partners. They were guided by 6 teachers and administrators. Everyone seemed to benefit. Students built vocabulary and reading comprehension skills. They also gained thinking skills as they considered how their challenges and dreams matched the characters in the book.

The students noted that they especially appreciated their “person”—the dad or policeman who came to read and talk with them. Volunteers reported that “this was the kind of thing they want to do with kids.” One student explained his eagerness, saying “Me and my daddy never read together, and we liked it. He said he wants to come back.”

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Charleston County School District

FAMILY READING PARTY

BURTON-PACK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
COLUMBIA, SC

Everything about reading is important at Burton-Pack Elementary School—including engaging parents and families to support their child’s reading skills and attitudes. Every year, teachers and school leaders share information with parents on literacy standards at each grade level. The partnership team conducts many reading activities to engage families and the community with students, including increasing the number of books in children’s home libraries.

After COVID prohibited meetings with families at school for over two years, Burton-Pack’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and teachers planned an outdoor Family Reading Party to bring parents, students, and teachers back together. The ATP and school leaders visited students’ classrooms and encouraged students to come with their families to celebrate reading.

The well-organized party included a raffle with gift cards and household essentials donated by community businesses and faith-based organizations. Eight reading stations were led by volunteers from the University of South Carolina College of Education Curriculum Studies Doctoral Program. At each station, students demonstrated reading activities that they can enjoy with a parent or family partner at home.

Prior to the Reading Party, teachers engaged students in a writing contest honoring a Community Hero. The five winners of this activity were announced and applauded. All students received several new books to take home. These were selected to be representative of the ethnic and racial diversity of students and families in the school community. Parents were given bookmarks with reading tips for families.

All students received a stuffed animal puppy-reading-buddy. These talented stuffed animals love to watch or listen to children read at home. They were donated by a generous community partner in honor of Burton-Pack’s mascot—the Bulldog. Students also received a pledge card to

encourage them to read at home every day with a parent, family partner, or new reading-buddy-puppy.

The Reading Party also included Cocky, the U of SC’s mascot. This spirited gamecock or fighting rooster supported Cocky’s Reading Express and took photos with students and families at the party.

The celebration was inspired by the school’s partners at the U of SC and the Carolina Family Engagement Center (CFEC). Local businesses and five faith-based community partners assisted with refreshments, gift cards, and funds for books that students took home. The local Junior League donated funds for take-home meals for students and families in attendance. A local shaved ice business provided iced treats to all participants at a discounted rate. The school is an important hub in the community and benefits from the good will of many partners.

Faculty members from the University of South Carolina and doctoral students who participated were happy to work with the students and families to increase literacy skills. Parents who ventured back to the school were happy to be there. One parent noted, “This was an awesome event. My daughters and I enjoyed reading with the community volunteers, the puppy-reading-buddy, and the food!” A teacher reported, “It was a joy to see how working together with community partners helped support our students!”

As COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, the Parent Reading Party welcomed parents and families back to the school to celebrate reading and increase students’ skills and attitudes about reading. In the process, Burton-Pack got the community excited about connecting with the school again.

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MILL CREEK LITERACY NIGHT

MILL CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
COLUMBIA, SC

Mill Creek Elementary School set ambitious reading goals for all students. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), ELA Reading Coach, Curriculum Resource Teachers, and others worked together to figure out how to connect with all families and increase their active participation in helping students at each grade level reach important reading standards. Due to COVID-19 restrictions on school meetings with groups of parents, the planners transformed the school's traditional Literacy Night from in-person to online.

It turned out to be an effective way to extend the school's connections with families who could not attend meetings at the school. Some parents found it less stressful and less intimidating to participate online, with their children, at home.

The planners knew that multiple publicity strategies were important to maximize parent participation. They posted information in various ways and places, including on the school website, via ClassDoJo, on the school's marquee, and at the meetings of the Parent Advisory Council and School Improvement Team. Perhaps most effective were flyers that each student took home one week prior to Literacy Night. Students received "extra credit" if they successfully encouraged a parent to participate.

For the online experience, each reading teacher created a video of fun literacy activities for students at each grade level to do at home with their families. Parents registered to receive the link for the online meeting and to join a raffle for useful door prizes. They selected their child's grade level to participate in specifically-designed reading activities.

Over 100 students and as many parents participated online—a noteworthy number. In addition, more than 25 teachers, administrators and staff were involved in preparing this new Literacy Night.

Parents provided immediate feedback to the teachers' videos on literacy-linked activities at

each grade level. The parents were positive and grateful for the information. Some stated that they learned several new reading strategies that would be fun to do at home with their children.

Literacy Night online fit right into Mill Creek Elementary's creative approaches to encourage students to read for pleasure. The homepage of the school's website includes a YouTube link for students and parents to enjoy a read-aloud book at anytime. Recently, one choice was *Piranhas Don't Eat Bananas* by Aaron Blabey. Two friends read the book aloud with great enthusiasm.

This school is all about reading in school and out to help students build skills and enjoy good stories. Teachers found that an online Literacy Night was a good way to build new connections with more parents and to improve students' attitudes about reading.

The teachers' grade-specific videos and fun activities helped parents and students see that reading is not just something to do in class, but also can be interesting and enjoyable at home. Further, literacy was not just about reading books, but also about reading-related skills that are used in "real life" and linked to many school subjects.

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Richland County School District One

READ ACROSS AMERICA BOOK COVER CONTEST

A. C. MOORE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
COLUMBIA, SC

Moore Elementary School’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) is working to strengthen Type 4-Learning at Home activities in its comprehensive program of family engagement. This is one part of the NNPS framework of Six Types of Involvement that guides schools’ partnership plans and practices.

The school has long recognized *Read Across America* as a national celebration of reading. It was started in the late 1990s by the National Education Association (NEA) as a “day” for reading, and grew into a “year-round” program to motivate students to read in many ways and in many places.

Moore uses a Balanced Literacy Model for its reading and writing programs. This approach assumes that students’ reading and writing skills develop at school, at home, and in the community—not just in reading class.

Students grow and strengthen their reading and writing skills each year with many different experiences such as independent, group, paired or partner reading, independent and group writing, and other activities. This includes reading with a parent or family partner at home. School reading, family reading, and students’ independent reading for pleasure all are important for improving students’ reading skills and instilling a love of reading across the grades. The Book Cover Contest added creative arts to students’ reading experiences.

The ATP and reading teachers created a video for students and parents explaining the contest rules. One flyer explained that all schools in the Dreher Cluster (i.e., the feeder pattern of schools in the area) were participating in the Book Cover Contest.

Each school—elementary, middle, and high school—invited students and parents to enjoy this creative assignment to read a favorite book and put their own “spin” on a new cover.

Students selected various art materials for their illustrations. Students used crayons,

markers, paint, construction, or a mix of approaches including designs by computer. Also, students wrote a short summary about the book on the back of their cover design.

The flyer for several schools recognized the importance of parental engagement with their student on reading. Parents were asked to read with their child or listen to their child’s account of the book they were illustrating with a new cover. Parents also were asked to help their child obtain art materials for their design.

Moore’s Media Specialist and Art Teacher served as contest judges. They developed a fair and useful rubric for reviewing students’ designs. The top three book cover designs earned small but valued gift cards. Other students were honored and recognized in other ways. Students’ designs were placed on display.

In the first year of this activity, a small number of students and parents participated by submitting original cover designs for a favorite book. The reading teachers, ATP, and school leaders assessed the value of the project. From the submissions this year, they saw that it would be good to extend the activity to all students across the grades as a regular part of the reading program. Adding original artwork to the reading experience is enriching and spotlights the role that illustrators play in the world of books.

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TABLEAUX MUSEUM: BLACK HISTORICAL FIGURES

ALCORN MIDDLE SCHOOL
COLUMBIA, SC

At Alcorn Middle School, which serves almost all Black students, a teacher noticed that many students were unaware of historical figures of color who made important contributions to society. Most students knew two names—Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Harriet Tubman. Also, at Chat with the Principal—a regularly-scheduled family engagement activity—a parent noticed and requested that the school fill this gap in students’ knowledge.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, and school leaders designed a way to address this issue: Tableaux Museum of Black Historical Figures. This was a student-centered activity that gave students major responsibilities for their work. Teachers explained that this shifts students to a scholarship role as “teacher” and provides them with an authentic audience for their research. Teachers were guiding students to meet the school goal of reaching grade level standards in reading and English Language Arts.

Students selected or were assigned a Black leader in history whom they may not have heard of before. The list included political figures such as Bayard Rustin (an advisor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and organizer of the March on Washington in 1963), sports figures such as Wilma Rudolph (an Olympic track champion), and many others.

Students researched the contributions of their historical figure, prepared drawings, designed a backdrop for their presentation, created a historically-accurate costume, and wrote a short speech to introduce themselves—in the role of their figure—to those who came to the Tableaux Museum.

Students used various rubrics, checklists, and graphic organizers, and wrote individual reflections throughout the process. Several steps in preparing the Tableaux Museum required students’ extra time after school.

Parents and teachers guided students with their work. Teachers and community members served as consultants to students as they

researched their historical figures. Teachers also provided source materials for students and critiqued draft presentations. Parents made sure students attended rehearsals. They helped their child create a historically-appropriate costume for their character.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and teachers conducted formal and informal evaluations of the process. Students were graded on their work based on the South Carolina Department of Education’s English Language Arts Standards. Students completed self-assessments to rate their own work. They recognized the value of the after-school rehearsals, and took pride in the responses they received from friends, teachers, parents, and community members. In many cases, previously failing students measured up to excel academically.

About 87 students participated in the Museum Tableaux. Over 140 parents and community members attended. They wrote comments on a “graffiti wall” displayed for all to see. Said one community partner, “I learned so much. I’m old, and some of these people [the historical figures] I never heard of either.” A parent explained, “I cannot believe my child did so well. I was more than impressed.” A retired teacher praised, “I’ve never seen anything like this before in my life—loved every minute of it.”

The activity changed parents and community members’ perceptions of what Alcorn Middle School students are able to do academically. Prior opinions of student deficits were replaced with positive views of student abilities and respect for students as scholars.

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THE POETRY CAFÉ

LADSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LADSON, SC

TYPE 4

Poetry has the power to increase students' reading for pleasure because poems speak directly to students' emotions and imaginations. Ladson's Poetry Café aimed to help students express themselves and increase their understanding of others. In addition, by presenting their poems, students could increase their confidence in speaking to an audience. In addition, parents and community partners, including the Charleston County Sheriff's Office, were invited to participate. Some wrote their own poems. In this way, poetry became a partnership activity.

Ladson Elementary is a diverse school with students and families speaking three languages—English, Spanish, and Portuguese. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and the school's Family Service Advocate agreed to incorporate the three languages in the Poetry Café. Parents and community partners were invited to present their poems in their own languages. The audience received English translations of the poems presented in other languages and Spanish and Portuguese translations of poems presented in English.

At the Café, one teacher discussed the importance of poetry with the audience. Then, students, parents, and members of the community recited their poems. They also had a period for remarks and reactions. And refreshments were served at the café.

Parents reported that Poetry Café was "an awesome and compassionate event" that generated deep emotions. For example, one student read a poem about his father who had taken care of him since he was a newborn. His dad wept as he listened and brought tears to others in the room. In another segment, three sisters read a poem about their dad who was the musician at the Poetry Café. Their dad, surprised, stopped playing and tears came in appreciation for his children's tribute. At Ladson, the poems helped all attendees realize that we are not so differ-

ent from each other as we go through the school years.

The creative activity was clearly appreciated. In exit evaluations, parents asked Ladson to make The Poetry Cafe an annual event. They suggested that all students, grades K-5, study, write, and recite poetry. They also requested materials on rhyming words and other poetry to use at home. The Poetry Cafe made a real impression on students and adults, and increased their readiness to read more, find favorites, and write their own poems.

About 20 students were selected to present their poems, along with some adult poets. Their parents, carers, community partners, and about 25 teachers participated.

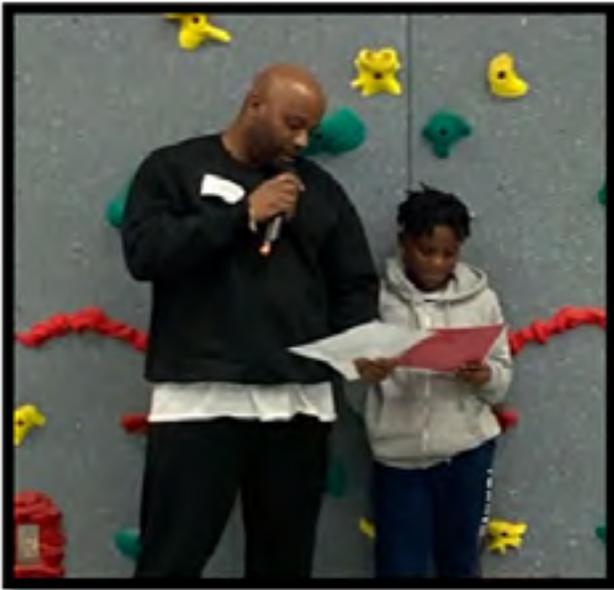
The ATP and teachers learned a lot about conducting a Poetry Cafe and the role of poetry in strengthening students' reading skills and attitudes. They helped students understand their poems in order to present the poem aloud. They learned to help children and adults take their time (without rushing) to read their poems aloud. This process seemed to increase and improve students' reading, thinking, and comprehension skills.

The principal found the presentations very touching and memorable. One police officer in the community presented a poem, noting that this "was a way for me to express what many people didn't know about me. . . . it was more than I expected." A student summed up other students' feeling, ". . . I was so happy that my mom and dad were there to hear me say my poem !"

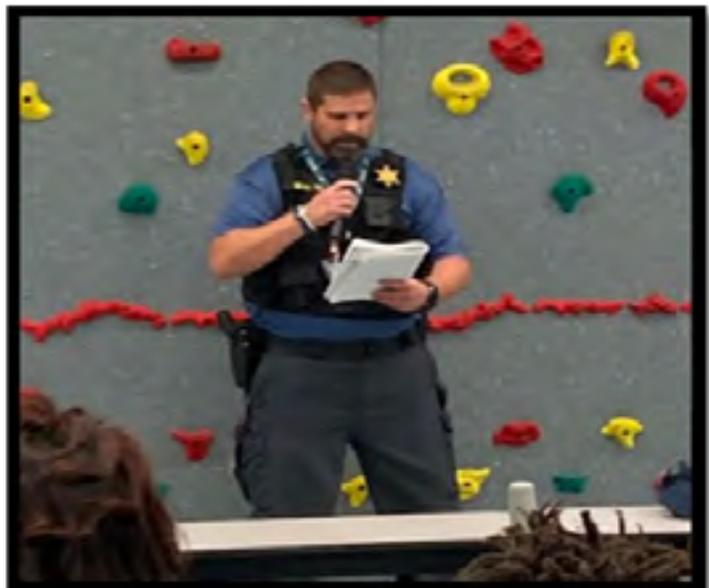
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READING & LITERACY

*THE POETRY CAFÉ
LADSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
CHARLESTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
LADSON, SC*



TYPE 4



READING & LITERACY

2

OTHER AND MULTIPLE SUBJECTS



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

FACEBOOK LIVE @ 5

A. J. LEWIS GREENVIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
COLUMBIA, SC

Facebook Live @ 5 activities provided parents at Greenview Elementary School with clear and useful information to support their child as a student. Parents could connect “live” or review the sessions at a convenient time at home, at work, in the grocery store, or in any location. All sessions were saved for viewing or reviewing.

The Parent and Family Engagement Specialist, Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), and others at Greenview knew that parents spend time on social media. They identified monthly topics that parents wanted or needed to know about. These included the school’s reading program and grade-level reading activities that parents could conduct with their child at home; STAR assessments and follow ups; self-care; Q&A with the principal; children’s mental health; and others.

The planners created flyers that were sent home and posted on ClassDoJo each month to announce the topics for discussion. The flyers also provided parents with the link to the school’s Facebook page for the live sessions. The family engagement specialist also made phone calls to parents, and posted the monthly topics on the marquee in front of the school. Live @ 5 was scheduled on the first Thursday of each month.

The principal, assistant principal, reading coach, and teachers logged in at the appointed time. Depending on the topic for the month, other specialists also attended the live sessions. They thanked the parents who logged in to meet online, and quickly shared the information on the scheduled topic.

Parents registered their attendance by typing in their child’s name and teacher, and asked questions using the chat feature. Students were welcome to attend with their parent or family partner.

To keep things interesting, community partners contributed prizes for each classroom that had the most parents attending.

Teachers and school leaders worked together to make sure the sessions were accurate and useful to parents. For example, the assistant principal worked with the school counselor on the session about students’ mental health. They also shared information from community services on the topic.

Live @ 5 used Facebook’s chat function to evaluate each session. The principal approved the concept, saying “This is an amazing way to reach parents where they are.” About 25 parents tested this approach in its first implementation. They praised the convenience. One parent wrote, “I’m always on Facebook. So this is a great idea for communicating with me in just about 15 minutes.” Another parent noted the archiving service, “I like being able to go back and view the information when I can’t log on at 5:00.”

Live @ 5 was a “real” way to communicate needed information to families, without requiring attendance at the school building. Many of the sessions will be useful to more families over the long term as they log in to the archived information. New parents whose children are enrolled at Greenview will have access to this basic information.

Interestingly, as an unexpected follow up to COVID-19 restrictions, using Facebook on a monthly schedule for live and archived information sessions may be a new and better way to “meet” with parents than asking them to come to school.

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TYPE 2

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

HAWTHORNE'S QUARANTINE ACADEMY: THE SEQUEL

HAWTHORNE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SEATTLE, WA

Hawthorne Elementary School is on a mission to increase equity and social justice in all aspects of its program for student learning and on school, family, and community partnerships. Last year, in response to COVID-19, the school created a Quarantine Academy—a series of virtual activities for parents and students. This year, the school supported Quarantine Academy: The Sequel, with in-person classes for students and some virtual and some face-to-face meetings for families, always maintaining rules for health and safety.

Q. A.-The Sequel included the Virtual Coffee Chats that parents requested. They wanted to continue virtual meetings with the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) for parents to discuss family needs for health services, ideas for partnership activities, and opportunities for families to meet and share ideas. The Sequel included six special sessions with interpreters present, as needed.

(1) Bringing Mindfulness Home: Help Students Create Balance and Reduce Stress (January). Space Between, one of Hawthorne's community partners, resumed teaching mindfulness in class to students in grades K-5. Virtual sessions for parents guided them to ask their children to demonstrate and practice the mindfulness strategies that they learned in class.

(2) Family Chess Night (February). Students and parents were learning to play chess, taught by a Hawthorne teacher. A community partner donated chess boards to families who did not have one. But, after the second virtual chess class, students asked to restart a Chess Club. This was approved by the principal.

(3) Family Literacy Art Night (March). Art materials were sent home via backpack. A teacher read the book *Do You Have a Hat?* by Eileen Spinelli, and followed up with step-by-step instructions on how to make a crazy hat reflective of the book. Students and families created and modeled their crazy hats. Said one parent,

"We loved this creative activity. Our hats are on display in our window."

(4) Family Math Cooking Night Using Math (April). This favorite activity was repeated this year with the focus on the cuisine of Puerto Rico. The lesson was conducted bilingually in Spanish and English for students and families. Ingredients were provided on the day of the session. Parents and students cooked (and then enjoyed eating) Sorullitos de Maiz (cornmeal fritters), Pollo Guisado (chicken stew), and Arroz Blanco (white rice). Students and families asked questions in English and Spanish as they cooked.

(5) All School Virtual Literacy Movie Night (June). This year, the virtual movie was based on the book, *Ferdinand*, which students read. Each student received a Hawthorne movie ticket and goodie bag of snacks to enjoy with others in the family.

(6) Celebration of Learning: Outdoor Dance Party (June). Hawthorne's ATP ended the year with a safe and friendly in-person activity for all students and families. With the PTA, the ATP conducted an outdoor party on the playground for students to dance and for families to meet to celebrate the year. The PTA identified a parent DJ for good music. Popsicles and snacks were enjoyed to end the year in a fun way.

Over 370 students and their parents participated in at least one activity in Q. A.-The Sequel, along with over 50 teachers and community members. A parent summed up many feelings: "I love when events involve both the student and families." This was another challenging year, but Hawthorne continued to step confidently on the path to partnerships.

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



TYPE 4

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

HOME LEARNING KITS FOR SCHOOL BREAKS

GEARITY, NOBLE, AND OXFORD PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS
UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS-CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OH

TYPE 4

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

Three preschool programs—all part of Invest in Children-Universal PreK-Starting Points—worked together to provide kits of activities and resources to encourage young children’s learning and development at home during school breaks. The three schools and several community partners contributed materials for the kits. The schools’ ATPs and teachers put the kits together and distributed them to students’ families in all three locations.

Each kit included a story book, materials for fine motor development (e.g., scissors, markers, crayons, glue, paper, playdoh, beads, and pipe cleaners), a Bingo Board, and easy to use instructions for activities with these supplies. The kits also included information on community events, a short article for parents, and other activities for families to do together. Some community partners added information about programs and services they were offering to students over school vacations.

The materials varied based on the time of year. For example, the winter kits included a winter-themed story book, outdoor activities in the community, and cozy activities to do at home. One activity helped students practice the Montessori “coat flip trick” that children use to put on their jackets to go outside.

Families were asked to share pictures of themselves completing some of the activities. They also returned the completed Bingo Board for a chance to win a membership to the Cleveland Zoo or Children’s Museum. Parents completed a survey on their experiences with the kits so that the ATP could make improvements in the future.

The schools first created kits along with Zoom sessions when COVID-19 closed school doors. Families needed good materials and clear guidance to enable students to learn from home. The new Home Learning Kits were a creative spin-off from the earlier versions. This year, students attended class in person, but families still needed good materials and guidance on fun-learning

activities during school breaks and vacations. The kits cost between \$20-\$100 per child, depending on the materials for the season. UPK Funds and donations covered the costs.

The Home Learning Kits enabled children to practice important preschool skills at home. Parents could read and reread the story books and have fun together with the various craft materials. The children and parents easily saw that learning was not just something to do in school, but part of everyday life at home. Parents gathered common materials and good ideas that they could use at any time at home.

The Home Learning Kits were widely distributed across the three schools to more than 235 parents and caregivers for use with more than 130 students. Parents reported that they appreciated everything the schools do to support them in school and at home. One wrote, “All of the tools, kits, and at-home activities are such a blessing. I was so stressed about Kindergarten in August. [With the summer kit, I have seen my son’s] growth in such a short amount of time. You really go above and beyond. I could never thank you enough!” Another parent affirmed, “The kits are amazing. I have enough going on and the kits help me balance work and family life during the breaks when time is of essence for me.” The schools’ ATPs agreed that this was one of the best-received family engagement activities the activities boosted students’ learning and the kits really helped parents when their children were on a school break.

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**HOME LEARNING KITS FOR SCHOOL BREAKS
GEARITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL,
NOBLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL,
AND OXFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL – PRESCHOOL
CUYAHOGA COUNTY UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN/STARTING POINT
CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OH**



TYPE 4

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

LET’S GET EVERYONE INVOLVED

FRASCH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SULPHUR, LA

Many partnership activities aim to “get everyone involved,” but that is really hard to do. Families are different from each other and live in different places. Parents have different schedules and cannot always attend events at school. At Frasch, we experienced more than one year of COVID restrictions and more than one serious hurricane. Parents could not come to meetings and activities at school. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and teachers designed a series of “send home” projects for students and parents to do together that spotlighted students’ skills in school subjects.

The three projects scheduled throughout the school year focused on different subject areas: language arts, math, and family history. The school provided card stock posters and forms for students’ artwork and writing. With a family partner, the students could make their work as simple or elaborate as they wanted. The projects were introduced to the students in class, and went home with a note of invitation and explanation for parents to participate with their child at home.

1. “You are YOUUnique” was a snowflake that students and a family partner decorated to show something unique about the family. Each grade level had a different shaped snowflake. Students drew or painted their family story, and some added glitter. Over 350 snowflakes created a lovely storm in the school hall!

2. “100 Days of Fun” asked students to do some math with their family based on the number 100. The challenge was to color, draw, or create a collage that made 100 days of fun meaningful to the student and family. Students selected many themes based on goldfish, bugs, and other things that are 100-times-fun for their family.

3. “Bloom Where You Are Planted” asked students and parents to discuss how the student had grown during the school year. Each grade level had a different flower and space to write their story. Parents helped the younger students, and

older students wrote for themselves. Students were excited to share their successes for the year and to think about the future.

The only challenge to get everyone involved was a good challenge. There was not enough space to hang all of the projects in one hallway at school. The project leaders solved the challenge by using other common spaces so that students could see their own and their classmates’ work.

The school was a very welcoming place with students’ work on display. More than 450 parents and family partners, 75 teachers, and 100 community members, and all students were part of this project. Students’ reactions were most important. A third grader summed things up, “I had so much fun doing this with my mom!” A fifth grader asked the teacher, “Did you see what my family does for Christmas? It’s on my snowflake right there.”

Parents, teachers, students, and the ATP evaluated the project after each activity. The activities did not take too much time—just good time. Some students completed their projects with parents, siblings, or other care givers. They engaged with someone at home on projects that they said were “not really like homework.”

Students benefitted academically and emotionally. Many students do not participate in family engagement activities if their parents cannot come to the school building. On these send-home projects, *everyone* really got involved.

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**LET'S GET EVERYONE INVOLVED
FRASCH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
CALCASIEU PARISH SCHOOL BOARD
SULPHUR, LA**



TYPE 4

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

PRESCHOOL SPRING CONCERT

BROOKLYN CITY SCHOOLS INTEGRATED PRESCHOOL
BROOKLYN, OH

TYPE 3

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

Brooklyn Preschool is working to engage all families in their young children’s learning activities at school and at home, and to ensure that all families are welcome as audience members (“audience volunteers”) for their children’s presentations and celebrations. The Spring Concert is a case in point. Teachers and staff welcomed parents and family members. Everyone was ready to enjoy the students’ talents.

The children performed three songs: *Five Green and Speckled Frogs*, *Head Shoulders Knees and Toes*, and *Baby Bumblebee*. The nursery rhymes not only were fun, but also required musically-timed gestures. They helped students strengthen early math readiness skills, ideas for good health, and large motor skills and coordination.

Then, students and their families traveled to three activity stations to gain skills in photography, cooking, and crafts. At one, they took family photos with a spring background. At another, they made their own “dirt” desserts following a recipe to dig a spring garden of chocolate pudding, crushed Oreos, and gummy worms. Third, they painted wind chimes with flowers and butterflies to take home. Families met and mingled with other families, teachers, and staff.

Everyone had roles to play for a successful Spring Concert. Parents and educators on the ATP worked together on plans. Teachers obtained materials, taught students the songs and movements, and set up the activity stations. Parents, teachers, and administrators facilitated the activity stations. Students, too, took responsibility for the success of the Spring Concert—as “stars” of the concert and partners with parents on activities. A small grant from the school’s managing organization, Universal Pre-Kindergarten, helped pay for the supplies for activities.

The ATP and school staff advertised the Spring Concert in several ways. In addition to signs at school and on the school’s website,

postcard invitations were sent a month in advance to all families in the students’ take-home folders. Reminders were in the *Virtual Family Weekly Newsletter*, and on the Remind App the day before and day of the concert. Reminder stickers were placed on students’ coats on the day of the concert.

A wonderful challenge was that large numbers of families attended. Nearly 50 students were supported by over 170 parents and other family members and all school staff. Seating for the concert had to be quickly extended.

Families evaluated the Spring Concert on a *Google* survey. Brooklyn Preschool serves families with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and with various family structures, including some grandparents raising grandchildren. All agreed that students were delightful singers.

Students benefitted by learning and memorizing the songs and movements, and by performing before an audience. The students followed directions in making desserts and used creative talents in painting their wind chimes. Parents and teachers celebrated their children’s learning. They benefitted from time to meet and talk with each other at one of the first school activities since COVID-19 closures.

The ATP and school leaders and teachers agreed that family engagement has many forms for contributing to children’s learning. Brooklyn Preschool conducts other family engagement activities throughout the school year during school hours and after school. They work to engage all families in ways that enhance and advance their young students’ learning and development.

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STEAM SHOWCASE AND CARNIVAL

ROWENA CHESS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PASCO, WA

Rowena Chess continued its work to improve the quality and content of communications and interactions among administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and students. The school's goal is to ensure that all students do their best and that all partners encourage and recognize students' good work. After a hard year of COVID restrictions that cancelled many family engagement activities, the school organized the STEAM Showcase and Carnival. This activity combined the school's math night, science showcase, and carnival into one celebration of students' skills in **Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics.**

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), PE teacher, and other teachers selected activities and presenters focused on STEAM subjects and arranged them in various parts of the school. Local scientists and museum staff conducted enrichment activities. In the library, scientists shared 30-minute presentations and conducted hands-on activities with students and families linked to their specialties. For example, the Columbia Mammoth McBones Dig Site showed and discussed fossils.

Other presenters from local museums, hospitals, banks, and the library linked information, examples, and activities to STEAM subjects in interesting ways. They set up booths, shared information, and engaged students and families in related activities.

The school's PEAK business partners and other community groups set up information booths to help parents learn about their services.

Middle and high school dance teams, robotics clubs, and bands were not only "entertainment," but also demonstrated how their talents linked to STEAM.

In the cafeteria, students showcased examples of their academic work, tests in STEAM subjects with art projects, science reports, math test scores, and PowerPoint presentations. It was clear that students had worked hard all year.

On the playground and outside spaces were food, entertainment, and games. Games included bowling, soccer kick, basketball throw, football throw, giant Jenga, giant Connect Four, bean bag toss, and more. Refreshments were sold by community partners including some family businesses such as a taco truck, Papa John's, and a coffee stand.

All hands were on deck to publicize the STEAM Showcase and Carnival. The planning group sent messages via ClassDoJo, robocalls, email, flyers, and various social media platforms (i.e., Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, District Website). Members of the ATP, teachers, parents, and community partners volunteered in pairs to conduct games and to monitor or conduct other stations.

Families were given passports that listed all of the games, booths, STEAM presenters, students' classroom projects, and other areas of interest. When they returned the checklists to record their visits, students received take-home Math Bags that included instructions for math games, cards, and dice to help students and parents practice and master grade-level math skills in fun ways at home.

Over 1000 students, 400 parents, 30 community members, and about 50 teachers gathered to celebrate STEAM and meet, talk, and have some fun. One parent observed, "This was the most well organized, fun carnival ever!" A teacher reported, "Our attendance was HUGE." Another teacher noted that students talked "non-stop" afterwards about how much fun they had at the event. The evidence was clear. Collaborations around STEAM led to a spectacular in-person celebration of students' learning and family fun.

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THE STARS OF CBS—A RED CARPET AFFAIR

CARL B. STOKES EARLY LEARNING CENTER
CLEVELAND, OH

TYPE 6

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

The Carl B. Stokes Early Learning Center (ELC) moved in new directions at the end of the school year when COVID-19 restrictions were lifted and things began to be “normal” again. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and school leaders changed the focus of the school’s end-of-year celebration from children performing and parents observing to a more interactive, whole-community activity.

Children were moving UP to the next grade in preschool at Stokes ELC, or were moving ON to kindergarten to start elementary school. An end-of-year celebration is an important recognition of students’ work and progress.

At Stokes, the students, families, and staff also support the community. As an end-of-year activity, each classroom at Stokes sponsored a different cleaning supply. When parents donated an item (e.g., sponges, dish soap, towels, trash bags, brushes, etc.), they were given their tickets to attend the Stars of CBS -- the end-of-year gala.

The children and families donated over 400 items of cleaning supplies, which were delivered to a local, non-profit organization that supports homeless families in the community.

To celebrate the end of the school year, the ELC planned *The Stars of CBS* (for **Carl B. Stokes**). Stokes was the first Black mayor of a major U. S. city, serving Cleveland from 1968 to 1971. The planners contacted several community partners and brought in face painters, a DJ, salsa instructors, photo booth owner, and others who were eager to work with the school, students, and families.

This was a red-carpet affair. Each child made a crown to wear and each made a musical instrument to play when they marched as a band.

Children and parents learned salsa and, then, performed their new talent. They visited the professional photo booth during the celebration and recorded their participation on the red carpet.

Each classroom had an assigned time to walk

the red carpet and to showcase every child and their accomplishments for the year. After all classes walked the red carpet, they wore their crowns and played their instruments as they marched down the hill. They followed the Shaw High School Drum Line, which featured local high school students’ talents.

More than 200 parents of just over 100 students and nearly 50 teachers and community partners participated in the Stars of CBS. A video captured all of the activities. Parents, family members, staff, and others wrote their thanks for the joy-filled, joyful end-of-year activity.

Students were aware that they were celebrating the progress they had made over the school year. Parents participated actively --not just watching the children. They salsa danced along with the students, took photos, and eagerly networked with other parents. All beamed at their children’s accomplishments.

The end-of-year celebration engaged students and inspired families in important ways. It was not lost on anyone that one day these young children might be members of the Shaw High School Drum Line and could be one of the performers or businesses in the community. On this day, however, the children were the *Stars of CBS*.

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**THE STARS OF CBS—A RED CARPET AFFAIR
CARL B. STOKES HEAD START CENTER
CUYAHOGA COUNTY UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN/STARTING POINT
CLEVELAND, OH**



TYPE 6

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

UNIQUE FAMILY TILES

MCMILLAN EARLY LEARNING CENTER
CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OH

McMillan Early Learning Center has an on-going goal to strengthen the “school family” with productive partnership practices. The COVID-19 experience—though disruptive and challenging—demonstrated that using *Zoom* helped teachers meet parents and students for extended learning activities. Often, more parents and family members participated online than when activities were conducted at school. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, and school leaders discussed a previously-in-person activity that would work well on *Zoom*.

Unique Family Tiles focused on family backgrounds and family life. Parents were guided to talk with their child about their family, and how families are alike and different from each other. The school aimed to encourage parent-child conversations to promote students’ language development, small motor skills, and creativity.

The ATP, teachers, and family advocates at the school planned well. They obtained tiles, paint brushes, and cups for red, yellow, blue, orange, green, white, and black paint. At the school, they created a special board on which all tiles would be glued for display. The school’s Family Engagement Fund covered the \$400 cost of materials for the project.

The ATP and teachers publicized the family engagement activity with flyers, posters, Class-DoJo, phone calls, text messages, student invitations, emails, and more. Teachers also talked with parents when they brought their children to school, and children reminded parents to participate.

Parents who registered picked up a Ziploc bag of supplies at school. Each bag included a ceramic tile, 2 paintbrushes, and all colors of paint. As they got into the activity, teachers, parents, and students discussed paint colors and how to mix colors. Then, they tried some mixing.

Parents and students talked about their families, what they enjoyed doing together, and what they wanted to put on their tiles. Said one child to a parent at one point, “Let me talk.” There was much to talk about. Parents and students shared their ideas with each other and with the other families working in the *Zoom* room.

About 30 students, 40 parents, and all teachers participated. Parents agreed that the activity was “fun,” “stress-free,” and “eye-opening,” as they heard their child’s ideas about how to represent their family on the tile. Parents also met other parents online as they shared their ideas and designs.

Students learned more about colors and extended their vocabularies as they talked with a parent or family partner about their families and design for the tile. They also strengthened their cooperative spirit and skills as they worked with a family partner to design and paint their tiles. One teacher reviewed, “The interactions were great!”

At the end of the *Zoom* session, families came together to share their stories and the designs of their tiles. If they were not finished, they had the weekend to complete their designs. Students returned their finished tiles to school. The tiles were glued together and the full “school-family” board was displayed at school. Parents could see the board when they brought or picked up their children. At school for many days, students enjoyed pointing out and explaining their tiles to each other. Each family had a unique family story, unique conversation, and unique tile.

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Universal PreK-Starting Point

UNIQUE FAMILY TILES
CARL B. STOKES HEAD START CENTER
CUYAHOGA COUNTY UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN/STARTING POINT
CLEVELAND, OH



TYPE 4



OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

VIRTUAL SPED NIGHT

CRAYTON MIDDLE SCHOOL
COLUMBIA, SC

Parents of students with special needs must know about the resources at school and in the community that are available to their children. They need to know how services and programs will make it easier for them to support their children’s success in school.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and teachers at Crayton organized Virtual SPED Night (**S**upporting **P**arents in **E**ducational **D**ecisions) to provide information about services and programs for their children with special needs. The school’s job coach and family engagement specialist were curious about whether parents and students were aware of the resources in the community that they could tap for needed services and learning opportunities.

The ATP, teachers, and specialists in the district discussed and listed the community agencies that should be invited to Virtual SPED Night to present information on services for students and families, including programs to help prepare students for the world of work. Calls and follow up emails identified those that could participate.

The planners selected the Richland County Library, Vocational Rehabilitation, Family Connections, SC Dept. of Employment and Workforce (SC Works) and others that had specific messages and services for families of students with special needs. Crayton worked with a partnering school—A. C. Flora—on this project. Flyers were sent to families by email and posted on the schools’ websites.

Virtual SPED Night was conducted on *Zoom*. Each organization had a time slot to explain their services and benefits. After each presentation, parents asked questions on screen or via the Chat Box. Some questions sparked deeper discussions about student development from middle to high school.

Raffle prizes were awarded to parent attendees between each presentation. The surprise gifts included a voucher for a series on resume writing,

a family game night basket, and a living-skills basket.

In evaluating the SPED Night, parents expressed “awe” and thanks for the information from formidable community agencies. Parents completed a short survey online after the activity. One parent acknowledged the importance of conducting meetings like this one. She noted, “I am happy I attended. This meeting was eye-opening because I did not know that these resources were available, nor how to obtain them for my child.” Others wrote that they were eager to access the resources that assisted their child in preparing for the “real world” and for advancing their education.

Virtual SPED Night helped improve the school’s welcoming climate because it not only gave parents needed information, but also encouraged them to voice their questions and concerns about their child’s educational struggles.

Schools are required to inform parents about the services available for students who have special educational needs. This activity, although for a small number of parents, fulfilled policy requirements in helpful and respectful ways. Crayton’s teachers and counselors believe it is important to conduct information and exchange sessions to meet and talk with students’ families in person and on *Zoom*.

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TYPE 4

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

3

HEALTH AND SAFETY



Practices for Types 1-6 in this section involve families and community partners to help students meet goals for physical and mental health, and school safety.

COOKING WITH THE GARDEN LADY

WESTERN HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LITTLE ROCK, AR

On the end-of-year survey last year, parents at Western Hills Elementary School requested cooking classes as a family engagement activity. The ATP, teachers, and school leaders planned interactive sessions for parents and students to work together in ways linked to students' school skills in math, science, and health.

The activities also were based on crops raised in the school garden. Students serve on the school garden crew. Growing crops and cooking go well together, and can help students and parents create healthy meals at home. This activity is designed to benefit families, students, and the school's partnership program for student success in school.

Teachers and the partnership facilitator took the lead in developing cooking experiences in September after the first harvest in the school garden. One community partner is the school's "Garden Lady." She also teaches Nutrition and Gardening in the *Arkansas SNAP-Ed* program at the school.

SNAP-Ed Arkansas is part of a national initiative with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and offices of Human Services and Cooperative Extension Services across states. Funds for *SNAP-Ed Arkansas* are distributed to districts and schools where at least 50% of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The program aims to increase healthy eating to reduce overweight and obesity in children and adults.

The Action Team for Partnerships and teachers at Western Hills used the ClassDoJo service and other communications to publicize the cooking classes and to encourage participation. Parents and their children registered to cook and enjoy a good lunch or dinner. For example, one recipe was for heart-healthy chicken salad using garden fresh vegetables and some fruit. The recipe also reduced the amount of mayonnaise in a typical salad to create a healthy and tasty mix.

As COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, Western Hills held the cooking activities in person at school. One teacher precooked the chicken. Students and parents followed the recipe to put all the ingredients together, including fresh bread and fresh lettuce from the school garden.

The school planned the cooking classes to highlight garden vegetables to promote good nutrition and to introduce reasonably-priced ingredients that parents could buy to prepare healthy meals and snacks for their children. *Arkansas SNAP-Ed* offers "Healthy Recipes" on its website.

The COVID carry-over limited the number of parents electing to come to the school in person. This hesitance was clear with the first cooking session. The program leaders changed schedules and conducted the second cooking class online. The number of participants increased. In-person events remain a challenge, making it necessary to continue to think about the importance of combining both in-person and online family engagement activities.

It was very clear that the parents and students who participated enjoyed preparing dinner and sitting down to enjoy their co-cooking. Parents saw that their child gained real skills in assisting with "prep" and cooking tasks. Both parents and children benefited from the shared experience. "I like it!" said one student-eater.

These tasty interactions proved again that cooking and eating products grown in the school garden is a win-win activity that benefits parents and students, and strengthens the school's partnership program.

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PARENTS' DEN

C. E. WILLIAMS NORTH MIDDLE SCHOOL
CHARLESTON, SC

TYPE 1

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Where is your *school community*? What are the community's interests in your school? C. E. Williams North (CEWN) Middle School aimed to identify a range of resources in its physical and virtual communities that could assist students and their families.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) continues to develop CEWN's program of family and community engagement. Last year, an ATP subcommittee focused on Type 1-Parenting activities and created the Parents' Den—a place for parents to meet and discuss important topics. With parents' input, the planners selected topics for monthly presentations to assist parents in supporting their middle school children's commitment to school. They printed flyers, organized sign-in sheets, and conducted other tasks to ensure that information for parents from the school, district, and community was clear and that presentations by school and community partners would go smoothly.

One theme last year was how parents may guide students to enter middle school successfully in grade 6. Teachers contributed ideas that are important for students' emotional, social, and academic success in middle school. Parents provided questions and ideas.

One focus was students' health and safety. Topics included internet safety, sexual awareness, and reducing bullying. The group made sure that students were included in these workshops with their parents and family partners.

The topical workshops benefited students and parents. For example, the discussion of internet safety helped students understand the seriousness and dangers of talking to and dealing with strangers on the internet. A discussion about good decisions vs. bad decisions, good judgement vs. bad judgement helped students see that their actions could help or harm them and their families for a long time. Parents learned about life-altering consequences of dangers on the internet, and good choices for

internet safety.

Other meetings were for parents only at their request, such as adult resume writing and interviewing skills. An interactive session was conducted with the author of the book, *Race toward Collaboration: 10 Rules for Parents to Engage with Schools*. This book guides parents to be present, talk, listen, ask questions, share goals, and never give up. Parents received a free copy of the book.

The ATP and Parents' Den leaders publicized the meetings for parents on the school website, in flyers sent home with students, in the school newsletter, principal's "callouts," and via Facebook and other social media platforms.

Parents were active participants at each session of the Parent Den. They asked questions and shared their experiences on the topics presented. They evaluated each meeting with both positive feedback and suggested improvements.

After the COVID closures and restrictions that made parent meetings and discussions difficult, the Parents' Den was a way to create a safe, responsive space for two-way communications. Starting Parents' Den was not easy because some families still were confused and concerned about rules for health and safety. About 20 parents were active participants at meetings of the Parents' Den. They suggested that attendance would increase as word spread of the value of the interactions. In fact, the ATP and school leaders noted that it might be best to permit both in-person and virtual attendance—one of the positive lessons learned during the COVID crisis.

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TAKE WHAT YOU NEED

DREHER HIGH SCHOOL
COLUMBIA, SC

Take What You Need is a project that provides high school students with school supplies and personal hygiene items that they, otherwise, could not afford to buy. Personal provisions not only give students confidence about their health and appearance, but also help improve attendance for students who might not come to school if they did not feel “ready” to interact with their teachers and friends.

Dreher is a successful urban high school that serves about 50% Black students, 40% white students, and students with other backgrounds. Success is a way of life at Dreher, but some students need personal items and school supplies to maintain good attendance and focus on learning and academic success.

A School Counselor, Social Worker, and Parent and Family Engagement Specialist saw a photo of a similar effort at another high school. They realized that students at Dreher might benefit from this service. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, and school leaders knew that some students came to the care offices and asked for personal hygiene items, and that some students lacked basic school supplies.

Take What You Need was organized with large bins of supplies that were placed in one of the school’s high-traffic areas not far from the nurse’s, attendance, and guidance offices. The space permitted some privacy for students to help themselves to needed supplies.

At a Dollar Tree, other stores, and from community donors, the project leaders selected items such as deodorant, shampoo and conditioner, soap and shower gel, lotion, tissues, hand sanitizer, toothbrushes, toothpaste, combs, and laundry detergent. School supplies included loose-leaf paper, spiral notebooks, pens, pencils, highlighters, markers, colored pencils, and folders.

Without fanfare, the planners set out the bins and supplies. A sign simply invited students to Take What You Need. The next morning a few personal care items were gone, and later in the day detergent and school supplies were picked up. It was clear that students knew they could select items without embarrassment.

Parents were included and informed about the new project via flyers and information on the school website. Parents and family partners—along with community groups—were invited to donate items if they could. They also were asked to encourage their teens to obtain items they needed. Teachers and administrators also donated items to keep supplies replenished. In addition, local faith-based groups and the students’ Kindness Club at school donated items for the project.

One challenge was that there was initial misuse of items as students used a few items to prop open doors or make a mess in a restroom. The bins were moved to a better location and there were no additional incidents. Instead of creating a big issue of the problem, the planners solved the challenge and maintained the service for students.

Overall, over 150 students benefited from obtaining needed items free and on a regular basis. Proof came from use. Students were aware that the high school cared for them beyond their test grades. One student commented, “This is great, especially the laundry detergent, a lot of us have to buy our own (detergent) and we don’t always have the money.” Students learned that they and their families were valued and “heard,” not only those who are more economically advantaged.

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**TAKE WHAT YOU NEED
DREHER HIGH SCHOOL
RICHLAND COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT ONE
COLUMBIA, SC**



Take What You Need

donation request



Take What You Need is an initiative at Dreher High School to insure our students have what they need in basic school supplies and personal care items. These items are free to our students and are placed near a main entrance so our students have easy access. Supplies are replenished daily. In order to maintain this effort we are asking for parent and community donations of the items listed below, which may be dropped off at the main office at Dreher. Please note these should be smaller sizes to allow students to discreetly take home. Travel sizes work best.

Personal Care Items	School Supplies
Deodorant	Notebook paper
Lotion	Spiral Binders
Shampoo/Conditioner	Pens
Pocket Size pkgs of tissue	Pencils
Hand Sanitizer	Highlighters
Combs	Markers
Laundry detergent	Colored pencils
Soap/Shower gel	Index cards
Toothbrushes/toothpaste	Folders
	Notebooks

Questions? Call B-Linda Rogers or Ebony Hilton 803.253.7000

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TYPE 1

HEALTH AND SAFETY

TEENS AND POLICE: A PROMISING PARTNERSHIP

WEDGEWOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL
COLUMBUS, OH

Yellow crime scene tape is not an unfamiliar sight to students at Wedgewood Middle School in Columbus, Ohio. The city has many positive qualities, but deals with the same problems as other cities. Wedgewood Middle School is working to improve school safety and students' sense of well-being. School leaders formed a partnership with the Columbus Police Department to bring officers to school to build better student and law enforcement relationships through mentoring.

In the *Teens and Police Service Academy* (T.A.P.S.), officers meet with students twice a week for eight weeks to strengthen school and community relationships. The officers and students discuss serious issues, such as bullying, drugs, truancy, and gun violence. No topic is off-limits because Wedgewood is a safe space for students. The goal is for students to learn from the police, and for police to learn from students so that non-violent solutions are used if conflicts arise.

Students are selected for T.A.P.S. by the principal, teachers, school social worker, and Family Ambassador. The students are "at risk" for different reasons, such as being bullied, problems at home, low self-confidence, failing academically. Applications are completed and approved by the child's parent. Sometimes conversations are necessary if the adults at home are apprehensive about connections with the police.

In the first year, 25 students met with their police mentors. They received additional guidance and support from their families, teachers, and others at school. For one activity, the T.A.P.S. Academy conducted a *Spirit of Giving and Safety* event in mid-November. Many partners—the school district, city officials, and related groups (e.g., Columbus Police Mounted Horse Unit, Student Success Stores, Safe Routes to Schools)—planned the program for students, families, and the community.

Attendees visited several stations on topics of community services and safety. They could leave messages for the school and for the T.A.P.S. program, pick up free gun locks, donate canned goods to community causes, receive free hygiene kits, and sign up for supplies for the fall and winter holidays. Some police officers played tag football or hacky sack with the students.

In January, students who completed the eight-week T.A.P.S. program participated in a graduation ceremony and earned a certificate of completion. Families were invited and officials representing the city, school district, and police attended. One student reported that a T.A.P.S. officer came to his basketball game when no one from his family could attend. Another student shared, that, as a young Black girl, she used to be "afraid of the police," but now feels differently due to the program. Photos and an article on the graduation were posted on the district website. Examples of T.A.P.S. programs throughout Columbus are on *YouTube*.

At the end of the year, the Wedgewood students joined others from a dozen other schools in the district for the T.A.P.S. Summit at the Police Training Academy. They participated in conflict resolution scenarios, drove an obstacle course wearing impaired-driving goggles, and competed in physical fitness challenges with police officers. One student reported that she "enjoyed learning more about what police do, including fingerprinting and identifying suspects."

Culture and Climate is an important component of Wedgewood's School Improvement Plan. The T.A.P.S. activities helped strengthen school, student, family, and community relations.

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**TOWN HALL: PROJECT SUCCESS!
COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL
RICHLAND COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT ONE
COLUMBIA, SC**

TYPE 2



HEALTH AND SAFETY



TOWN HALL: PROJECT SUCCESS!

COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL
COLUMBIA, SC

Columbia High School uses the NNPS Framework of Six Types of Engagement to develop and strengthen its program of school, family, and community partnerships. Last year, in response to a suggestion from the school’s community partner—100 Black Men of Greater Columbia—the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, and school leaders planned a new kind of Town Hall. It was titled *Project Success-Reach Back and Pull Up!*

The planners aimed to share important information on the curriculum, clubs and programs for student participation, voter registration, police and community relations, and other topics suggested by parents and students. They also aimed to show that the high school was addressing issues of inequity and injustice in school programs, class projects, clubs, and other activities to promote equity and justice for all student’s success.

The agenda, presentations, and discussions at the Town Hall focused on important issues for students’ emotional health, positive behaviors, and progress through high school. Speakers were selected who would connect well with both students and parents. For example, the speaker on Police and Community Relations traveled from Florida. He simulated a police officer stop to show students how they should respond.

To add interest and excitement, the planners included a comedian, a competition among members of the school’s dance team, and a raffle for a scholarship. Students also received rewards for answering questions at the end of each topical session.

Attendees received T-shirts, lunch, and other give-aways, which kept students and their families engaged throughout the program. Prizes included a laptop, Apple watch, and Beats headphones. Some funds for these items came from a grant from Coca-Cola earned by 100 Black Men of Columbia, and from donations from the school’s community partners.

The Town Hall was advertised with fliers, auto-dial calls, announcements, and students’ invitations to parents. Planners used *Google Doc* to track the number of registrations and materials and lunches needed. The teacher with the most students attending earned a gift card.

A tech expert was on hand to assist presenters, and a photographer documented the many segments of the gathering. Students volunteered to assist with all aspects of the program. Attendees signed a “Thank You” poster for each organization that donated food or incentives.

This was one of the first meetings after COVID-19 closures to bring parents, students, and educators together to discuss the importance of students’ education, the school, community, and their support for each other. Parents met other parents, and families started important conversations about equity and opportunities for success. More than 60 students, 60 parents, and 70 teachers and community partners participated.

Reactions to the town hall were very positive. One parent expressed the views of many others by noting, “Not only were the sessions informative on topics that both students and parents could relate too, but also the speakers were engaging—especially on with the topic of policing and inequality.”

Project Success-Reach Back and Pull Up! set a big agenda. All partners at Columbia High School worked together to make the comprehensive Town Hall engaging and informative for parents and students.

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4

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS



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

FALL FEST AND TITLE I PARENT MEETING

MORNINGSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL
NORTH CHARLESTON, SC

At Morningside Middle School, everyone is working to encourage more and better family engagement. The administrators, teachers, and Action Team for Partnerships (ATPs) at Morningside Middle agree that all families must be part of school decisions and engaged in ways that contribute to their child's education and development in early adolescence. The principal wants parents to feel welcome at the school and willing to ask questions, express concerns, and offer comments.

Early in the 2021-22 school year was a good time to bring everyone together to let families know that the school supported them socially and emotionally during their children's middle school years. Fall Fest was combined with the Annual Title I Meeting to enliven spirits and to include students in the experience. The in-person/outdoor gathering also introduced Morningside Scholars—that is the student body—and their parents to teachers and new staff members.

The back-to-school greeting-meeting was conducted on school grounds from 5 to 7 p.m. There was space for activities including Jump Castle and other games, and a picnic dinner including hot dogs, popcorn, and sno-cones.

Last year, parents reported that they needed care providers (e.g., dental and health care) at the school because, often, they could not take off time from work to take their children for needed services. So, the Fall Fest included representatives from Fetter Health and Dental Plus who explained how parents could register their children for needed vaccinations and dental services at the school. Planners also heard parents' requests for a GED program and job placement services. It was clear that Morningside leaders were listening and responding to parents' requests for services in partnership with the school.

At Fall Fest, other community groups and school programs provided information about opportunities and services for students, grade 6-8. Parents and teachers organized some

stations and volunteered to provide childcare for those who brought young children to the gathering.

The planners used all available media to publicize the fall gathering, including email, social media, phone calls, the school's website, the parent newsletter, and, of course, the student scholars-as-messengers. The ATP and staff measured the success of the meeting by the number of families attending. About 75 students, 75 parents, and over 60 teachers, administrators, and community partners participated—a good number given the prior year's COVID-cancellations.

At the start of the school year, parents, students, and teachers like to meet each other. It is risky to think that just giving students information is enough to inform all parents. It is better to share information with both parents and students about how to take advantage of programs and services at the school and in the community. It is even better to encourage conversations that lead to action.

Fall Fest showed that it is possible to combine information, resources for students and for parents, relationship-building, and fun. The planners' efforts were noticed. Parents evaluated, "Very welcoming." "This was a great turnout." and "Wow! [We're glad that] Fetter is here!"

Parents and teachers know that students—the scholars at Morningside—are not defined by the rural area around the school, but by the big dreams they have for the future. Those dreams will be reached with good partnerships of home, school, and community.

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FAMILY APPRECIATION NIGHT

HILLTONIA MIDDLE SCHOOL
COLUMBUS, OH

Some people think that teachers and parents are at odds with each other, but that is not what we hear from schools in the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). At Hilltonia Middle School, teachers and parents know that they share a common interest in student success. Parents connect with new teachers each year as children advance through the grades and move through developmental stages from early childhood through adolescence.

Hilltonia serves students with diverse racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, but all students are eligible for free lunch. The school has a Parent Ambassador on campus to connect families with school services such as the school counselor or social worker, or to community services that families need. The Parent Ambassador also works to keep two-way communications open between home and school. The school encourages parents to communicate with their children's teachers and other members of the staff.

Hilltonia meets the requirements in Title I to communicate with parents about teachers' qualifications, state learning standards, school assessments, and about all school programs that are available to students. This information is provided to all families, and parents are invited to send in questions at any time. The Action Team for Partnerships, Parent Ambassador, and teachers wondered: Did parents know they were really appreciated?

Teachers wanted to do something to make clear that everyone at the school appreciated parents for the on-going care and assistance they gave to their children every day through the middle grades. The school made annual awards to students for their accomplishments. They wanted to recognize students' parents and families for supporting student attendance and student success in school. Students, too, thought this was a good idea. They invited their parent or guardian to attend Family Appreciation Night.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and colleagues organized the family engagement activity. The team obtained the principal's approval, confirmed the date, surveyed families about preferred locations, planned activities, selected refreshments, and prepared award certificates. The planners recruited teachers and staff to help at the event. Families were invited through flyers, text messages, email, phone calls, and Google Classroom. One challenge the school faced was the need to update parents' email, text, phone, and social media addresses that were out of date. Some of these contacts changed or were incorrect in school records.

It was clear that parents appreciated that the school recognized that they were partners in education with the care, love, and supervision they give to their middle schoolers. The message of the evening from the school was "We know. We recognize. We appreciate." One parent commented, "It was really nice that you all did this for the families"

This was a good idea with room to grow. It was the first meeting at the school building since the COVID-19 closures. In reviewing Family Appreciation Night, the ATP observed that students benefited by seeing their teachers and parents communicating about the student's success. However, there were too few parents in attendance. The team agreed that next time they need to start earlier to plan, promote, and conduct this activity, and confirm parents' attendance. They also plan to involve several community partners to contribute services, resources, gifts, or other recognition to parents. One team member expressed everyone's shared conclusion, "It felt good to give our families a day of recognition."

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PARENTS' BRUNCH WEEK

NORTH CHARLESTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
NORTH CHARLESTON, SC

North Charleston Elementary School's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and all teachers wanted to meet and talk with parents about all children's progress toward important learning goals. They also wanted to ask parents to support and assist students during the upcoming period of standardized testing. But this wasn't a one-way "ask." The ATP and teachers also wanted to hear parents' questions about the school, the assessment program, and other topics on their minds. They agreed that if the school was working to improve student success in general, and test scores in particular, they needed to start with parents as partners.

Parents' Brunch Week was designed as a relaxed and friendly way to meet and hear from all parents. Each day of the week was dedicated to parents from different grade levels (e.g., Monday for kindergarten and grade 1 parents; Tuesday for grade 2 parents; and so on through the week). Parents with more than one student at the school could choose which day to come to brunch with other parents. A different brunch menu was served each day of the week.

The administrators, teachers, and staff gathered data and resources to share with each group of "brunchers." Each day, the principal greeted parents, presented a PowerPoint on the school's goals for student success, the prior year's test results, grade level curricular units, the school's schedule for annual standardized tests for each grade level, and more. The principal is known for capitalizing on everyday learning opportunities and for empowering parents to use games at home to prepare children to get excited about the world around them and to succeed in school.

Each Parents' Brunch also was a forum for parents to connect with each other, share ideas, and consider ways to support their children's learning at home. They also were given information on how to become more involved in the

NCES community in volunteer and other opportunities. The school serves families with diverse racial and cultural backgrounds, but all parents at NCES want their children to do their best in school.

The ATP publicized Parents' Brunch Week using face-to-face, email, text messages, the school's website, Facebook, and flyers that students took home. The brunches were well attended with more than 80 parents participating. They gathered ideas for activities to do with their children at home, met other parents, and heard some thought-provoking ideas to better understand the school. A few community partners explained their services that were available to all families, and how they can assist parents with their children's educational, social, and emotional development.

On exit surveys, parents commented on the welcoming climate, and appreciated the data on student achievement factors. They welcomed the ideas on how to be more actively engaged in their students' education. One parent wrote, "Wonderful job keeping parents involved and informed." Another reflected, "This is my son's last year at this school, but I have enjoyed the experiences and would not change anything."

Even though Parents' Brunch Week was a school "meeting," the relaxed atmosphere encouraged two-way conversations between parents and teachers. It was clear that parents' voices are important at NCES and that parents' voices were being heard. Parents agreed this was a good way to bring "the village" together to meet, listen, ask questions, and support the school and its goals for student success.

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**PARENT'S BRUNCH WEEK
NORTH CHARLESTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
CHARLESTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
NORTH CHARLESTON, SC**

TYPE 2



CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS



SPRING FLING

ORCHARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
RICHLAND, WA

For the first time in over two years, Orchard Elementary School invited parents to come in person to celebrate the school and to strengthen the school community. The Spring Fling supported school goals to engage families with activities that activated Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision Making, and Collaborating with the Community in the NNPS Framework of Six Types of Involvement.

Orchard's guiding motto has always been *Growing Passionate Minds and Compassionate Hearts*. The PTO, Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), and teachers conduct all activities with these important qualities in mind. The PTO suggested that it was time to do something BIG. The Spring Fling was planned to enable parents, students, teachers, and administrators to meet and talk with each other once again, after two years of virtual meetings and digital activities.

Parent volunteers mobilized vendors and other volunteers for the Spring Fling. The district's food service provided free meals for all students. The PTO paid for adult meals and ice cream desserts for everyone. The PTO and community donations covered the \$700 cost of the Spring Fling. A grocery store donated supplies. A local DJ added lights and music for the Spring Fling Dance Party.

Spring Fling was scheduled outside on school grounds for 2 hours (4:30-6:30 p.m.) with all families. Alerted with various print materials and social media, parents used a QR code to register to attend, choose dinner, and report the number of meals needed for their family. There were picnic areas for eating dinner. A dance area was placed far enough away from the picnickers to enable families to talk and meet with teachers and other families.

Over the past two years, some new parents, students, and teachers entered the school and had never met their children's teachers or other parents face-to-face.

Activities included space for sidewalk chalk

drawings, information about the school, and services in the community. Teachers, administrators, staff, and PTO leaders took time to welcome all families, discuss their questions, and enjoy being "back" as a school community. Volunteers were assigned short shifts to give them time to enjoy dinner with their own families.

Activities were limited this year, as the goal was clearly on creating a welcome-back school climate. In the future, information on school programs and student presentations on their work and projects may be added.

Over 150 students and 150 parents attended Spring Fling, along with 30 teachers, staff, and community partners. The purpose of gathering was not lost on attendees. One parent noted "I loved seeing our community together." A teacher summed up the importance of the Spring Fling, "I loved seeing so many of my students' families that I have not seen in person in [two] years." Another parent reflected, "[This] reminded us of how important it is to be an active member of our school community."

Even students were affected by the COVID constraints. Some had never experienced the fun of having a parent come to their school. These attachments are important influences on student attendance, behavior, and achievements.

There were no presentations or meetings for parents to listen to others. The free dinner enabled all parents to attend without concerns about costs. It was just a good time to create a welcoming climate and strengthen the school community.

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**SPRING FLING
ORCHARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
RICHLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT #400
RICHLAND, WA**

TYPE 5



CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS



THRIVE WITH THE HIVE

HAND MIDDLE SCHOOL
COLUMBIA, SC

At Hand Middle School, the principal wanted to bring together all of the school’s partners—students, parents, teachers, and others—to strengthen school, family, and community connections. The school is Home of the Hornets, so everyone came to Thrive with the Hive. Having an outdoor gathering after all of the COVID closures made good sense. Activities were organized on the parking lot, athletic field, and basketball court.

On the parking lot, students and families found Score Four, Uno, Jenga and Corn Hole Toss. There also were two food trucks, from the community, a game truck, and a 360-degree photo booth. Community groups and agencies distributed information on their services and on summer opportunities for students.

Other informational activities included a state survey of parents with a gift card for participants, and a counselor to help students select their elective classes for the 2022-23 school year.

A pick-up basketball game was ongoing on the court. There was a performance area where Hand students from band, orchestra, theater, and chorus performed. Students from a feeder elementary school also performed, along with the high school’s ROTC Drill Team. Participants were encouraged to bring a picnic blanket or chair to watch the field games and to enjoy the students’ music, dance, and color guard performances.

On the field were Tug of War and Hula Hoop spaces. A DJ livened up the space with music. There was a \$3000 budget and many donations were secured. Some games were borrowed and others were already at the school.

This year, administrators took the lead for Thrive with the Hive with an active planning committee from all groups in the school. Students volunteered to greet and assist families and assisted with the games. A nearby church volunteered its parking lot as needed.

Next year, the School Improvement Council and Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) will coordinate this very popular celebration of partnerships.

Thrive with the Hive was promoted using social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook), email, flyers, auto calls, the school marquee, and the Hand and district websites. The week prior to Thrive with the Hive, the administration held *Let’s Talk @ The Hive*—an online meeting where parents from each grade level were invited for an unscripted conversation with the principal and other school leaders. Verbal invitations were extended to the parents who attended the discussion.

The planning group evaluated Thrive with the Hive based on the number of participants and their comments. It was the first large gathering to celebrate the school and each other since COVID closed doors in March 2020. Words like “awesome” and “amazing” were common descriptors. One attendee wrote, “I am speaking as a parent and 5th grade teacher in our cluster. Our students from Rosewood felt so honored to be a part of the program. Thank you and your student ambassadors for a wonderful event!”

Everyone was ready to meet, greet, and play together. The new sixth graders at the school were particularly eager to experience the true spirit of the school. More than 125 students, 100 parents, 40 teachers, and 45 members of the community came together for a beautiful spring evening to have fun, play games, complete selections of electives, and enjoy student performances. This hive was buzzing!

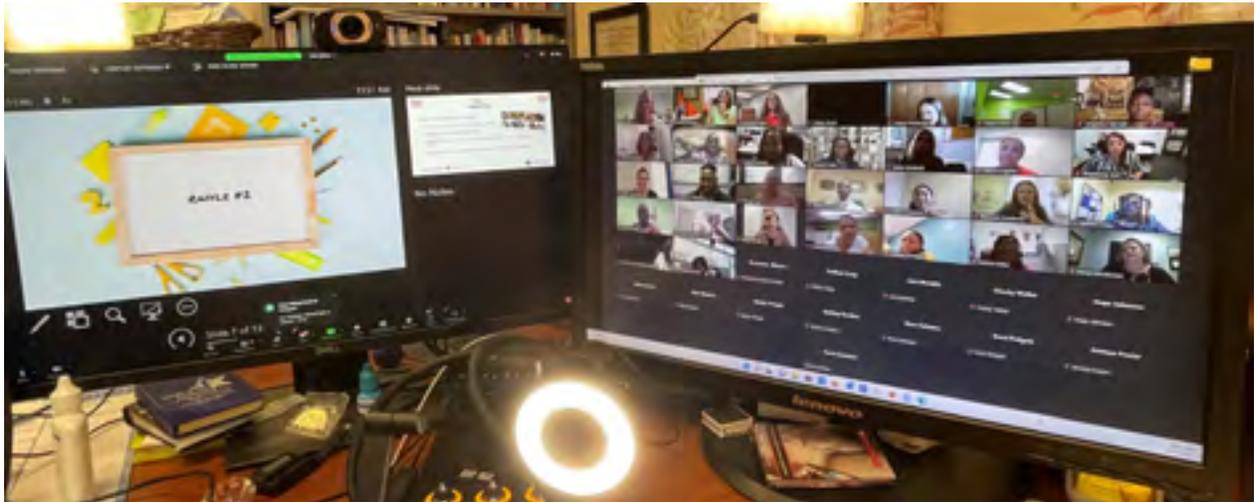
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TYPE 2

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

5

DISTRICT AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP



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

ANNUAL VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION CELEBRATION

WINDSOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WINDSOR, CT

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

April is Volunteer Recognition Month across the country. Windsor Public Schools planned to recognize the volunteers in all schools in the district. In the past year, many parents, family members, and community partners volunteered to support their schools and students in various ways. They participated even with on-going COVID-19 concerns and constraints.

The district's Office of Family and Community Partnerships works to engage families and community members to support preschools, elementary, middle, and high schools, and to increase positive results for students. This includes identifying volunteers to help teachers and conducting activities to advance students' academic achievement, positive behavior, and good attendance. Schools also welcome mentors from the business community. Many mentors guide students to plan post-secondary pathways. It was time to recognize and honor all who contributed to the success of Windsor's schools and students.

In January, planners outlined steps for a celebration of volunteers. They selected the local Marriott for the large gathering. They chose a date, designed invitations, signs, badges, registration forms, background music, and certificates for volunteers. They ordered gifts for all volunteers.

The planners used multiple strategies to invite and remind honorees, including text messages, emails, follow up phone calls and various social media platforms. The district obtained a grant from a local foundation to cover costs of about \$9000.

The well-planned recognition ceremony included a looping photo display of volunteers at their school. A district communications staff member took photos to post on district social media. Students in the afterschool program created center pieces for the tables. Game stations were set up for attendees to enjoy.

Some families still were concerned about COVID-19 safety measures, and did not attend the large group meeting. Certificates and notes were sent to those who could not attend to make sure they knew that they were appreciated and not forgotten.

The superintendent and district leader for partnerships welcomed everyone to the celebration. A volunteer mentor gave the Keynote on his experiences as a volunteer in the district. Dinner was served to the volunteers and their families. Over 100 volunteers, mentors, students, teachers, and district leaders attended the gala. The local paper, *Windsor Journal Weekly*, covered the gala with a front-page story (May 6) and several photos. The reporter explained that the volunteers "add value and vibrancy to our learning communities."

The district developed a 5-question survey for feedback from attendees. One dad who volunteers with the WATCH D.O.G.S (Dads of Great Students) program noted, "I am so grateful [that our school] gives parents and community members the opportunity to come into school. It has been rewarding and enlightening." A district leader reflected, "I want [you to know] how wonderful last night's event was. The volunteers were excited to be recognized."

There are other benefits to a sincere celebration. The district expects that the volunteers' satisfaction will help attract other volunteers over time.

This was the first official district dinner for volunteers—now being called "annual." Of course, they were honored to be honored. Volunteers give freely of their time and talents, but it is very nice to receive an end-of-year "Thank You!"

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CHECK & CONNECT WITH ALL FAMILIES (FAMILY AMBASSADORS)

COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS
COLUMBUS, OH

One of many lessons from the pandemic is that family life can be very fragile. Student and family needs must be identified and addressed to strengthen student learning and success in school. This process may begin with friendly and helpful connections between home and school. This is where Columbus City Schools' Family Ambassadors are having an impact in schools throughout the district.

Check and Connect phone calls started when schools were closed by COVID-19 and students had to learn from home. Family Ambassadors made calls for teachers to every family to establish two-way communications to check the well-being of families and students, and help parents solve food, health, technology, and education challenges.

The connections were important and effective. Over the past two years, Family Ambassadors were hired to assist all 110 schools in the district, with additional Spanish-speaking Ambassadors in some schools. Family Ambassadors are paid a stipend of \$25/hour for about 20 hours per week. They make about 20-25 calls to parents each week. They also are part of their school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) to continually improve the school's plans and practices to engage all families as partners with educators on children's education.

The Family Ambassadors are well-trained with a script and information on resources before starting calls with families. They, then, can initiate stress-free conversations, identify needs, and provide information and links to services listed in the district's Virtual Resource Center. If families have no questions or requests for assistance, the Ambassadors provide helpful information about the school's up-coming family engagement activities.

Principals provide a list of students' families who would most benefit from this kind of personal and caring contact.

The district Engagement Team recruits, trains, and monitors Family Ambassadors across all schools. Last year, Ambassadors totaled over 18,000 calls with parents. District leaders use the aggregated data to identify services and resources in the district and community to help solve family requests.

For example, last year, the largest number of parents wanted assistance with food or clothing for students, and with needed technology when students were learning from home. Some asked for extra academic support to improve students' skills and learning. Others had specific questions about their school's Parent Portal, how to help with homework, and where to find afterschool programs, tutoring services, or summer school.

One school's Family Ambassador summed up the experiences of others: "What I've noticed is that families are appreciative of my taking time to ask how they are doing and then leaving space. I don't try to fill it. I listen. ... I have been able to provide resource information for families they didn't know existed."

An important result of the Family Ambassadors' interactions has been to reinforce the fact that just because a parent can't attend a school meeting does not mean they are not engaged in their child's education in important ways. This reinforces the NNPS watchwords: "Know your families!" The program also influenced the district's new five-year strategic plan to ensure that all schools develop trust and strong relationships with all families. District leaders want every school in Columbus City Schools to be a welcoming place where educators and parents work together to help all students meet their full potential.

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DESTINATION COMMUNICATION: CONNECTING WITH FAMILIES

PASCO SCHOOL DISTRICT
PASCO, WA

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

Pasco School District’s Community Outreach Supervisor and ATP leaders planned a series of quarterly ATP Cluster Trainings to help team chairpersons consider how to communicate successfully with all students’ families. The district’s goal is to help all families understand that they are important partners in their children’s education and welcome at their children’s school. This is an serious challenge in Pasco, where over 70% of families speak Spanish.

At the first quarterly Cluster Training, district leaders placed posters around the room for ATP chairs to indicate their current communication strategies (e.g., radio, print, TV, and district social media). ATP chairs placed sticky dots on the posters to show how they provide news and notices to and obtain information from families. The result was a visual display of communication strategies across schools.

Then, district leaders and ATP chairs created a short electronic survey in English and Spanish for all schools to ask parents about their preferred communication technologies via radio, print, TV, and the district’s social media platforms. The survey explained to parents in English and Spanish: “This survey will assist us in knowing how you best like to obtain your school updates. Thank you so much for taking time to fill out this 2-minute short survey.” There were just four questions about parents’ preferred media, including the district’s options for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, ClassDoJO, their child’s school’s website, robo calls, and YouTube.

At the next quarterly Cluster Training, the ATP chairs examined the survey results. The responses confirmed, for example, that the district’s Spanish speaking community listens to Spanish radio and watches Spanish TV (e.g., Univision and Telemundo). Parents also reported that ClassDoJo, Facebook, and text messaging are the best ways to communicate with them about school information.

Also, the district leaders invited one of the ATP Chairs—a parent who had served on the Parent Advisory Council and volunteered at her children’s schools—to share her experiences in receiving communications from the schools. She discussed how school leaders, ATPs, and parent groups shared information successfully with all parents, including using live radio and TV.

She challenged other ATP chairpersons to use live radio and TV options, and bring their examples to share with others at a future ATP Cluster Training. She also reminded them to include their PEAK business and community partners in their communications about the school.

At the final quarterly ATP Cluster Training for the year, district leaders invited Pasco’s new Public Affairs Director to discuss her work. She used a similar survey to learn how parents prefer to receive information from the district. The Community Outreach Supervisor reported the results of the 2021-22 Community Communication Short Survey.

The series of ATP Cluster Trainings made clear that it not only is important for each school to know what strategies are available to connect with parents, but also the parents’ preferences for receiving information about their children’s work and progress and school activities. The goal is to reach all parents, not to simply use all available communication strategies. Ultimately, Pasco leaders and ATP Chairs recognized that this information will benefit students most. When parents are informed, aware, and active partners in their child’s education, students do better in school.

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FAMILY & COMMUNITY CULTURAL DIVERSITY APPRECIATION DAY

SAGINAW PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT
SAGINAW, MI

The Saginaw School District has a guiding motto: Keep Kids First. This means engaging school, family, and community partners in ways that support student success in school. After the COVID-19 closures and disruptions, school doors reopened for family engagement activities. It was time for a purposeful celebration of “us.”

District leaders worked with schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) and other school and community leaders to plan a districtwide gathering in the gym at Arthur Hill High School—a good place for families to share food and fun. The planners—with many volunteers—created a world-cultures theme with music from many nations, 100 international flags in the gym, and food tables identifying countries of origin.

An African Drums group in the community performed rhythms and dances. More than 30 faith-based and other community groups shared information on their services. Many donated gifts and games for students and families. The stations around the room featured the racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds of the district’s diverse families. Each station engaged students and families in learning about the home countries of the people in Saginaw. Students experienced the interesting, valuable, and “tasty” diversities in the room.

Saginaw’s district Superintendent is a strong supporter of returning to active partnerships, after the COVID crisis. This required clear plans and approvals to open a school building and organize security, custodial, technology, and other services for a districtwide gathering. The SPSD Culinary Manager arranged a multicultural menu to represent the theme for the day.

District and school leaders and teams advertised the celebration of Saginaw’s diversities via phone calls, flyers, Facebook, robocalls, and posters in local businesses.

About 250 students, parents, educators, and community groups gathered to celebrate their individual strengths and to appreciate the differences that strengthen this community.

Community Cultural Diversity Explosion Appreciation Day was conducted from about 11 a.m. through the afternoon. Community partners signed in to set up their stations. Attendees signed in to record their participation. Everyone visited the community displays, tasted multicultural foods, and danced to the beat of the African Drums. They played international games, took turns learning African Drum rhythms, and explored the languages and native costumes from various countries. In other words, “mission accomplished.”

Surveys were distributed to parents for their reactions and suggestions. In addition to many thanks for the first meeting in person in more than two years, several parents indicated they wanted to help plan other activities with their schools and with the district. Attendees singled out different parts of the Community Cultural Diversity Explosion Appreciation Day for praise. A parent liaison from one school commended the planners for the food and “awesome” raffle gifts. A community judge enjoyed the “fantastic entertainment” and the talent in Saginaw. A reporter from a popular radio station contacted the superintendent and family engagement leader for an interview about “the magnificent Family & Community Cultural Diversity Appreciation Day Districtwide Event”.

The celebration of Saginaw’s cultural diversity was just the thing to spotlight the richness of student and family backgrounds and to focus attention on the district goal to “increase family and community engagement for the betterment of the youth and families we service.”

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DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

LEARNING & GROWING THROUGH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CHARLESTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
CHARLESTON, SC

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

How do school team members and other parent leaders learn about the people and services available in their districts? The best way is for people to talk with each other and share useful information about what is happening in their departments and schools. To promote these exchanges, Charleston County School District and its schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) met monthly on *Zoom*. Additional professional development sessions were conducted with members of the Title I Parent Advisory Council (PAC).

Gathering good information on available resources is one form of professional development that has immediate applications. Representatives of school-based ATPs heard from district leaders in the Department of Federal Programs and others about programs and services that would assist their schools. For example, ESOL Parent Advocates presented information on best practices to support multilingual students and families at each of the monthly sessions.

In addition, school team members were spotlighted at each meeting to showcase one of their family engagement activities. In this way, district leaders learned about the efforts, challenges, and successes with family engagement in their schools. Topics included Title I requirements for family engagement, student and family needs, information on state offices and resources for family engagement, and two book-study selections (*Mindset* by Dweck and *Powerful Partnerships: A Teacher's Guide to Engaging Families for Student Success* by Mapp, Carver, & Lander).

The Title I Parent & Family Engagement Coordinator planned the year's professional development calendar in collaboration with colleagues in the Department of Federal Programs and with Title I Parent Advisory Council (PAC) board members.

The Coordinator invited colleagues across district departments and community organizations to present their information and services

at scheduled sessions. Parent leaders, school and district staff, teachers, families, ATP members, and community and business partners were invited to participate in the professional development sessions.

The goal for all workshops was—and remains—to enable every school in the district to conduct effective and equitable programs of school, family, and community partnerships that support students academically, behaviorally, and emotionally. This is a huge agenda that can only be fulfilled with on-going professional development and support.

Over 60 teachers and administrators, more than 75 parents, and numerous district leaders participated over the 2021-22 school year. Each workshop was evaluated individually, and the series was evaluated mid-year and at the end of the school year. In general, members of school ATPs appreciated the focus on sharing best practices of family engagement, along with information on the resources available in the district and community.

One challenge was that COVID-19 restrictions limited professional development to the online format. School ATPs and district Board members wanted to meet each other and network in person. Good use of *Zoom* solved some of these challenges by providing attendees to meet and chat with interactive activities. There is no doubt, however, that people are eager to have options to conduct both in-person and online professional development workshops and meetings in the next school year.

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PARTNERING TO ENRICH THE LIVES OF EAU CLAIRE CLUSTER FAMILIES

RICHLAND COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT ONE
COLUMBIA, SC

Communities are complex places. Many families want to know, “What services are here to support student learning and to help my family when the need arises?” The leaders for family and community engagement in Richland County School District One worked with school and community partners to conduct meetings with parents and students at schools in the Eau Claire Cluster to address parents’ questions about community and district services.

One very active and valued community partner—the Junior League of Columbia (JLC)—stepped up to help organize sessions to address families’ questions about community programs and services. Also, schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) joined the planning group. They identified partnership schools, locations, and dates for the gatherings. Some in-person, online, and “drive thru” activities were scheduled. The planners created flyers and invited families to attend via the schools’ auto-dial, email, text message, and telephone systems.

The six partner schools in the Eau Claire Cluster serve about 1500 students and their families. In these schools, from 56%-81% of the families live below the federal poverty level. Parents had questions about specific services in the community. In November, two schools were invited to focus with school and community partners on Dental Hygiene. In February, two schools focused on Literacy Learning, and in April, two schools focused on Student and Family Fitness.

Each meeting engaged students and families in activities and provided packets of useful materials.

- At the meeting on Dental Hygiene, students and parents received toothbrushes, floss, mouthwash, and information about dental care and services in the community.

- At the meeting on Reading and Literacy, students received books at their reading levels and packets of ideas and activities to increase reading skills at home.

- At the meeting on Physical Fitness, students and parents received a fitness calendar of family-friendly activities and equipment to help them keep moving and practice good health habits.

At all meetings, parents and students received dinner from district-partner *Chick-Fil-A*, and a COVID-19 mask. Community partners donated valued door prizes to spark parents’ interest and enthusiasm. The JLC and community groups donated goods valued at about \$15,000 (i.e., about \$5000 for each of the three topical meetings).

The district and community leaders met after each activity to debrief. Across the three events, about 400 parents and more than 500 students attended. It was clear that attendees appreciated the activities and information they received. Principals at the partnering schools expressed gratitude. One principal at the Literacy gathering reported, “The drive-thru Books and Dinner event was a complete success. All students had a good meal and a bag full of wonderful books!” On the Fitness focus, a principal praised the useful equipment given to each student and the family, “This event motivated students and parents to engage in more physical activity, and encouraged families to establish a fitness routine.”

It is important for districts and schools to learn about and meet the needs of students and families for information on services in the district and in the community for students’ academic support, medical care, and well-being. Parents in the Eau Claire Cluster of schools in Richland County School District One expressed their needs and interests in improving and enriching their children’s academic progress and healthy development. The district and its community partners listened and responded to assist these families and students in important ways.

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DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

SUMMER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: ENGAGING FAMILIES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT
LITTLE ROCK, AR

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

Arkansas requires certified educators to obtain at least two hours of professional development on parent and family engagement every four years. The goal is to ensure that all teachers and administrators understand and have skills in conducting effective and equitable parent involvement strategies. Administrators are guided to set expectations for a welcoming climate of school, family, and community partnerships and active parent participation. About 30 states and the District of Columbia have similar requirements for periodic professional development on parent and family engagement.

This year, LRSD provided opportunities for educators to earn the required credits at the district's summer professional development conference. They could choose to attend a two-hour workshop on two different days of the conference.

LRSD's Parent and Family Engagement Specialist contacted NNPS to conduct the PD workshop for its educators and staff. NNPS Senior Facilitator, Brenda Thomas, worked with LRSD leaders to select the topics to address in the workshops.

In each session, the LRSD leaders welcomed attendees and explained the agenda. Attendees were provided an overview of NNPS and ideas for strategies that teachers could use, immediately, in their own practice to connect with parents in positive ways. The sessions included hands-on activities and Zoom Polls to keep attendees actively engaged. A Q & A session followed for attendees to raise questions or offer comments.

The workshops were online, but the LRSD Parent and Family Engagement Specialist created interesting "in-person" conditions by inviting teachers to come to the Parent and Family Center to attend the training together. Laptops, ear buds, and snacks were provided to create something of a typical conference environment.

In addition, the LRSD leader for partnerships wanted all teachers and administrators at the summer conference to know how the district and many schools were working with NNPS to use research-based strategies to plan, implement, and continually improve their partnership programs and practices. She also wanted the summer conference attendees to know how their schools and they, themselves, can participate in the Little Rock and national networks.

The district publicized the opportunity to earn the required parent and family engagement credits at the summer conference on the official district calendar and in other communications with all educators. Over 30 teachers, administrators, and staff participated in one of the workshops to earn the credits they needed.

It was clear that active learning about family and community engagement was promoted at the summer workshops. A principal commented, "Thank you for this PD. I learned useful strategies that my school can use." A second grade teacher reported, "I did not realize how significantly important the work is of my school's parent facilitator, how NNPS is a national organization, and how LRSD is doing important work on this agenda. I plan to offer my assistance by serving on my schools' committee/action team." Another educator evaluated, "The NNPS Facilitator was very knowledgeable. I like the way the facilitator pushed for more engagement amongst the virtual attendees."

The summer workshops did double duty. Attendees gained examples of research-based practices of family engagement that they could use in their own schools and classrooms. They also become aware of the good work that LRSD is doing as a member of NNPS and its national network.

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TITLE I FAMILIES IN TRANSITION (FIT): SUMMER CARE PACKAGE

LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT
LITTLE ROCK, AR

Little Rock School District (LRSD) organized and distributed a Summer Care Package to support homeless families and those in transition throughout the district. Leaders in several departments including Title I Families in Transition (FIT), Bilingual Family Services, and Child Nutrition worked together before, during, and after distributing boxes of useful goods and information to parents and students.

The students and families in FIT include those who are relocating and those still homeless. Although it is possible to connect with families who live in local shelters, others are more difficult to reach. Some change email addresses and phone numbers several times. By working with school counselors, the leaders of the Summer Care Package project had direct contact with LRSD students, who, then, helped connect them with parents to pick up the summer supplies.

During COVID-19 closures, the district had difficulties tracking FIT and homeless families. District leaders wanted to stabilize contact with these families and help them with needed supplies and services through the summer. This included helping older students in the FIT program to enroll in summer school for credit-recovery courses so that they would graduate from high school.

The Summer Care Package project started with a survey of homeless families using ParentLink—the district’s telephone, email, and text message system—about items and information they needed most during the summer. Then, volunteers from many district departments helped gather items and pack boxes, creating about 200 Summer Care Packages for students and families. The district’s custodial staff also participated by setting up the distribution area. The FIT staff, social worker interns, and others contacted parents individually about picking up the Care Packages. In LRSD, some families in the FIT program speak languages other than English. They were assisted by the district bilingual staff who served as translators and interpreters as needed. The Bilingual Family

Services Department provided translations for messages with parents and for written materials that were included in the boxes.

Summer Care Packages included information on locations for summer meals provided by Central Arkansas Library System (CALs) Be Mighty Program, a list of summer activities for students, and services for summer learning. A business partner donated t-shirts for parents and each child. The boxes also contained school supplies, personal hygiene items, non-perishable foods. There also were books for students to read over the summer, based on their reading and grade levels, and educational games for students and families to play. CALs provided students with a mini-garden kit, Grow & See, to encourage students to grow their own herbs and vegetables for healthy eating. Some costs were covered by Title I and by funds in the American Rescue Plan.

With shared leadership and many volunteers, the project delivered over 170 of the boxes to the FIT families and students. School Counselors, parent liaisons, and other staff delivered Care Packages that were not picked up. Some thought it was “impossible” to connect with homeless families for this project. However, district leaders were determined to communicate with and serve these students and families. One parent’s reactions were echoed by the others, “Oh, this is great! I had no idea the district provided this service, I appreciate it, thank you so much.”

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

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HOW REGIONAL COACHES SUPPORT PARTNERSHIP DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS

OHIO STATEWIDE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CENTER
COLUMBUS, OH

The Ohio Department of Education supports 16 regions in the state that provide all districts and schools with professional development on school improvement and student learning. In the Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center (OhSFEC), each region has a Regional Coach who guides districts to help their schools organize effective programs of school, family, and community partnerships. Each school forms an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), writes an annual plan, implements its plan, and assesses progress. All regions, districts, and schools in the project are active members of NNPS.

Last year, the Regional Coaches attended all OhSFEC and NNPS workshops to learn to guide their district leaders for partnerships to work with their own schools. OhSFEC plays imperative coordinating roles to ensure that all 16 Regional Coaches work effectively with their districts and schools. OhSFEC conducts monthly *Colleagues Connect* meetings and issues a monthly newsletter, *Ohio Partnership Schools*, with ideas for Regional Coaches to share with their districts and schools.

At *Colleague Connect* meetings there is time to share information and address questions. For example, a district leader asked for ideas to find time for meetings—always a challenge in districts and schools. At another meeting, district leaders explained how their Regional Coaches helped them integrate practices of family engagement with other school improvement initiatives, such as PBIS, diversity policies, reading and math instruction, and improving student attendance.

The Regional Coaches also meet monthly with their own district leaders to address questions, solve challenges, and share best practices. In this way, district leaders continue to help schools improve their programs of family and community engagement.

The Regional Coaches help collect district leaders' *Leadership Plans for Partnerships* and schools' *One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships*. OhSFEC uses these for to monitor progress in regions, districts, and schools across the state. Regional Coaches also submit quarterly Coaching Logs to record meetings with district leaders and to request resources from OhSFEC.

By starting with the state's 16 Regional Coaches for Partnerships, OhSFEC is "growing" a statewide network by scaling up the number of districts and schools in each region that organize and continually improve research-based partnership programs for student success. NNPS calls this approach a "leadership ladder." That is, OhSFEC guides its Regional Coaches who guide their district leaders who guide their schools' Action Teams for Partnerships to plan, implement, evaluate, and continually improve partnerships with all students' families in ways that contribute to student success in school.

Through the 2021-22 schoolyear, Regional Coaches guided 46 district leaders worked with over 90 schools to help them improve their partnership programs. OhSFEC evaluates the work and progress of its regions, districts, and schools to learn how programs improve over time, and to identify resources that districts and schools need from OhSFEC.

OhSFEC leaders drew from studies of Implementation Science showing that "coaching" can make a difference in improving schools. Just as states have coaches in many subject areas (e.g., reading coaches, math coaches), this project shows that Regional Coaches are important leaders for guiding districts and schools across the state to implement and continually improve programs and practices of partnerships.

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ONLINE FLASH WORKSHOPS TO RENEW FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

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

The partnership between the South Carolina State Department of Education and the Center of Excellence (COE) at Francis Marion University continues to thrive. The COE Director delivered a keynote address at a state conference on practical strategies aligned with the NNPS Framework of Six Types of Involvement. The presentation led to a series of online FLASH Workshops by COE's Family and Community Engagement Coordinator.

COE asked the Family Engagement Liaisons in 29 Partner Districts about their needs and goals to reengage students' families at school and at home. The educators and parent leaders preferred an online format for the training workshops for easy attendance from their locations across the state. With this information, COE developed and conducted a series of online, fast-paced, goal-linked, free workshops to share ideas that could be immediately implemented or adapted in all districts, and at all grade levels from pre-K through high school.

Teachers, administrators, and district leaders for partnerships signed up for the workshops, and were given *Zoom* links to the workshops they selected. The COE Coordinator shared her slides and encouraged participants to join a richly interactive discussion on the feasibility or adaptations needed to make the practices of family engagement work in their locations. Lottery-style drawings for gift cards and free registrations for COE's 2022 Online Summer Institute were conducted during each workshop to sustain attendees' interest and participation.

COE developed publicity materials for each online FLASH workshop. The first workshop was marketed to only the Center's 29 Partner Districts. Subsequent workshops were open to all Superintendents and school leaders in districts across South Carolina, and to stakeholders interested in family and community engagement. Costs (about \$3000 for gift cards and materials) were covered

by COE's annual budget for family and community engagement.

The workshops included many examples of how to design and select family and community engagement activities linked to important academic, social, and personal goals for student learning and success in school. Over 750 teachers, administrators, staff and an uncounted number of parents, caregivers, and community partners attended one or more of the workshops in the FLASH series.

Parents, teachers, administrators, district leaders, and other stakeholders explored the theory underlying family engagement activities and were guided to implement clear strategies to improve the learning and life experiences of students with their families. All of the workshops stressed the importance of building positive, trusting relationships between home and school.

Participants evaluated the format, content, and presentations of FLASH workshops. They were uniformly positive. A district leader commented, "Thank you for conducting the workshops and for recording them. I shared this information with my district colleagues." Wrote another, "Thank you for helping our staff understand the six types of engagement so we can plan [our program] in a more goal-based way."

COE and the districts and schools in its projects responded in creative ways to COVID-related challenges that limited their travel and restricted meetings with parents and community partners. It was time to think about returning to pre-COVID practices of school, family, and community partnerships. But there was a twist. Education leaders had discovered the benefits of using *Zoom* to enable more participants to attend workshops without travel and expenses.

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RE-IMAGINE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT: THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

RIVERSIDE COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION
RIVERSIDE, CA

Leaders of the Parent Engagement Leadership Institute (PELI) of the Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE) gave a presentation at a meeting of the California Department of Education (CDE) Statewide Family Engagement Network (FEN). They explained how PELI used the *Dual Capacity-Building Framework (DC-BF) for Family and School Partnerships* to guide districts and schools to develop effective programs of family and community engagement.

PELI emphasizes Section 2 of DC-BF: Building partnerships for student outcomes. They give attention to Practice 5: Providing professional learning and support to teachers and principals to improve a school's capacity to partner with families. They also focus on Practice 6: Providing families with information and resources to support student learning and development in the home.

The PELI presentation highlighted the importance of school-based Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) to implement directives in the Dual Capacity-Building Framework. The leaders discussed how ATPs help schools and districts meet standards in the CDE Family Engagement Framework. In other words, strong school teams can turn policy directives into actual practice.

In recent evaluations, RCOE's Family Engagement leaders found that districts with schools that had ATPs did not skip a beat in creating innovative and responsive family engagement activities when schools closed during the pandemic. Other districts, where schools did not have ATPs, had more difficulty at that unexpected and unprecedented time because they lacked the structure to organize new ways to connect with all families.

At the CDE meeting, attendees brainstormed with PELI on how to encourage more RCOE districts and schools fully implement the standards in the CDE Family Engagement Framework. The group agreed to help district leaders ReIMAGINE what family engagement would look like if they put research-based strat-

egies including ATPs in place to help all schools engage all families to support student success. RCOE distributed ReIMAGINE Family Engagement Gift Boxes to encourage district leaders for family engagement to consider how students might benefit from school programs to engage every family.

The colorful gift boxes included a welcome letter from RCOE, family engagement resource books that were donated or purchased, PELI workshop materials, and other items. The contents urged district leaders to consider what authentic and meaningful family engagement might look like in the 2022-23 school year. PELI challenged district leaders to consider how an ATP in each school might strengthen partnership plans and with family and community engagement activities linked to goals for student success.

The gift boxes were well received. Three more school districts requested PELI support to develop ATPs in their schools. There was an increase in the number of family engagement leaders who registered to attend the next FEN Network Meeting. Also, more leaders for partnerships registered for, attended, and received the University of California Riverside Parent Liaison Certification, conducted by PELI leaders.

One district administrator explained, "The [gift box] was a welcome surprise!...We are excited to participate in FEN meetings in the coming year. Thank you for motivating us to think outside the box!" A district family engagement coordinator shared, "Our district contracted with PELI for the past seven years for training and support for ATPs at each of our sites. The gift box gave us more ideas...to intentionally engage our families in creative and meaningful ways. Thank you for sparking our creativity."

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SCHOOLS' ACTION PLANS FOR PARTNERSHIPS: A GOAL SETTING WEBINAR

NATIONAL PARENTS COUNCIL PRIMARY - PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS IRELAND
DUBLIN, IRELAND

Partnership Schools Ireland (PSI) developed a webinar for its schools Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs). *Your One Year Action Plan for Partnerships: A Goal Setting Webinar* presented information and examples from NNPS and from schools in Ireland that have been developing their partnership programs for several years. The webinar addressed five questions:

- What does a *One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships* include?
- What are the six types of engagement with examples to implement?
- How will an annual action plan support your school's work on partnerships? How does it link to your School Improvement Plan?
- What is a SMART goal that will guide each page of the plan?
- What are some good ideas to share? What questions do you have about your school's plans, goals, and activities for family and community engagement for the year ahead?

PSI Coordinators invited school principals and other members of school-based ATPs to attend. There are several PSI schools in various parts of the country. The webinar was hosted on *Zoom* so that everyone could attend without traveling to one meeting place.

PSI checks in with all Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) individually, but also schedules time for school-based ATPs to hear from each other. ATPs always benefit from "refresher" sessions on writing a good *One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships*. They always like to share ideas and brainstorm solutions to challenges before writing plans for the next school year.

PSI's fall Regional Support Meeting was a virtual webinar with the focus on goal setting in schools' plans for the 2021-22 school year. The education landscape in Ireland has been difficult over the past two years, as in other locations. Public health rules for schools dramatically restricted the people allowed in school buildings. This meant that most parents had not visited their

child's school since March 2020. Many ATP leaders and principals felt they "had not done enough" partnership work when schools were closed and wanted to make good plans for the 2021-22 school year. PSI reassured the educators that their experiences were shared by other schools in Ireland and beyond.

With this webinar, PSI heard about the work on family and community engagement that all schools had done despite COVID restrictions. It was a good time to look forward and make ambitious plans for the 21-22 school year.

At the webinar, schools' ATPs were guided to set clear goals and plan family engagement activities to support children's literacy and numeracy skills. Many also were interested in children's and families' well-being, and in using outdoor space to bring members of the school community together after the COVID restrictions had kept people apart.

The webinar was attended by 16 ATP members representing 12 schools, including principals, teachers, parents, and community partners from various parts of Ireland. Attendees provided feedback on Microsoft Forms. They agreed that their time was well spent. A principal reviewed, "Good pace and just what we need to get back on schedule!" A teacher expressed others' approval, "It was lovely to participate today and hear from other schools!"

PSI followed up with attendees after the webinar to answer outstanding questions and to distribute resources that were mentioned or requested during the session. PSI will continue to guide schools to strengthen their programs of family and community engagement in ways that contribute to students' learning and development.

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VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLES AND DIGITAL TOOLKITS: COLLABORATIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

CAROLINA FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CENTER
COLUMBIA, SC

The Carolina Family Engagement Center (CFEC) provides professional development on effective leadership and programs of family and community engagement for partnership specialists and educators in regions, districts, and organizations across the state. Due to COVID-19's restrictions on large gatherings, CFEC and its partner the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), offered online training and technical assistance on several topics including more effective school, family, and community partnerships. One CFEC goal was to enable district and school leaders to integrate their work on family engagement with the overarching *South Carolina Family Engagement K-12 Framework*.

Working together, CFEC and SCDE selected topics from those suggested by attendees at prior training sessions. They set schedules, created agendas, identified speakers, prepared PowerPoint presentations, and developed questions for discussions in *Zoom Breakout Rooms*. Workshops included family engagement to improve student attendance, support social and emotional learning, and how districts and schools could improve communications with all families. Other topics over the year explored Whole School Engagement, Partnering to Make a Difference, and several sessions to help schools work with students to recover learning losses due to distance learning.

The planning team collected information from Attendance Works, SCDE, and promising practices from CFEC districts and schools. They developed two digital toolkits: *School-Home Communications Toolkit* and *Attendance Toolkit for Schools*. Copies were provided electronically to workshop attendees to use and share with others in their districts and schools. (See www.cfec.sc.gov)

The workshops were open to all districts across the state. Some sessions were targeted for school and family leaders in four regions— Pee Dee, Midlands, Lowcountry, and Upstate. At each workshop, attendees gained information on the selected topic and then moved to breakout rooms

to discuss solutions to challenges to engage all families, exchange examples of effective practices, and share information on useful resources.

The CFEC and SCDE team created flyers and digital registration forms for educators, parents, and other leaders on partnerships. Over 175 teachers, administrators, staff, and other district and organizational leaders attended the workshops last year. Exit evaluations showed that participants appreciated the information, and benefited from the discussions with other district leaders and educators about the challenges they faced in engaging all families in ways that supported student attendance and achievement.

One Parent Engagement Coordinator wrote: "All sessions were very informative. I never thought of how all of these topics relate to my [work], but now I'm excited about what I can do to help our school community use these resources." CFEC and SCDE leaders used the feedback to fine-tune the workshops to give attendees more time to discuss ideas, challenges, and solutions.

CFEC and SCSD selected research-based topics for the workshops. Studies confirm that, at all grade levels, students with good attendance are more likely to pass their classes and graduate from high school on time. Other studies show that students who are supported to strengthen social and emotional skills have decreased risks for depression, violence, substance abuse and other mental health issues as young adults. And, schools that communicate clearly with all families, regardless of family background characteristics, promote greater family engagement and student success in school.

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