



NATIONAL NETWORK OF  
**Partnership Schools**  
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

## **SPECIAL REPORT**

# **2008 SCHOOL UPDATE DATA**

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**January 2009**

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# SUMMARY

## 2008 SCHOOL UPDATE DATA

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In response to requests for information on program development and positive feedback from members about last year's summary, NNPS is providing this report of schools' *2008 School UPDATE Data* to all active members of the network. Districts, states, and organizations also will receive a summary of the *2008 District UPDATE* data. This is the fourth annual summary report. To see past reports, visit the NNPS website ([www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org)). Click on Research and Evaluation and follow the links to NNPS Evaluations and UPDATE data.

### SUMMARY

The data from schools in 2008 indicate that most schools in NNPS are working to implement the core components and essential elements that NNPS has found affect the quality of partnership programs over time. Presently, elementary schools conduct more activities and report more parental involvement than do middle and high schools. The data show that school programs benefit greatly from district support and attention. Finally, the data suggest that program evaluation continues to be an area where NNPS schools need more help and guidance.

Results of descriptive analyses of the 2008 data indicate that there are several ways for schools to improve the organization of their partnership programs:

- Many ATPs need to organize committees to share leadership for implementing activities focused on specific school goals or on the six types of involvement. Too many still are working on all activities as a whole group. Committees not only distribute leadership, but also help teams implement more activities to involve more and different families and the community.
- Many schools' Action Teams for Partnerships need to meet monthly. This is an important requirement for developing and discussing plans, improving teamwork, and conducting evaluations of implemented activities.
- More middle and high schools need to solve the challenge of getting fathers actively involved in their adolescents' education.
- High schools rated the support they received from district leaders for partnerships as especially helpful. District leaders need to step up to guide and assist schools' ATPs in their work on partnerships.
- More schools need to help teachers guide parents to monitor and discuss homework with their children. When teachers do so, there tend to be more families who engage in these activities.
- Principals need to continue their strong support for family and community involvement. This support is critical for schools to maintain and improve partnership program quality.

NNPS expects all schools to continue to plan, implement, and evaluate their programs of school, family, and community partnerships every year. By doing so, ATPs will be able to report progress and new challenges on the *2009 School UPDATE* survey next spring.

Schools may compare the data in this report with their own responses on the *2008 School UPDATE*. ATPs should take pride in practices that are strong compared to other schools across the country.

ATPs are invited to share their best practices with NNPS in the 2009 collection of *Promising Partnership Practices*. Ideas are due May 15, 2009, but can be submitted at any time at [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org) in the section Success Stories. Click on Submit a Practice/Online.

ATPs should work this year to improve aspects of their programs that fall below NNPS averages or that do not reflect NNPS's expectations for excellent programs. Studies indicate that schools that work on partnerships over time will improve their programs, outreach, and results of family and community involvement (Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Sheldon, 2007; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004).

## SCHOOLS IN 2008 UPDATE SAMPLE

In 2008, 759 Action Teams for Partnerships reported *UPDATE* data. Surveys came from schools in 34 states, the District of Columbia, and Canada. A large majority of schools (62.6%) served students in the elementary grades (PK-6); 11.7% served students in PK-8; 13.6% included the middle grades only (4-8); and 8.1% included high school grades only (9-12). A small percentage of schools (2.1%) served students from PK through high school and (1.9%) combined middle and high school grades. For this report, early childhood centers, adult education centers, K-12 schools, and combined middle and high schools were omitted in order to report clear school-level patterns of program development. The report is based on surveys from 679 schools.

The largest percentage of schools was located in large, central cities (32.3%), with the remaining schools in small city (23.3%), suburban (24.7%), and rural areas (19.8%). A large majority of schools (70.2%) received school-wide or targeted Title I funds.

On average, schools served students from varied racial and ethnic backgrounds. Across schools, about 32.9% of students were African American; 16.4% were Latino/Hispanic American; 49.2% were White; and 4.1% were from other racial/ethnic groups. Individual schools included a range of minority students, from 0% to 100%. The families served by these schools spoke an average of 4.5 languages. In some schools, families spoke only English at home, whereas other schools served diverse families speaking up to 58 different languages and dialects.

## FINDINGS

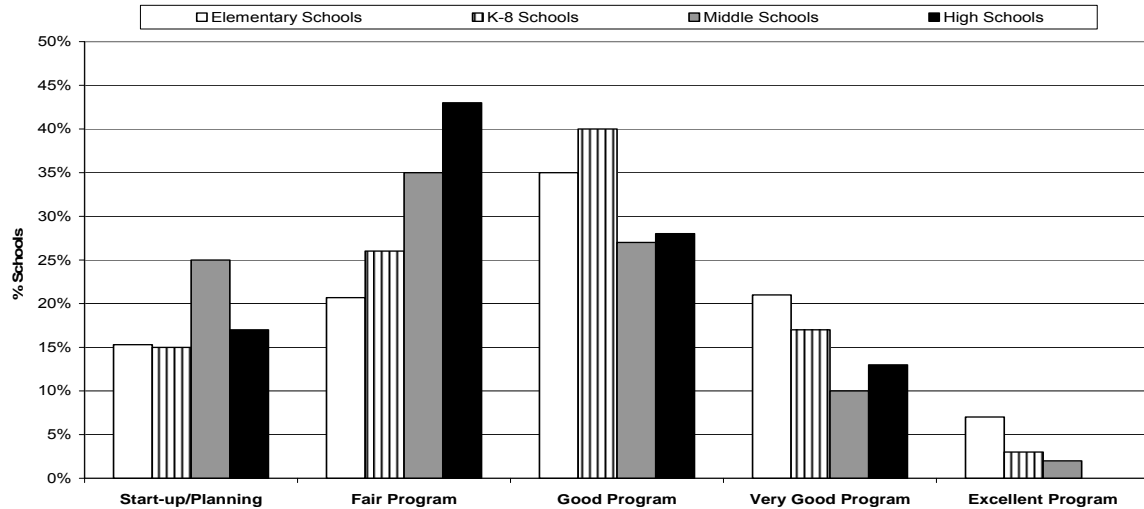
### OVERALL PROGRAM QUALITY

The annual NNPS *School UPDATE* survey provides each school's Action Team for Partnerships an opportunity to reflect on the overall quality of its partnership program by identifying one of six program portraits. Each portrait represents a different level of program quality, beginning with a *planning* stage and continuing up to an *excellent* program.

**Schools in NNPS, on average, reported a near-normal distribution in the quality of their programs (Figure 1). A majority of ATPs rated their school's partnership program as either fair/average or good.**

- About 17% of schools were planning or just beginning their programs. Almost 6% reported excellent programs, with most aspects of a sustainable program in place.
- The largest percentage of schools (34%) reported that their programs were *good*, indicating that several activities were implemented for the six types of involvement, teams were working to meet challenges to reach all families, and most teachers and families at the school knew about the program for partnerships and the school's work with NNPS.

**Figure 1**  
**% ATPs Reporting Overall Quality of Partnerships in 2008,**  
**by School Level**



N= 679 Schools Source: 2008 UPDATE Survey

- No high schools and only about 2% of K-8 and middle schools reported having an excellent partnership program.

## PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Several *UPDATE* measures indicated whether schools and their ATPs were implementing core components of NNPS’s research-based partnership program and how well schools were implementing a broad range of programmatic activities.<sup>1</sup>

### CORE COMPONENTS

Core NNPS program components were measured using a 6-item scale ( $\alpha = .72$ ).<sup>2</sup> On average, schools implemented 4.1 out of 6 program components. Schools were most likely to report that they wrote (or planned to write) a One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships for the *next* school year (85%); had an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) of six or more people (81%); and had written an action plan for the 07-08 school year (79%).

- Schools at all grade levels were similar in the degree to which they implemented the core components of a NNPS partnership program.

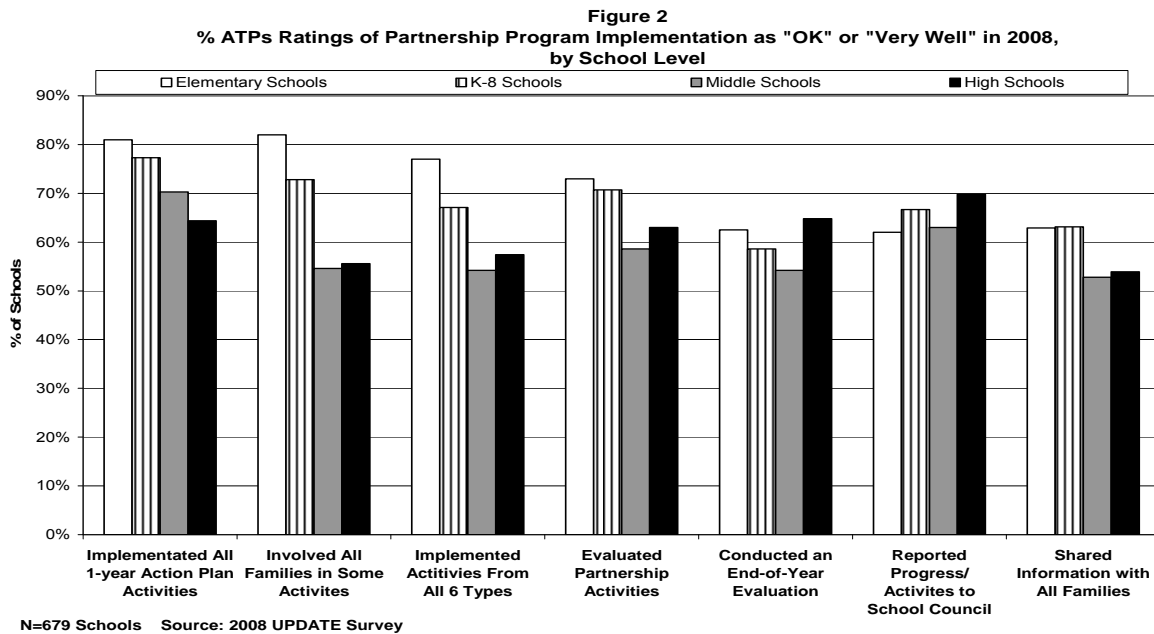
### QUALITY OF IMPLEMENTATION

A 13-item scale ( $\alpha = .93$ ) measured how well ATPs organized and implemented the partnership program at the school. These actions included involving families in some activities for all six types of involvement; evaluating the activities conducted; and reporting information to all families, PTA/PTO, and faculty and staff. Schools gave one of four responses to each item, indicating if they *did not do the action*, *need to improve*, were *OK*, or implemented *very well*.

**Most schools reported that they were implementing key NNPS program elements “OK,” as shown in Figure 2.**

- On average, elementary schools reported higher levels of program implementation than middle and high schools.

- Schools were most confident in their implementation of activities to support school improvement goals and in their scheduling activities throughout the school year (not shown).



Although most schools had many activities in place to organize their work on partnerships, practices associated with evaluation were particularly challenging for schools.

- About 30% of all schools indicated that they did not evaluate or needed to improve their evaluations of partnership activities. Almost 40% of schools indicated that they did not conduct or needed to improve the end-of-year evaluation of their partnership program.
- More than 40% of middle schools reported they did not evaluate or needed to improve the evaluation of their partnership activities and 46% did not conduct or needed to improve their end-of-year program evaluation.

## ACTION TEAM FOR PARTNERSHIPS (ATP)

In NNPS, each school must have an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) or an equivalent committee of teachers, parents, and administrators working on family and community involvement. The ATP is responsible for planning, implementing, overseeing, and evaluating partnership activities that are linked to school improvement goals. As an official committee or work group, the ATP should report its plans and progress to the School Improvement Team or School Council on a regular basis, just as other committees report their work. Questions on the *2008 School UPDATE* asked about the structure of schools' ATPs, members of the team, subcommittee structure, frequency of meetings, and funding for the partnership program.

### STRUCTURE

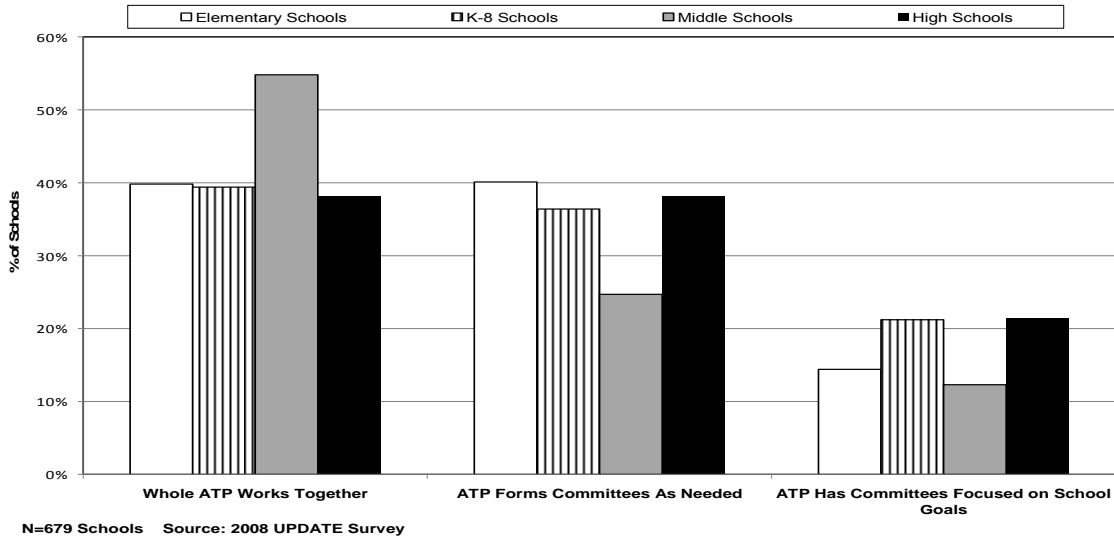
Prior NNPS studies and the *Handbook for Action, Third Edition* (see Chapter 3 in Epstein, et al., 2009) suggest that the ATP should have committees in order to conduct more practices of family and community involvement. With committees, ATP members and others who are not on the team can share leadership for more and different activities.

**About 41% of all schools' ATPs worked together only as a whole team. Of the schools that organized committees to develop and implement involvement activities, more ATPs formed committees as needed for scheduled activities, as shown in Figure 3.**

- Middle schools were most likely to organize their ATPs as a whole group without committees.

- K-8 and high schools were more likely than elementary and middle schools to organize their ATP committees by school goals, as suggested by NNPS.

**Figure 3**  
**% of ATPs Reporting How Action Teams were Organized in 2008,**  
**by School Level**



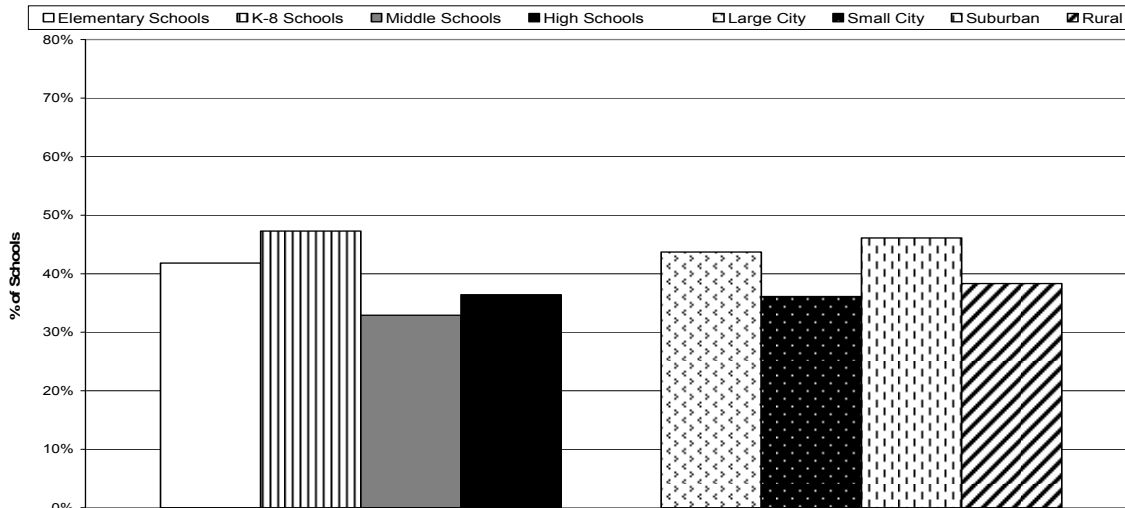
### MEMBERSHIP

NNPS suggests that each school’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) include at least two or three teachers, two or three parents, and one administrator, with one or two students at the high school level, and options for community partners and other educators and representatives at any level. On average, schools in NNPS had between eight and nine members on their ATPs.

### FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

**Fewer than half of the schools’ ATPs (42%) met at least monthly to plan and implement their partnership efforts, as shown in Figure 4.**

**Figure 4**  
**% of Schools’ Action Teams that Met at Least Monthly in 2008,**  
**by School Level and Location**



N=679 Schools Source: 2008 UPDATE Survey

## FUNDING

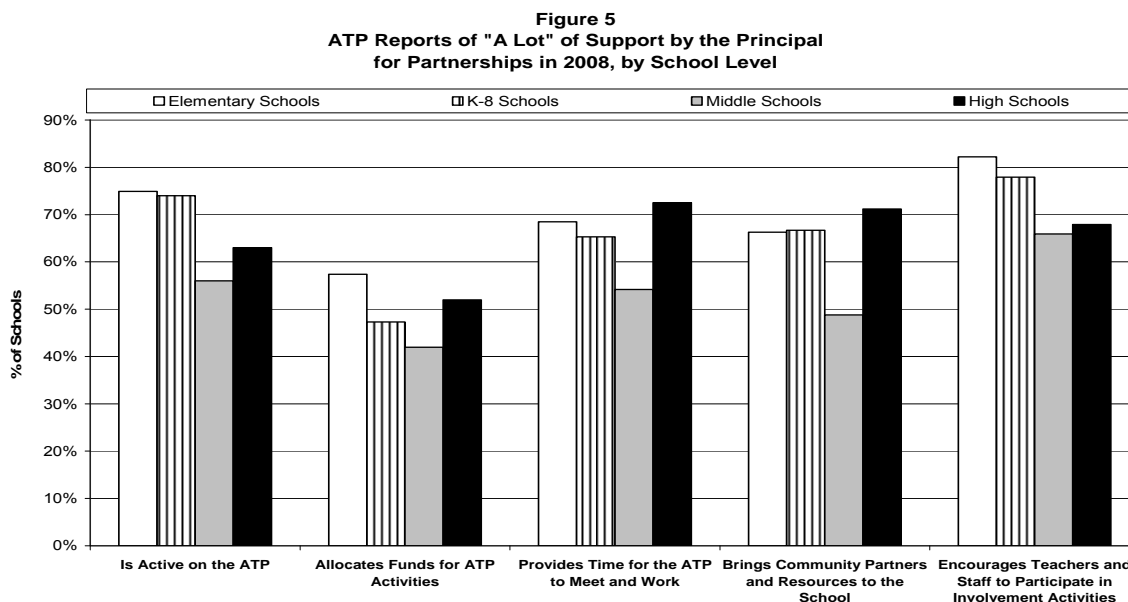
A single item asked ATPs to rate the level of funding for their schools' partnership programs. The largest percentage of teams reported that they had *adequate funding* for their partnership program (51.8%). Others noted that they received *no funds* (12%) or *not enough funds* (24.5%) for their programs. A few (11.7%) said their family and community involvement programs were *well funded*.

## ACTION TEAM SUPPORT

### PRINCIPALS' SUPPORT

Partnership programs need the support of the school principal in order to be successful and sustained (Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004). Almost all schools (96%) reported that the principal was a member of the Action Team for Partnerships, as NNPS requires. ATPs reported whether or not the school principal provided *no*, *some*, or *a lot* of support for nine actions for the partnership program ( $\alpha = .90$ ).

**Overall, principals were rated as highly supportive of partnerships at their school (Figure 5).**



N=679 Schools Source: 2008 UPDATE Survey

- Principals were least supportive in allocating funds for partnerships.
- Middle schools consistently reported receiving the least amount of support from the principal for their partnership program. Compared to last year, high schools' ATPs reported more support from their principals for partnership program activities.

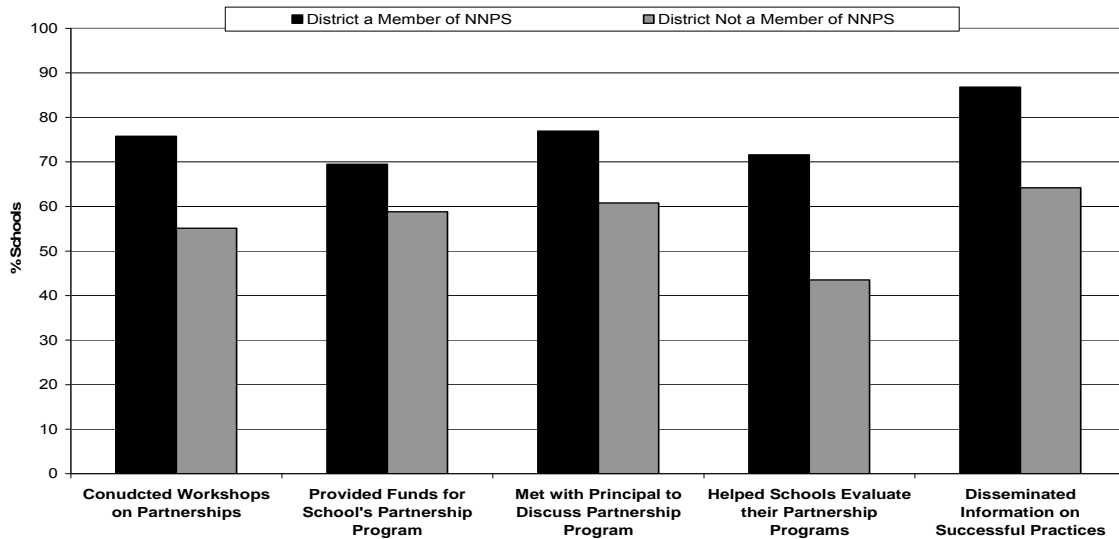
### DISTRICT LEADERS' SUPPORT

Schools' partnership programs also benefit from the support of district leaders. In 2008, ATPs rated the quality of 7 types of district assistance they received, from "not provided," to "not very helpful," "helpful," and "very helpful" ( $\alpha = .90$ ). Schools reported receiving an average of between 5 and 6 supportive actions from their districts.

**Schools nested within districts that are NNPS members reported more partnership program support than those whose districts were not members of NNPS (Figure 6).**

- About 83% of all schools reported that their districts disseminated information on successful partnership practices and 81% reported that their districts recognized schools' good work on partnerships.
- About 32% of schools reported that their districts did not offer technical assistance on partnerships, provide funds for partnership program activities, or help the school evaluate the quality of its partnership program.

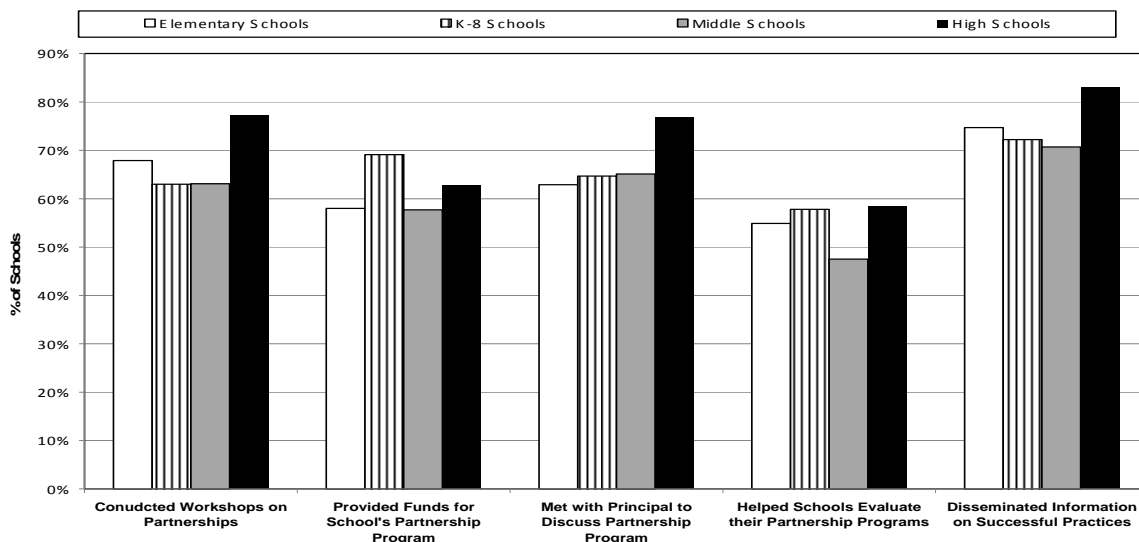
**Figure 6**  
**% ATPs that Reported Support from their District in 2008,**  
**by District Membership in NNPS**



N=679 Schools Source: 2008 UPDATE Survey

- More high schools than other schools reported that their districts' workshops on partnerships, meetings with principals, and dissemination of partnership-related information were "helpful" or "very helpful" to their ATPs (Figure 7).

**Figure 7**  
**ATP Reports of District Support as "Helpful" and "Very Helpful" in 2008,**  
**by School Level**



N=679 Schools Source: 2008 UPDATE Survey

## MEETING CHALLENGES TO REACH ALL FAMILIES

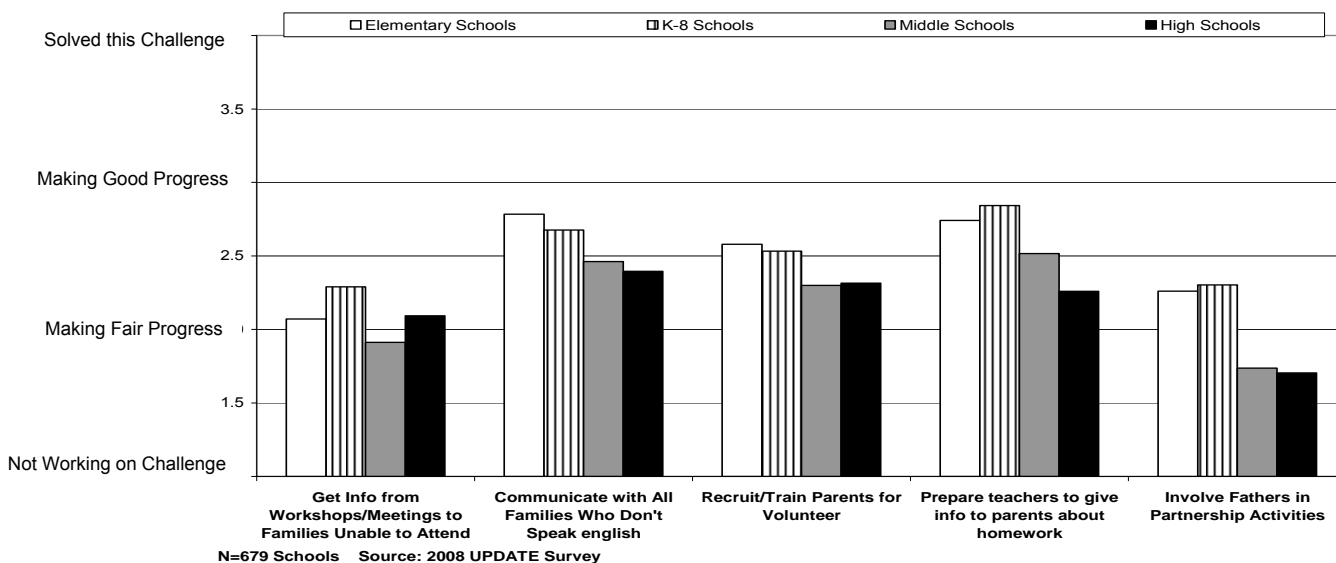
In addition to organizing their partnership programs, ATPs are expected to conduct and encourage other partners (teachers, PTA/PTO, community members) to conduct activities that involve all

families and community partners in ways that support student success. Schools' efforts to solve challenges of outreach and the involvement of all families were measured with a 9-item scale ( $\alpha = .85$ ). ATPs rated their attention to solve challenges from *not working on the challenge*, to making *fair progress*, *good progress*, or having *solved the challenge*. Schools' ATPs averaged 2.6 on this scale, suggesting that most are making between fair and good progress in trying to solve challenges to involve many families who, typically, would not become involved on their own.

**The vast majority of NNPS schools were working to overcome challenges to help more families get involved in their children's schooling, as shown in Figure 8.**

- Schools were least likely to be working on the challenge of getting information from workshops and meetings to families who could not attend. Almost 30% of all schools reported that they were not yet working to meet this challenge.
- Many schools (26%) were not yet working to involve fathers in partnership activities.
- Elementary and PK-8 schools reported stronger efforts to meet the challenge of involving fathers than did middle and high schools.

**Figure 8**  
Average Degree to which ATPs Reported Working to "Meet the Challenges,"  
by School Level



## PRACTICES OF INVOLVEMENT

Five items identified the percent of teachers who conducted various family involvement activities, such as holding parent-teacher conferences with each student's family, communicating with all students' families, utilizing volunteers in the classroom, guiding parents in discussing homework with their children, and supporting the partnership program.

ATPs also estimated the percent of families involved in various partnership activities, including Back-to-School Nights, parent-teacher conferences, volunteering to help the school or teachers, monitoring their child's homework, and being good partners in their children's education. Figures 8 through 11 illustrate how teacher practices and family involvement varied by grade level.

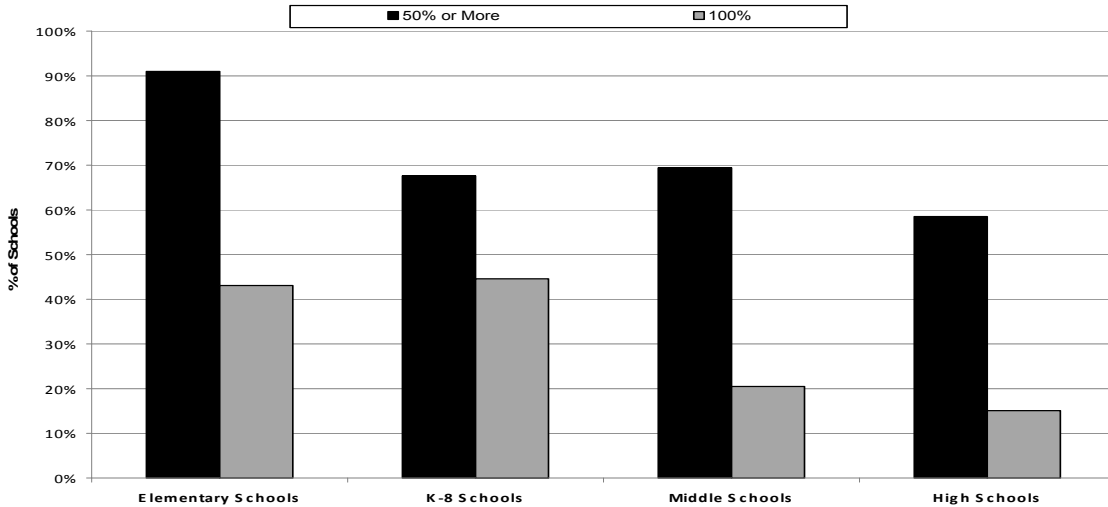
**Family involvement was more common in elementary and K-8 schools and less frequent as the grade level of the school increased.**

*SUPPORT FOR THE SCHOOL'S PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM*

**Teachers**

- ATPs reported that a majority of teachers at all school levels supported their partnership program.

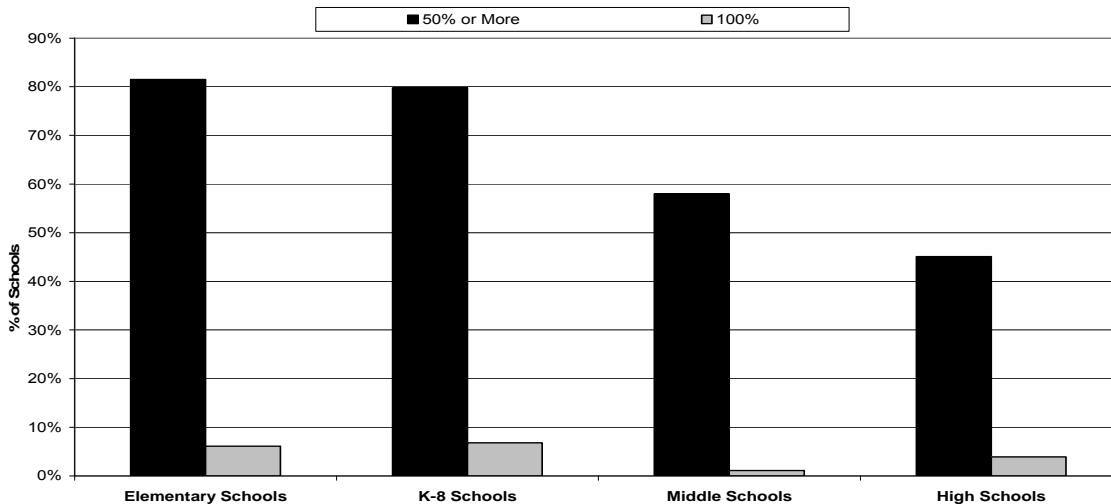
**Figure 9**  
**% of ATPs Reporting Teachers Who Support School's Partnership Program in 2008, by School Level**



N=679 Schools Source: 2008 UPDATE Survey

- Elementary schools tended to have a broader base of support for partnerships from teachers and staff than did middle or high schools. About 91% of elementary schools' ATPs reported that at least half of the teachers supported their partnership program, and 43% of the elementary schools reported that all (100%) of the teachers supported their school's program of family and community involvement. Between 15% and 20% of middle and high school ATPs reported that all of the teachers supported the partnership program.

**Figure 10**  
**% ATPs Reporting Families Who are Good Partners in Education in 2008, by School Level**



N=679 Schools Source: 2008 UPDATE Survey

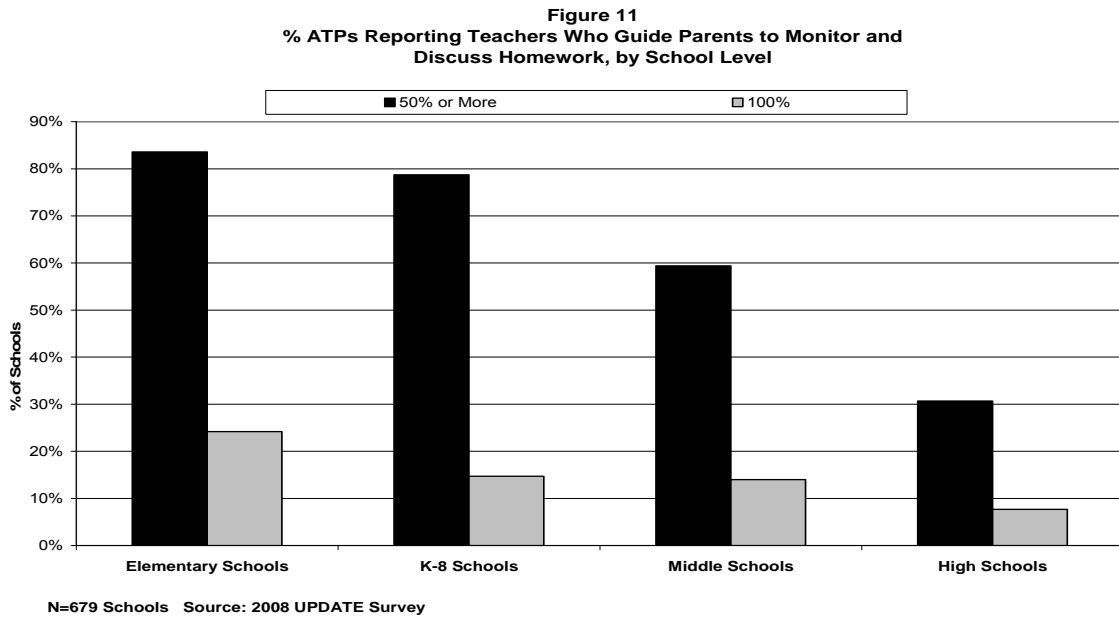
## Families

Figure 10 (above) reports ATPs' estimates of the percentage of families who were good partners with the school in their children's education. As shown, high schools reported the smallest percentage of families as "good partners."

### MONITORING HOMEWORK

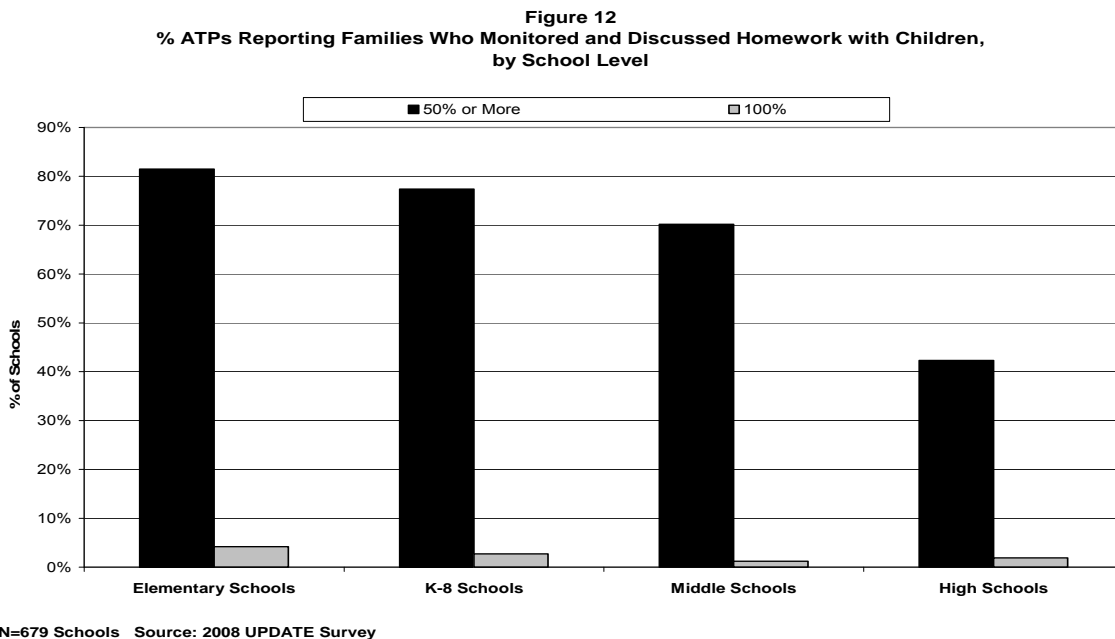
## Teachers

- Elementary and K-8 schools reported the highest percentage of teachers guiding parents to monitor or discuss homework with students.



- Only 31% of high schools reported that at least half of all teachers guided parents on how to monitor and discuss homework with their children (Figure 11).

## Families



- Elementary and K-8 schools reported the largest percentage of parents monitoring and discussing homework with their children.
- About 42% of high schools estimated that at least half of all families monitored and discussed homework with their children (Figure 12, above).

## SCHOOL COMMENTS

The *2008 School UPDATE* asked ATPs to share a successful practice they implemented and how it was designed to contribute to student achievement and success in school. About 87.5% of the ATPs provided some information about a successful partnership practice at their school.

**Table 1. Elementary School Partnership Practices**

<b>Welcome Video for New Parents</b>	Designed a video to distribute to new families in the school, including a PowerPoint presentation about the school's policies and expectations for behavior.
<b>Gym Nights</b>	Activities gave parents and students opportunities to practice positive social interaction while getting physically fit.
<b>Do Great in '08!</b>	Program gave parents tips on how to support their students' learning at home in all subjects. Specific topics included homework help, study skills, and organizational skills.
<b>Bring Your Parent to School Day</b>	Parents attended school with their children to experience the routines, curriculum, and "school language" to reinforce expectations at home.
<b>International Day</b>	Students and families made a recipe from an assigned country to share at International Day. The activity reinforced reading, math, and researching skills.
<b>"Words Up" Vocabulary in Math Workshop</b>	Informed parents of essential mathematics vocabulary for all grade levels and provided math activities for families to complete at home.
<b>Family Reading Night</b>	Teachers dressed up as main characters of favorite children's books and activities helped students and parents learn how to reinforce reading skills at home.

**Table 2. Middle and High School Partnership Practices**

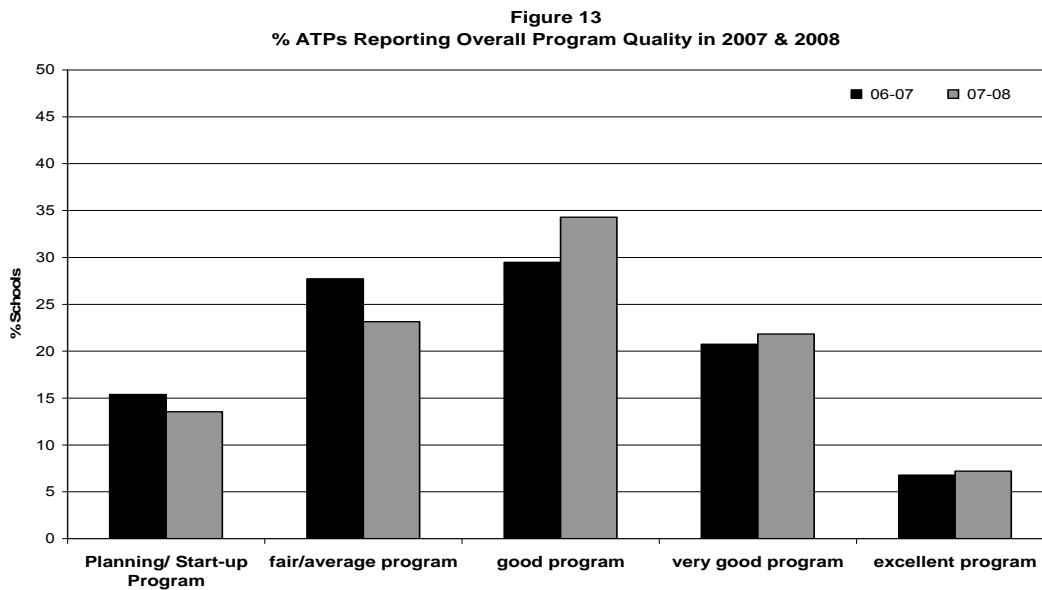
<b>"I Love to Read" Book Fair</b>	Designed to motivate students to read and write, this event at a middle school was run by high school students. Invited local authors talked to students.
<b>Reading Program for At-Risk Students</b>	Paired students with a local fire department volunteer/mentor for one-on-one reading.
<b>Museum Night</b>	Students learned about history and historical pieces of art, and then worked as docents for families and younger students teaching them about the art work and historical context in which it was created.
<b>Parent Orientation</b>	Before the academic year started, the school staff provided information to and answered questions from families of incoming middle school students.
<b>Community Speaker</b>	A World War II veteran talked to a U.S. History class about his personal experiences at this historical event
<b>Career Exploration and Presentations</b>	Students researched and wrote essays about a job shadowing experience and presented these to parents.
<b>Students, Parents, Staff, and Community Book Club</b>	The school held book club meetings where everyone shared their opinions, different perspectives, and thoughts about a book and how it relates to life today.

## COMPARISON of SCHOOLS' 2007 and 2008 UPDATE REPORTS

This section summarizes results from 458 schools that returned the NNPS *School UPDATE* for the past two years (06-07 and 07-08 school years). Similar to the 2008 school sample, these were elementary schools (67.5%), K-8 schools (11.3%), middle schools (12.4%), and high schools (8.8%).

### OVERALL PROGRAM QUALITY

Schools in NNPS reported similar patterns of overall program quality from 2007 to 2008, but there were some changes. In 2008, compared to 2007, smaller percentages of schools rated their programs as “planning/start-up” or “fair/average,” and larger percentages of schools rated their programs as “good,” “very good,” or “excellent” (Figure 13). Further analyses revealed that 30.3% of the school ATPs moved to a higher-quality “portrait” of their partnership program, while almost half of the school ATPs (43.7%) reported no change in their program’s portrait, and 26.0% reported a decline in program quality.



N = 458 Source: 2007 & 2008 UPDATE surveys

### PROGRAM SUPPORTS AND IMPLEMENTATION

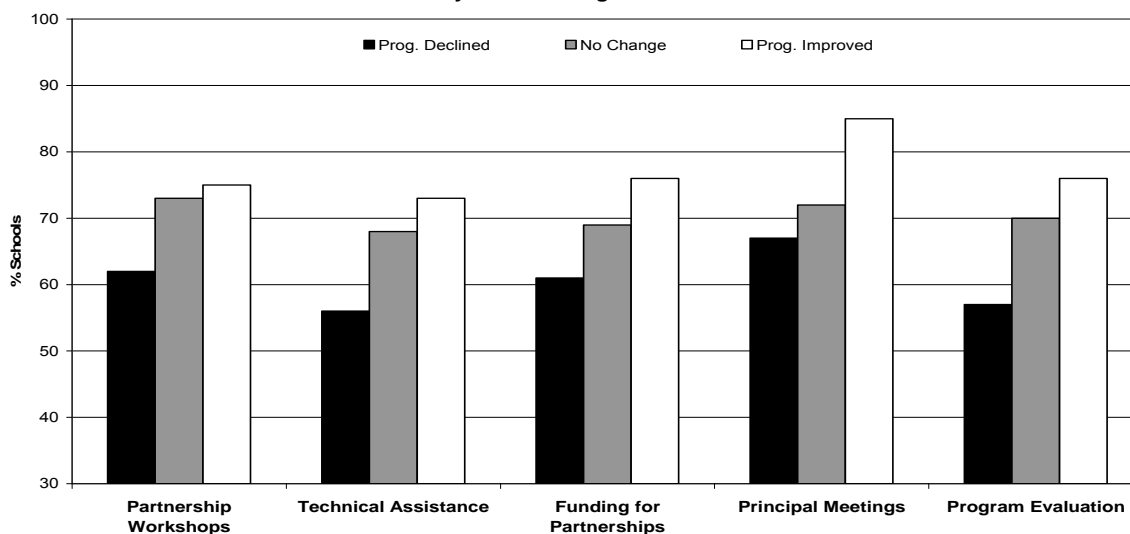
We found consistent, statistically significant differences between schools with partnership programs that declined in quality and those whose programs improved or remained stable. Schools whose program portrait in 2008 was higher or the same as the portrait in 2007 reported:

- Higher levels of principal support
- More types of district support
- More helpful district support
- Higher quality program implementation
- Higher degrees of meeting challenges to family involvement

Several kinds of district support distinguished schools whose partnership program improved from those whose partnership program declined in quality (Figure 14). Schools whose partnership program improved were more likely than those whose program declined to report that their district:

- provided workshops about partnerships,
- provided technical assistance on partnerships,
- provided funding for partnership activities,
- met with the principal to discuss the partnership program,
- helped the school conduct an evaluation of the partnership program.

**Figure 14**  
**% ATPs that Reported Support from their District in 2008,**  
**by level of change from 2007**



N=458 Source: 2007 & 2008 UPDATE Surveys

### *FAMILY INVOLVEMENT OUTCOMES*

Other analyses indicate that schools with improved or stable partnership programs differed from those whose programs declined in quality on estimates of family involvement and teachers' uses of family involvement practices. These differences were statistically significant. Programs that maintained or improved their portrait on quality reported greater percentages of:

- Teachers who utilized parent volunteers in the class or at school.
- Teachers who helped family members understand how to monitor and discuss their child's homework.
- Family members who attended Back-to-School Night.
- Family members who monitored and discussed homework with their children.
- Families who were reported to be "good partners" with the school.

## How To Use This Report

This report summarizes results of the *2008 School UPDATE* survey on program development for the 07-08 school year. YOU should use this report to help assess your school's progress in its program of family and community involvement.

- Use this summary to compare the responses on your school's *UPDATE* with others in NNPS to identify how you are progressing and to conduct an ATP discussion on ways to improve this year and in plans for 09-10.
- Use the *UPDATE* summaries as a guide to report your progress to your full faculty, PTA, district leaders, and others in your school newsletter and/or website.

**Visit the NNPS website, [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org), for:**

- Research summaries (click on Research and Evaluation)
- Professional development conference registrations
- All editions of *Type 2* newsletters (click on Publications and Products)
- All collections of *Promising Partnership Practices* (click on Success Stories)
- Send an e-mail to NNPS Facilitators with questions or comments
- Lots of other good information!

### NOTES

- 1) NNPS *UPDATE* data are analyzed each year in research studies to learn how the various scales and measures combine to affect the quality of district and school programs. For a summary of results of studies conducted over the past five years and access to the annual collections of *Promising Partnership Practices* (Hutchins, et al., 2008), visit the NNPS website, [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org). See sections on Research and Evaluation and Success Stories.
- 2) The ( $\alpha$  or alpha) reports the *internal reliability* of a scale, indicating whether the items are correlated and represent a common construct. Reliability coefficients of .6 or higher indicate that a set of items is consistent and the scale is useful.

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