



NATIONAL NETWORK OF
Partnership Schools
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

SPECIAL REPORT

2009 SCHOOL UPDATE DATA

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SUMMARY

2009 SCHOOL UPDATE DATA

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In response to requests for information on partnership program development, NNPS provides this summary of schools' *2009 School UPDATE* data to all active members of the network. Districts, states, and organizations also will receive a summary of the *2009 District UPDATE* data.¹

SUMMARY

The *2009 School UPDATE* data indicate that most schools in NNPS are working to implement core components and essential elements that research shows 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 also suggest that school programs benefit greatly from district leaders' support and attention. Finally, the data suggest that program evaluation and funding are two areas where NNPS schools need more guidance and support.

The data also suggest several ways for schools to improve the organization of their partnership programs:

- Many schools Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) have not organized committees to share leadership for implementing activities that focus on specific school goals or on the six types of involvement.
- Many schools' ATPs do not meet monthly. This is an important requirement for developing and discussing plans, improving teamwork, and conducting evaluations of implemented activities.
- Few middle and high schools are working to solve the challenge of getting information from workshops to families who are unable to attend.
- Schools located in districts that are members of NNPS report more help on partnerships from their district leaders than do schools that are not in NNPS-member districts.
- Principals need to continue their strong support for family and community involvement, as this support is critical for schools to maintain and improve partnership program quality.

Use This Report. Schools should compare the data in this report with their own responses on the *2009 School UPDATE*. ATPs can take pride in practices that are strong, compared to other schools across the country. 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 the quality of their programs and results of family and community involvement (Epstein, et al., 2009; Sheldon, 2007, 2008; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004).

NNPS guides all schools to plan, implement, evaluate, and continually improve their programs of school, family, and community partnerships. By doing so, schools' ATPs will be able to report progress and new challenges on the *2010 School UPDATE* survey in the spring. Also, ATPs will be invited to share their best practices with NNPS in the 2010 collection of *Promising Partnership Practices*. The deadline will be May 1, 2010.

SCHOOLS IN 2009 UPDATE SAMPLE

In 2009, 769 Action Teams for Partnerships reported *UPDATE* data. Surveys came from schools in 35 states, the District of Columbia, and Canada. A large majority of schools (61.2%) served students in the elementary grades (PK-6); 13.7% served students in PK-8; 13.1% schools included the middle grades only (4-8); and 7.3% included high school grades only (9-12). A small percentage of schools (2.8%) 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 from analyses. The report is based on surveys from 707 schools.

The largest percentage of schools was located in large, central cities (32.9%), with the remaining schools in small city (30.6%), suburban (20.0%), and rural areas (18.7%). A large majority of schools (73.1%) received school-wide or targeted Title I funds.

On average, schools served students from varied racial and ethnic backgrounds. Across schools, about 30.6% of students were African American; 18.9% were Latino/Hispanic American; 39.8% were White; and 9.2% 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 57 different languages and dialects.

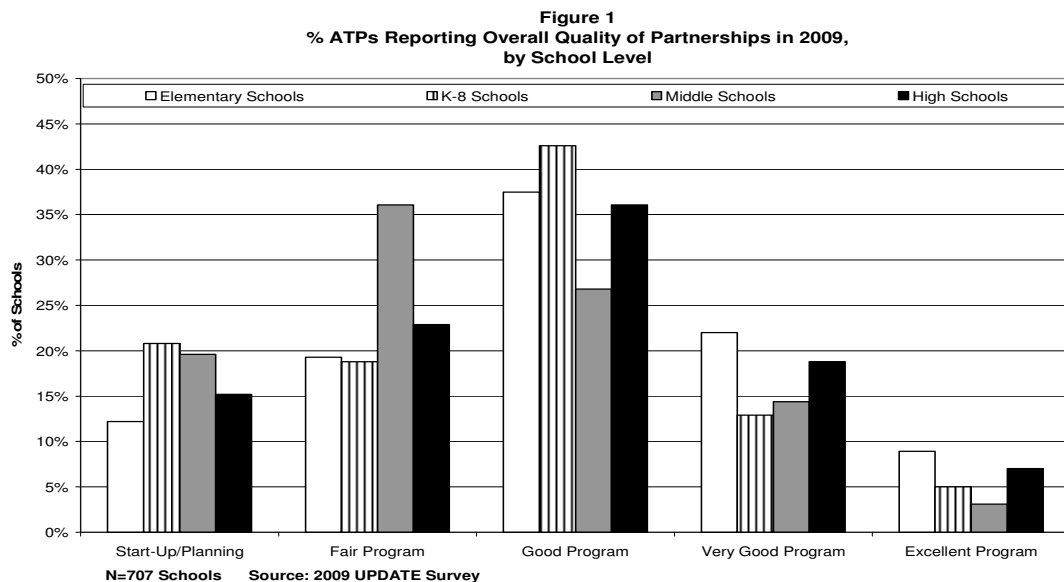
FINDINGS

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 15% of schools were planning or just beginning their programs. Approximately 7% reported excellent programs, with most aspects of a sustainable program in place.



- The largest percentage of schools (36%) 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.
- Middle schools were most likely (36%) to have *fair* programs and were least likely to report conducting *good* (27%) or *excellent* (3%) programs.

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.

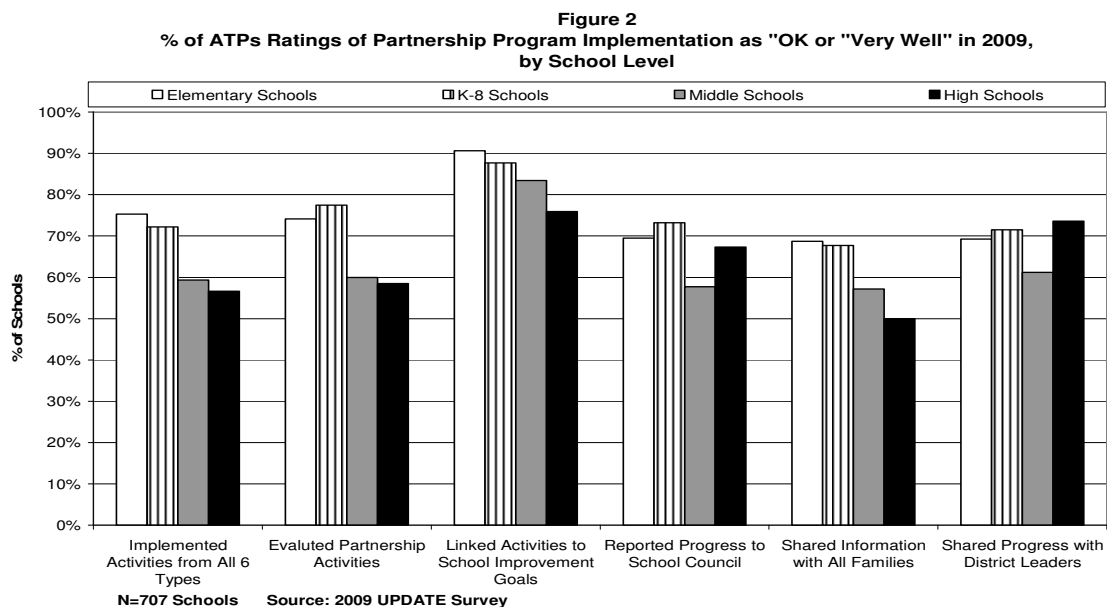
CORE COMPONENTS

Core NNPS program components were measured using a 6-item scale ($\alpha = .74$).² On average, schools implemented 4.1 of 6 program components. ATPs were most likely to report that they wrote (or planned to write) a One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships for the *next* (09-10) school year (84%); had an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) of six or more people (82%); and had written an action plan for the 08-09 school year (78%).

QUALITY OF IMPLEMENTATION

A 12-item scale ($\alpha = .93$) measured how well ATPs organized and implemented the partnership program at the school. These program 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. There is room for schools to improve their program implementation.



- On average, elementary and K-8 schools reported higher levels of program implementation than did middle and high schools.
- The greatest percentage of schools reported a high quality of implementation in linking their partnership activities to school improvement goals.

Although most schools were actively organizing their work on partnerships, some were still challenged to evaluate the quality and outreach of activities and to provide useful information to all families.

- About 28% of all schools indicated that they did not evaluate or needed to improve the evaluation of their partnership activities.
- Over 34% of all schools (and more middle and high schools) reported that they did not effectively inform or needed to improve information on plans and progress of partnerships with all families.

ACTION TEAM FOR PARTNERSHIPS (ATP)

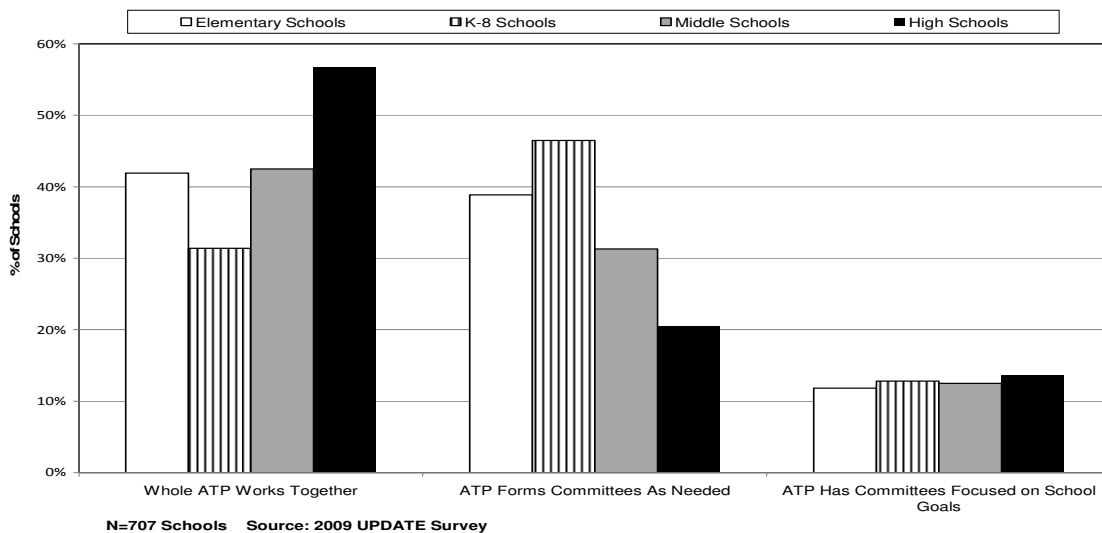
In NNPS, each school must have an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) or an equivalent committee of teachers, parents, and administrators working on family and community involvement. The ATP is responsible for planning, implementing, overseeing, and evaluating partnership activities that are linked to 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 *2009 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 not on the team can share leadership for more and different activities.

About 42% of all schools' ATPs worked together only as a whole team. Of the schools that organized committees to develop and implement involvement activities, most ATPs formed committees as needed, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3
% of ATPs Reporting How Action Teams were Organized in 2009,
by School Level



- High schools were most likely to organize their ATPs as a single, whole committee. This is not particularly efficient for large high schools with complex organizational structures that need to develop ambitious partnership programs with families to ensure that students complete grades 9 through 12 and graduate from high school on time.

- At all school levels, a small percentage of schools organized their ATP with subcommittees focused on school goals, as suggested by NNPS.

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 nine and ten members on their ATPs.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

Fewer than half of the schools' ATPs (41%) met at least monthly to plan and implement their partnership efforts. K-8 schools were more likely (52%) than other schools to meet at least monthly. High schools were more likely (45%) than elementary (40%) and middle schools (35%) to meet at least monthly.

FUNDING

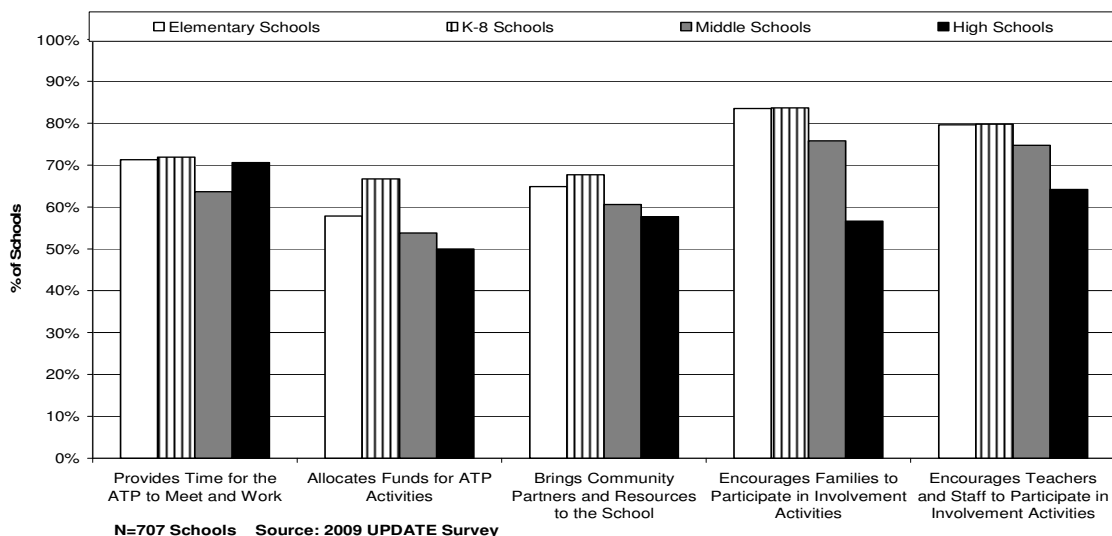
A single item asked ATPs to rate the level of funding for their schools' partnership programs. The largest percentage of teams reported that they had *adequate funds* for their partnership program (44%), although others noted that they received *no funds* (12%) or *not enough funds* (28%) for their programs. A few (11%) said their family and community involvement programs were *well funded*.

ACTION TEAM SUPPORT

PRINCIPALS' SUPPORT

School-based partnership programs need the support of the principal in order to be successful and sustained (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004). Almost all schools (92%) 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 ($\alpha = .91$).

Figure 4
ATP Reports of "A Lot" of Support by the Principal in 2009, by School Level



Overall, principals were rated as highly supportive of partnerships at their school (Figure 4).

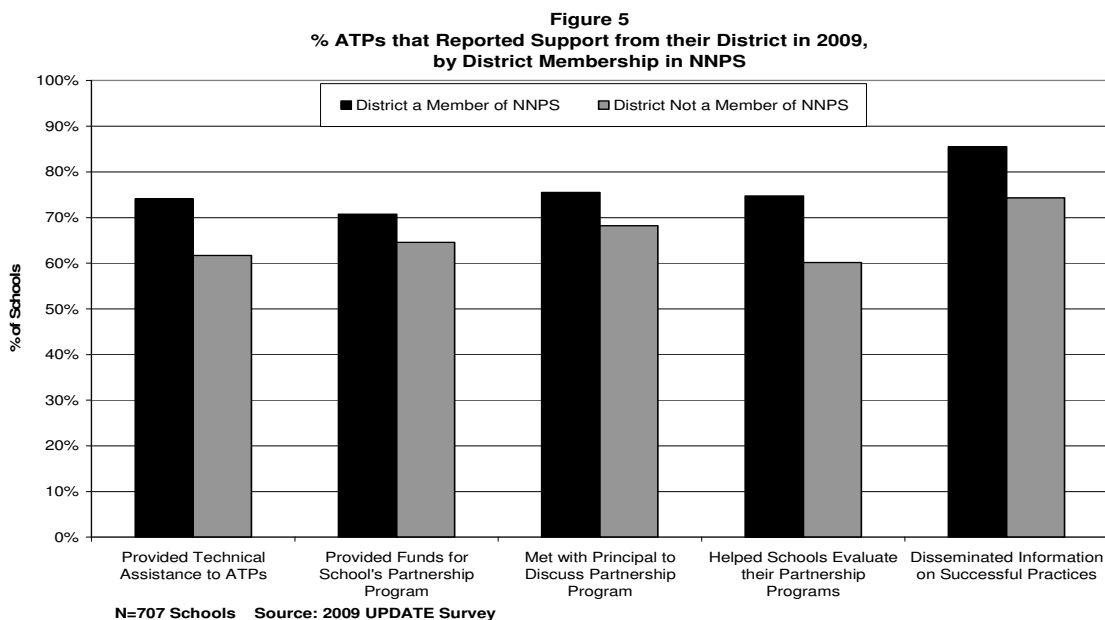
- Principals were least helpful in allocating funds for partnerships.
- Schools at all levels were about equal in principals’ support for time for the ATP to meet.
- High schools reported the least amount of support from the principal for their partnership program.

DISTRICT LEADERS’ SUPPORT

Schools’ partnership programs also benefit from the support of district leaders. In 2009, ATPs rated the quality of 7 types of district assistance they received, from “not provided,” to “not very helpful,” “helpful,” and “very helpful” ($\alpha = .91$). Schools reported receiving an average of between 5 and 6 supportive actions from their districts.

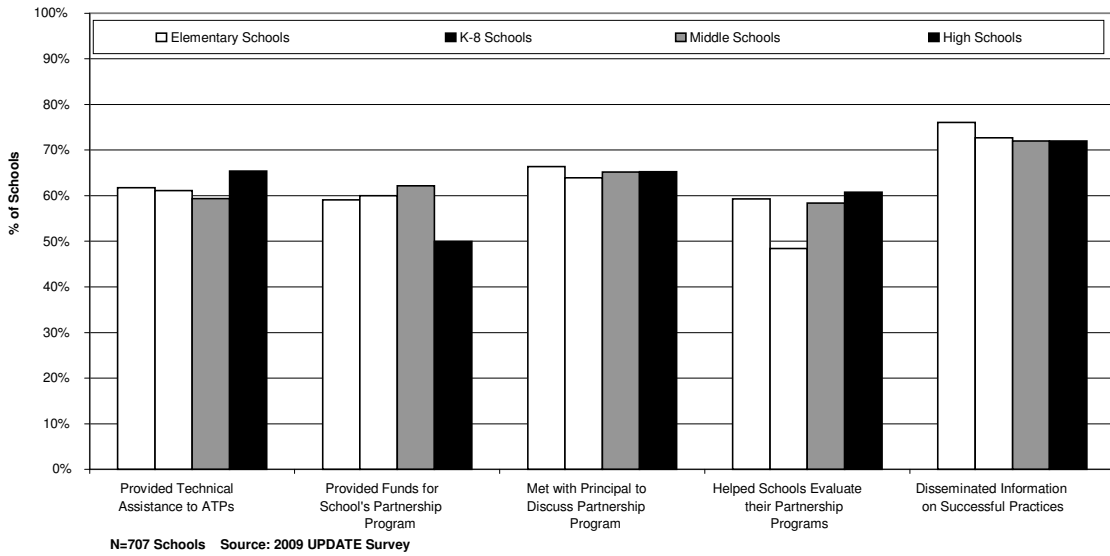
Schools nested within districts that are NNPS members reported more support for their partnership programs than did schools in district that were not NNPS members (Figure 5).

- About 84% of all schools reported that their district disseminated information on successful partnership practices, and 81% reported that their district recognized schools’ good work on partnerships.
- Based on ATP reports, districts were least likely to provide funding for schools to implement partnership activities, particularly at the middle school level (26%).
- Between 28% and 30% 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.



- The majority of schools’ ATPs at all school levels reported that their district leaders supported partnership program development in several ways, particularly in sharing ideas and best practices of family and community involvement, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6
% ATPs Reporting District Support as "Helpful" and "Very Helpful" in 2009, by School Level

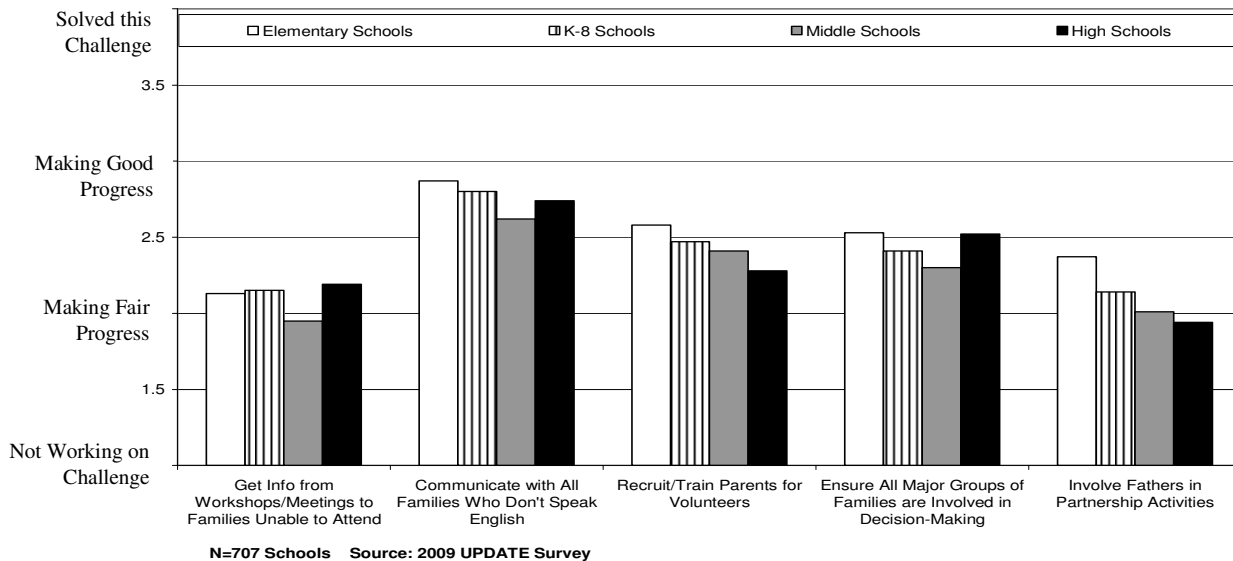


MEETING CHALLENGES TO REACH ALL FAMILIES

In addition to organizing their partnership programs, ATPs are expected to conduct and encourage other partners (teachers, PTA/PTO, community partners) to conduct activities that involved 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 would not become involved on their own.

The vast majority of NNPS schools were working to overcome many challenges to help more families get involved in their children's schooling, as shown in Figure 7.

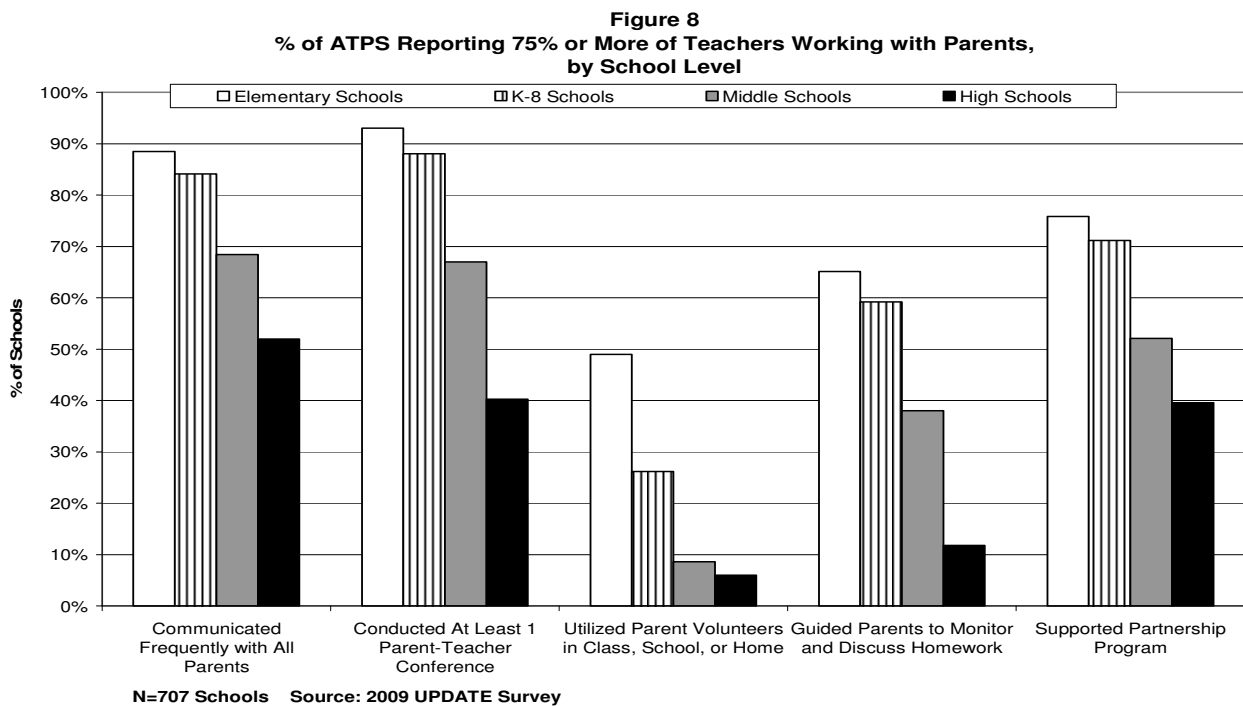
Figure 7
Average Degree to which ATPs Reported Working to "Meet the Challenges," by School Level



- Schools were most likely to be working on the challenge of conducting positive communications with all families, including those who speak languages other than English at home.
- Schools were least likely to be working on the challenge of getting information from workshops and meetings to families who could not attend. About 26% of all schools reported that they were not working to meet this challenge.
- Elementary and K-8 schools reported stronger efforts to meet the challenge of involving fathers than middle and high schools. Middle and high schools were moving toward “making fair progress” in 2009, compared to 2008.

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. Figure 8 shows the percentage of schools in which 75% or more teachers participated in activities to involve all families.



- Elementary schools were most likely to have a larger numbers of teachers conducting parent involvement activities.
- At all school levels, schools had fewer teachers organizing and using parent volunteers in the school, in classrooms, or at home.

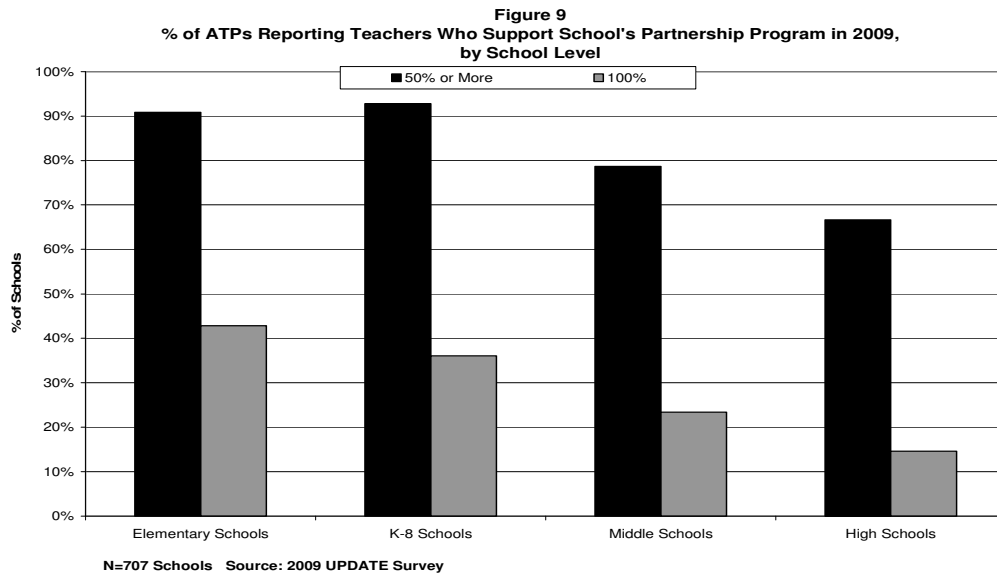
ATPs estimated the percent of families involved in various partnership activities, including Back-to-School Nights, parent-teacher conferences, volunteering to help the school or teachers, monitoring their child’s homework, and being good partners in their children’s education.

Family involvement was more common in elementary and K-8 schools, and less frequent in middle and high schools.

SUPPORT FOR THE SCHOOL'S PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Teachers

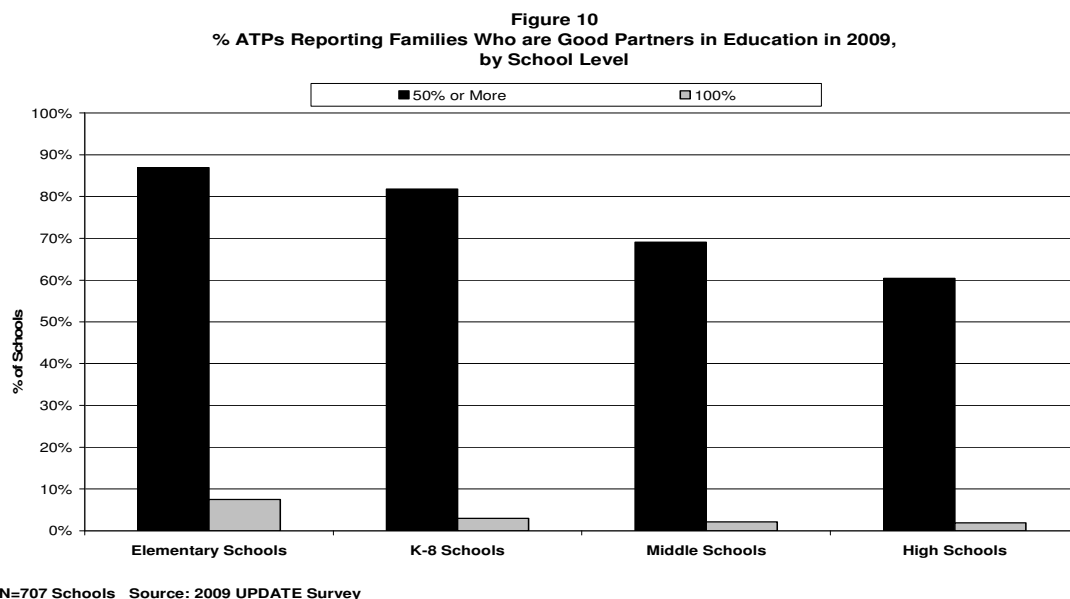
- ATPs reported that a majority of teachers at all school levels supported their school's partnership program.
- Elementary school and K-8 school teachers had higher percentages of teachers who supported their school's partnership program.



- Elementary schools had 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.

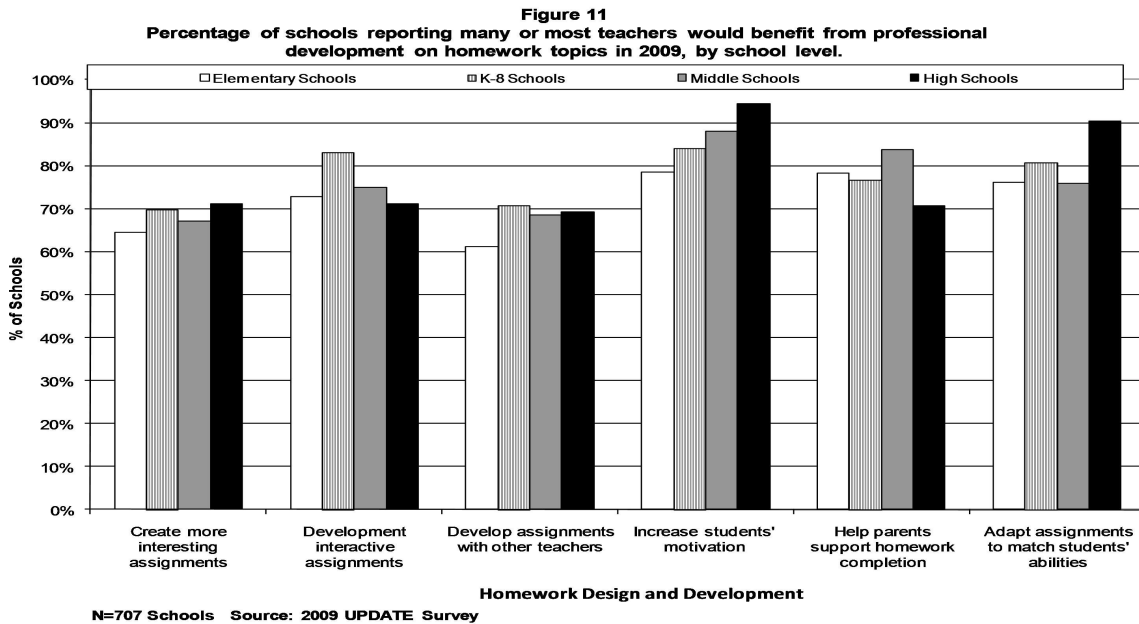
Families

Figure 10 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 who were "good partners."



SPECIAL FOCUS: HOMEWORK

This year, the *2009 School UPDATE* survey included a section asking ATPs to assess their school’s need for professional development to improve the homework process. Schools reported how many teachers would benefit from guidance on improving homework practices on a 6-item scale ($\alpha = .88$). The responses ranged from *none* (i.e. no teachers would find the information beneficial), to *a few*, *many*, and *most*. Figure 11 highlights ATPs responses by grade level.



- Middle schools were most likely (84%) to perceive that their teachers would benefit from professional development about how to help parents establish conditions and schedules at home for students to complete homework.
- Over 94% of high schools reported that “many” or “most” of their teachers would benefit from receiving professional development about how to increase students’ motivation to complete their homework.
- Overall, the vast majority of schools at all levels believed that many or most teachers would benefit from professional development on all of the topics that would improve the homework process.

NNPS offers professional development training and resources on *interactive homework*, and has conducted research demonstrating the efficacy of these materials (Van Voorhis, 2003, in press; and see the TIPS section on the NNPS website, <http://www.partnershipschoools.org>).

HOMEWORK EXPERIENCES

The *2009 School UPDATE* asked ATPs to share an example of a homework assignment in which students had to interact with a parent or family member in order to complete the assignment. About 84% of the ATPs provided information on a successful partnership practice at their school.

Table 1: Elementary School Homework Assignments

Subject	Example that Involves Parent/Family
Language Arts Homework Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students write a biography about a family member (parent or grandparent) • Students receive a disposable camera and take pictures at home over a weekend to use as illustrations for a story • Parents and students make a doll together representing the child’s career aspirations as part of a “Hopes and Dreams” literacy unit

Subject, continued	Example that Involves Parent/Family
Math Homework Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students collect 100 of some item—pennies, popcorn, candy corn—as part of a 100th Day of School celebration with parents • After a workshop on finances, students and parents keep a budget sheet based on a weekly allowance and write long-term financial goals • Students with families estimate the cost of an upcoming family vacation (or outing) and then determine the actual cost of the vacation
Science and Health Homework Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with family members builds a collage of scientific artifacts (rocks, leafs, shells) • Students and parents create a map which indicates escape routes in the house to be used in case of a fire • Students make or bake a model of a plant or animal cell using food items
Social Studies Homework Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and parents create a Family Tree • Students interview a parent about what school was like for them and discuss difference and similarities • Students and parents complete a civic duty together and write a summary about it with illustrations

Table 2: Middle and High School Homework Assignments

Subject	Example that Involves Parent/Family
English/Language Arts Homework Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and parents read a common text, discuss the text, and write a short summary of the similarities and differences of their opinions • Students and parents work together to proof-read writing assignments from class
Math Homework Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students complete a “Game of Life” homework assignment and discuss postsecondary aspirations with a parent • Students complete a family survey on a chosen topic and analyze the data for a statistics unit • Students discuss financial planning and the cost of health and life insurance with their parents
Science and Health Homework Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and a family member write and solve sample math problems in preparation for standardized testing • Students and parents figure out the carbon footprint of their family and their community • Students teach emergency procedures to family members • Students work with parents to complete science fair projects
Social Studies Homework Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview family members and complete a family tree timeline • Students create websites in school about a history topic and complete additional projects from the website with parents at home • Students and families discuss their heritage and make a family crest

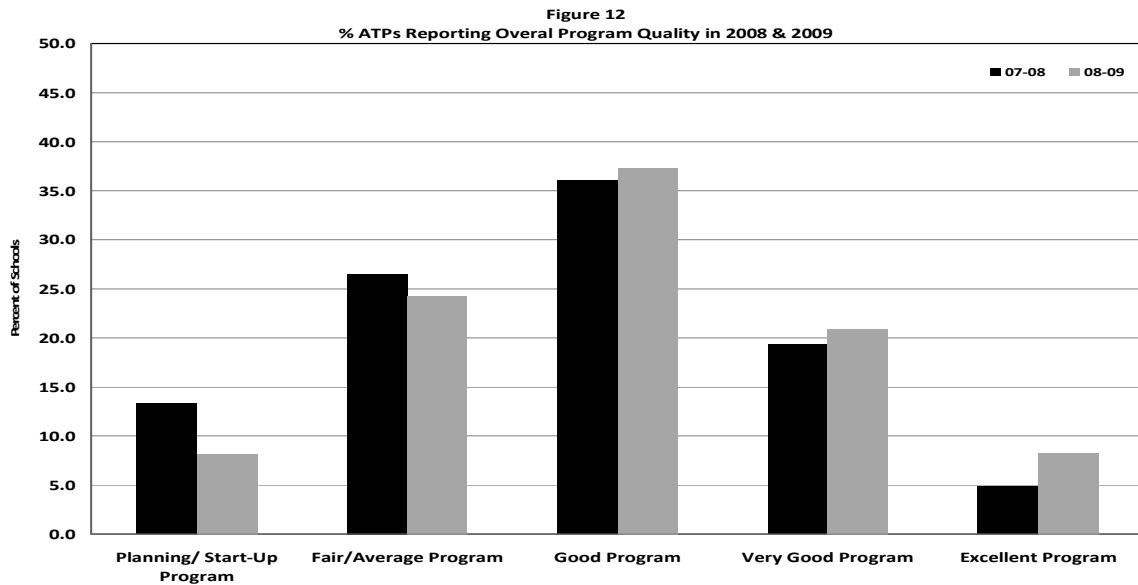
COMPARISON of 2007 and 2008 UPDATE REPORTS

This section of summarizes results from 535 schools that returned the NNPS *School UPDATE* for the past two years (07-08 and 08-09 school years). The sample, similar in composition to 2009, included elementary schools (67.5%), K-8 schools (11.3%), middle schools (12.4%), and high schools (8.8%).

OVERALL PROGRAM QUALITY

Compared to 2008, schools in 2009 were higher in quality with more school teams reporting an overall “portrait” of good, very good, and excellent (Figure 12). Almost half of the schools (47.5%) reported no change in the quality of their partnership program, while 19.7% reported a decline in program quality and 32.8% reported an improvement in the overall quality of their partnership programs. More schools

maintained or improved the quality of the programs, compared to the report a year ago. This kind of incremental progress is important for showing that programs can change for the better with the work that is done from year to year.

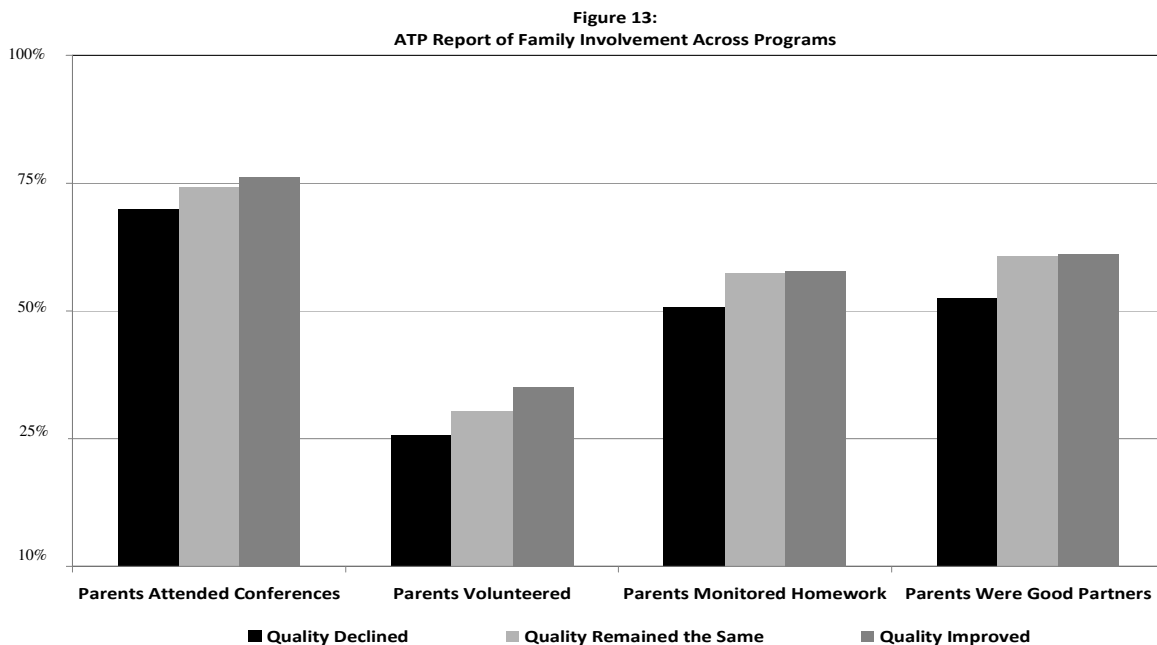


PROGRAM SUPPORTS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Analyses of factors that affected program improvement were conducted that statistically controlled for the prior year’s program quality, principal turnover, average daily attendance, and the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunches. Two factors helped explain positive change in program quality: ATPs reports of district support and ATPs reports of team functioning. That is, ATPs that wrote an action plan and met at least monthly were more likely to report higher levels of program quality in 2009 compared to 2008, after accounting for all other variables in the model.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT OUTCOMES

We compared schools that improved, remained stable, and declined in the quality of their partnership programs from the 08 to 09 school year. Schools with improved or stable partnership programs differed significantly from those that declined in quality on their estimates of family involvement (Figure 13).



Schools that maintained or improved program quality reported greater percentages of:

- Family members attended the Back-to-School night.
- Family members volunteered to help the school or teachers.
- Family members monitored and discussed homework with their children.
- Families perceived to be “good partners” with the school.

These schools also reported greater percentages of teachers who:

- Supported the partnership program.
- Utilized parent volunteers to in the school and/or classrooms.

These comparisons show how important it is for schools to sustain their partnership programs from year to year and to continually improve plans and practices for family and community involvement.

Visit the NNPS website, www.partnershipschools.org

- Read research summaries. (Click on Research and Evaluation.)¹
- Register for professional development conferences or for web-conferences
- See all editions of *Type 2* newsletters (Click on Publications and Products.)
- Find good ideas in the annual collections of *Promising Partnership Practices* (Hutchins, et al. 2009) (Click on Success Stories.)
- Send an e-mail to an NNPS Facilitator with questions about YOUR next steps at the district level and in scaling up your assistance to schools. (Click on Meet the Staff.)
- 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 past years’ summaries of *UPDATE* data and for the annual collections of *Promising Partnership Practices* (Hutchins, et al. 2009), visit the NNPS website, www.partnershipschools.org.
- 2) The (α or alpha) reports the *internal reliability* of a scale, indicating whether a number of 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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