

SUMMARY 2005 UPDATE DATA FROM DISTRICTS IN NNPS

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In response to members' requests for information on program development, NNPS is providing all members with a summary of district and school *2005 UPDATE* data. Districts with 8 schools or more that are members of NNPS and returned *UPDATE* also will receive a customized summary of their own schools' data.^{1,2}

NNPS assists schools, districts, states, and organizations to improve their partnership programs in many ways:

- The NNPS handbook, *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action, Second Edition* (Epstein et al., 2002), includes research summaries, planning and evaluation tools, and materials to develop family and community involvement programs and to conduct one-day training workshops for schools' Action Teams for Partnerships.
- *Type 2*, NNPS's periodic newsletter, includes information and examples to guide leadership and actions.
- An annual collection of *Promising Partnership Practices* features examples of family and community involvement activities from members across the country.
- The annual NNPS Leadership Development Conference and District Leadership Institute provide initial and ongoing professional development on partnerships.
- A monthly *e-Brief* from NNPS Facilitators brings leaders up-to-date on ways to advance their programs.
- The NNPS website, www.partnershipschools.org, offers an enormous amount of information and ideas.

This summary of *2005 UPDATE* data adds another service to benefit NNPS members.

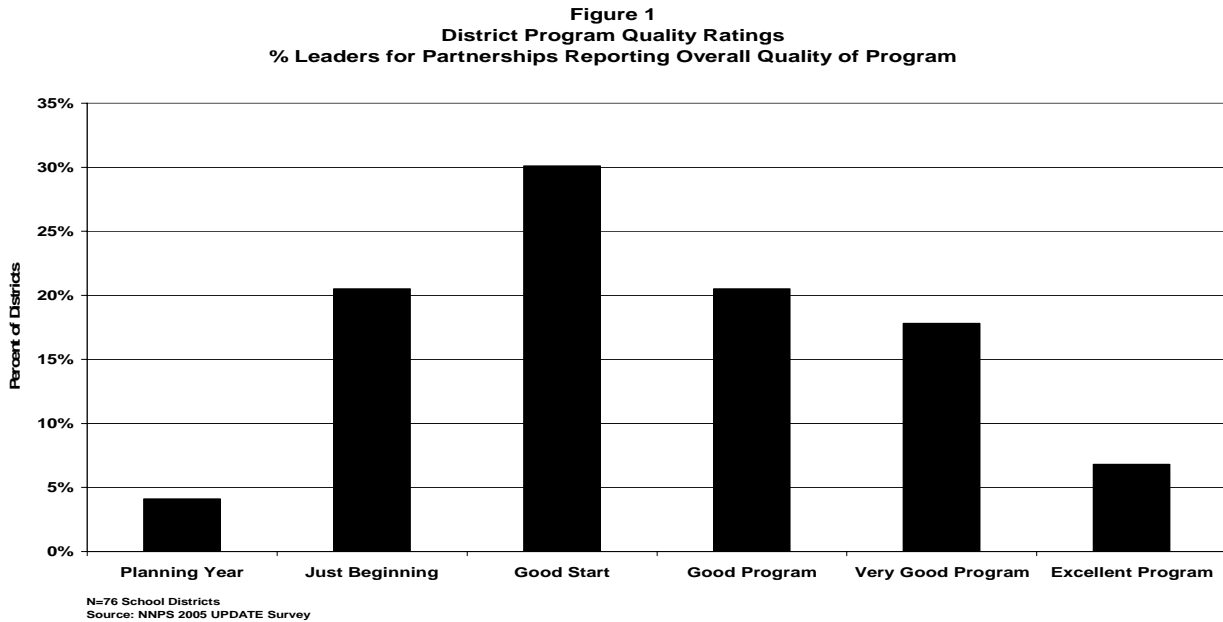
DISTRICTS in NNPS

This section summarizes the results of 10 *UPDATE* measures that NNPS researchers use to study districts' progress in developing their leadership and programs of partnership at the district and school levels. Districts in NNPS may compare their *UPDATE* survey responses with this summary to gauge the quality of their work on partnerships. This information should help district leaders consider how to improve the implementation of essential elements of their partnership programs.

In 2005, 76 district leaders for partnerships reported *UPDATE* data by mid-October. The Key Contacts to NNPS included full-time and part-time leaders in small and large districts located in diverse communities in 25 states and two Canadian provinces. The district leaders spent an average of 16.4 hours per week on their work on partnership program development. Eighty-four percent of the Key Contacts to NNPS in 2005 expected to continue their positions in the 05-06 school year.

OVERALL PROGRAM QUALITY

The 2005 *District UPDATE* measured the overall quality of districts' partnership programs in the form of a "portrait." Figure 1 shows that the district leaders reported that their programs ranged from *low* (25% in a planning year or just beginning), to *average* (51% with a good start or good program), to *high* quality (24% with a very good or excellent program).



In most years, a "normal curve" of the quality of partnership programs emerges, as NNPS adds new district members. Some districts begin to organize a research-based partnership program and other work to improve various aspects of their programs. The variation in program quality reflects (a) districts' starting points on partnerships when they join NNPS and (b) the efforts and investments that districts make to organize and improve key components of their programs as district leaders and their schools continue their work on partnerships.

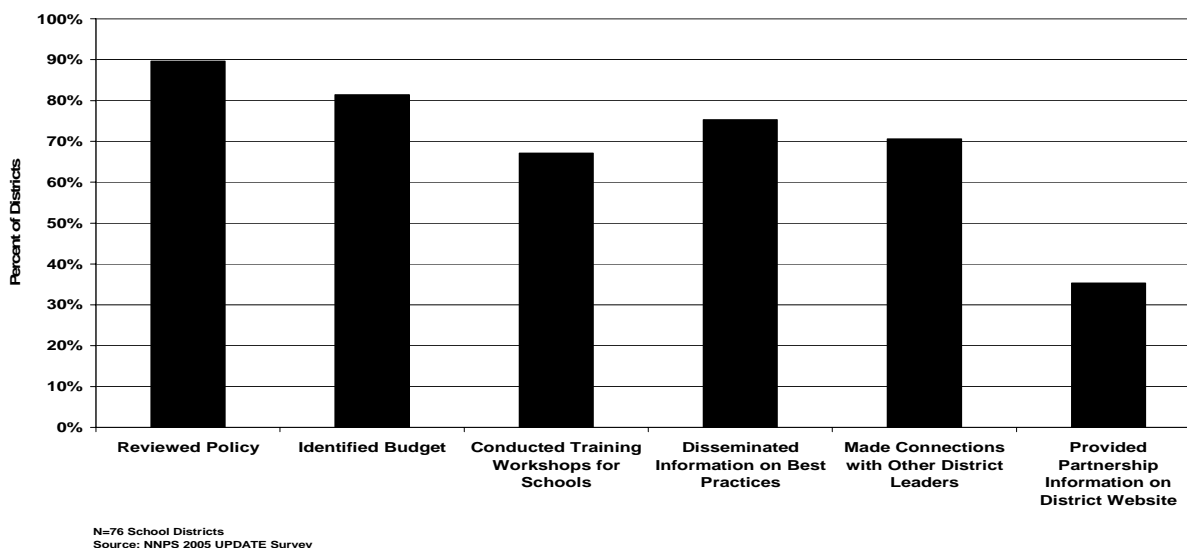
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Although all districts join NNPS with the goal of improving family and community involvement, leaders for partnerships vary in how quickly, how much, and how well they organize their offices and implement actions for high-quality programs. The following measures show how districts in NNPS in 2005 were developing several "essential elements" that have been shown, in previous studies, to help improve partnership programs from year to year.

District-Level Leadership on Partnerships

Figure 2 summarizes six items from a 13-item scale ($\alpha = .60$) that measured how district leaders organized their leadership and work in the district office. Districts averaged 8.27 leadership actions, with a standard deviation of 2.43.

Figure 2
District-Level Leadership on Partnerships
% Who Conducted Selected Actions in 2005



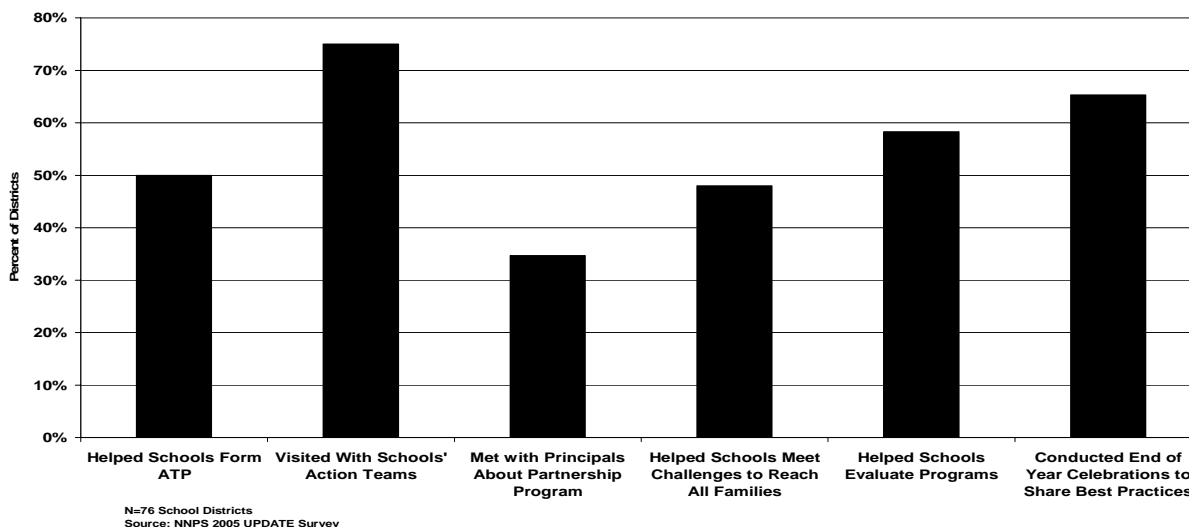
The graph shows that the vast majority of districts in NNPS conducted several basic steps to organize their work on partnerships by reviewing or developing their district policy on partnerships, establishing a budget, and coordinating interdepartmental communications on partnerships. Fewer (68%) conducted team-training workshops for schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships. The percentage reflects the fact that some leaders prepared teams during the 2004-05 school year, while others conducted team training in prior years. Still other district leaders need to prepare their schools’ teams in 2005-06. Fewer district leaders (35%) were communicating their work on partnerships on their district’s website. This reflects the varied stages of website development in districts across the country, but suggests that this useful technology is not yet well used by most district leaders for partnerships in NNPS.

Interestingly, about 75% of the district leaders in NNPS reported that they disseminated information on best practices of family and community involvement to their schools. Most schools already have some good partnership practices to share and want their district leaders to know that they are taking steps to involve students’ families. With ongoing facilitation and guidance, NNPS district Key Contacts can help all schools build on their present practices so that teachers, parents, and community partners work better together as an Action Team for Partnerships to plan, implement, strengthen, and sustain programs that reach out to all families and that contribute to students’ success.

DIRECT FACILITATION OF SCHOOLS ON PARTNERSHIPS

Figure 3 summarizes 6 items from an 18-item scale ($\alpha = .91$) that measured how district leaders directly assisted individual schools to develop programs of partnership linked to school improvement goals. The district leaders averaged 7.89 facilitative actions, with a standard deviation of 5.54.

Figure 3
Direct Facilitation of Schools on Partnerships
% of District Leaders for Partnerships Who Conducted Selected Actions in 2005



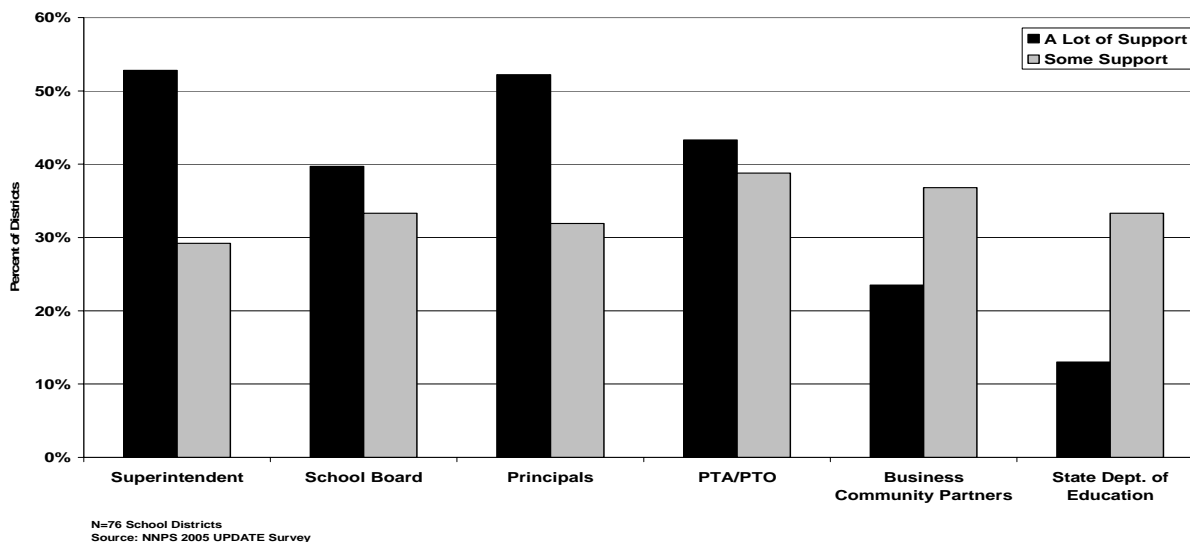
There is greater variation among district leaders in facilitating schools than in setting up their leadership offices (Figure 2). This is partly because district leaders tend to start their work with NNPS by organizing their own offices and plans for partnerships. Then, they learn to conduct team-training and assist elementary, middle, and high schools with their partnership programs. About 50% of the district leaders helped schools form Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) in 2005. In some other districts, school teams were formed in prior years. In still other districts, schools have not yet been assisted to established teams and school-based partnership programs.

Most district leaders for partnerships (75%) visited with their schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs). Between 35% and 65% of district leaders met with school principals, helped school ATPs address key challenges to reach all families, evaluated their programs, and conducted formal end-of-year celebrations to help schools share progress and practices. Over time, excellent districts in NNPS do most or all of these activities every year to increase the capacity of schools' Action Teams for Partnerships to continually improve their programs of family and community involvement.

SUPPORT FROM COLLEAGUES FOR PARTNERSHIPS

Figure 4 summarizes 6 items from a 12-item scale ($\alpha = .93$) that measured how much support district leaders for partnerships reported receiving from colleagues in the district office, schools, and community. Scored 1-4, from *no support* to *a lot* of support, districts averaged 36.85 out of a possible 48 points, with a standard deviation of 8.34. This indicates that most district leaders had some support, but, in many cases, wanted more active support from their colleagues.

Figure 4
Support From Colleagues for Partnerships
% of Leaders for Partnerships with A Lot and Some Support



Just over 50% of the districts in NNPS in 2005 reported strong support from their superintendents and school principals for work on partnerships. The district leaders for partnerships reported receiving the least amount of support from state leaders and from business and community partners. This is due, in part, to the fact that many states have not yet organized a concerted effort to communicate with districts about comprehensive partnership programs. As districts develop their programs of family and community, leaders should find it easier to collaborate with businesses and the broader community in their work on partnerships.

Prior NNPS studies have shown that collegial support is very important for improving district- and school-level programs of partnerships from year to year. It is not enough to understand the goals for family and community involvement. District and school leaders must help others (e.g., other district leaders, all teachers, all families, community businesses and organizations) know *how* the district and schools are actively working to involve all families in their children’s education in productive ways. Without widespread collegial support, someone will always criticize the district and schools for a “lack of involvement.” Because no educational program can achieve perfection, families and the community need to know how the district and schools are working to continually involve more families and to community partners in ways that help students increase learning and success in school.

ASSISTANCE TO SCHOOLS ON KEY CHALLENGES TO REACH ALL FAMILIES

Figure 5 summarizes the items of a 6-item scale ($\alpha = .66$) that measured whether district leaders for partnerships took leadership in guiding schools to meet challenges to involve all families or left these challenges up to schools to solve on their own. The districts guided schools on an average of 2.87 challenges, with a standard deviation of 1.81.

Figure 5
% District Leaders for Partnerships Who Guide Schools to
Address Key Challenges to Reach All Families

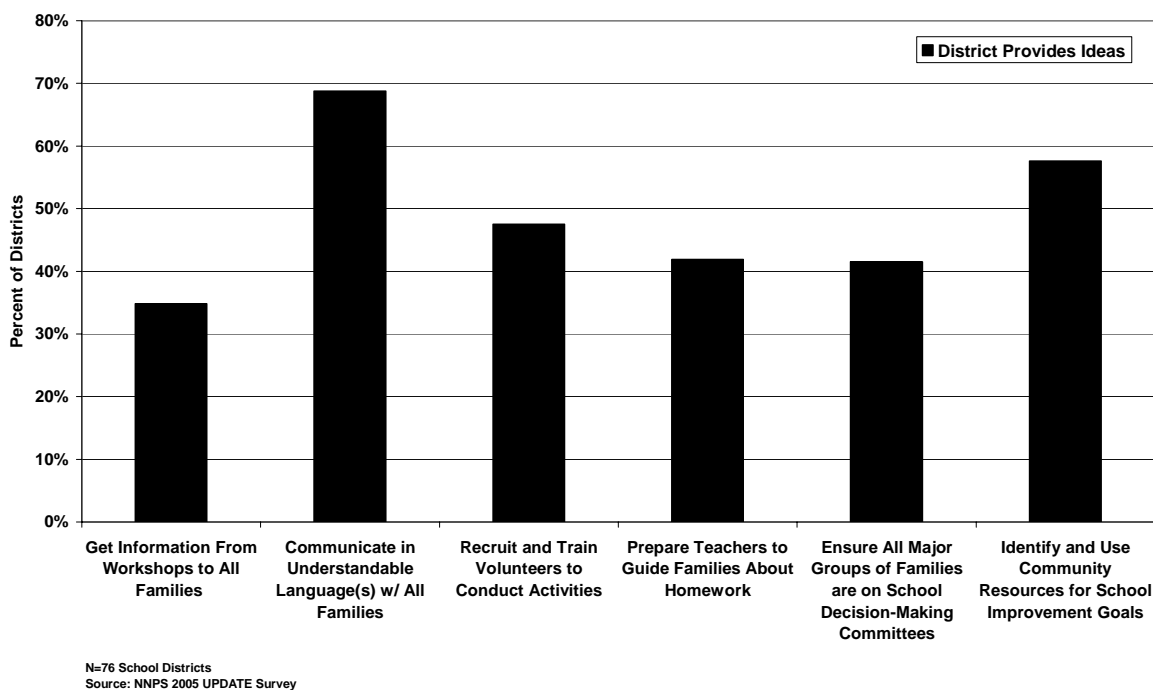


Figure 5 shows that most district leaders (nearly 70%) were helping schools find ways to communicate with families that did not speak English at home. District offices may have translators to assist schools with communications that are sent home, information on school websites in multiple languages, and interpreters to assist parents and teachers at school meetings. Over half of the district leaders also helped schools find community resources to enrich their programs during the 2004-05 school year.

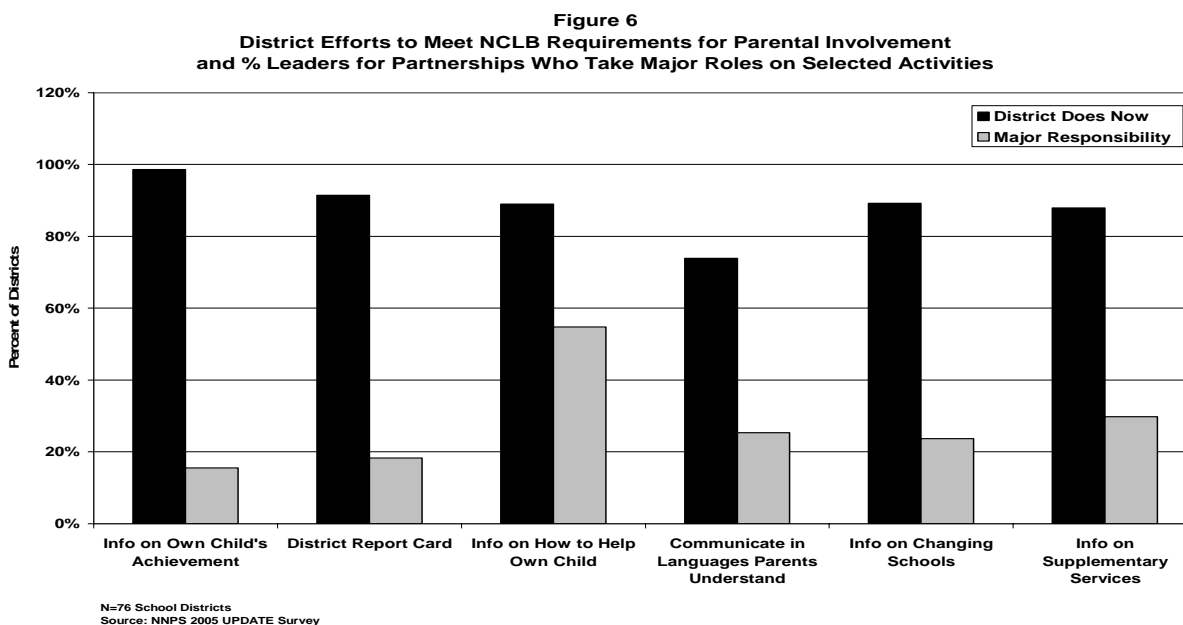
The other challenges measured in 2005 were more often left to schools to solve. Some district leaders, however, helped schools find ways to get information from workshops to parents who could not come (35%), recruit volunteers (48%), find diverse parent leaders for school committees (41%), and work with teachers to guide families about homework (41%).

Prior NNPS studies of *UPDATE* data indicated that district leaders who helped schools address key challenges were more likely to report that their schools made more progress in developing their partnership programs than if schools were left on their own to figure out how to reach more or all families. As district leaders develop their own expertise, learn about the challenges that their schools face in reaching families, and gather examples of promising practices, more leaders are likely to assist schools' Action Teams for Partnerships to reach more (indeed, all) families.

DISTRICT EFFORTS TO MEET NLCB REQUIREMENTS FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Figure 6 summarizes the items of a 10-item scale ($\alpha = .61$) that measured whether district leaders for partnerships reported that their districts were working to meet the NCLB requirements for parental involvement, as specified in Section 1118 and other parts of the law. The districts

averaged 8.96 actions to address NCLB requirements, with a standard deviation of 1.41. This indicates that most districts were aware of and working on just about all NCLB requirements for parental involvement.



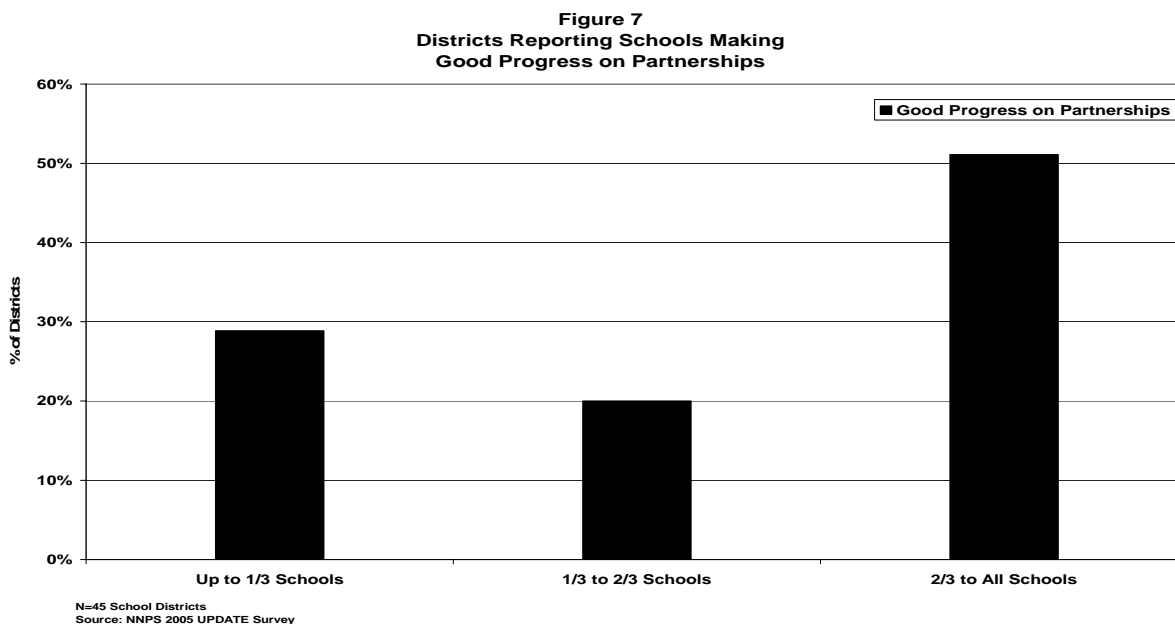
The *2005 District UPDATE* also asked the Key Contacts to NNPS if they had major, minor, or no responsibility for taking actions on NCLB requirements for parental involvement. For example, just about all district leaders reported that their districts gave parents reports on their own child's state achievement test scores. This reporting function is mainly the responsibility of state and district accountability offices. Thus, only 18% of NNPS Key Contacts for partnerships had major responsibility for reporting achievement test scores to parents.

Most districts (67% to 86%) were working on the other NCLB requirements shown in Figure 6. District leaders for partnerships did not have major responsibility for distributing the district report card, providing information on options to change schools or elect supplementary services, or communicating with families in multiple languages. By contrast, more district leaders for partnerships (56%) reported taking major responsibility for helping schools provide information to parents about how to help their own child at home with achievement-related activities.

The main responsibility of district leaders for partnerships is to guide and support *each school* to plan, implement, and strengthen its partnership program and to involve families in ways that support student achievement and success, as outlined in Section 1118. NNPS guidelines, tools, and materials guide this process of program development in all districts and schools, whether they are supported by Title I funds or not. The district leader for partnerships must collaborate with colleagues in other district offices to complete the communications and reports that are required in other sections of NCLB. In this way, family and community involvement will be understood as an important part of the work of curriculum and instruction, assessment, student services, federal programs, and other district departments.

SCHOOLS' PROGRESS ON PARTNERSHIPS

Figure 7 summarizes a single-item indicator of district leaders' reports on whether their schools were making *good progress* in their partnership programs in the past school year. In 2005, about 50% of district leaders for partnerships reported that 2/3 to all of their schools were making *good progress* in developing their program of family and community involvement. Other leaders either reported that fewer than 1/3 or up to 2/3 of their schools were making good progress.



Other NNPS studies indicated that district leaders who actively facilitated their schools' work on partnerships and helped schools meet challenges to reach all families were more likely to report that their schools were making good progress on partnerships. Some district leaders worked with every school in their district on partnerships; others started with a first cohort and planned to "scale up" their work with more schools over time.

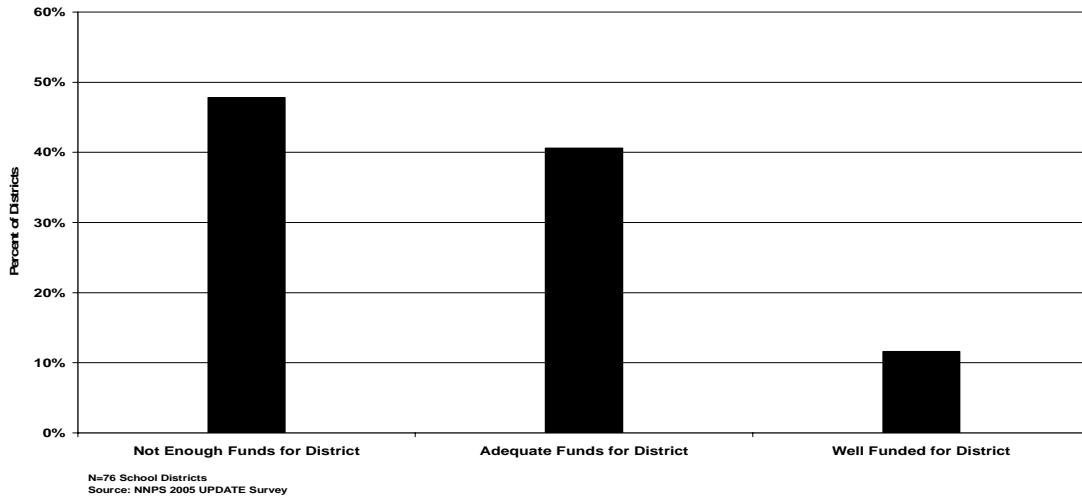
As district leaders work with their schools' ATPs, they may find that some schools respond better than others to guidance. All schools in a district that become members of NNPS receive handbooks, newsletters, and other materials and communications from NNPS. Some ATPs quickly understand and use NNPS tools and guidelines when assisted by their district leaders, whereas other ATPs need extra help to organize their work and make progress on partnerships. Thus, in any school year, district leaders will see variations in how much progress their schools make on partnerships.

District leaders also estimated how many families their schools involved as they implemented family and community involvement activities. The districts, ranging in size from 1 school to over 250 schools, reported that from 20 to over 50,000 families were engaged in the schools' partnership program activities, with an average of over 5500 families involved per district.

ADEQUACY OF FUNDING FOR PARTNERSHIPS

A single item on the 2005 *District UPDATE* asked leaders whether their partnership program was *poorly*, *adequately*, or *well funded*. Figure 8 shows that 52.2% of the district leaders said they were adequately funded (40.6%) or well funded (11.6%), whereas the rest (47.8%) reported that they did not have adequate funds for partnership program development.

Figure 8
District Leaders' Reports of Adequacy of Funding for Partnerships

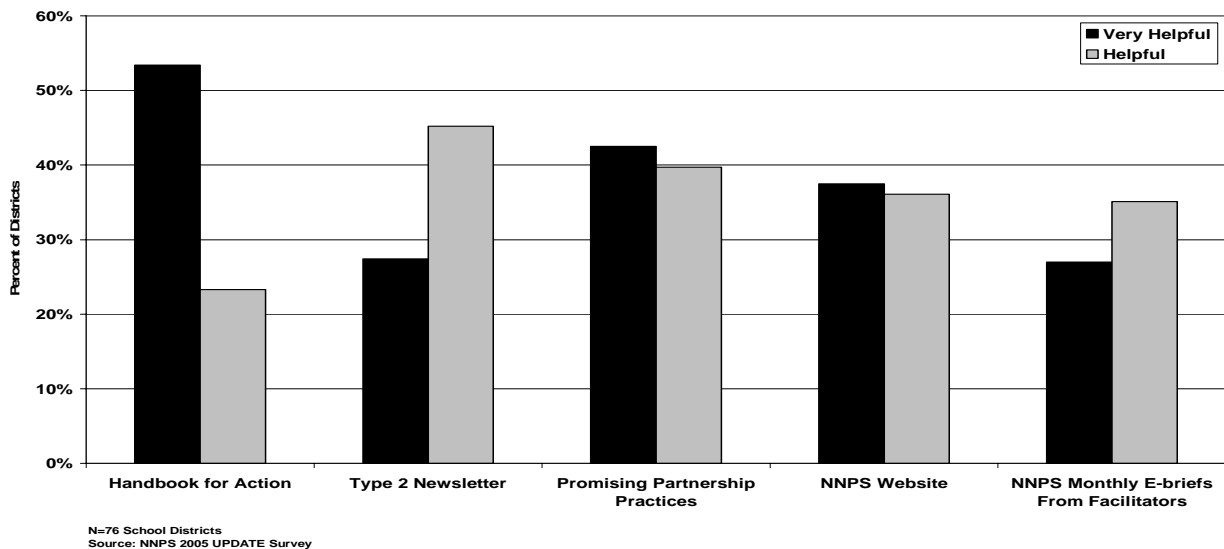


Because districts in NNPS vary greatly in size (from 1 school to over 250 schools in 2005), it is not possible to compare the dollar amount of support for partnerships across districts. Prior NNPS studies indicated that leaders' estimates of the adequacy of funds were more important than the dollar figure. (For information on the average level and sources of funds for partnership programs, see p. 270 of the *NNPS Handbook for Action, Second Edition*.)

USE OF NNPS PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT MATERIALS

Figure 9 summarizes the items of a 8-item scale ($\alpha = .89$) that measured how much district leaders for partnerships used and found helpful NNPS tools and materials to help them plan their leadership and facilitate schools in developing their partnership programs. Scored 1-4, from *not helpful* to *very helpful*, districts averaged 26.13 points out of a possible 32 points, with a standard deviation of 5.25. Over 70% of district Key Contacts found the NNPS tools for program development *helpful* or *very helpful*. Most others noted that the tools were “a little helpful,” whereas only a few said that the materials were not helpful to them.

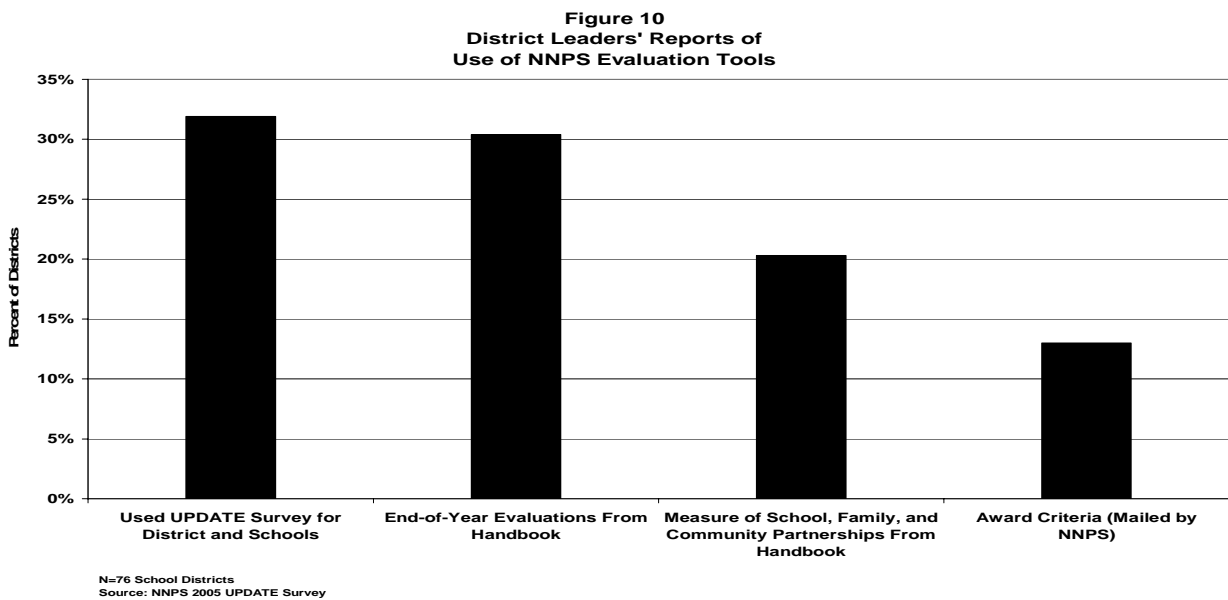
Figure 9
District Leaders' Reports of Use of NNPS Program Development Materials



The most helpful tools were the NNPS *Handbook for Action*, collections of *Promising Partnership Practices*, and website (www.partnershipschools.org). A relatively new service to NNPS members, monthly *e-Briefs* to district leaders, was *helpful* or *very helpful* to about 60% of the district leaders. The e-mail memo is less formidable than the other major publications that were listed on *UPDATE*, but allows NNPS to touch base with all members on a regular schedule.

USE OF NNPS EVALUATION TOOLS

Figure 10 summarizes items from a 5-item scale ($\alpha = .63$) that measured whether district leaders for partnerships use NNPS tools designed to help them chart progress and evaluate the quality of their programs and practices. The districts averaged 1.32 tools to evaluate their work, with a standard deviation of 1.39.



Most district leaders evaluated their work on partnerships, their schools' programs, or both. All (100%) of the districts returned the NNPS *UPDATE* survey, which includes many indicators of program development, including those summarized in this report. Only about 1/3 of the district leaders, however, used the *UPDATE* survey to assess their district or schools' progress. Some district leaders used the NNPS End-of-Year Evaluation forms and the Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships that are included in the NNPS *Handbook* to assess schools' progress on partnerships. A few districts used the NNPS Awards criteria to gauge the quality of the district and/or schools' programs. The results in Figure 10 suggest that NNPS's evaluation tools are underutilized in most districts. The *UPDATE* survey, awards criteria, and tools in the *Handbook* could help all district leaders document the quality and outreach of their programs and practices every year.

DISTRICT LEADERS' COMMENTS

The 2005 *District UPDATE* asked district leaders for partnerships to comment on what changed most in their programs of family and community involvement during the 04-05 school year. Ninety-one percent of the district leaders wrote comments about program changes. Of these, about 6% noted that their most dramatic changes were cutbacks in funding and a reduction of attention to partnerships. The vast majority noted positive program developments. The following were typical comments from many district leaders.

Facilitating Schools' Action Teams for Partnerships

A few more schools started action teams.

All schools developed teams, plans, conducted training, and celebrated success.

Increasing collegial support and partnership program development

[We] developed stronger ties with community action agencies and groups.

[The district and schools] improved communications of administrators, parents, teachers, and the community.

More parents took advantage of SES services. Schools better used Title I parent involvement funds for training and activities.

Schools are contacting my office more frequently to provide programming and assistance.

The work has become focused and efficient. Data collection has become a (regular) practice.

Increasing Family Involvement to Boost Student Achievement

[We had a complete change of understanding...] that lead to strategic and steady communication with families to positively influence the home learning environment.

By tying parent involvement to student achievement, [the school] staff was more interested and committed to parent and community involvement activities.

[Schools were more focused] on parents as true partners, not just classroom volunteers who bring cupcakes.

Parent guides to summer learning were developed and mailed to all K-5 families.

We made teachers, principals, and parents aware of the six keys (types of involvement) and tied parent involvement to our SWP goals. We conducted 16 workshops for at-risk kindergarten students and their parents.

SUMMARY

NNPS guides districts to organize their leadership on school, family, and community partnerships and to assist all elementary, middle, and high schools to develop their own school-based programs of family and community involvement linked to school improvement goals. The *2005 District UPDATE* data indicate that most districts in NNPS are working to implement key program components.³

The data also indicate that there is room for improvement

- More district leaders must provide training and support for schools' Action Teams for Partnerships. Most district leaders have taken steps to organize their district offices, but some have not yet started to facilitate the work of any schools. District leaders must conduct team training workshops, guided by NNPS's *Handbook for Action* and other professional development services. They also must provide ongoing assistance to help every school's Action Team for Partnerships develop knowledge, skills, plans, and

practices of partnership. Districts in NNPS are expected to develop their “local network of schools,” which also is connected to NNPS. In that way, district leaders and schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships obtain ongoing support for their work on partnerships and opportunities to network with others.

- Attention to key challenges to involve all families. Some district leaders help schools understand and address key challenges, such as communicating with families who do not speak English at home. Other districts leave it up to schools to identify challenges and solutions on their own. Although many districts assist schools in translating materials to other languages, few districts assist schools with solving other key challenges for the six types of involvement. NNPS studies indicate that district leaders who assist schools in addressing major challenges report more progress by schools and more involvement of families from one year to the next.
- Outreach to the community. Many district leaders could do more to increase the involvement of business and community partners in ways that support goals for student success. District leaders for partnerships and colleagues with other specialties can assist schools by establishing good communications community partners. Connections with community businesses and organizations do not substitute for family involvement, but can help enrich school curricula, extracurricular programs, and students’ learning experiences.
- Finding funds for partnership programs. Nearly half of the district leaders for partnerships note inadequate funds for their work on partnerships. This requires attention not only to the need for districts to fund partnership programs, but also to new ways to allocate Title I and other federal, state, and local funds that stipulate family and community involvement as part of programs for school improvement and student learning.

NNPS encourages district leaders for partnerships to compare their responses on the *2005 District UPDATE* survey to the national network’s averages and to NNPS expectations presented in this report. District leaders, colleagues, and their schools may work, this year, to improve aspects of their programs that fall below the network’s average or that do not reflect NNPS’s expectations for excellent programs. District leaders may take pride in, sustain, and continue to improve aspects of their district-level leadership and facilitation of schools that are relatively strong compared to other districts in NNPS, and share best practices with NNPS in the 2006 collection of *Promising Partnership Practices*.

Studies indicate that districts and their schools that continue to work on partnerships over time improve their programs, outreach, and results of family and community involvement (Epstein, 2005; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Salinas, Maushard, Brownstein, & Waxman, 2005; Sheldon, 2005; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004). Districts that are just starting to organize their leadership and plans on partnerships cannot be expected to do as much as districts that have been improving leadership for many years. NNPS expects all districts to continue to plan, implement, and evaluate their district-level and school-based programs of school, family, and community partnerships and report progress and challenges on the *2006 District UPDATE* survey next spring.

NOTES

- 1) A few late *UPDATE* surveys may be added until the end of the calendar year, but are unlikely to change the patterns of results in this summary.
- 2) States and organizations in NNPS are being sent the summaries of school and district 2005 *UPDATE* data. There are too few states and too diverse organizations to summarize those data in sensible ways. NNPS will continue to review the annual *UPDATE* surveys from states and organizations to chart progress and to learn how NNPS can best assist these leaders with their work on partnerships.
- 3) 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 data collected over the past five years, click on *Research Summary* on the home page of the NNPS website, www.partnershipschools.org. Also see the “Research Briefs” columns in each issue of the NNPS newsletter on the website in the section *Publications and Products*. Follow the links to *Type 2* and “Research Briefs.” The 2005 *UPDATE* data in this summary will be further analyzed for a report at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in April 2006 and summarized for members of NNPS in a future issue of *Type 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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