

# type 2

Spring, 1997 No. 2

National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools

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## Meeting the challenge

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**PARTNERSHIPSCHOOLS**

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## Communication Flows Two Ways

Mavis G. Sanders

Challenges for the six types of involvement must be met to transform an average partnership program into an excellent one. Meeting the challenges means that practices will be responsive to the diverse needs of families, students, and communities, and will inform and involve all families in various ways.

One key challenge of Type 1 - Parenting is to provide information from workshops and other school activities to families who cannot attend. Because families also need opportunities to provide ideas and information to the school, a key challenge of Type 2 - Communicating is to establish two-way channels of communication from school-to-home and from home-to-school. Action Teams in schools across the country in the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools are working hard to meet these and other challenges.

For example, to meet the first challenge, the Action Team for School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Cross Country Elementary School in Baltimore City makes sure that summaries of all school events and activities are available in the school's Parent Room. Parents can stop by to pick up the summary of a workshop they missed. Summaries also appear in the school's monthly newsletter.

To meet the second challenge, the school produces a "two-way" newsletter that contains a tear-off section for parents'

signatures, comments, or questions. Someone at the school replies to the comments or questions by phone or in the next newsletter. The Action Team encourages students to return tear-offs by conducting an on-going school-wide activity called the "One Hundred Percent Club." Classes with 100 percent returns win pizza parties, are announced over the intercom, and are recognized in the next newsletter. This helps strengthen students' understanding of the part they play in school, family, and community partnerships.

By meeting these challenges, schools are taking steps to ensure that all families receive and have opportunities to respond to important school information. They are building the foundation for a strong program of partnerships.

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## State Line

### Ohio Initiates a Network of 235 Partnership Schools

Connie Ackerman and Cathy Oriole, Ohio's Key Contacts to Partnership-2000 Schools, have taken giant steps to help Ohio's districts and schools plan and implement programs of school, family, and community partnerships. This spring they awarded planning grants of \$500 to 235 schools to develop and improve their partnership programs.

*(Continued on page 3)*

# Issues and Insights

## What Makes a Permanent Program of Partnerships?

Joyce L. Epstein, Director

One of the main goals of the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools at Johns Hopkins University is to help schools, districts, and states establish permanent programs of school, family, and community partnerships. In permanent programs, families and community members are welcomed, respected, informed, and involved in positive and productive ways. Activities are planned every year for the six types of involvement to improve school programs, strengthen families, increase students' success, and develop helpful connections with the community. How do school, district, or state leaders make their programs of school, family, and community partnerships PERMANENT? By starting some good habits this spring.

It is time to do some "spring gleaning!" That means it is time to gather information, assess progress, and make plans for the next school year. To progress toward a permanent, ever-improving program of partnerships, Action Teams should:

- Complete an End-of-Year Evaluation to check progress overall and on each of the six types of involvement. Also, review Starting Points: An Inventory of Present Practices to chart present practices and identify activities that should be maintained or improved next year.
- Revisit the Three-Year Outline. Select Form A or the new Form B to update a long-term vision for a program of partnerships.

- Write a new One-Year Action Plan for 1997-98. Most important of all is to complete the next One-Year Action Plan before the end of the school year so that your partnership program will continue in the fall. Select Form A to plan activities for each of the six types of involvement or the new Form B to link school, family, and community partnerships to the major goals in a School Improvement Plan. (See Chapter 5 of the *Partnership-2000 Schools Manual*, and details in the article on page 5.)

States and districts, too, must work toward permanent programs of partnerships with some spring gleaning. This includes collecting information on the effectiveness of staff assistance to schools, and writing plans for 1997-98 to improve training, support, communications, opportunities to share practices, and to "scale up" the number of schools or districts in the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools.

The National Network will do some spring gleaning too! In May, we will mail to all Key Contacts an UPDATE: The Annual Progress Report to the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools to check the progress and plans of members (see details in the article on page 3).

Gathering information every spring and completing new plans for the next school year will help create permanent programs of school-family-community partnerships.

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## Question

What is the ONE time that members of the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools must communicate with the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships?

(Answer on page 8)

## State Line

### Ohio Supports 235 Schools to Develop Partnerships in Network

(Continued from page 1)

Ohio's leaders conducted 16 orientation meetings across the state to prepare parents, teachers, principals, counselors, and others to work together to plan their programs of partnership. They report: "After each meeting, people are leaving excited about developing stronger partnerships. Your materials and framework make it easier." Next, Ohio will conduct an ambitious competitive grants program for \$3000 implementation grants for program development in the 1997-98 school year.

Ackerman and Oriole's work in Ohio's Office of Family and School Partnerships is supported by John M. Goff, Superintendent of Public Instruction and Gene T. Harris, Chief Program Officer, and by the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation. The state's office also is working with the State Board of Education and conducting collaborative activities with

the Ohio Parent Information and Resource Center, the Ohio PTA, Ohio Family and Children First Initiative, the University of Cincinnati, and other state and local groups to strengthen the partnership program.

Ohio's design is an outstanding example of how state leaders can foster district and school leadership and action. The feasible levels of planning and implementation grants could be matched by any state, district, or school that wants to implement comprehensive programs of home-school-community collaboration.

The National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools at Johns Hopkins University welcomes the first 235 schools in Ohio as members. With the Ohio group, the Network has more than doubled its school members!



## Watch Your

The only required communication from all states, districts, and schools is UPDATE: The Annual Progress Report to the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools. In May, all members who joined the Network by December 1996 will receive a short form to update names and addresses of Key Contacts, progress made this year, challenges met, and whether your school, district, or state intends to continue developing its program of school-family-community partnerships and its membership for the 1997-98 school year.

Schools will be asked about their Action Teams and about progress on the six types of involvement; districts and states will be asked about their leadership activities that help schools strengthen programs of partnership. We also want to know if members are using this newsletter (*Type 2*), whether members have access to the Internet and use the Network's website (<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000>), and whether there are other ways the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships can assist members of the Network.

UPDATE: The Annual Progress Report to the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools for 1996-97 is coming soon to members who joined the Network by December 1996. Members who joined later will receive their first UPDATE at the end of the 1997-98 school year. Please return your UPDATE to the Network quickly!

### National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools

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## **NEW MEMBERS GRAPHIC**

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## District Record

### Facilitators Help Develop Strong Action Teams

A well-functioning Action Team for School, Family, and Community Partnerships is essential for the success of a school's partnership program. The action team approach ensures that work is shared among parents, teachers, administrators and others, and reduces the likelihood that partnerships will end if one active person leaves the school.

Baltimore Area Facilitators Marsha Powell-Johnson, Brenda Thomas, and Paula Williams guide the work of about 80 Action Teams in the Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS). They conduct meetings with the schools in their areas, quarterly cluster meetings with groups of schools, End-of-Year Celebrations to share best practices, and help the schools with their plans and programs.

Recently, the district-level facilitators, the Fund for Educational Excellence, and the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools conducted a 3-hour workshop for Chairs of all BCPS Action Teams. The goal was to help the chairpersons understand the skills and actions needed for effective leadership of their teams, including delegating tasks, motivating team

### Introducing Our Logo! National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools



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members, and ensuring that progress is made on partnership activities. One product of the workshop was the "ABCs of Action Team Leadership," added to Chapter 4 of the *Partnership-2000 Schools Manual*.

The workshop for the Action Team leaders was a great success. It helped Action Team leaders see what Powell-Johnson of the Northwest Area of BCPS often says: "There is no T in TEAM." Strong Action Teams have leaders and members who share responsibility for implementing a comprehensive program of partnerships.

One team leader explained: "Before joining Partnership-2000, the parent liaison alone was responsible for family and community involvement. Now, the Action Team members share responsibilities. We're all turning to each other. It [the Action Team for School, Family, and Community Partnerships] has made my job so much easier."

## New for 1997-98!

Action Teams and district facilitators now may choose a "matched set" of Form A or B for the Three-Year Outline and One-Year Action Plan. Form A focuses on the six types of involvement, activities to be improved, maintained, or added, and the desired results from each activity. Form B requires a page for each major school improvement goal and focuses on measurable results and the partnership activities that will help produce desired results for each major goal.

Both forms help produce a comprehensive, results-oriented program. Schools that have a School Improvement Team may find Form B more consistent with their overall School Improvement Plans. Schools that are beginning a program of partnerships might find Form A more helpful. Look in Chapter 5 of the *Partnership-2000 Schools Manual* to find the forms that best suit your partnership program for 1997-98. If you need copies of the forms, contact Karen Salinas at 410-516-8818.

## Double Check for Districts

How is your district-level leadership developing? This spring have you...

- Continued visits to facilitate the work of individual schools?
- Continued quarterly cluster meetings to enable schools to share information?
- Planned and conducted an End-of-Year Celebration to help schools in your district share best practices, progress, and plans?
- Increased the number of schools (up to all schools in the district) who are members of the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools?
- Made district plans for the summer and for the 1997-98 school year to continue to help schools develop their programs of school, family, and community partnerships?

IF YOU HAVE NOT DONE THESE THINGS YET, check your *Partnership-2000 Schools Manual* for guidelines and explanations. Or, e-mail [p2000@csos.jhu.edu](mailto:p2000@csos.jhu.edu) and we will answer your questions.

## Members Share Best Practices

Schools, districts, and states in the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools are invited to share their best practices and most effective leadership activities each year. In February, all members received forms for submitting best practices. Seven schools and three districts responded in time for "honorable mention" in this issue of *Type 2*.

Thanks to these schools for sharing some of their best practices of 1996-97: Beverly Shore Elementary (FL) - an interactive homework activity; Eli Whitney School (CT) - school-wide interactive homework project; Henry Barnard Elementary (CT) - volunteer program; Howard Elementary of Panama - list of partnership activities; Norton School (CT) - brochure describing partnership programs; Robertson Elementary (CT) - parent brochures to enhance student learning; and Thomas Jefferson Elementary (MD) - science fair.

(Continued on page 7)

## School Report

### School-Wide Interactive Homework Project Involves Families in Enfield, Connecticut

The Family Connection, an interactive homework project, was submitted to the Network's Sharing Best Practices by Action Team Chair Juliette Leith and Principal Linda Cavanaugh of the Eli Whitney School in Enfield, Connecticut. As homework, The Family Connection is a Type 4 Activity - Learning at Home that aims to improve students' writing skills and parent-child interactions.

Because it is a well-organized school-wide project, it also incorporates other types of involvement such as helping educators know their families (Type 1 - Parenting), improving school-to-home communications (Type 2 - Communicating), and increasing volunteers (Type 3 - Volunteering). The activity is co-organized by the Action Team called the Partners in Education (P.I.E.) Group and the PTO (Type 5 - Decision Making).

Started in the fall of 1995, The Family Connection has been conducted and improved each fall and spring. Presently, about 75% of the 480 students and families complete the voluntary homework on such topics as: About My Family or Favorite Family Fun.

The topics are discussed and selected by all 23 teachers at a staff meeting to ensure that they are involved and satisfied with the assignments. Students and families at all grade levels receive the same assignment and complete it in the same time period.

The writing assignments and pictures that the students draw are shared in classrooms and displayed in hallways. The result is a celebration and appreciation of all families.

The school leaders explain: "Implementation of these activities was really quite easy. The most difficult part of the school-wide project is finding an activity that will appeal to the K-6 range of grade levels, and one that can be attractively displayed in our hallways."

Interactive homework projects are described as "low cost" and "non-threatening" with "strong interest from parents." Leith and Cavanaugh state: "The Family Connection has not only been a best practice, but is fast becoming a tradition in our school culture!"

Summary of a report from Juliette Leith and Linda Cavanaugh, Eli Whitney School, Enfield, CT contributed to the 1996-97 Sharing Best Practices of the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools at Johns Hopkins University.

## Double Check for Schools

How is your program of partnerships developing? This spring have you...

- Accomplished activities as scheduled in the One-Year Action Plan?
- Recognized volunteers who helped at school, at home, or in the community?
- Completed an End-of-Year Evaluation to assess progress this year?
- Written the NEXT ONE-YEAR ACTION PLAN for the 1997-98 school year?
- Scheduled time in the summer to design activities needed to "kick off" the program in the fall?
- Checked to see which teachers, parents, administrators, or others on the Action Team will continue next fall, or need to be replaced?

IF YOU HAVE NOT DONE THESE THINGS YET, check your *Partnership-2000 Schools Manual* for guidelines and explanations. Or e-mail [p2000@csos.jhu.edu](mailto:p2000@csos.jhu.edu) and we will answer your questions.

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## Research Briefs

### Partnerships Promote Better Attendance and Higher Achievement

Data on the partnership programs of 39 schools in Baltimore City were linked to Maryland state data on attendance and reading, writing, and math achievement. Analyses explored whether the quality of partnerships contributed to higher attendance and achievement. Analyses indicate:

- The best predictors of school attendance or achievement are the prior year's scores on these measures.
- Schools with high mobility (many students entering and withdrawing during the year) have poorer attendance than other schools.
- With these and other important factors statistically controlled, schools with stronger partnership programs have higher attendance, and in grade 3 have more students achieving at the satisfactory level or better on writing, reading, and math performance assessments.

Although the data are limited, the analyses suggest that schools that strengthen their school, family, and community partnerships will boost attendance and achievement beyond that which would be predicted by the prior year's data. Results should be stronger if school-family-community connections focus specifically on attendance or on writing, reading, and math activities.

From: *Scaling Up School-Family-Community Connections in Baltimore: Effects on Student Attendance and Achievement*, by J. L. Epstein, L. Clark, K. C. Salinas, and M. G. Sanders. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the AERA, March 1997, Chicago.

### School Teams and District Help Strengthen School, Family, and Community Partnerships

Membership forms of the first 222 schools in the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools were analyzed to determine the types of schools that join the Network, and to test some assumptions of our work. Schools joining the Network are highly diverse in starting practices of school, family, and community connections, level of district and state support for their programs of partnership, racial/ethnic composition, and socioeconomic status. For example, schools in the Network serve an average of 39% of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches, with a range of 0% to 100% on this poverty indicator.

Elementary schools in the Network have stronger partnerships than middle or high schools, and schools that serve poorer students have weaker programs initially.

Grade span and poverty level were statistically controlled in analyses of the effects of district help, school

teams, and other factors on partnerships. The study reveals these results:

- District HELP is more important than district POLICIES for enabling schools to develop strong programs of school, family, and community partnerships.
- Having a partnership TEAM or a paid COORDINATOR helps strengthen school programs and practices of partnership.

The 1996 data confirm the importance of some of the Network's requirements for membership such as School Action Teams and District Facilitators. The results indicate that as members implement the Network's requirements, all schools should strengthen their programs of school, family, and community partnerships.

From: *The National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools: Analyses of Members' Characteristics and Goals for School-Family-Community Connections*, by B. S. Simon, J. L. Epstein, M. G. Sanders, and K. C. Salinas.

### Network Members Share Best Practices of 1996-97

*(Continued from page 6)*

Thanks also to the following districts for sharing some of their best leadership activities of 1996-97: Galt Joint Union School District (CA) - community teams for reading success; Mt. Pleasant Public Schools (MI) - parent friendly outcomes; and Sacramento City Unified School District (CA) - recognition celebration for Sacramento Network members.

As your Action Team or leadership team completes an End-of-Year Evaluation of this year's partnership

activities, select one of your most successful practices to share with the Network. If you need additional copies of the Sharing Best Practices forms, contact Karen Salinas at 410-516-8818.

All submissions received by June 30, 1997 will be considered for "In the Spotlight" — a feature on the Network's website to help all members improve their partnership programs. We can learn from each other!

## Focus on Results

Each year, the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools invites members to join a cross-site study of the linkages of school, family, and community partnerships with important results for students. Twenty-four schools volunteered to participate in the Network's first cross-site study of how involving families and communities helps improve or maintain **student attendance**.

Participants include:

Baer School, Bainbridge Elementary, Canton Middle, Dabney Elementary, Fairsite Elementary, Fallstaff Middle, Farring Elementary, Hawthorne Elementary, Lee Adult Education Center, Lincoln Elementary Technology Academy, Litchfield High, Luther C. Mitchell Primary, Madison Square Elementary, Milford High, Northside Elementary, Osan American High, Plum Point Elementary, Ranch View Elementary, River Oaks Elementary, South St. Paul High, Thurmont Middle, Valley Oaks Elementary, Vernon E. Greer Middle, and Wagner Elementary.

In November 1996, participants completed a short baseline survey on student attendance and plans for improving attendance and reducing lateness. A mid-year documentation is in the field, and a final survey will be sent to participants in May. Analyses will be completed and shared with all members of the Network.

Next year's Focus on Results will explore whether and how family and community connections affect student math achievement. If improving math achievement is one of your school's goals, your Action Team may elect to join the Network's

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## Answer

 (What is the ONE time members must communicate with the Center?)

At the end of each school year on UPDATE: The Annual Progress Report to the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools to share progress and plans to continue in the Network — to be mailed soon to all Key Contacts.

## Network Website Updated for Members

Do you have questions that you want to ask? Best Practices to share? Publications you need? Are there schools or districts that may be interested in joining the Network? Visit the updated website of the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools at <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000> to find:

- **Partnership Program** introduces the main components and processes that will help schools, districts, and states with their work on school, family, and community partnerships.
- **Membership** gives the requirements for membership and a way to request membership forms online.
- **Q & A** shares frequently asked questions and their answers, and enables users to ask questions and respond to posted questions.

- **Member Services** outlines some of the ways that the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships assists members of the Network, including the manual, newsletter, workshops, and access to staff.
- **Publications** describes a few publications that will help build strong partnership programs, including information on TIPS interactive homework and available surveys.
- **In the Spotlight** showcases best practices that are submitted by members - presently under construction.
- **Contact the Staff** introduces the directors of the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools and how to contact them.
- **Links** lists related sites that agree to two-way links with our Center and the Network.

## National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools CALENDAR for 1997-98

May:	Final contact for data on the FOCUS ON RESULTS for 1996-97.
May/June:	UPDATE: The Annual Progress Report to the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools. (Required from all members as of 12/96.)
June 27-28, 1997:	Optional Training Workshop for new members and others who want initial training for 1997-98.
October:	Next issue of <i>Type 2</i> .
November:	Invitation to members to join an optional cross-site evaluation, FOCUS ON RESULTS for 1997-98: <i>School-Family-Community Partnerships for Improving Math Achievement</i> .