

STATE ACTION TEAM FOR PARTNERSHIPS

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

In order to serve as a role model for a partnership-based approach that the California State Educational Agency (SEA) plans to encourage districts and schools to implement, the SEA piloted its own Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) this year—at the state level.

Based on an idea that SEA representatives learned at a NNPS Leadership Development Conference, the agency began this practice with the goal in mind that the State ATP would, in turn, develop a state-wide Action Plan for Partnerships (APP). Leaders also aimed to use the State ATP to secure a wide range of input and ideas for the development of the SEA's State Leadership Plan for Partnerships.

The roles assumed in the State ATP are analogues of those assumed by the members' school-based ATPs and district-level teams. The individual roles were based on the nature of the organization that each member represented. The targeted groups included major leaders from school, family, and community partnership organizations from across California such as: the State PTA; the federally-funded Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) and Regional Equity Assistance Center; the San Diego State University Research Foundation; the California Alliance for School, Family, and Community Partnerships; district partnership leaders; and various non-profit organizations.

By the time of the April 2008 NNPS District Leadership Institute, the state's two PIRCs and the SEA had drafted a concept paper for partnerships that these groups could conduct together. At the NNPS Institute, the group took time to meet and discuss ways to amplify the original PIRC/SEA plan.

After returning from the conference, one of the PIRCs and the Regional Equity Assistance Center began to work on the next draft of the document. The difficulties of collaborating on this document via conference calls inspired the

implementation of new meeting-software that will streamline future group efforts.

The State ATP shared the resulting draft of the APP at a meeting of the Family Area Network (FAN) Board, an informal advisory group of the SEA. Since then, the State ATP became a subcommittee of the FAN Board, and continues to convene at FAN Board meetings. During this year, the ATP presented a final draft of the APP to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and asked for his support for the partnership initiatives presented in it. This step is pending.

Each of the entities involved in the ATP came to the partnership to carry out its own individual charge in the context of a common effort. In this sense, the State ATP accords with the NNPS' Theoretical Model: Overlapping Spheres of Influence in Family, School, and Community on Children's Learning by overlapping areas of responsibility among members to form a cohesive partnership unit.

"A lesson learned in the process was to actively involve the Comprehensive Center, parent leaders, the faith-based community, and parent advocates in the formative stages of the development of the State APP," wrote the state's Education Programs Consultant. The membership of the State ATP will be expanded next year to better represent the state's diverse populations that all are interested in improving and developing district and school programs of family and community involvement.

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