
REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Madison, Wisconsin

After six years of very successful statewide conferences, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) transitioned to regional partnership workshops in eight different communities (four during the spring of 2000 and four during the spring of 2001). The goal of the regional workshops was to spread comprehensive family-school-community partnerships in schools statewide and to grow membership in the Wisconsin/National Network of Partnership Schools.

During the past two years, about 2,000 parents, teachers, school administrators, and community members have attended the regional workshops, mostly in teams of four to six people. Workshop participants learned about the six types of involvement and effective partnership practices. The agenda of the regional workshops included time during the day for teams to begin developing their One-Year Action Plans, with the emphasis on improving student learning.

Workshop facilitators provided participants with National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) membership forms and encouraged them to join NNPS at points throughout the day. Facilitators offered participants the opportunity for a follow-up visit from a member of the workshop-planning group. Workshop participants from the past two years also have been invited to attend one of three follow-up workshops further exploring the Action Team concept to be held during the summer of 2001. In addition to workshops, participants keep in touch by subscribing to the Wisconsin Partnership listserv. All members of the Wisconsin/National Network of Partnership Schools receive valuable information through this service.

Regional workshops have resulted in a 20% increase in the number of Wisconsin districts and schools that have joined the National Network. Now, a total of almost 100 Wisconsin sites are members. In some communities, locating a regional workshop in or near the community has had a profound impact on its commitment to partnerships. For example, the Eau Claire School District progressed from having one school join in 1998 to the district joining in 2000. When a regional workshop was held in Eau Claire in March 2000, nearly 200 district teachers, parents, and community members attended, with the wholehearted support of the Eau Claire superintendent who offered the day's welcome.

The Regional Workshops Planning Group met regularly and communicated by e-mail during the fall, winter, and spring of each year to plan the workshop theme and agenda, suggest presenters, recruit participants, and publicize the workshop statewide. The regional workshops were funded by DPI's Title IV, Title I, and Goals 2000 programs, as well as Parents Plus and Wisconsin's Parent Information and Resource Center. Parents Plus also acted as the fiscal agent.

The move from statewide conferences to regional workshops was successful because of the contributions of each of the programs and organizations represented on the planning group. Regional workshops helped spread family-school-community partnerships statewide and grow membership in the Wisconsin/National Network of Partnership Schools.

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