
MONTHLY LEADERSHIP MEETINGS

Orleans Parish Public Schools

New Orleans, Louisiana

Twenty-one high priority schools in New Orleans are implementing the National Network of Partnership Schools' model with the support of the New Orleans Public Schools Chief Executive Officer, Chief Academic Officers, and Executive Director of Title I. The district's Parental Involvement Program Specialist and Parent Facilitators hosted monthly meetings throughout 2001-2002 for chairpersons of the Action Teams for Partnerships and school principals to strategize, obtain information and resources, discuss concerns, and share success stories on best practices of partnership. These monthly leadership meetings enabled the twenty-one Action Teams to collaborate and network in an effort to build and sustain effective partnership programs benefiting students.

The twenty-one participating schools were identified according to their school performance score; special emphasis was given to schools in economically impoverished communities. Each of the identified schools received a written correspondence inviting the principal, parent liaison, school nurse and/or social worker, counselor, community person, and a teacher to attend the initial meeting.

At this first meeting, the schools learned about the framework of six types of involvement and the action team approach, engaged in structured discussions of current partnership practices and challenges, and completed membership forms to join the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University. Subsequent meetings rotated from school to school allowing each school an opportunity to host a meeting as well as share its success stories.

The district Parental Involvement Office in conjunction with the twenty-one schools planned the full year's calendar of meetings so that each Action Team knew far in advance when meetings would take place. The monthly leadership meetings usually lasted two to three hours, typically on the third Wednesday of each month. About one week prior to the scheduled dates, schools received written reminders of the meetings with information about the agenda items. For most meetings, the Action Team chairpersons and principals brought their Action Plans to review progress with the district facilitators and their fellow Action Team leaders.

Partnerships between the schools, district, and state contributed to the strength of the monthly leadership meetings. The Louisiana Department of Education's Family Involvement Coordinators conducted presentations at one of the leadership meetings on using the *Starting Points Inventory*, writing Action Plans for Partnerships, the strengths of collaboration, and the importance of focusing on results. The state Family Involvement Coordinators also conducted follow-up site visits to schools. The district Parental Involvement Program Specialist and Parent Facilitators handled the essential details for each meeting: compiling the agenda, securing presenters, confirming sites, ordering refreshments, disseminating reminder notices, and facilitating the actual meetings. The district also maintained primary responsibility for ongoing technical assistance to the schools between meetings and provided the twenty-one schools with financial support and resources. The schools themselves made the meetings successful because of their enthusiasm to network with each other and to collaborate on effective strategies. They understood that their partnership practices needed to link to their school improvement plans, and they supported each other in this endeavor.

The goal for 2002-2003 is to continue to enhance the monthly leadership meetings to ensure sustainability of and enthusiasm for high quality partnership programs linked to school improvement goals. Efforts will be made to increase attendance of school principals at monthly meetings. The principals are supportive of the partnership programs, and their regular attendance at the monthly leadership meetings will further strengthen the Action Teams' work. The structured monthly leadership meetings provide critical ongoing support and guidance for the twenty-one schools to reach their goals for school, family, and community partnerships.

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