



NATIONAL NETWORK OF
Partnership Schools
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

SPECIAL REPORT

SUMMARY 2007 UPDATE DATA FROM DISTRICTS IN NNPS

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January 2008

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SUMMARY

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This report summarizes results of the *2007 District UPDATE* survey on program development for the 06-07 school year. YOU can use this report to assess progress on family and community involvement in your district.

- Use this summary to compare the responses on your district's *UPDATE* with others in NNPS to identify how you are progressing and ways to improve this year and in plans for 08-09.
- Use this report along with the summary of *2007 School UPDATE* data to compare schools in your district with all schools in NNPS. Use the scales and items to reflect on how well your office is facilitating schools with their work on partnerships and to plan your next steps.
- If your district has 8 or more schools in NNPS, use the customized summary of your schools' 2007 data to examine the schools' progress and needs.
- Use the *UPDATE* summaries to report on progress in developing and evaluating your district and school-based partnership programs to your Superintendent, School Board, and others. Outline plans for on-going improvements.¹

SAMPLE

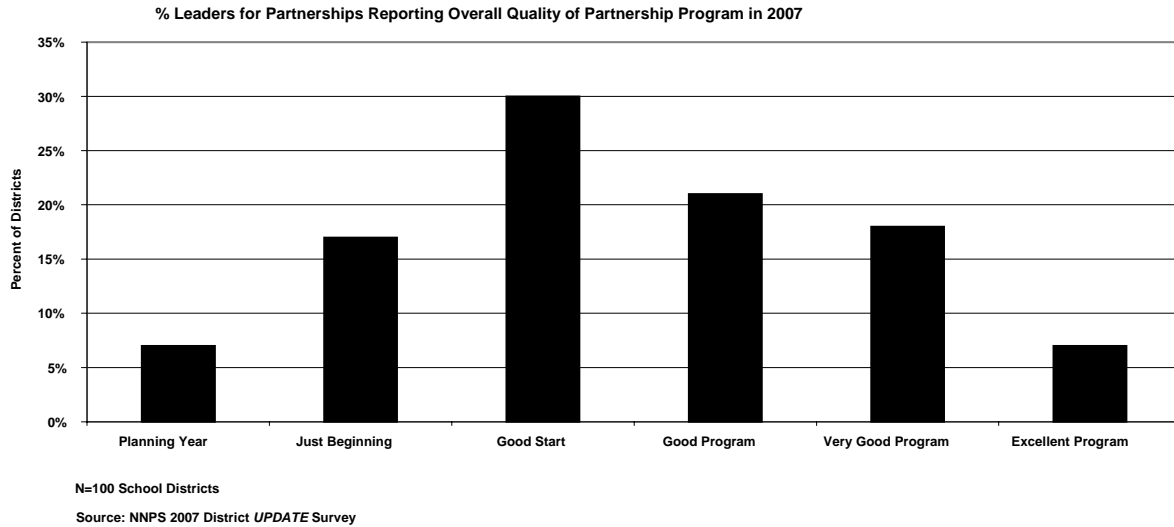
In 2007, 102 district leaders for partnerships reported *UPDATE* data to NNPS. Respondents included full-time and part-time leaders in small and large districts located in diverse communities in 32 states and 3 Canadian provinces.¹

- Leaders for partnerships averaged 16.1 hours per week in their work on partnership program development.
- Most leaders (85%) reported that they had at least one colleague who worked with them (full- or part-time) on improving district and school-level partnership programs.
- The districts in the sample had been members of NNPS from less than 1 year to 11 years, with an average of 4.5 years.
- Ninety percent of the districts' Key Contacts to NNPS in 2007 expected to continue their leadership in the 07-08 school year.
- Districts ranged in size from 1 school to over 200 schools. More than 90% of the districts in the U. S. received Title I funds for their educational programs.

OVERALL PROGRAM QUALITY

The *2007 District UPDATE* included a "portrait" measure of the overall quality of districts' partnership programs. Leaders selected one of six portraits of increasingly advanced district leadership for partnerships that best matched their stage of development. Figure 1 shows that program quality ranged from *low* (about 24% were in a planning year or just beginning), to *average* (51% had a good start or good program), to *high* (25% had a very good or excellent program).²

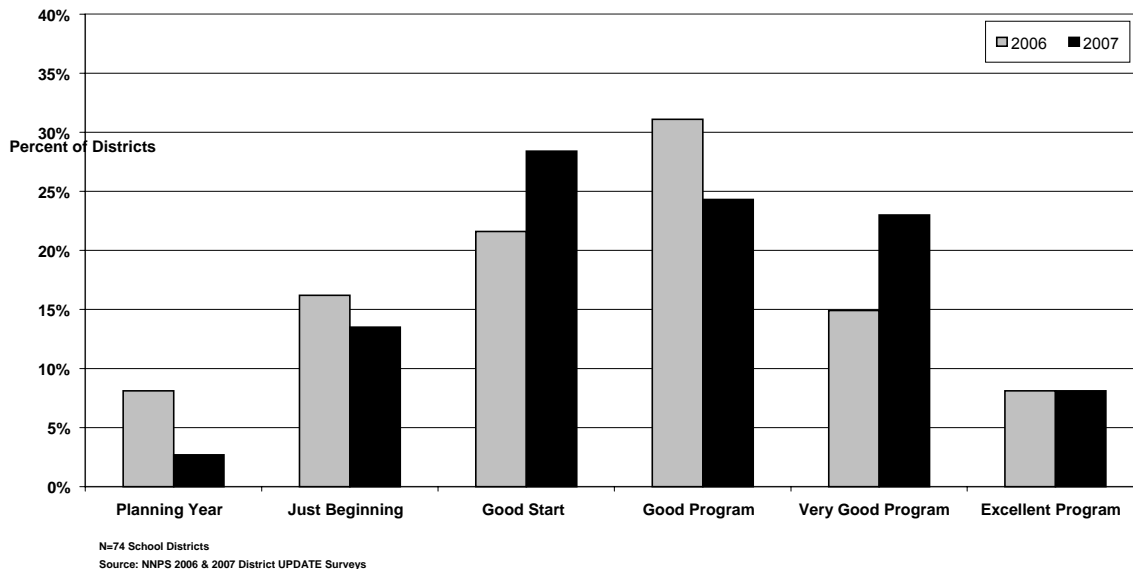
Figure 1
District Program Quality Ratings



As in the past, a near-normal curve emerged in 2007 on the quality of partnership programs. The range in quality reflects the varied starting points on partnerships when districts join NNPS and the different investments in time, funds, and special projects across districts

Figure 2 shows how programs change from one year to the next. Sixty two district leaders provided UPDATE data on program quality in 2006 and 2007. Compared to last year, fewer district leaders were in a planning stage. More leaders made a good start and more reported a very good program. About the same percentage reported an excellent program.

Figure 2
Change in Ratings of District Program Quality from 2006 to 2007



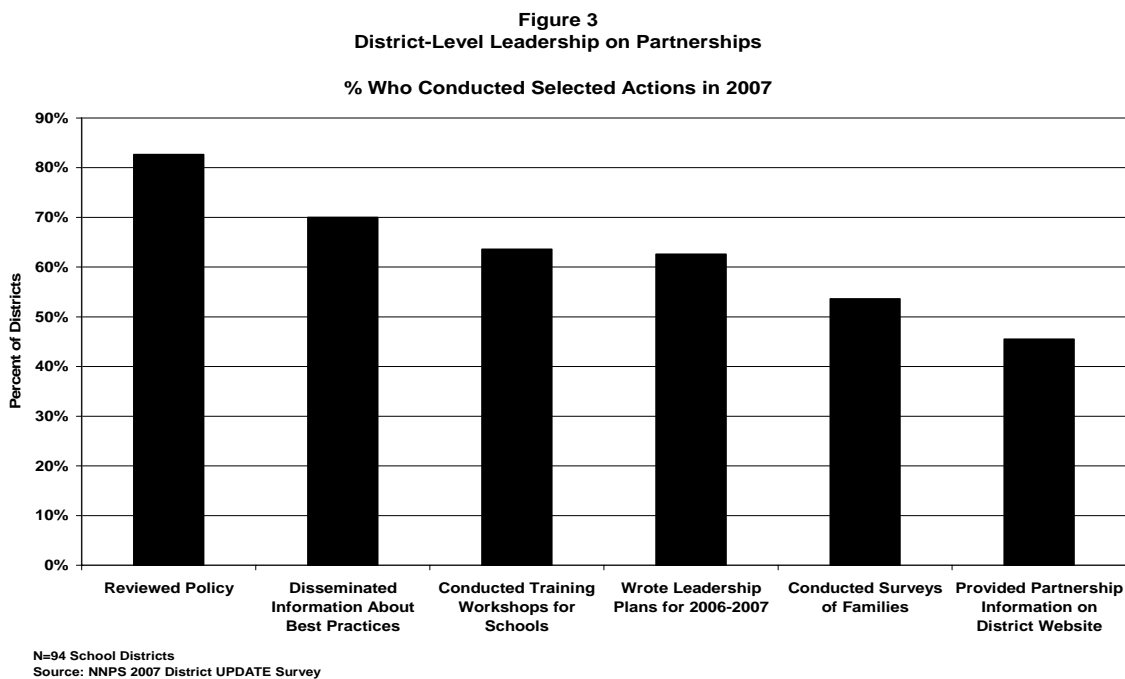
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

All districts in NNPS aim to improve family and community involvement, but leaders vary in how quickly and how well they organize their offices and implement actions for high-quality programs. The following measures show how, in 2007, district leaders addressed several “essential elements” that have been shown in NNPS studies to improve partnership programs over time.

District-Level Leadership on Partnerships

Figure 3 summarizes six items from a 13-item scale ($\alpha = .75$)³ that measured the organization of district leadership on partnerships. In 2007, leaders conducted an average of 7.9 leadership actions to organize their work at the district level. Most conducted the basic leadership actions recommended by NNPS as they reviewed or developed a district policy on partnerships (83%), established a budget (77%), and shared best practices of partnerships across schools (70%). Most conducted training workshops for schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (64%) and other staff development on partnerships with various district audiences (70%). About 63% of district leaders wrote formal leadership plans for the 06-07 school year.

The fewest district leaders posted information on their partnership programs on their websites (46%). This percentage has been increasing from about 35% in 2005. Some districts have excellent websites linked to NNPS, whereas many websites still are underdeveloped.



In written comments, some district leaders reported that they conducted other leadership actions. These included conducting workshops and conferences for parents, supervising parent and community advisory councils, obtaining discounted admission tickets for families from community attractions, supervising parent liaisons, and recognizing volunteers. These additional activities emphasized the delivery of direct services to parents from all schools in the district, which is one component of district leadership for partnerships.

DIRECT FACILITATION OF SCHOOLS ON PARTNERSHIPS

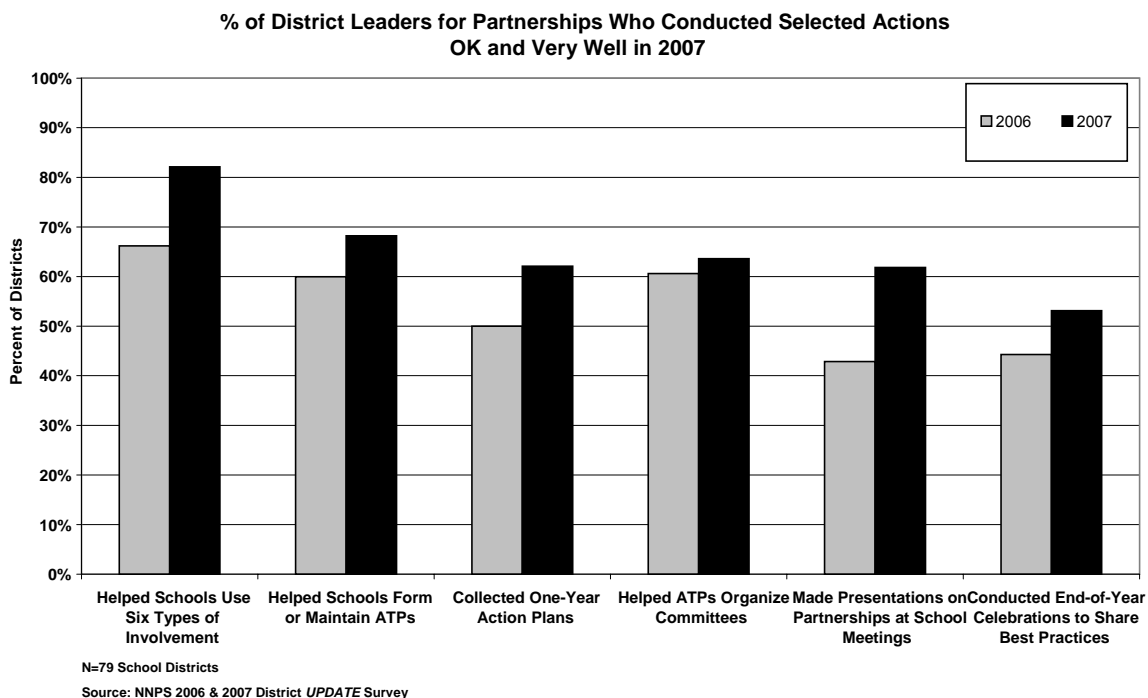
Figure 4 summarizes 6 items from an 18-item scale ($\alpha = .94$) that measured how well district leaders directly assisted individual schools in developing their school-based programs of partnership linked to school improvement goals. District leaders conducted an average of 13.8 facilitative actions, two more than leaders reported in 2006.

There was considerable variation in the number of actions and the quality of assistance to schools. Some districts reported working “very well” to assist schools, others “OK,” and still others said that they “need to improve” the quality of their direct assistance. On average, leaders reported that they

were just OK or needed to improve the quality of their assistance to schools, with items averaging 2.59 on the 4-point ratings of quality of direct assistance. About 17% of the district leaders provided no assistance to schools in the 06-07 school year – mainly those in the initial stages of program development.

From 2006 to 2007, leaders improved the quality of assistance to schools on all 18 items in this measure. In 2007, over 80% of the district leaders reported doing OK or very well in helping Action Teams for Partnerships understand and use the framework of six types of involvement in their school-based partnership programs, compared to about 67% in 2006. Other double-digit increases were reported by district leaders in making presentations at school meetings for parents and teachers, helping teams implement specific involvement activities, helping ATPs organize their committees, meeting with school principals on partnerships, guiding ATPs to replace team members who were leaving, and helping ATPs develop a budget for partnerships. Although still low, more district leaders visited school teams on a regular schedule in 2007 (39.1%) than in 2006 (26.5%).

Figure 4
Direct Facilitation of Schools on Partnerships

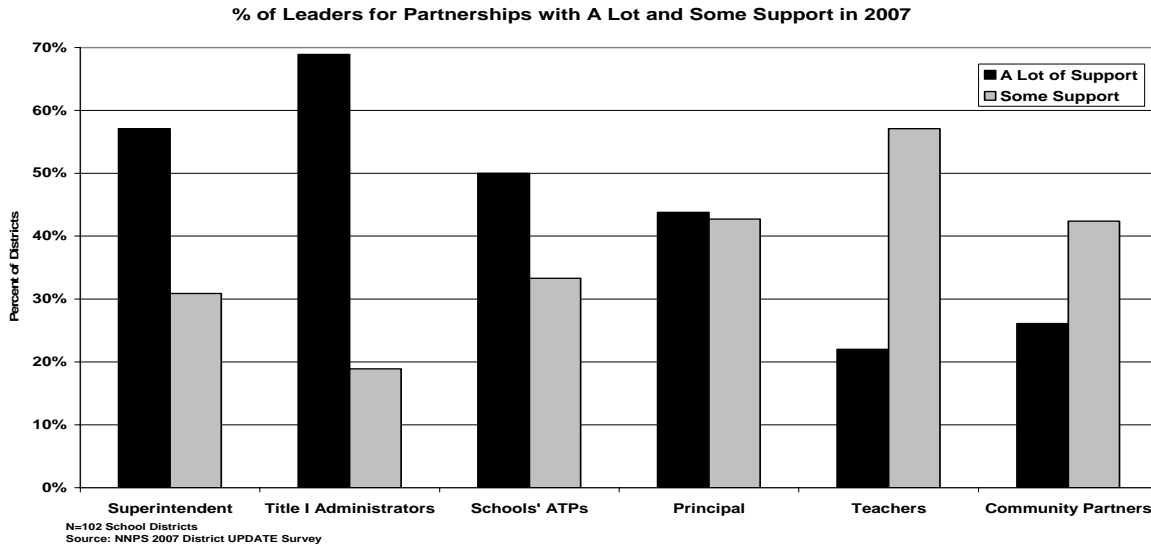


There has been a steady increase in district leaders’ direct assistance to schools over the past three years. For example, the percentage of district leaders conducting end-of-year celebrations to help schools share best practices increased from 34.4% in 2005, to 44.3% in 2006 and to 53.1% in 2007. This may indicate that district leaders in NNPS are becoming more aware of the importance of extending their work to directly assist schools in improving their programs and practices to involve their students’ families and community partners.

SUPPORT FROM COLLEAGUES FOR PARTNERSHIPS

Figure 5 summarizes 6 items from a 12-item scale ($\alpha = .92$) that measured how much support district leaders for partnerships reported receiving from colleagues in their district offices, schools, and communities. Scored 1-4 for *no support*, *a little*, *some*, and *a lot of support*, districts averaged 36.0 out of a possible 48 points, indicating strong support from some colleagues and weaker support from others.

Figure 5
Support From Colleagues for Partnerships



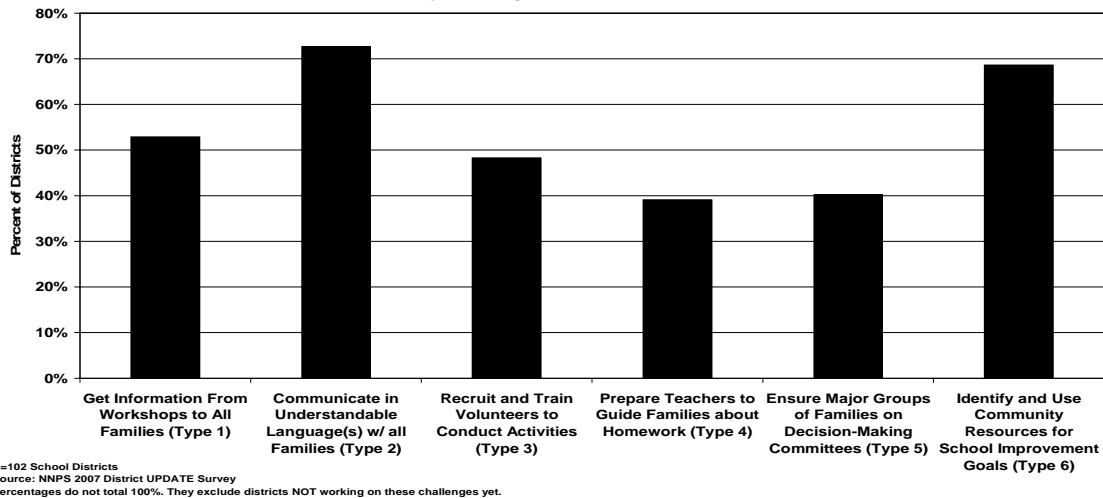
For example, district leaders reported strong support for partnerships from their superintendents (57%) and Title I administrators (69%). Many district leaders for partnerships are supported by Title I funds. Equal percentages reported “a lot” and “some” support from principals, and somewhat weaker support from individual teachers and community partners. District leaders recorded strong (32%) or some (19%) encouragement from state leaders for work on partnerships (not shown).

Collegial support is an important variable for program quality. Prior NNPS analyses of *UPDATE* data showed that district leaders for partnerships did more to help their schools when felt that they had strong support from their colleagues.

ASSISTANCE TO SCHOOLS TO SOLVE CHALLENGES TO INVOLVE ALL FAMILIES

In NNPS, district leaders are expected to help school teams meet serious challenges to involve all families. Figure 6 shows the 6-item scale ($\alpha = .63$) that measured whether district leaders for partnerships guided schools to meet challenges to involve all families or left these challenges up to schools to solve on their own.

Figure 6
% District Leaders for Partnerships Who Guide Schools to Address Key Challenges to Reach All Families in 2007



Most district leaders for partnerships reported helping schools find ways to communicate with families who did not speak English at home (73%). Many districts provided translators to assist schools in producing communications sent to families, preparing material for websites in multiple languages, and providing interpreters to assist parents and teachers at school meetings. District leaders also have been working to increase community and business partnerships to improve school programs and students' experiences (Sanders, 2005). Nearly 70% of the district leaders in NNPS assisted schools to meet the challenge of finding additional resources from community partners.

There was a sizable increase in 2007 in the percentage of district leaders who helped schools get information from workshops and meetings to parents who could not attend, from 35% in 2006 to 53% in 2007. This may reflect increased uses of e-mail and district and school websites to communicate with parents who have computers at home. About 11% of the district leaders were not yet working with schools on any of these challenges.

Other challenges were more often left to the schools to solve on their own. Some districts helped schools recruit volunteers (45%), find diverse parent leaders for school committees (39%), and work with teachers to guide families about homework (38%). Although these challenges may require customized school-based designs and decisions, district leaders can share best practices among schools to solve these and all challenges.

Prior NNPS studies of *UPDATE* data indicated that district leaders who actively helped schools address key challenges reported more progress by schools on family and community involvement than did leaders who left schools on their own (Epstein, 2007). And, schools have higher quality partnership programs when they report more direct assistance from their districts (Sheldon, 2007).

SPECIAL CHALLENGE GROUPS

Many schools in NNPS have reported that it is challenging for them to involve fathers and diverse families. This year, *UPDATE* asked district leaders to share one activity that their schools are conducting to successfully involve one of these challenging groups. More than 75% of the district leaders did so. Most (60%) identified successful activities to increase the involvement of diverse families; the rest (40%) provided examples to increase fathers' involvement.

Increasing Fathers' Involvement

In addition to many variations of "donuts for dads" including many linked to student work and discussions of school topics, the following were a few interesting activities to build relationships with fathers and other male figures in students' lives.

Activity to Increase Fathers' Involvement	What is the secret of its success?
Fathers were invited to breakfast with their children and to discuss selected school topics	Fun. Food. Content and timing of the event was family-friendly
Fathers were actively recruited as volunteers	Better communication with fathers as a targeted group to increase involvement
Watch DOGS (Dads of Great Students) (3 districts) Included school patrol (volunteers), and other activities (e.g., fatherhood luncheon).	Time commitment was reasonable and flexible, and a variety of activities were available for fathers to select. Included all male figures in students' lives, not just fathers.
Fathers came to help school with small projects in the school and in the yard	Marketed well with notice that "no special skills" were needed; fathers were asked to "come-as-you-are."
Junior High School Father/Student Breakfast and Math Night at the Home Depot	Fathers helped plan the events, time, purpose, focus and content
Boys Night Out	Small, well-planned, and personal
Math for Men	Fun and practice. Math used in daily life situations helped students and the males in their lives respond to practical math activities

Engaging Diverse Families

In addition to having interpreters and translators to assist schools and families, the following were a few activities that that district leaders reported and the reasons that the activities were successful.

Activity to Engage Diverse Families	What was the secret of its success?
Schools with large ELL populations have three meetings a year just for ELL families.	Covered issues and needs of the families, made them feel welcome at their school. This way, the ELL families are more comfortable attending other family involvement activities at the school.
Translated information on the website.	Used high school foreign language teachers to translate materials. Helped break down language barriers.
Family literacy nights included ELL and fathers	Advertised (marketed) the event. Included non-threatening activities, interest level of the students, and word of mouth from other families who attended.
Monthly events for non-English-speaking parents to meet with a native speaker to facilitate communications on school topics	Passion, commitment, and dedication to the spirit and letter of NCLB made the difference.
Various literacy-related events	Made an effort to reach out, rather than wait for Hispanic families to come to us.
Kindergarten transition program with simultaneous English and Spanish sessions	Multiple organizations collaborated – school, district, Head Start, Migrant ESL – to show positive partnerships for children.
Migrant and bilingual district-level parents’ advisory committee (PAC) introduced their parent representatives to their school’s One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships for 06-07	One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships from each school was translated into Spanish in the fall. PAC Representatives became familiar with the work on School and Family Partnerships at their schools.

District leaders were aware of many creative and effective practices to engage diverse families and fathers in their schools’ partnership programs. Many of the reasons for success referred to the fact that activities honored and recognized the roles that diverse families and fathers play in their children’s education. The activities cited in the 2007 *UPDATE* are good candidates for schools to submit for the next edition of *NNPS Promising Partnership Practices*.

NCLB REQUIREMENTS FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

District leaders were asked whether their schools wrote One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships and collected “pledges” signed by parents to work as good partners. They also identified which of these documents was used as the *school-parent compact*, which is required by NCLB. Most districts use both documents, but still call pledges the *school-parent compact* (73%). NCLB states that the compact should outline “*the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve.*” Most pledges simply list ways families may choose to be involved. By contrast, One-Year Action Plans specify and schedule involvement activities that help schools and families work together on goal-oriented partnerships during each school year.

Although pledges are a valid Type 2-Communicating activity in a full partnership program, NNPS recommends using the One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships as a school-parent compact to fulfill the intent of the law for all schools to develop and implement well-planned programs to involve all families in ways that support student achievement and success in school.

In 2007, district leaders were asked about their *main* responsibilities for NCLB’s requirements for parental involvement (Section 1118). In NNPS, some district leaders are supported by and located in the Title I or a related office. Their comments indicate their responsibilities:

- *Our main responsibility is to guide the Title I schools to full compliance of the law.*
- *I oversee all parts of parental involvement, budgets, activities, documentation of district report cards.*

Others are not directly responsible for Title I, but link to colleagues who are:

- *We don't have direct responsibility, but work deeply with other departments that do.*
- *We work closely with our Title I Coordinator and other administrators in the Learning Office.*

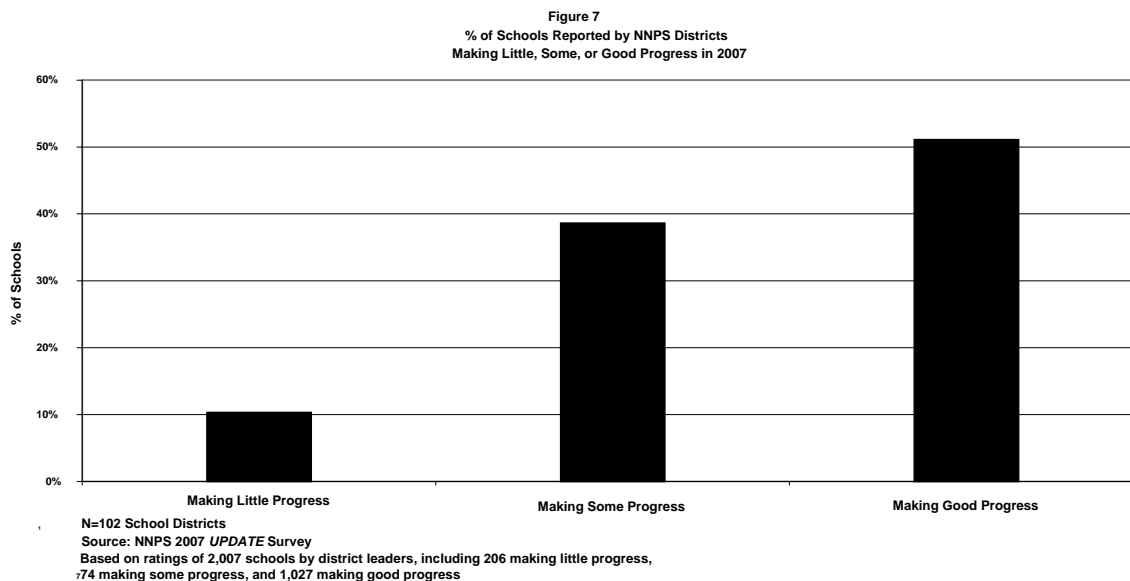
Whether supported by Title I funds or not, district leaders noted many activities that are consistent with NLCB requirements in Section 1118.

- *We work to increase parent involvement to increase student achievement*
- *We guide schools with parent involvement plans; provide training to schools and parents regarding parent involvement.*
- *We create a culture of partnerships linking schools, families, and community through activities and workshops.*

By working together, district leaders in Title I and other departments can ensure that all schools develop plans and practices for partnerships focused on student achievement and success in school

SCHOOLS' PROGRESS ON PARTNERSHIPS

Figure 7 summarizes district leaders' reports of whether their schools were making *little, some or good progress* on partnerships in the past school year. In 2007, district leaders reported that they directly assisted over 2000 elementary, middle, and high schools to help them develop stronger, goal-linked programs of partnership. Their ratings indicated that about 51% of these schools were making good progress on partnerships; 39% of the schools were making some progress; and 10% were making little progress in developing effective partnership programs.

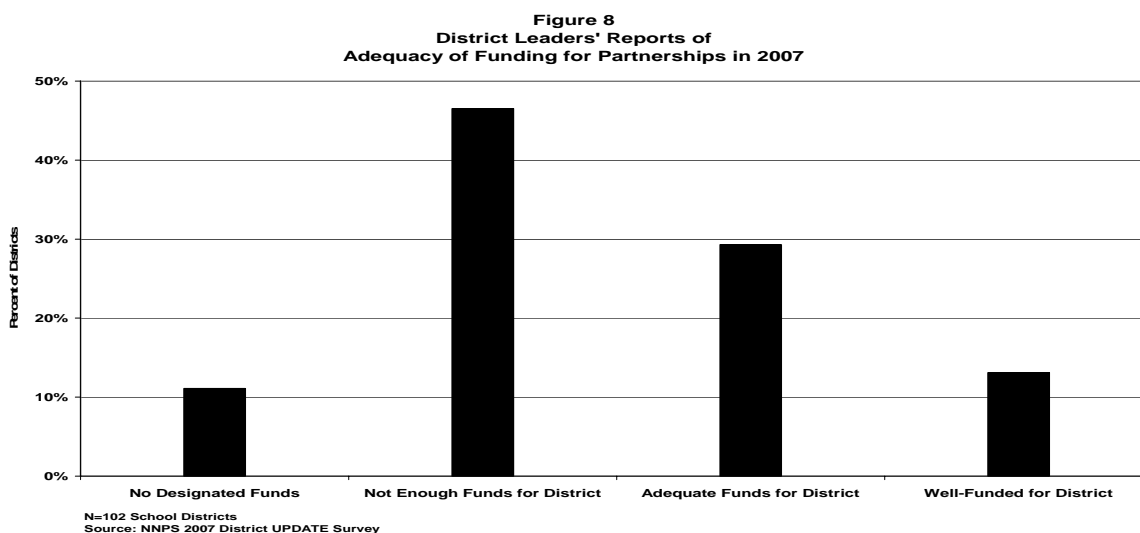


Collectively, district leaders in NNPS estimated that over 290,000 families were involved in the activities conducted by the schools they were assisting on partnerships in 2007. The percentage of schools making “some” progress increased from about 30% to 39%, and the percentage reported as making “little progress” decreased about the same amount from 2006 to 2007. These figures may reflect changes shown in Figure 4 of district leaders’ increased facilitation of schools’ ATPs.

ADEQUACY OF FUNDING FOR PARTNERSHIPS

A single item on the 2007 *District UPDATE* asked leaders whether their partnership program was *unfunded, poorly, adequately, or well funded*. Because districts vary greatly in size and student and family needs, NNPS uses “adequate funds” as the general terms for funding, rather than a particular dollar amount.

Figure 8 shows that fewer than half (42.4%) of the district leaders reported that they were adequately or well funded. The rest reported inadequate (46.5%) or no designated funds (11.1%) for district-level partnership program development.



Title I funds were the most frequent source of funds used for district-level leaders and programs, but other sources of funds also were recorded. These included funds from bilingual education, community partners, drug prevention, general funds, local foundations, PIRC support, the district PTA, special education, state funding sources, Title I, II, III, IV, United Way, 21st Century Schools, and other district, state, and federal funds for parental involvement.

The reports on funding indicate that many district superintendents and school boards need to examine the allocation and adequacy of funds for district-level and school-based programs of family and community involvement.

USE OF NNPS PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT MATERIALS

Figure 9 summarizes items from a 5-item scale ($\alpha = .80$) that measured how district leaders for partnerships rated the usefulness of the five major NNPS tools and materials that are provided to all members for program development: NNPS *Handbook for Action*, annual collection of *Promising Partnership Practices*, *Type 2* newsletter, website, and monthly e-briefs from NNPS facilitators. Scored 1-4, from *not helpful* to *very helpful*, districts averaged 17.0 points out of a possible 20 points. Between 81.7% and 92.4% of district leaders for partnerships found the tools *helpful* or *very helpful*. A few (2.2%) rated materials as *not helpful* to them. A small percentage did not use the NNPS materials that were listed.

Figure 9
District Leaders' Ratings of
NNPS Program Development Materials in 2007

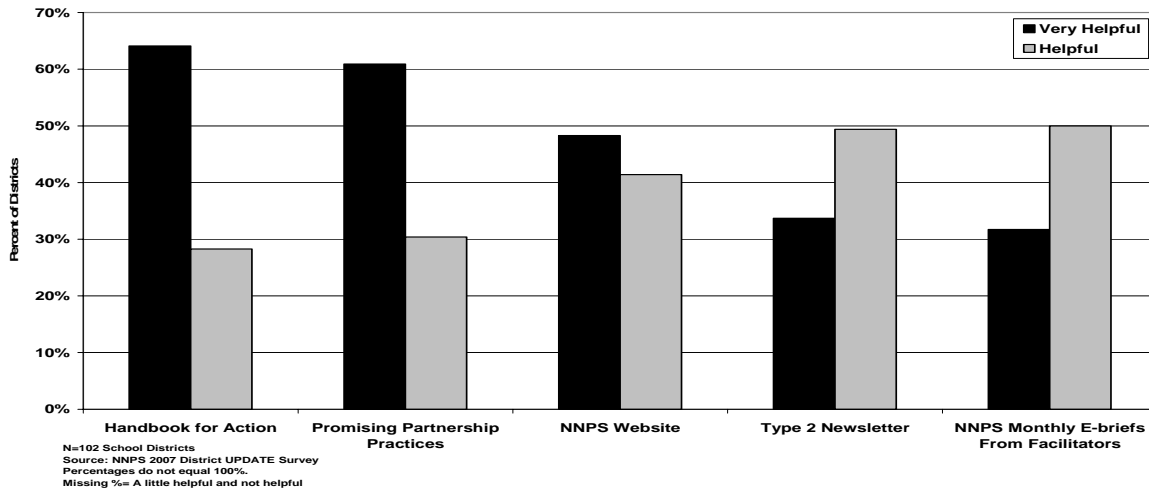


Figure 9 shows that district leaders gave their highest ratings of helpfulness to the NNPS *Handbook for Action*, collections of *Promising Partnership Practices*, and website, followed by the newsletter, *Type 2*. Many more district leaders rated monthly *e-Briefs* from NNPS staff as helpful or very helpful in 2007 (81.7%) than did a year ago (69%). As more district leaders are using e-mail, the new technologies are helping NNPS stay in touch with district leaders with new research, guidelines, and announcements to help improve district and school-based programs.

Other NNPS services (not shown) are selectively activated by district leaders. Between 85% - 93% of members who contacted NNPS directly for information, used the NNPS video (on the website), and attended NNPS conferences rated them as helpful or very helpful. The summary report on last year's 2006 *UPDATE* data (like this report) was given high ratings by 85% of the district leaders who received and used it.

USE OF NNPS EVALUATION TOOLS

About 62% of the district leaders reported that they evaluated some aspects of their districts' partnership programs and 66% said they evaluated their schools' work on partnerships. Presently, many district leaders use their own assessments, often linked to Title I record keeping.

Some district leaders used NNPS *UPDATE* (32%) to assess their district and school partnership programs. This makes good sense because districts and the schools must complete *UPDATE* to renew their membership in NNPS, and because *UPDATE* has been designed to measure key components of partnership program development. When the *UPDATE* indicators are tracked from year to year, district leaders can document progress systematically, statistically, and graphically.

At the school level, some district leaders (32%) guide ATPs to use the *End-of-Year Evaluation* in the NNPS *Handbook* to enable ATPs to assess the quality of each involvement activity that is implemented throughout the school year and to gauge needed improvements.

Other Assessments. Almost 60% of the district leaders reported that they used various tools to evaluate their programs, in addition to or instead of NNPS evaluation tools in 2007. Some reviewed schools' Action Plans for Partnerships. Some districts conducted annual or periodic surveys of parents to learn how parents view their children's educational programs and school climate. These are useful and recommended strategies for gathering ideas for schools' Action Plans for Partnerships and for providing helpful feedback and assistance to the schools. However, the quality and results of activities that are implemented also must be measured.

Most districts and schools evaluate their activities by counting *the number* of parents attending events, business partners, volunteer hours, home visits, phone calls from and to parents, and other tallies. These counts can be useful, but more pointed measures are needed to monitoring the underlying structures and processes of program development (e.g., the indicators in Figures 1-9 in this report) and for assessing the quality of the implementation of the activities that are in schools' One Year Action Plans.

District leaders also listed their questions about evaluation on the *UPDATE* surveys. By far, most questions concerned how to measure whether family and community involvement affected student achievement and success in school. There are two parts to the answer these questions.

Questions about program quality and outreach. It is critical for district leaders and school teams to know that they must *first* measure *implementation quality* to show that there is a program “there,” before *results of programs* can be measured. The good news is that questions about the quality of program design, implementation of activities, outreach, welcoming climate, and parents' responses can be answered using the annual *UPDATE* surveys and the tools in the *Handbook*, including *End-of-Year Evaluations* and the *Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships*. These tools are designed to provide basic knowledge about whether programs of family and community involvement are, in fact, being implemented and how well.

Questions about results for students. Most districts and schools cannot conduct rigorous “effects studies” on whether and how specific involvement activities affect student achievement and other outcomes. However, all districts and schools can use the results of the research that underlies the NNPS guidelines for partnership program development to justify their efforts to develop high-quality partnership programs. Many studies indicate that well-designed, well-implemented partnership programs help increase student success in school. The “research-based” approaches provide the rationale for districts and schools to implement high-quality partnership programs linked to their school improvement goals in order to increase student achievement and other results. Thus, when s teachers, parents, and others work together with students to attain important school improvement goals, all components are credited if scores increase, and all must be reviewed and improved if scores decline.

At certain times, districts and schools may want to study the results of particular partnership practices or the program, overall. In most cases, this is best accomplished by collaborating or contracting with research and evaluation experts in district offices, local universities, or other agencies to conduct formal effects studies. NNPS researchers can help district evaluators link schools' *UPDATE* data to school-level test scores, attendance rates, and other indicators for school level analyses of results for students over time. Effects studies require an adequate sample of schools, longitudinal *UPDATE* data or other measures of program quality, and longitudinal outcome measures before results can be examined.

DISTRICT LEADERS' COMMENTS ON PROGRESS

The scales and measures in *UPDATE* show how districts are progressing in improving their leadership and programs of partnerships. In addition, district leaders' open-ended comments reveal their personal observations and reports. Almost all district leaders (93%) addressed the question “What changed most?” in their programs of family and community involvement in the 06-07 school year. Of these, 4 leaders noted that they made little or no progress due to changes in leaders and other factors. The vast majority conveyed positive program developments, as in these typical comments.

District Policies Changed

- *Family involvement was included as a key component of the district strategic plan. Schools became accountable for building family involvement programs and data collection.*
- *Action plans for partnerships are part of the school improvement plan.*
- *Building principals will be evaluated, in part, on their progress in implementing school, family, and community partnerships.*
- *We formed a District Action Team.*

School Programs Improved

- *More attention was given to partnerships and to representative participation*
- *More schools recognized the needs of underserved families*
- *More schools joined NNPS and had action team training; school activities were better designed; and more teachers were involved.*
- *Our schools are beginning to implement different activities, based on what they've heard other schools share and the successes they have had.*

Partnerships Were Linked to Student Learning

- *The schools' action plans were aligned with school plans.*
- *Activities for parents are more focused on learning and students' achievement.*
- *Students reading levels improved greatly, K-5.*
- *This year was a turning point with principals. More principals linked the increase in parent involvement at their schools with the increase in academic achievement.*

Over 90% of the district leaders also listed specific goals for improving district and school partnership programs in the 07-08 (current) school year. Goals focused on increasing assistance and training to schools, building support among district level colleagues, expanding the number of schools that are working systematically on partnerships, organizing their own work with clear plans, helping schools reach more families, and evaluating the quality of programs and results more effectively. By addressing these goals, districts should have progress to report on the *UPDATE* survey at the end of this school year.

SUMMARY

Districts in NNPS are guided to organize their leadership on school, family, and community partnerships and to assist all elementary, middle, and high schools to develop their school-based programs of family and community involvement linked to school improvement goals. The *2007 District UPDATE* data indicate that most district leaders in NNPS are working hard to implement key program components. The most intriguing information was in the two-year patterns in the data:

District leaders who continued to work on partnerships in 2006 and 2007:

- Improved the overall quality of their districts' partnership programs
- Increased the quality of all 18 facilitation activities to directly assist schools' ATPs in developing their school-based partnership programs

The *2007 District UPDATE* data confirm that districts and schools that sustain their work on partnerships from year to year improve their programs, outreach, and results of family and community involvement. Recent NNPS studies show that district assistance schools improves the quality of schools' programs of family and community involvement from year to year (Epstein, 2007; Epstein, Galindo, and Sheldon, 2007).^{4, 5}

It is clear that developing excellent programs of school, family, and community partnerships is an on-going process. District leaders can continually improve their knowledge about family and community involvement and their skills in helping school teams improve their site-based programs that involve all families in productive ways. This year's *UPDATE* data provide many details on how district leaders become more expert and active leaders.

The 2007 data also showed that district leaders have “room to grow” to better organize their work and assist their schools. Three topics need particular attention:

- All district leaders should write annual, detailed, leadership plans for partnerships. Although over 60% of the district leaders reported doing this in the 06-07 school year, all leaders will benefit from written plans and schedules. Regardless of the stage of program development, annual leadership plans enable district leaders to focus clearly on goals for improving partnerships and balancing their work on district-level activities and direct assistance to schools. A template is included in the NNPS *Handbook for Action, Second Edition*, p. 280, or district leaders may request an electronic template used at the 2007 NNPS District Leadership Institute.
- All district leaders need to conduct targeted and useful evaluations of their own programs and of their schools' work and progress on partnerships. Although over 62% report evaluating *something* about their own and their schools' programs of family and community involvement, only about 1/3 of the districts are using NNPS evaluation tools or other systematic measures to monitor, chart, and take action on strengths and needs in program development from year to year.
- All districts need to identify and allocate adequate funds for district-level and school-based programs of partnerships. This year, over 40% of the district leaders reported adequate or good funding for partnerships, but the rest reported less-than-adequate funds for their partnership programs. Costs of district leaders' salaries, basic programs, and schools' activities in their One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships are relatively low – typically, less than \$25 per child per year for district- and school-level expenses. Funds for partnerships are thrifty investments in support for student success on the key indicators of attendance, behavior, and achievement for which schools are being held accountable. (See more information on average costs and sources of funds for partnership programs at the school, district, and state levels in the NNPS *Handbook for Action, Second Edition*, Epstein, et al., 2002, p. 270. Or, see a new table based on 2007 *UPDATE* data on the NNPS website, www.partnershipschools.org. In the Research and Evaluation section, click on Research Summaries and #8-Levels and Sources of Funds.)

District leaders for partnerships can take pride in the advances they are making to strengthen programs of family and community involvement in the district and in all schools. Many good ideas shared in the 2007 *UPDATE* survey on district-level leadership activities are candidates for the 2008 collection of *Promising Partnership Practices*. (See Maushard et al., 2007.) A call for submissions will be sent to all members of NNPS in March.

District leaders for partnerships should work with colleagues and all schools to improve indicators that fall below NNPS averages or that do not reflect NNPS's expectations for excellent programs.

With work well underway in the 07-08 school year, we look forward to evidence of on-going improvements on the next *UPDATE* at the end of this school year.

NOTES

- 1) In 2007, districts in NNPS were located in 32 states and three Canadian provinces: AK, CA, CT, FL, GA, HI, ID, IL, IN, KY, LA, MA, MD, MI, MN, NC, NE, NJ, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, TN, TX, UT, VA, WA, WI, and WV, and in Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario, Canada.
- 2) The portrait of an “excellent” program specifies that the district’s partnership program is well developed with annual written leadership plans, many activities at the district level, direct facilitation of most or all schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships, adequate funding, strong collegial support, and evidence that the program would be “permanent” even if leaders changed.
- 3) The *internal reliability* (α or alpha) of a scale indicates whether the items are correlated and represent a common construct. Reliability coefficients of .6 or higher indicate that the items are consistent and that the scale is useful.
- 4) NNPS researchers use *UPDATE* data in analytic studies to learn how specific actions affect the quality of district and school programs. For summaries of recent reports using *UPDATE*, click on the *Research and Evaluation* section of the NNPS website, www.partnershipschoools.org.
- 5) States and organizations in NNPS also are sent the summaries of school and district 2006 *UPDATE* data. There are too few states and too diverse organizations in NNPS to summarize their *UPDATE* data systematically. NNPS will continue to review the annual *UPDATE* surveys from states and organizations and tailor individual assistance to these members as they develop partnership policies and programs.

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