

February 2012    Special Report

# SUMMARY 2011 SCHOOL DATA

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 NATIONAL NETWORK OF  
Partnership Schools  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Fall 2011, the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) changed its renewal policy such that returning a completed UPDATE survey was no longer the sole condition necessary to remain partners with the organization. Now, schools wishing to remain partners with NNPS (with full access to NNPS facilitators and resources) are required to complete the annual UPDATE survey and submit a \$200 payment. As expected, the number of schools maintaining members in NNPS fell. Whereas the *2010 School UPDATE* Summary was based on almost 900 schools (our largest sample ever), the 2011 Summary used data collected from over 550 schools.

Consistent with previous reports, the *2011 School UPDATE* data indicate that most schools in NNPS are working to implement core components and essential elements that research shows affect the quality of partnership programs over time. The descriptive analyses of these data found that:

- Presently, elementary and K-8 schools implement more partnership program components than middle and high schools.
- Overall, ATPs report strong principal support for partnership program development.
- Secondary schools were more likely than elementary and K-8 schools to find district leaders' technical assistance on partnerships helpful.
- Program evaluation and obtaining funds continues to be an area where NNPS schools need more guidance and support.

The data also suggest several ways for schools to improve the organization of their partnership programs:

- Most schools' ATPs (over 90%) have not organized committees to share leadership for implementing activities that focus on specific school goals or on the six types of involvement.
- Many schools' ATPs (over 65%) do not meet monthly. This is an important requirement for developing and discussing plans, improving teamwork, and conducting evaluations of implemented activities.
- Few middle and high schools are working to solve the challenge of getting information from workshops to families who are unable to attend and getting fathers involved in partnership activities.
- Schools located in districts that are members of NNPS report more help on partnerships from their district leaders than do schools that are not in NNPS-member districts.
- ATPs in schools where the partnership program is in the beginning stages are *under-utilizing* NNPS benefits and services, such as calling NNPS facilitators and visiting the NNPS website.

Our analyses of the longitudinal data suggest two main conclusions. The first confirms that schools with partnership programs that are maintaining and improving quality are implementing the various components of the NNPS model more strongly than schools in which their partnership program has declined in overall quality. This report also shows that support for partnerships is invaluable for the development of strong partnership programs. Our research found three sources of support that predicted partnership program improvement: the district, teachers, and NNPS.

# SUMMARY 2011 SCHOOL UPDATE

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National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS)  
Johns Hopkins University

February 2012

In response to requests for information on partnership program development, NNPS provides this summary of schools' *2011 School UPDATE* data to all active members of the network. Districts, states, and organizations also will receive a summary of the *2011 District UPDATE* data.<sup>1</sup>

Schools should compare the data in this report with their own responses on the *2011 School UPDATE*. ATPs can take pride in practices that are strong, compared to other schools across the country. ATPs should work this year to improve aspects of their programs that fall below NNPS averages or that do not reflect NNPS's expectations for excellent programs. Studies indicate that schools that work on partnerships over time will improve the quality of their programs and results of family and community involvement (Epstein, et al., 2009; Sheldon, 2007, 2008; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004).

NNPS guides all schools to plan, implement, evaluate, and continually improve their programs of school, family, and community partnerships. By doing so, schools' ATPs will be able to report progress and new challenges on the *2011 School UPDATE* survey in the spring. Also, ATPs will be invited to share their best practices with NNPS in the 2011 collection of *Promising Partnership Practices*. The deadline will be May 1, 2011.

## SCHOOLS IN 2011 UPDATE SAMPLE

In 2011, 558 Action Teams for Partnerships reported *UPDATE* data. Surveys came from schools in 28 states. A majority of schools (60.8%) served students in the elementary grades (PK-6); 23.2% served students in PK-8; 10.2% of schools included the middle grades only (4-8); and 2.9% included high school grades only (9-12). Some schools (2.5%) served students from PK through high school and (.4%) combined middle and high school grades.

The largest percentage of schools was located in small cities (31.8%), with the remaining schools in large central cities (24.7%), suburban (27.0%), and rural areas (16.3%). A large majority of schools (78.6%) received school-wide or targeted Title I funds.

On average, schools served students from varied racial and ethnic backgrounds. Across schools, about 37.6% of students were White; 38.2% were African American; 19.9% were Latino/Hispanic American; 3.3% were Asian American; 1.3% were Native American; and 2.3% was from other racial/ethnic groups. Individual schools included a range of minority students, from 0% to 100%. The families served by these schools spoke an average of 4.7 languages. In some schools, families spoke only English at home, whereas other schools served diverse families speaking up to 41 different languages and dialects.

## FINDINGS

### OVERALL PROGRAM QUALITY

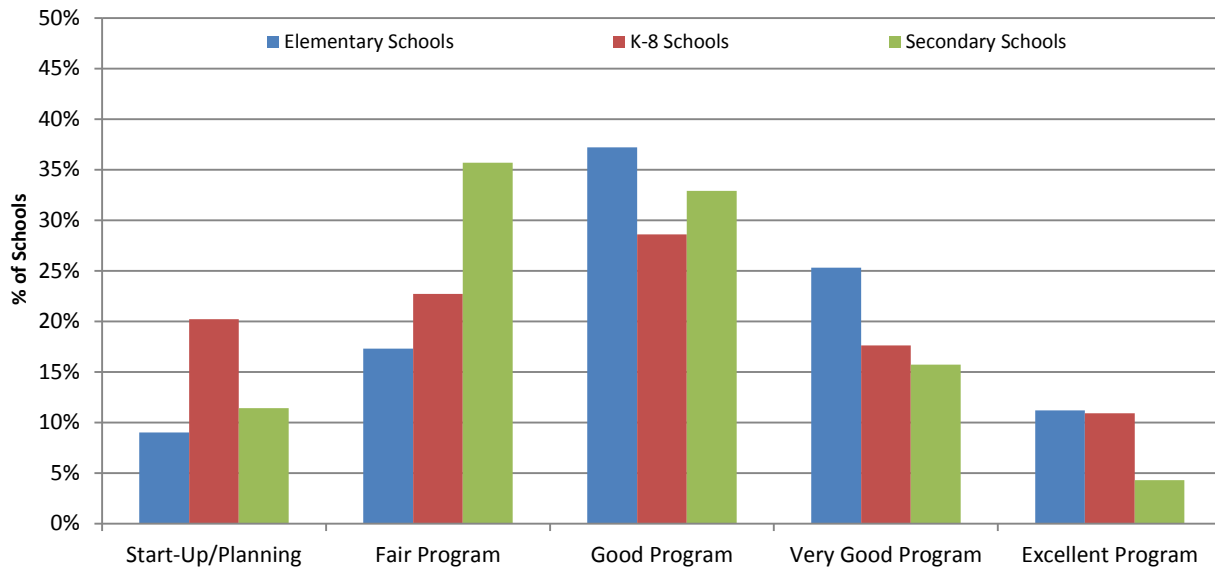
The annual NNPS *School UPDATE* survey provides each school's Action Team for Partnerships an opportunity to reflect on the overall quality of its partnership program by identifying one of six program

portraits. Each portrait represents a different level of program quality, beginning with a *planning* stage and continuing up to an *excellent* program.

**Schools in NNPS, on average, reported a near-normal distribution in the quality of their programs (Figure 1). A majority of ATPs rated their school’s partnership program as *good*.**

- About 12% of schools were planning or just beginning their programs. Approximately 10% reported excellent programs, with most aspects of a sustainable program in place.

**Figure 1**  
**% ATPs Reporting Overall Quality of Partnerships in 2011,**  
**by School Level**



N=548 Schools Source: 2011 UPDATE Survey

- The largest percentage of schools (34.3%) reported that their programs were *good*, indicating that several activities were implemented for the six types of involvement, teams were working to meet challenges to reach all families, and most teachers and families at the school knew about the program for partnerships and the school’s work with NNPS.
- Elementary and K-8 schools were more than twice as likely as secondary schools to rate their partnership program as excellent (11.2%, 10.9%, and 4.3% respectively).

## PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Several *UPDATE* measures indicated whether schools and their ATPs were implementing core components of NNPS’s research-based partnership program and how well schools were implementing a broad range of programmatic activities.<sup>1</sup>

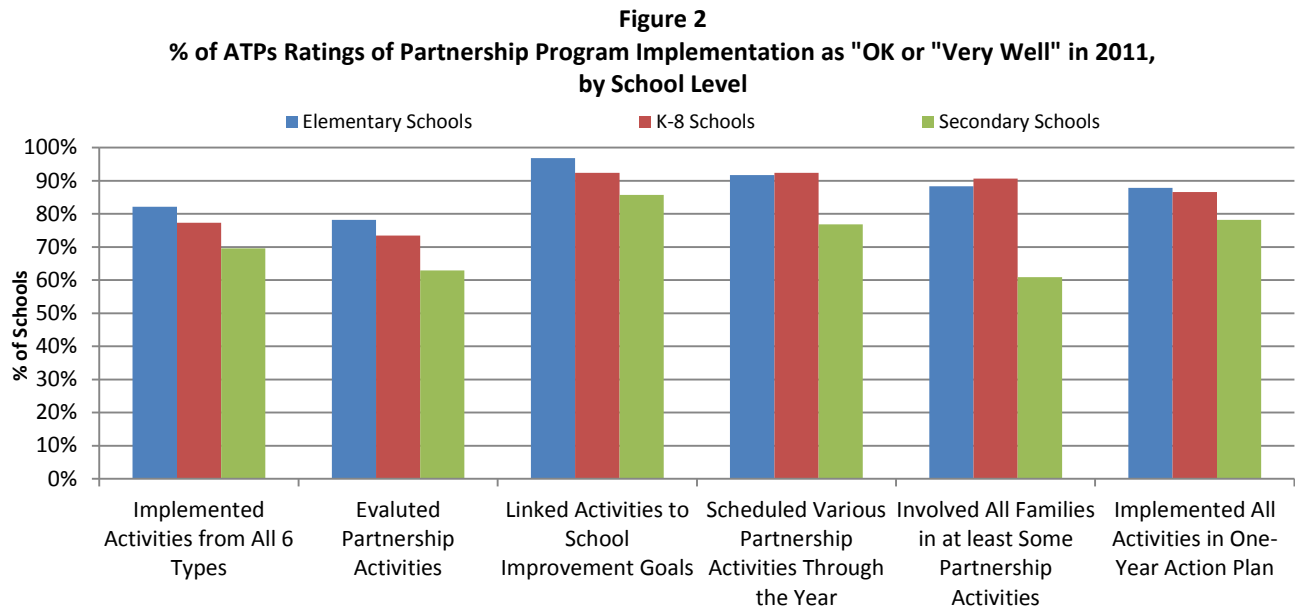
### CORE COMPONENTS

Core NNPS program components were measured using a 6-item scale ( $\alpha = .73$ ).<sup>2</sup> On average, schools implemented 4.5 of 6 program components. ATPs were most likely to report that they wrote (or planned to write) a One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships for the *next* (11-12) school year (93.4%); had an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) of six or more people (86.1%); and had written an action plan for the 10-11 school year (85.9%). Schools were least likely (54.7%) to have participated in an end-of-year celebration to share activities and ideas on partnerships with other schools.

## QUALITY OF IMPLEMENTATION

A 12-item scale ( $\alpha = .87$ ) measured how well ATPs organized and implemented the partnership program at the school. These program actions included involving families in some activities for all six types of involvement, evaluating the activities conducted, and reporting information to all families, PTA/PTO, and faculty and staff. Schools gave one of four responses to each item, indicating if they *did not do* the action, *need to improve*, were *OK*, or implemented *very well*.

**Most schools reported that they were implementing key NNPS program elements “OK” or “Very Well,” as shown in Figure 2. There is room for schools to improve their program implementation.**



N=558 Schools Source: 2011 UPDATE Survey

- On average, elementary and K-8 schools reported higher levels of program implementation than did middle and high schools.
- Schools were most likely (93.9%) to link partnership activities to school goals and least likely (73.1%) to meet in ATP committees or work groups as needed.
- Secondary schools (60.9%) were less likely than elementary (88.3%) and K-8 (90.7%) schools to involve all families in at least some partnership activities. This is generally more difficult in middle and high school because of a larger parent population.
- About 25% of all schools indicated that they did not evaluate or needed to improve the evaluation of their partnership activities.

## ACTION TEAM FOR PARTNERSHIPS (ATP)

In NNPS, each school must have an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) or an equivalent committee of teachers, parents, and administrators working on family and community involvement. The ATP is responsible for planning, implementing, overseeing, and evaluating partnership activities that are linked to school improvement goals. As an official committee or work group, the ATP should report its plans and progress to the School Improvement Team or School Council on a regular basis, just as other committees report their work. Questions on the *2011 School UPDATE* asked about the structure of schools' ATPs, members of the team, subcommittee structure, frequency of meetings, funding for the partnership program, and the ATP's effort to share plans and progress with the school community.

## STRUCTURE

Prior NNPS studies and the *Handbook for Action, Third Edition* (see Chapter 3 in Epstein, et al., 2009) suggest that the ATP should have committees in order to conduct more practices of family and community involvement. With committees, ATP members and others not on the team can share leadership for more and different activities.

**About 41% of all schools' ATPs worked together as a single team. Of the schools that organized committees to develop and implement involvement activities, the largest percentage of ATPs formed committees as needed.**

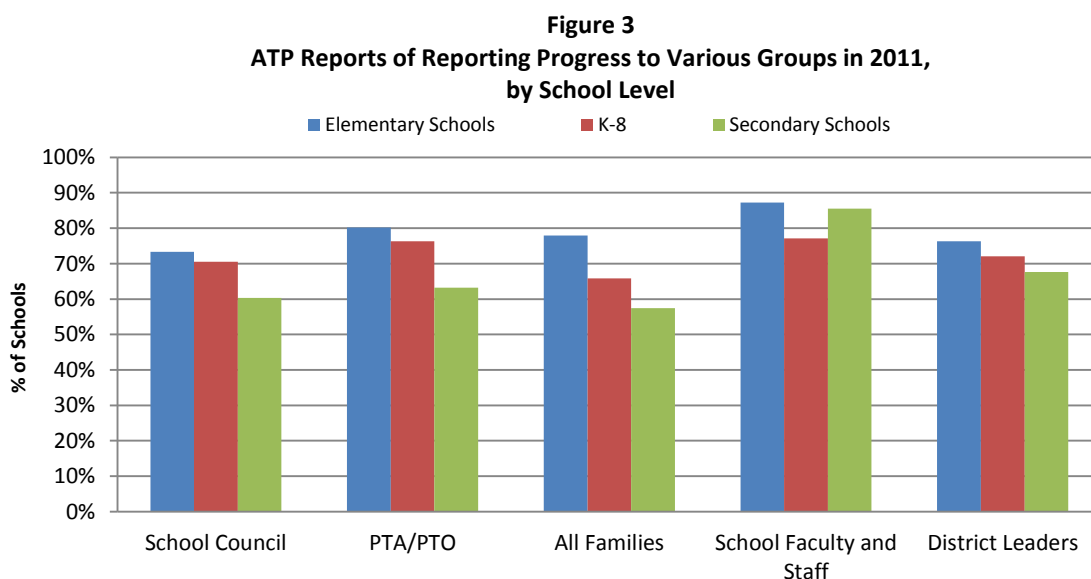
- About 40% of middle and high schools organized their ATPs as a single, whole committee. This is not particularly efficient for secondary schools with complex organizational structures that need to develop ambitious partnership programs with families to ensure that students graduate from high school on time.
- At all school levels, only 9.2% of schools organized their ATP with subcommittees focused on school goals, as suggested by NNPS.

## MEMBERSHIP

NNPS suggests that each school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) include at least two or three teachers, two or three parents, and one administrator, with one or two students at the high school level, and options for community partners and other educators and representatives at any level. On average, schools in NNPS had between eight and nine members on their ATPs.

## FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

**Fewer than half of the schools' ATPs (36.9%) met monthly to plan and implement their partnership efforts. Elementary schools were more likely (42.3%) than other schools to meet at least monthly. Most schools (54%) reported meeting less than monthly and a small percentage of schools (6.8%) reported that the ATP never met.**



N=558 Schools Source: 2011 UPDATE Survey

## REPORTING OF PROGRESS

NNPS recommends that ATPs report progress to various stakeholders, including the School Council, Faculty, District Facilitators, and other parent groups (PTO/PTA). As a sub-committee of the School Council, the ATPs should communicate with the overarching goal-setting advisory committee so that partnerships remain a priority at the school.

- Schools were most likely to report their partnership program progress to faculty members (84.8%).
- About 30% of schools reported that they did not or needed to improve their communication of partnership plans and progress with the School Council and all families.
- Elementary schools (73.3%) were more likely to share progress with their School Council than schools at other grade levels.
- Secondary schools were least likely (57.4%) to share their plans and progress about school, family, and community partnerships with families.

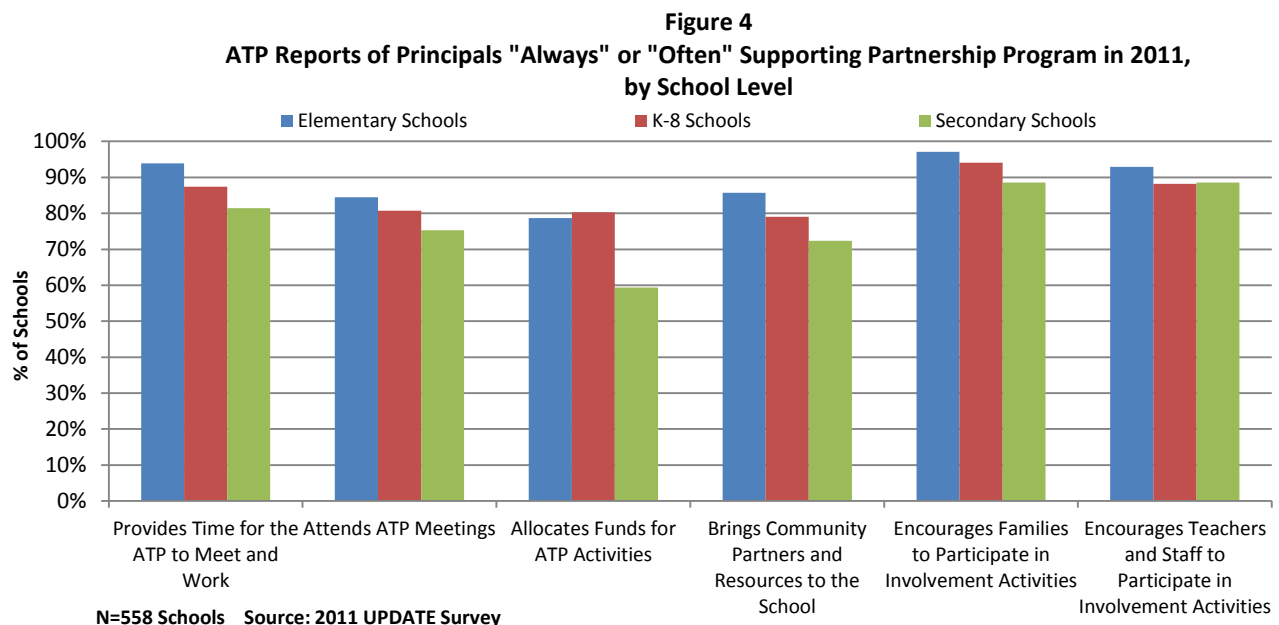
## FUNDING

A single item asked ATPs to rate the level of funding for their schools' partnership programs. The largest percentage of teams reported that they had *adequate funds* for their partnership program (54%), although others noted that they received *no funds* (6.6%) or *not enough funds* (26%) for their programs. A few (13.4%) said their family and community involvement programs were *well funded*.

## ACTION TEAM SUPPORT

### PRINCIPALS' SUPPORT

School-based partnership programs need the support of the principal in order to be successful and sustained (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004). Almost all schools (94%) reported that the principal was a member of the action team for partnerships, as NNPS requires. ATPs reported whether or not the school principal *never*, *sometimes*, *often*, or *always* provided support for ten actions for the partnership program ( $\alpha = .88$ ).



**Overall, principals were rated as highly supportive of partnerships at their school (Figure 4).**

- Principals were least helpful in allocating funds for partnerships, especially at the secondary level.
- Schools at all levels were about equal in principals’ support for encouraging teachers and staff to participate in involvement activities.
- Over 95% of principals “always” or “often” encouraged families to participate in involvement activities.

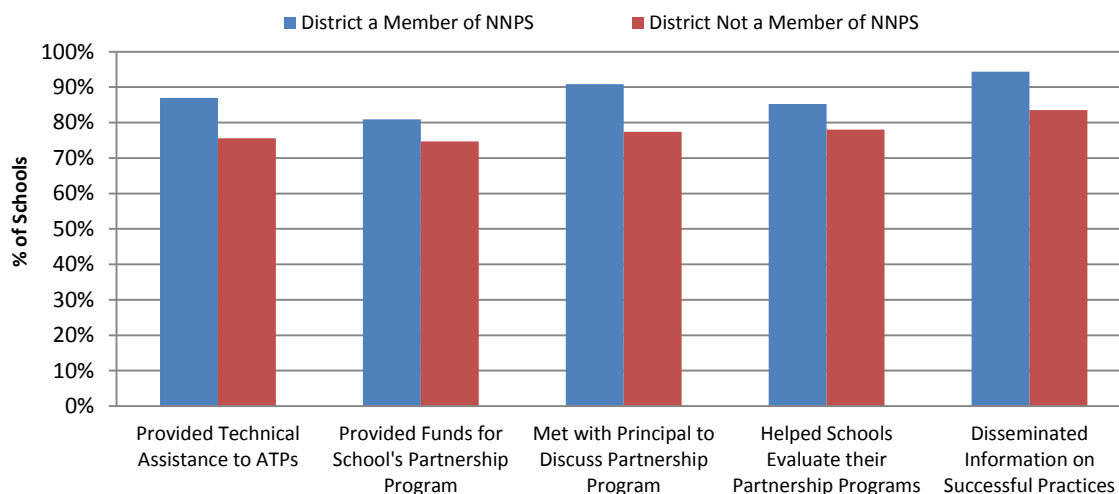
**DISTRICT LEADERS’ SUPPORT**

Schools’ partnership programs also benefit from the support of district leaders. In 2011, ATPs rated the quality of 7 types of district assistance they received, from *not provided*, to *not very helpful*, *helpful*, and *very helpful* ( $\alpha = .91$ ). Schools reported receiving an average of between five and six supportive actions from their districts.

**Schools nested within districts that are NNPS members reported more support for their partnership programs than did schools in district that were not NNPS members (Figure 5).**

- About 88% of all schools reported that their district disseminated information on successful partnership practices, and 85% reported that their district recognized schools’ good work on partnerships.
- Based on ATP reports, districts were least likely to provide funding for partnership programs or help schools evaluate the implementation of partnership activities.
- Secondary schools (85.5%) were more likely than elementary (77.7%) and K-8 (74.4%) to find district leaders’ technical assistance on partnerships either “helpful” or “very helpful.”

**Figure 5**  
**% ATPs that Reported Support from their District in 2011,**  
**by District Membership in NNPS**



N=558 Schools Source: 2011 UPDATE Survey

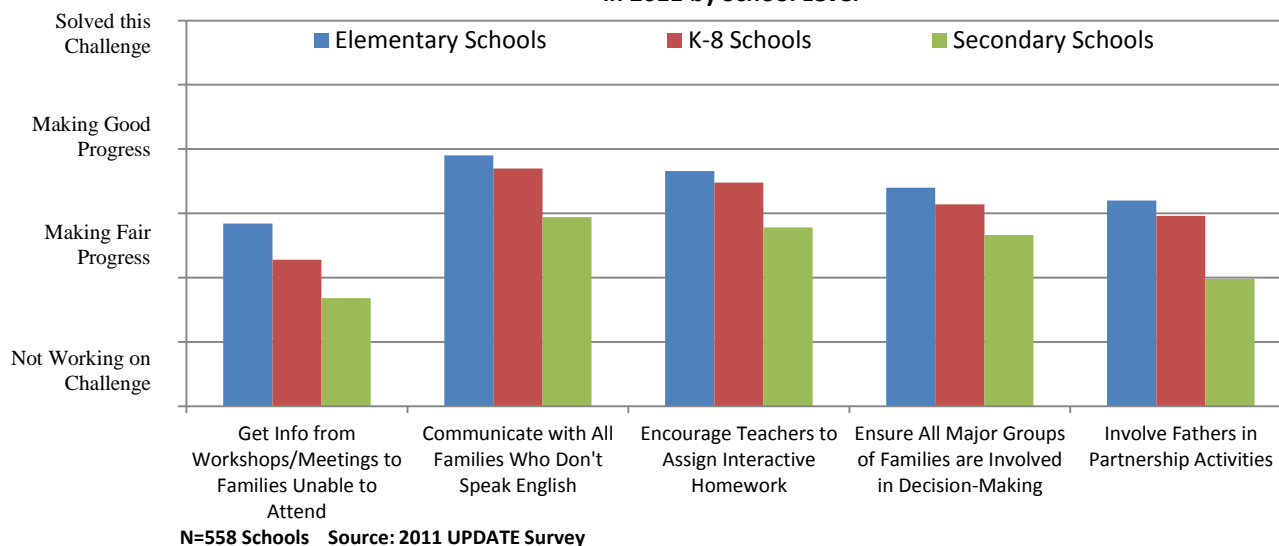
## MEETING CHALLENGES TO REACH ALL FAMILIES

In addition to organizing their partnership programs, ATPs are expected to conduct and encourage other partners (teachers, PTA/PTO, community partners) to conduct activities that involved all families and community partners in ways that support student success. Schools' efforts to solve challenges of outreach and the involvement of all families were measured with a 9-item scale ( $\alpha = .84$ ). ATPs rated their attention to solve challenges from *not working on the challenge*, to making *fair progress*, *good progress*, or having *solved the challenge*. For each challenge, schools' ATPs generally averaged between 2 and 3 on this scale, suggesting that most are making between fair and good progress in trying to solve challenges to involve many families who would not become involved on their own.

**The vast majority of NNPS schools were working to overcome many challenges to help more families get involved in their children's schooling, as shown in Figure 6.**

- Schools rated themselves highest on the challenge of conducting positive communications with all families, communicating with all families (including those who speak languages other than English at home) in ways that they can understand, and working with community partners to meet school improvement goals.
- Schools were least likely to be working on the challenge of getting information from workshops and meetings to families who could not attend.
- Elementary and K-8 schools reported stronger efforts to meet the challenge of involving fathers than secondary schools. This pattern was consistent with the UPDATE summary from the past two years.

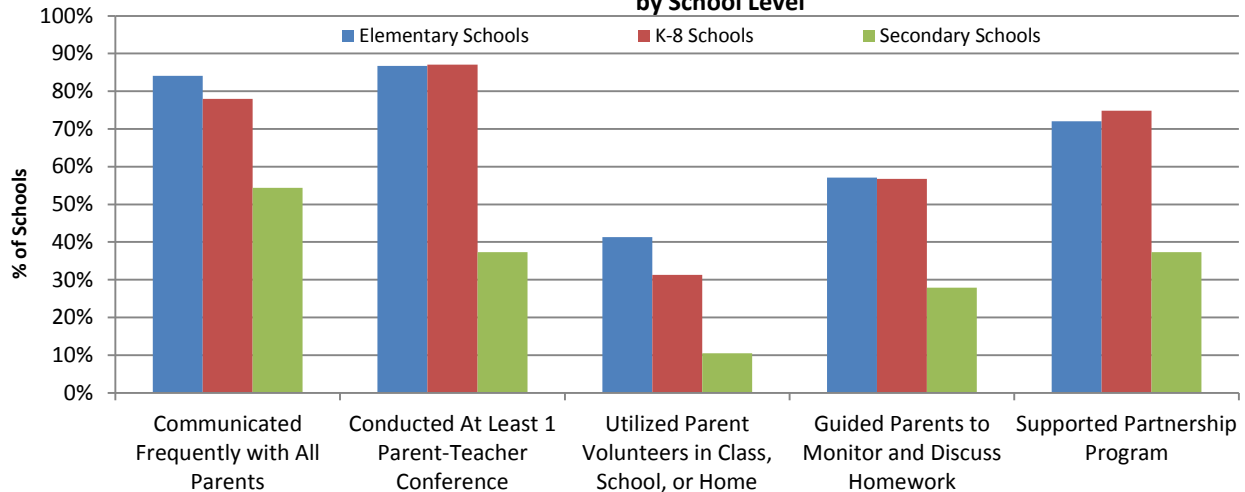
**Figure 6**  
Average Degree to which ATPs Reported Working to "Meet the Challenges" in 2011 by School Level



## PRACTICES OF INVOLVEMENT

Five items identified the percent of teachers who conducted various family involvement activities, such as holding parent-teacher conferences with each student's family, communicating with all students' families, utilizing volunteers in the classroom, guiding parents in discussing homework with their children, and supporting the partnership program. Figure 7 shows the percentage of schools in which 75% or more teachers participated in activities to involve all families.

**Figure 7**  
**% of ATPS Reporting 75% or More of Teachers Working with Parents in 2011,**  
**by School Level**



N=558 Schools Source: 2011 UPDATE Survey

- Elementary and K-8 schools were most likely to have a larger percentage of teachers conducting parent involvement activities.
- At all school levels, schools had fewer teachers organizing and using parent volunteers in the school, in classrooms, or at home.

ATPs estimated the percent of families involved in various partnership activities, including Back-to-School Nights, parent-teacher conferences, volunteering to help the school or teachers, monitoring their child's homework, and being good partners in their children's education.

**Similar to Figure 7 on teachers work with parents (above), family involvement was more common in elementary and K-8 schools and less frequent in secondary schools.**

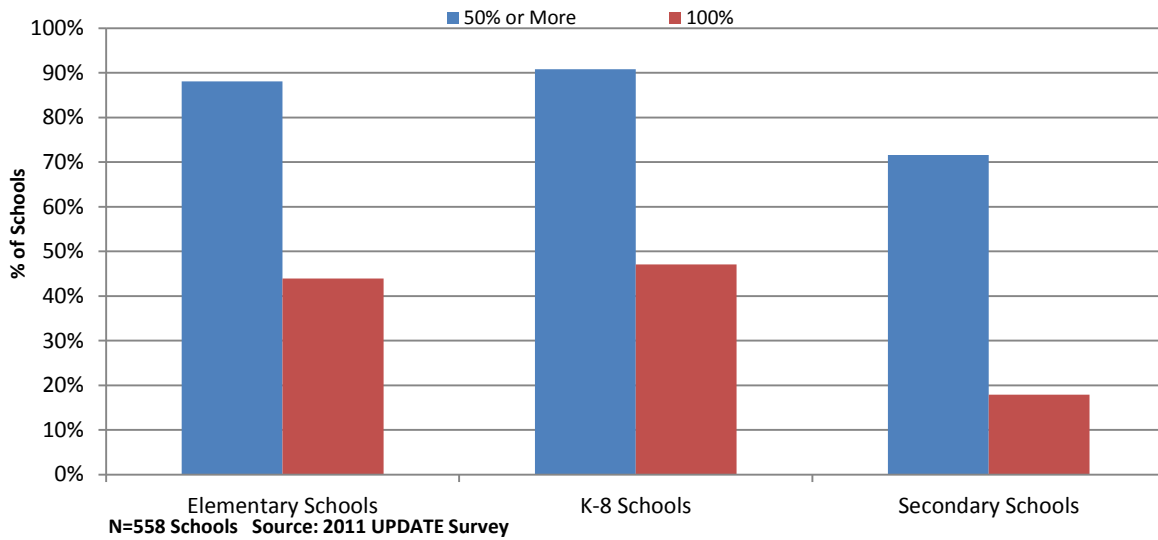
## SUPPORT FOR THE SCHOOL'S PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

### Teachers

- Across school levels ATPs reported that a majority of teachers supported their school's partnership program.
- Elementary and K-8 schools had a broader base of support for partnerships from teachers and staff than did secondary schools. About 88% of elementary schools' ATPs reported that at least half of the teachers supported their partnership program, and 44% of the elementary schools reported that all (100%) of the teachers supported their school's program of family and community involvement.

These findings suggest that, in general, educators at NNPS schools see the need and value of establishing a good relationship with students' families. This recognition of the need for strong partnerships appears most widespread in elementary and K-8 schools.

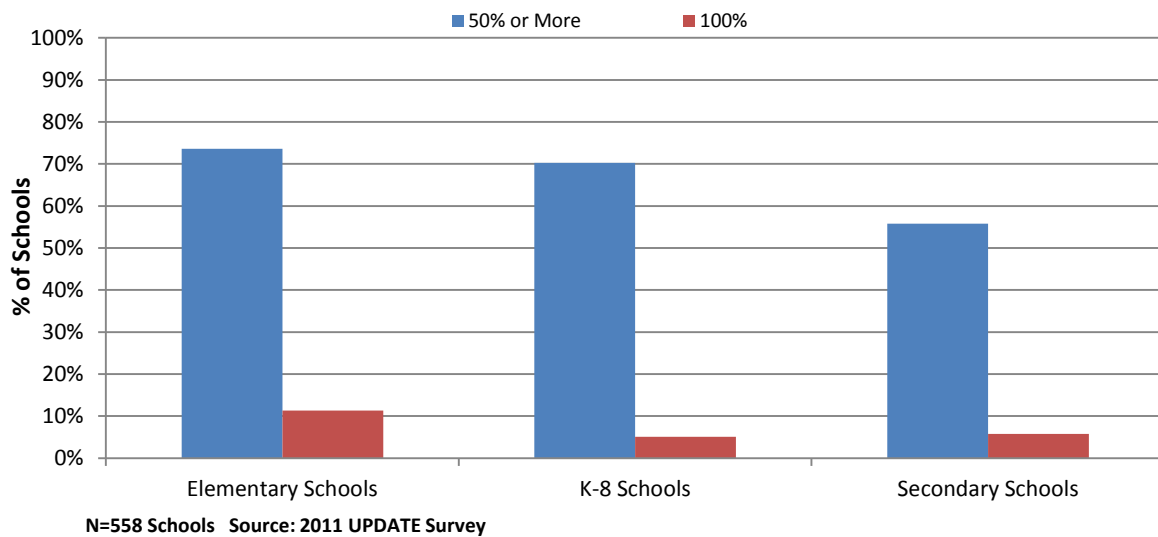
**Figure 8**  
**% of ATPs Reporting Teachers Who Support School's Partnership Program in 2011,**  
**by School Level**



## Families

Figure 9 reports ATPs' estimates of the percentage of families who were "good partners" with the school in their children's education. As shown, secondary schools reported the smallest percentage of families who were "good partners."

**Figure 9**  
**% ATPs Reporting Families Who are Good Partners in Education in 2011,**  
**by School Level**



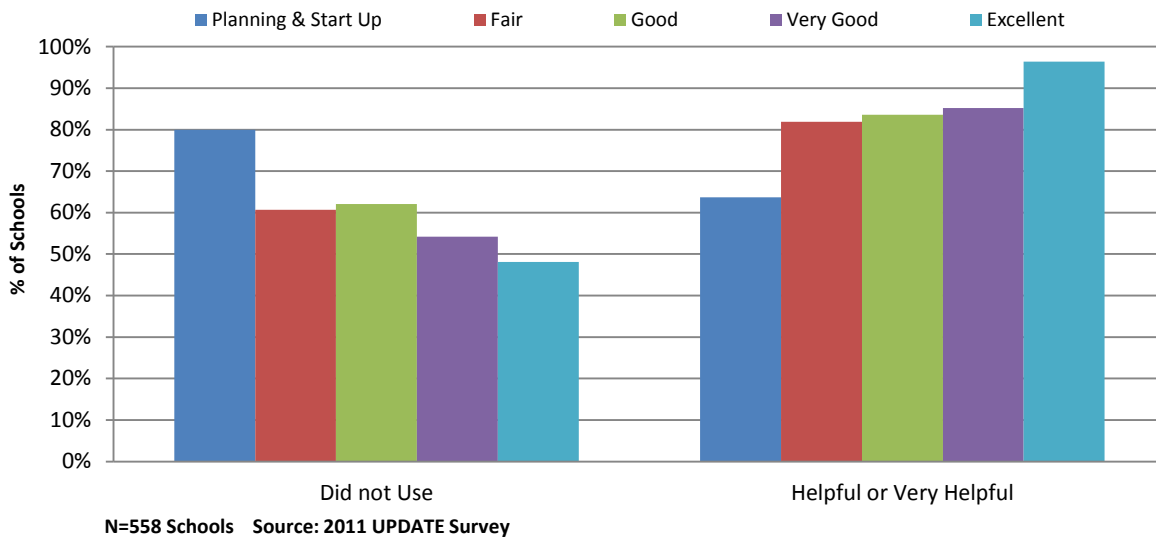
## NNPS BENEFITS AND SERVICES

Members of NNPS have access to many benefits and services. Every school that joins NNPS receives the *Handbook for Action* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), *Type-2* newsletter, *Promising Partnership Practices*, monthly E-Briefs, the UPDATE survey and written summary of UPDATE, and a Six Types of Involvement poster. NNPS members also have access to services, including NNPS conferences and web conference, the NNPS website, and

technical assistance from NNPS staff. The use and helpfulness of NNPS benefits and services were measured with a 10-item scale ( $\alpha = .86$ ). ATPs rated their use of NNPS support from *did not use*, to *not helpful*, *a little helpful*, *helpful*, and *very helpful*.

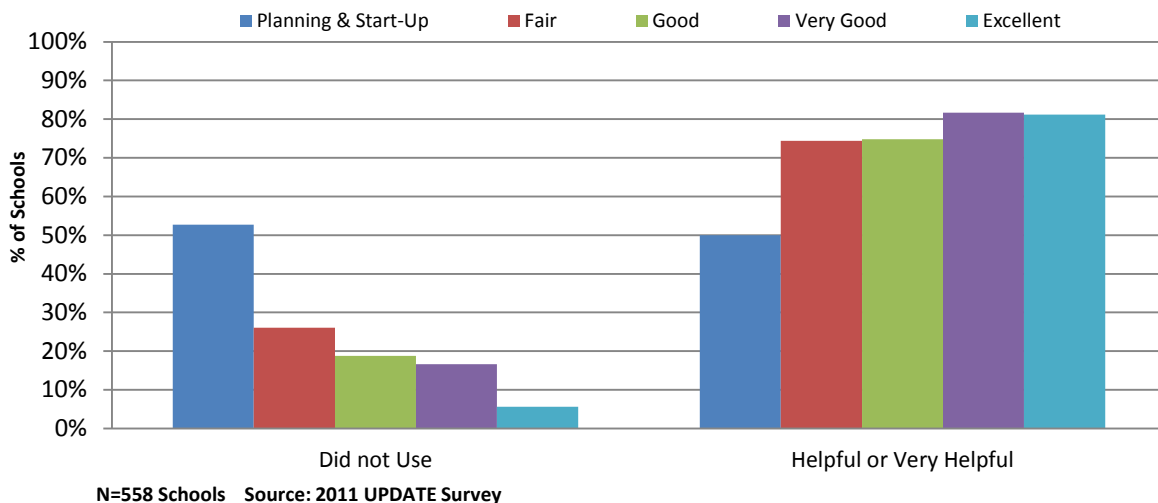
**In general, schools that had higher quality partnership programs were more likely to use NNPS services and find those services “helpful” or “very helpful,” as shown in Figure 10.**

**Figure 10**  
ATP Reports of Use of NNPS Technical Assistance in 2011,  
by Quality of Partnership Program



- About 80% of schools that reported being in the *planning* or *start-up* phase of partnership program development did not email or call NNPS staff for assistance. Only 48.1% of schools with *excellent* partnership programs did not use this service.
- Of schools that did email or call NNPS staff for assistance, 63.7% of *planning* or *start-up* schools found it helpful, while 96.4% of schools with *excellent* programs found the support helpful.

**Figure 11**  
ATP Reports of Use of NNPS Website 2011,  
by Quality of Partnership Program



The NNPS website contains research briefs, *Promising Partnership Practices* dating back to 1998, information about partnership program components, and many more resources for members and non-members.

- In general, schools that reported higher quality partnership programs were more likely to find the NNPS website *helpful* or *very helpful*.
- Almost 95% of schools that reported excellent partnership programs used the NNPS website. Over 81% of those schools found the website *helpful* or *very helpful*.
- Over 52% of schools that self-classified as having planning or start-up programs did not use the NNPS website.

## PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION OVER TIME

### SAMPLE

In addition to examining data collected using the 2011 UPDATE, program data were examined from schools that returned the 2010 *and* 2011 UPDATE surveys. These analyses drew upon a sample of 383 schools, and compared schools whose partnership program *improved* in overall quality to those whose program quality *remained the same* or *declined*. A significant majority of these schools were either elementary or K-8 schools (85.5%), received Title I funding (80.5%), and were embedded in a NNPS member district (83.5%). Schools in the longitudinal sample were evenly distributed across locale. Slightly more than one-quarter of the schools were located in a large, central city (26.3%); one-third reported that they were located in a small city (35.2%); 23.5% were located in suburbs; and 15% of the schools were serving rural populations.

### PROGRAM QUALITY

Schools that remained in NNPS tended to improve or maintain the overall quality of their partnership program over the course of one year. According to school reports, slightly more than one-quarter (28.6%) of the sample experienced an improvement in their partnership program. Only 19.9% of schools reported a decline in partnership program quality, while about half (51.5%) maintained the quality of their partnership program.

As in years past, analyses looked into characteristics of those programs that improved, remained the same, and declined in quality. Schools that *improved* or *sustained* program quality over the year were more like to be elementary or K-8 schools. Also, these schools reported:

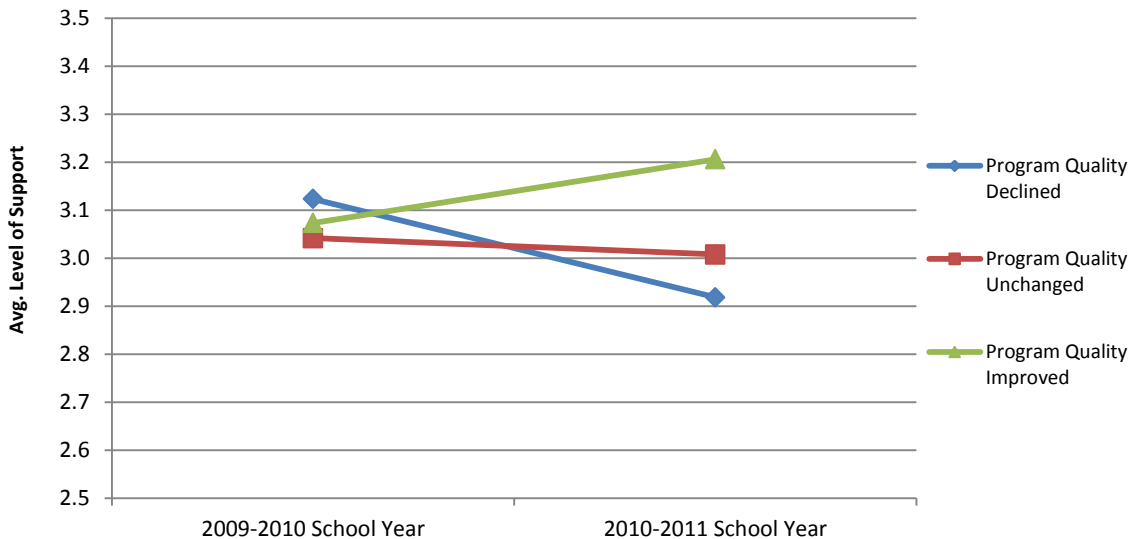
- Stronger implementation of partnership program activities.
- Having an ATP that meets at least monthly.
- Greater progress meeting the challenges for family and community involvement.
- Stronger support for partnerships from their district (as shown in Figure 12).
- Stronger support for partnerships from the school principal.
- Stronger support for the partnership program from the teachers.
- Greater use of NNPS resources and supports for their partnership program (See Figure 13).

### PROGRAM SUPPORTS

Analyses were conducted to investigate more deeply some important elements associated with improvement in schools' partnership programs. First, as shown Figure 12, Action Teams in schools with

partnership programs that improved tended to report an increase in district support for partnerships. In contrast, Action Teams in schools where the program quality declined were more likely to report a decrease in support from their district.

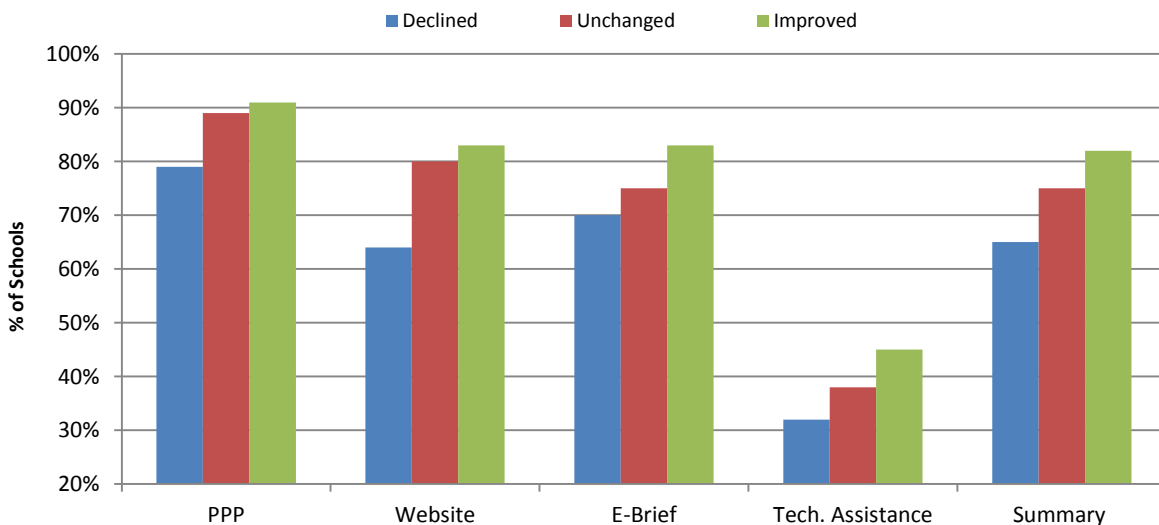
**Figure 12**  
District Support and Change in Program Quality



N=383 Schools Source: 2010 & 2011 UPDATE Surveys

In addition to the support from districts, our analyses showed that ATPs that drew upon NNPS resources were more likely to report program improvements from one year to the next (Figure 13). In comparison to programs that declined in quality, improving partnership programs were more likely to: use the *Promising Partnership Practices* book (91% vs. 79%), access the NNPS website (83% vs. 64%), read the NNPS e-briefs (83% vs. 70%), contact NNPS facilitators for technical assistance via phone or e-mail (45% vs. 32%), and examine the annual UPDATE summary (82% vs. 65%). NNPS works to support schools' efforts to involve family and community members into student learning, and these findings suggest that schools can make strides in the development of a strong partnership program when they draw upon NNPS staff and resources.

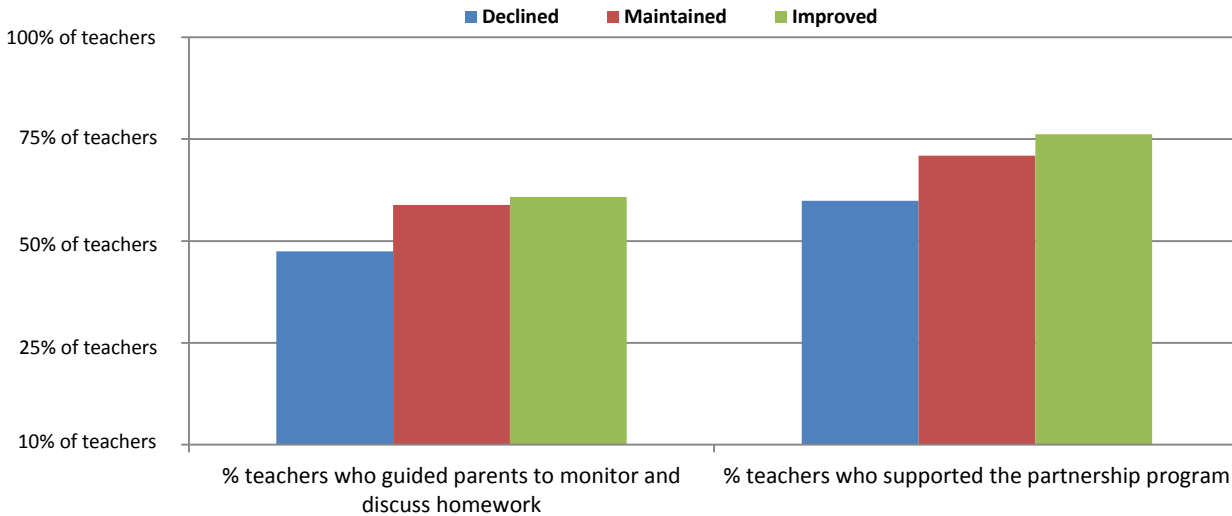
**Figure 13**  
Use of NNPS Resources by Change in Program Quality



N=383 Schools Source: 2010 & 2011 UPDATE Surveys

Finally, our examination of the longitudinal data highlighted the importance for schools leaders to mobilize teachers and develop their buy-in to the program. Figure 14 represents the finding that, in comparison to programs that declined in overall quality, improving programs reported a greater percentage of teachers who supported the partnership program work in general; and a greater percentage of teachers helping families understand how to monitor and discuss homework with their children. These two items reflect teachers' commitment to supporting the partnership climate at their school, as well as their efforts to help support a vital form of involvement linked to improved students learning.

**Figure 14**  
**Teacher Buy-in and Support for Partnership Programs**



N=383 Schools Source: 2010 & 2011 UPDATE Surveys

## CONCLUSIONS

Our analyses of the longitudinal data suggest two main conclusions. The first is that schools with partnership programs that are maintaining and improving quality are implementing the various components of the NNPS model more strongly than schools in which their partnership program has declined in overall quality. Maintaining and improving programs have ATPs that meet more frequently, more successfully meet challenges that inhibit family involvement in their children's education, and garner greater support for their partnership efforts. These findings suggest an internal consistency and validation for the 2011 UPDATE survey, supported also by the fact that these findings are in line with analyses conducted in past on NNPS program data.

The second important conclusion from these analyses is support for partnerships is invaluable for the development of strong partnership programs. Our research found three sources of support that predicted partnership program improvement: the district, teachers, and NNPS. Although Action Team members may not always be able to control the nature of support they get from district leaders or teachers, the NNPS resources predictive of program improvement are available to all members. By using our printed materials (PPP, the website, etc.) or calling an NNPS facilitator, ATPs can access partnership strategies that involve more families and community members in ways that enable more students to succeed.

Visit the NNPS website, [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org)

- Read past research summaries. (Click on Research and Evaluation.)<sup>1</sup>
- Register for professional development conferences or for web-conferences
- See all editions of *Type 2* newsletters (Click on Publications and Products.)
- Find good ideas in the annual collections of *Promising Partnership Practices* (Click on Success Stories.)
- Send an e-mail to an NNPS Facilitator with questions about YOUR next steps at the district level and in scaling up your assistance to schools. (Click on Meet the Staff.)
- Lots of other good information!

## NOTES

- 1) NNPS *UPDATE* data are analyzed each year in research studies to learn how the various scales and measures combine to affect the quality of district and school programs. For a summary of results past years' summaries of UPDATE data and for the annual collections of *Promising Partnership Practices* (Hutchins, et al. 2011), visit the NNPS website, [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org).
- 2) The ( $\alpha$  or alpha) reports the *internal reliability* of a scale, indicating whether a number of items are correlated and represent a common construct. Reliability coefficients of .6 or higher indicate that a set of items is consistent and the scale is useful.

## SELECTED REFERENCES

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