



NATIONAL NETWORK OF
Partnership Schools
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

SUMMARY: 2010 SCHOOL UPDATE

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SUMMARY

2010 SCHOOL UPDATE

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In response to requests for information on partnership program development, NNPS provides this summary of schools' *2010 School UPDATE* data to all active members of the network. Districts, states, and organizations also will receive a summary of the *2010 District UPDATE* data.¹

SUMMARY

The *2010 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.

- Presently, elementary schools conduct more activities and report more parental involvement than do middle and high schools.
- The data also suggest that school programs are more likely to improve over time when ATPs engage and obtain support from parents and community members.
- ATPs need to improve their communication with the school community, particularly the school improvement council.
- The data suggest that program evaluation 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:

- Many schools Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) 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 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.
- 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.

USE THIS REPORT

Schools should compare the data in this report with their own responses on the *2010 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 2010 UPDATE SAMPLE

In 2010, 889 Action Teams for Partnerships reported *UPDATE* data. Surveys came from schools in 39 states, Canada and Australia. A large majority of schools (63.9%) served students in the elementary grades (PK-6); 10.1% served students in PK-8; 13.5% of schools included the middle grades only (4-8); and 9.1% included high school grades only (9-12). A small percentage of schools (2.1%) served students from PK through high school and (1.3%) combined middle and high school grades.

The largest percentage of schools was located in large, central cities (28.9%), with the remaining schools in small city (26.9%), suburban (23.6%), and rural areas (20.7%). A large majority of schools (78.0%) received school-wide or targeted Title I funds.

On average, schools served students from varied racial and ethnic backgrounds. Across schools, about 52.1% were White; 32.2% of students were African American; 19.6% were Latino/Hispanic American; 4.1% were Asian American; 2.9% were Native American; and 1.9% 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 4.6 languages. In some schools, families spoke only English at home, whereas other schools served diverse families speaking up to 45 different languages and dialects.

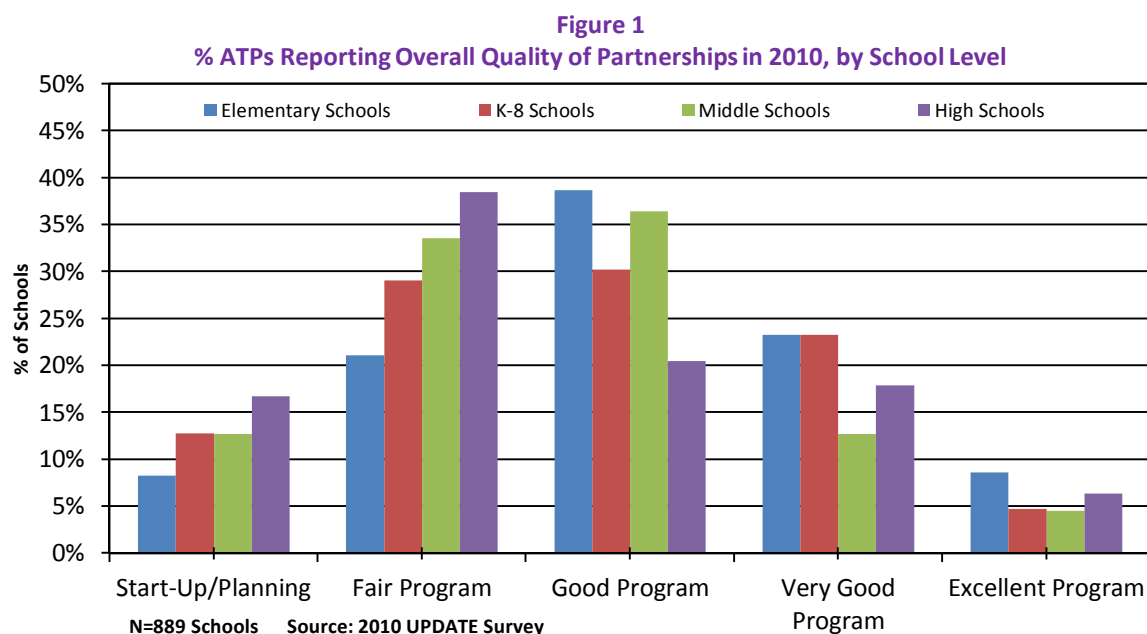
FINDINGS

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 either *fair/average or good*.

- About 10% of schools were planning or just beginning their programs. Approximately 8% reported excellent programs, with most aspects of a sustainable program in place.



- The largest percentage of schools (36%) 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.
- Compared to middle schools, elementary and K-8 schools were almost twice as likely to rate their program as “very good” (23.3% vs. 12.7%).
- K-8 schools were equally as likely as middle schools to rate their partnership program as “excellent” (4.7% and 4.5%, 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.

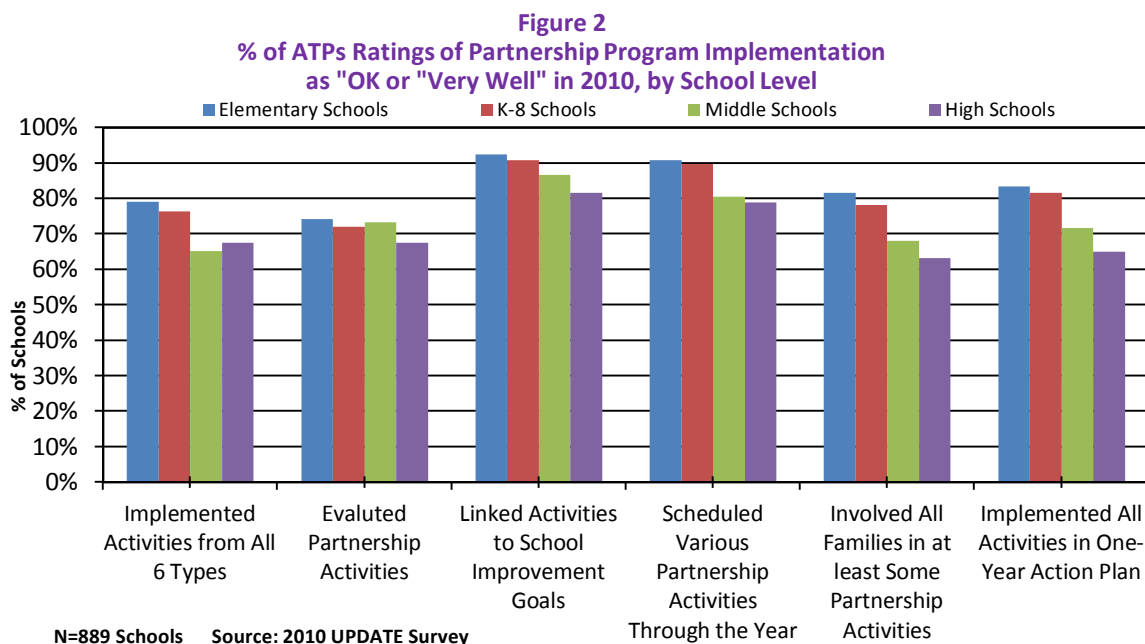
CORE COMPONENTS

Core NNPS program components were measured using a 6-item scale ($\alpha = .70$).² 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* (09-10) school year (88%); had an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) of six or more people (88%); and had written an action plan for the 08-09 school year (85%).

QUALITY OF IMPLEMENTATION

A 12-item scale ($\alpha = .92$) 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,” as shown in Figure 2. There is room for schools to improve their program implementation.



- On average, elementary and K-8 schools reported higher levels of program implementation than did middle and high schools.
- A large majority of schools reported linking the activities to involve families and community partners to school improvement goals.

Although most schools were actively organizing their work on partnerships, some were still challenged to evaluate the quality and outreach of activities and to provide useful information to all families.

- About 26% 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 *2010 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 42% 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 half (52%) of high schools organized their ATPs as a single, whole committee. This is not particularly efficient for large high schools with complex organizational structures that need to develop ambitious partnership programs with families to ensure that students complete grades 9 through 12 and graduate from high school on time.
- At all school levels, a small percentage of schools organized their ATP with subcommittees focused on school goals, as suggested by NNPS.

MEMBERSHIP

On average, schools in NNPS had between nine and ten members on their ATPs.

- Almost all ATPs had a least one parent, but a significant percentage (25%) did not include two parents on the ATP.
- 38% of high schools did not report having at least one student on the ATP.

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.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

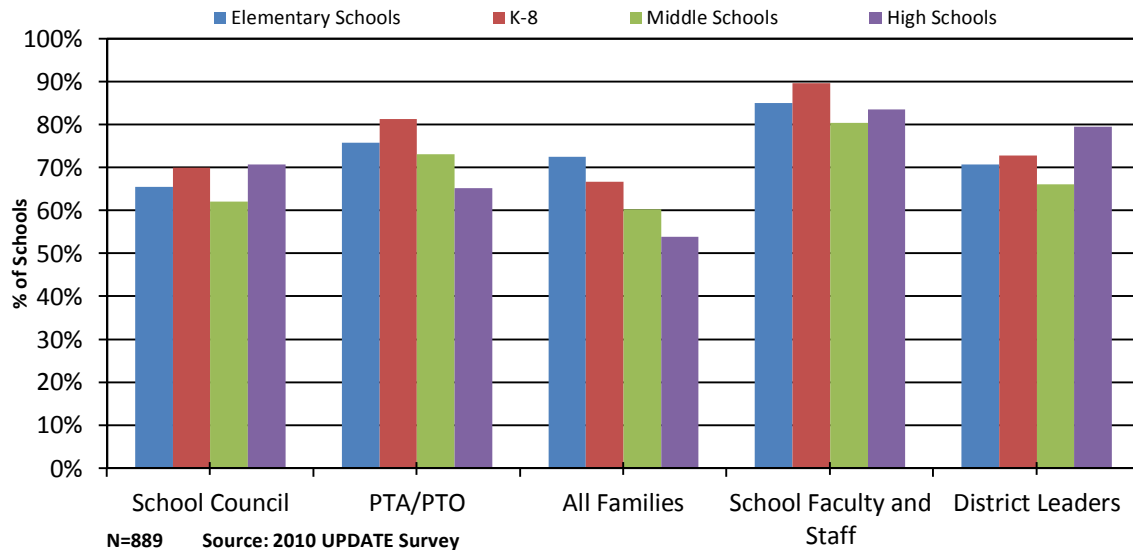
Fewer than half of the schools' ATPs (42%) met at least monthly to plan and implement their partnership efforts. High schools were more likely (51%) than other schools to meet at least monthly. K-8 schools were more likely (47%) than elementary (40%) and middle schools (41%) to meet at least monthly.

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 (84.6%).
- About 30% of schools reported that they did not or needed to improve their communication of partnership plans and progress with the School Council, all families, or district leaders.
- High schools (70.7%) were more likely to share progress with their School Council than schools at other grade levels.
- Overall, schools were least likely to share their plans and progress about school, family, and community partnerships with families.

Figure 3
ATP Reports of Reporting Progress to Various Groups in 2010, by School Level



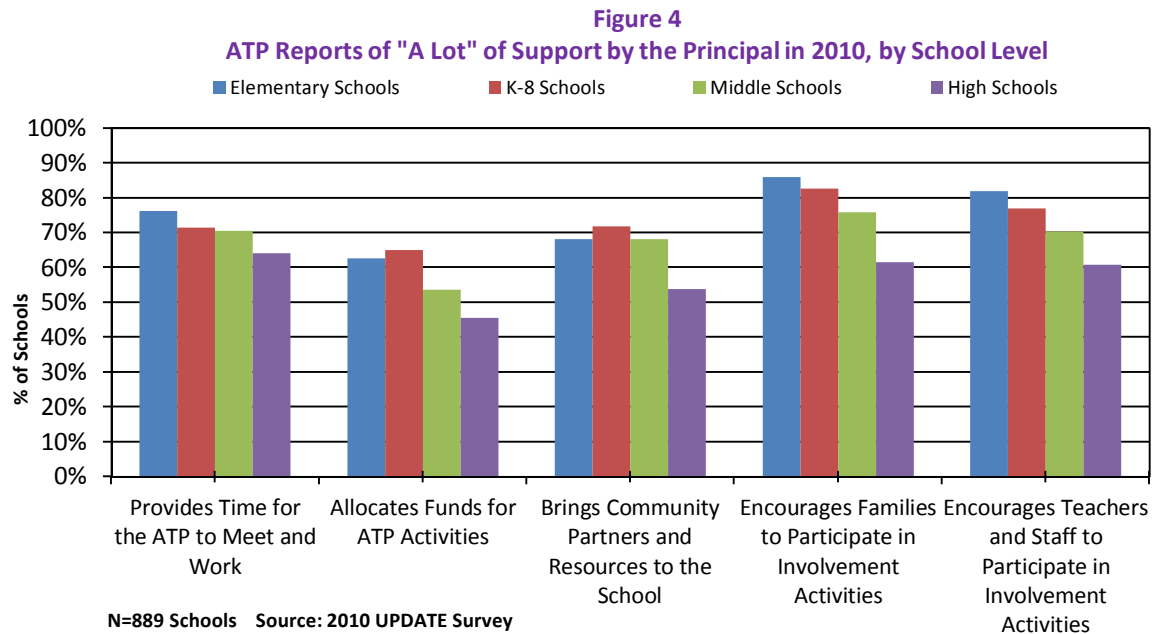
FUNDING

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 (51%), although others noted that they received *no funds* (9%) or *not enough funds* (27%) for their programs. A few (14%) 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 provided *no*, *some*, or *a lot* of support for nine actions for the partnership program ($\alpha = .91$).



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

- Principals were least helpful in allocating funds for partnerships.
- Schools at all levels were about equal in principals' support for time for the ATP to meet.
- High schools reported the lowest levels of support from the principal for their partnership program.

DISTRICT LEADERS' SUPPORT

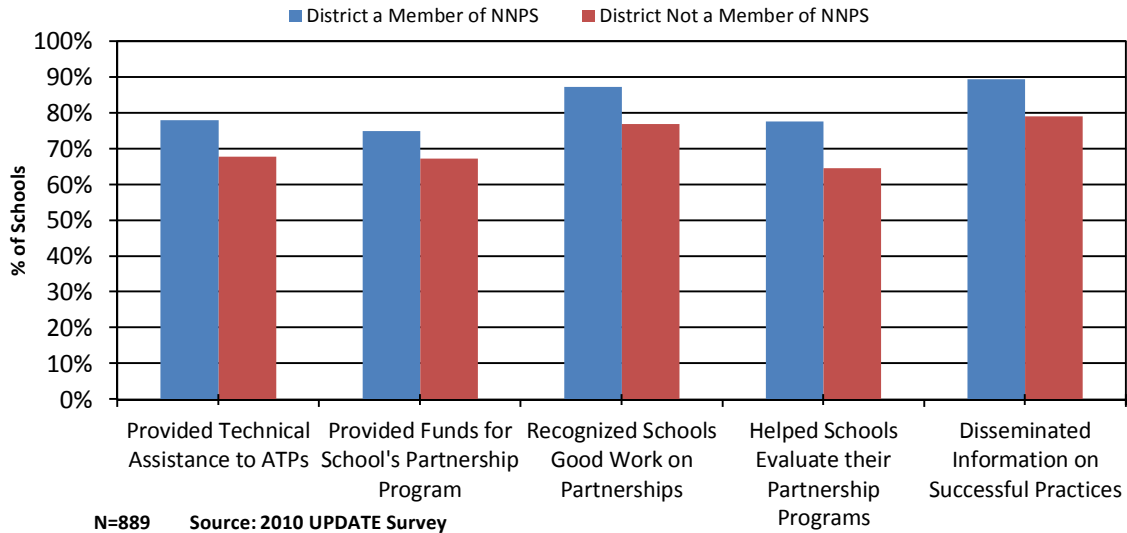
Schools' partnership programs also benefit from the support of district leaders. In 2010, ATPs rated the quality of 7 types of district assistance they received, from *not provided*, to *not very helpful*, *helpful*, and *very helpful* ($\alpha = .87$). Schools reported receiving an average of between 5 and 6 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 86% of all schools reported that their district disseminated information on successful partnership practices, and 84% reported that their district recognized schools' good work on partnerships.
- Based on ATP reports, districts were least likely to provide help evaluating the implementation of partnership activities, particularly at the high school level (31%).

- At least 25% of schools reported that their districts did not offer technical assistance on partnerships, provide funds for partnership program activities, or help the school evaluate the quality of its partnership program.

Figure 5
% ATPs that Reported Support from their District in 2010,
by District Membership in NNPS



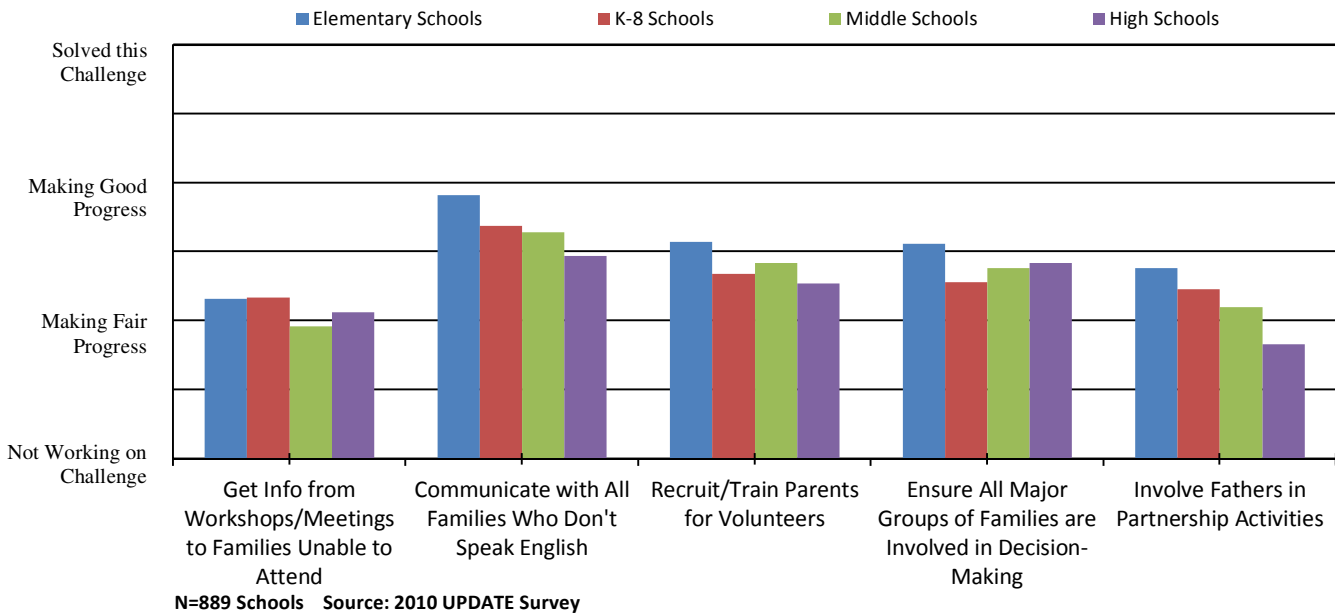
MEETING CHALLENGES TO REACH ALL FAMILIES

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 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. About 27% of all schools reported that they were not working to meet this challenge, unchanged from last year.
- Elementary and K-8 schools reported stronger efforts to meet the challenge of involving fathers than middle and high schools. This pattern was consistent with the 2009 UPDATE summary.
- Middle schools reported the highest level of success on the challenge of helping families transition into their school.

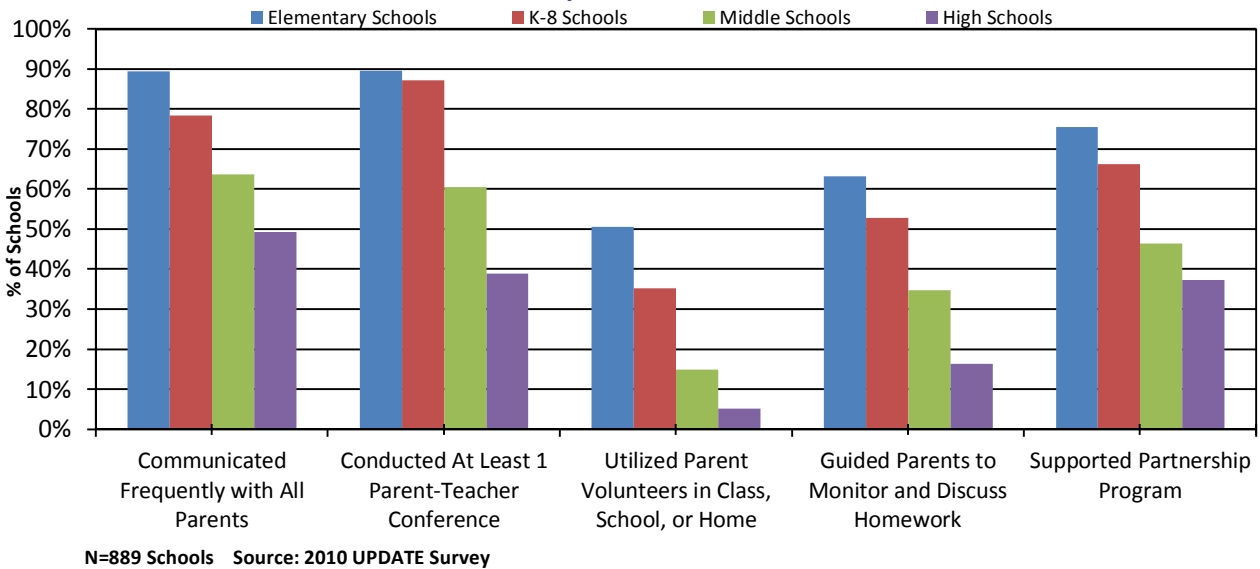
Figure 6
Average Degree to which ATPs Reported Working to "Meet the Challenges,"
by School Level



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,
by School Level



- Elementary schools were most likely to have a larger numbers 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 middle and high schools.

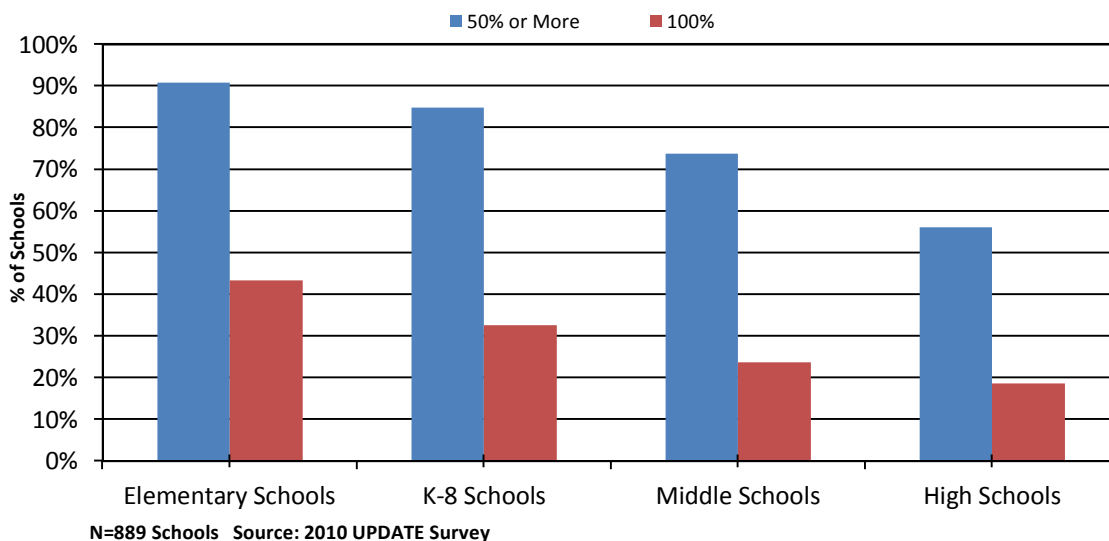
SUPPORT FOR THE SCHOOL’S PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Teachers

- Across school levels ATPs reported that a majority of teachers supported their school’s partnership program.
- Elementary schools had a broader base of support for partnerships from teachers and staff than did middle or high schools. About 91% of elementary schools’ ATPs reported that at least half of the teachers supported their partnership program, and 43% 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.

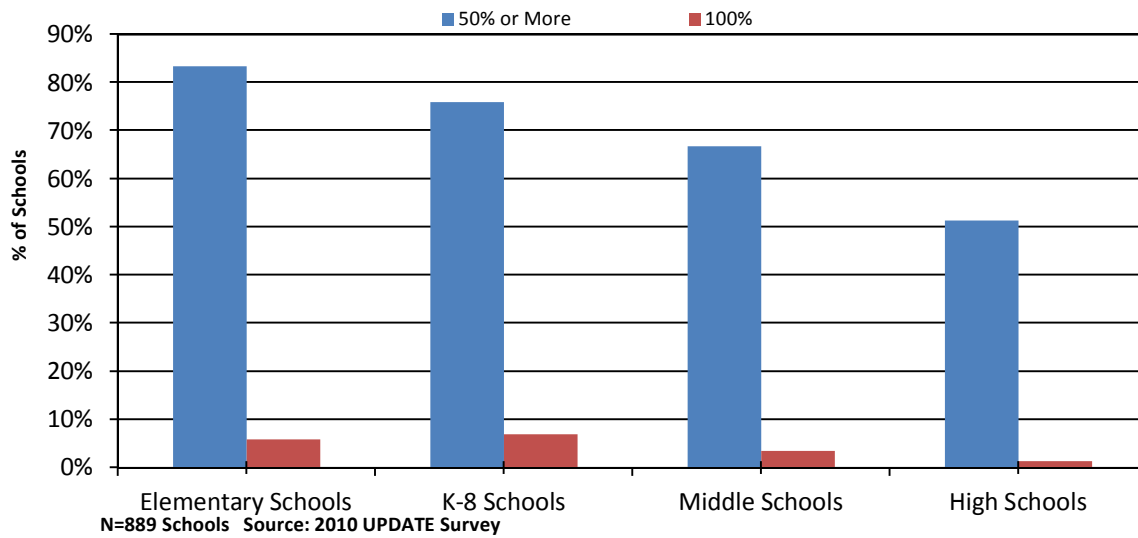
Figure 8
% of ATPs Reporting Teachers Who Support School's Partnership Program in 2010, by School Level



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, high schools reported the smallest percentage of families who were “good partners.”

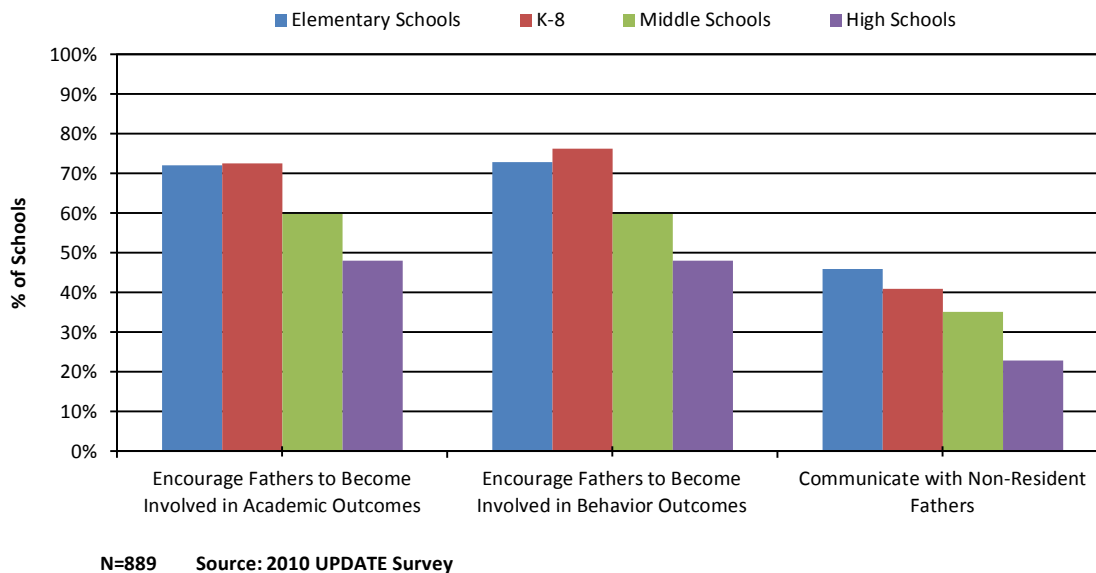
Figure 9
% ATPs Reporting Families Who are Good Partners in Education in 2010, by School Level



SPECIAL FOCUS: FATHER INVOLVEMENT

This year, the *2010 School UPDATE* survey included a section asking ATPs to assess their school’s efforts to involve fathers and father-figures in children’s education. Schools reported how well they were encouraging fathers to be involved to improve children’s academic outcomes, how well they were encouraging fathers to be involve to improve children’s attitude and behaviors in school, and how well they were collecting information so that teachers could communicate with non-residential fathers (e.g., those who do not live with their biological children). The responses ranged from “*We did this well*” to “*Did not do this yet.*”

Figure 10
% ATPs Reporting Father Involvement in 2010, by School Level



- Most schools (58.6%) reported that they were not collecting information to help teachers communicate with and involve non-residential fathers.
- More than half of all schools reported they needed to improve their efforts to involve fathers in order to improve children’s academic and non-academic outcomes (53.2% and 52.8%, respectively).

These findings suggest that, while there is interest in getting more fathers involved in children’s education, current efforts are perceived as somewhat inadequate. Most schools are not making sufficient effort to enable teachers to communicate important news about the school or children’s academic progress to all fathers, including those who do not live with their child. NNPS offers professional development training and resources on *involving fathers*. Those interested in more information and activities for involving fathers should read the most recent edition of *Promising Partnership Practices* (Hutchins, et al., 2010), which is online at the NNPS website (<http://www.partnershipschoools.org>) in the section Success Stories.

ACTIVITIES TO INVOLVE FATHERS

The *2010 School UPDATE* asked ATPs to share an example of a partnership activity that was implemented with the goal of engaging more fathers and father-figures in children’s education. Among the most common practices that involved fathers were variations on *Doughnuts for Dads* and the nationally sponsored *Watch D.O.G.S.* program. In addition, our analyses identified three broad categories of father-focused activities: Activities just for dads; activities to better include dads in general partnership activities; and activities where dads are leading a school activity.

ACTIVITIES FOR DADS

Walking Children to School	Dads walk their children to school and have an informational meeting about school activities
Father and Me Wii Night	Fathers met with a local male counselor to discuss parenting and played Wii games with their children.
Father BINGO	Fathers completed exercises in the gym with their children and then played BINGO in various classrooms.
Pancakes for Pops	Male role-models attended breakfast and learned about various scholastic topics, including curriculum, social skills, health, and safety.
Boys to Men’s Conference	Fathers attended seminars to learn positive parenting and learning at home skills.

ACTIVITIES FOR ALL WITH OUTREACH TO DADS

Math-Science Family Nights	Families constructed catapults, hovercrafts, critter cars, stamp rockets, popsicle bridges. This whole-family event focused on activities fathers would enjoy completing.
Parent-Teacher Conferences	In each conference, teachers encouraged fathers to read to their children
Family Wellness Classes	School held courses for all parents about health and wellness. They particularly focused on communicating with non-resident fathers
Field Trip Chaperones	When searching for volunteers, schools called fathers to invite them to participate as chaperones.
Parent Helpers	Each parent is asked to volunteer either in the school or for the school at least three times per semester.

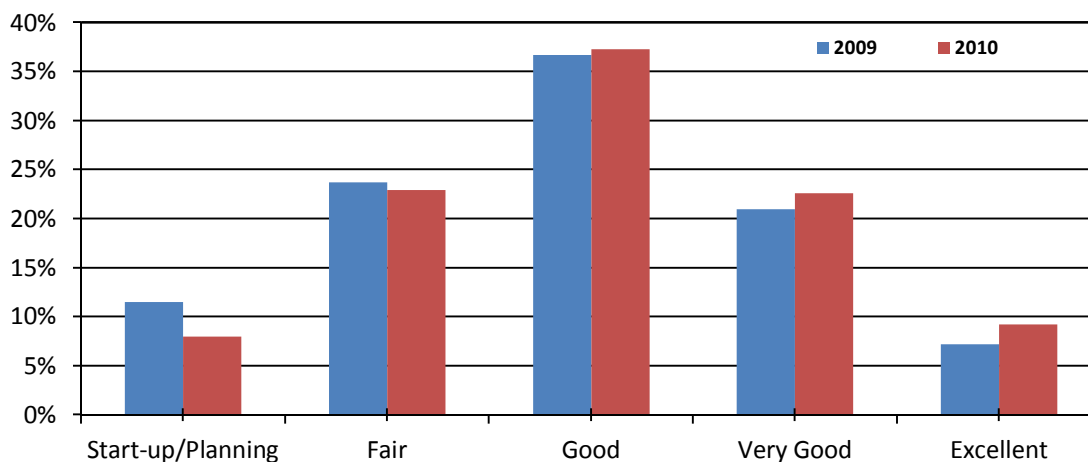
DADS AS LEADERS

Ace Dad's Group	Fathers mentor students, assist running community functions, volunteer at school activities, and landscape the school grounds
Dads on Duty	Fathers, uncles or older brothers supervised the students in the cafeteria for breakfast. They did magic tricks to improve behavior.
Dads Read, Kids Succeed	Dads read with a class and share examples of literacy in real life.
Family Game Night	The school provided an evening for families to play games at school. Dads ran all of the games.
Turn Off the TV Week	Fathers organized an evening of math games and building model airplanes to encourage children to limit TV watching.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION OVER TIME

In addition to examining the 2010 UPDATE, program data were examined from schools that returned the 2009 *and* 2010 UPDATE surveys. These analyses drew upon a sample of 576 schools, and compared schools whose partnership program *improved* in overall quality to those whose program quality *remained the same* or *declined*. Schools that remained in NNPS tended to improve their program over the course of one year (See Figure 11). According to school reports, almost one-third (31.4%) of the sample experienced an improvement in their partnership program. Only 21.8% of schools reported a decline in partnership program quality, while almost half (46.8%) maintained the quality of their partnership program.

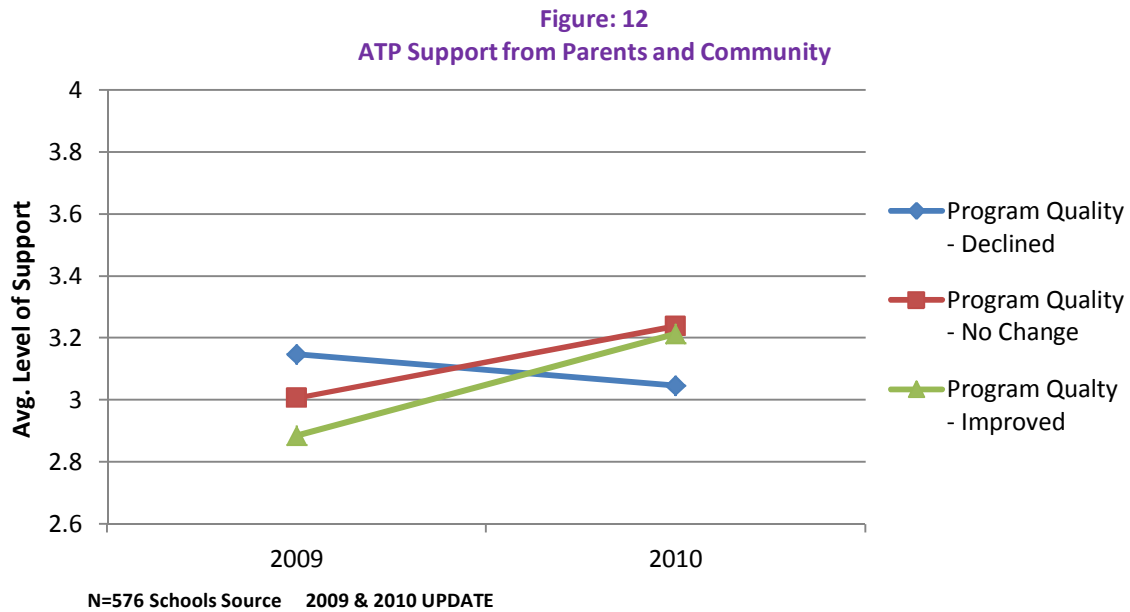
Figure 11
Comparison of Program Quality Across Schools 2009 & 2010



N=576 Schools Source: 2009 & 2010 UPDATE

Additional analyses looked into characteristics of those programs that improved, remained the same, and declined in quality. After taking into consideration school level (i.e. elementary, middle, or high), schools that *improved* or *sustained* program quality over the year reported:

- Stronger implementation of partnership program activities.
- Greater progress meeting the challenges for family and community involvement.
- Stronger support from parents, parent groups, and community members to support the work of the ATP (as shown in Figure 12).



As shown in the above graph (Figure 12), ATPs with programs that improved in program quality and those remained stable reported increased support from parents, parent groups, and community members. Interestingly, change in partnership program quality was not related to the reported number of core components in place.

Our interpretation of these findings is that having in place organizational structures like an ATP and writing an action plan are necessary, but not sufficient characteristics of an excellent partnership program. For a partnership program to improve and engage all families in ways that contribute to student outcomes, ATP members, teachers, and school staff and administrators need to put forth effort to enact partnership activities that engage all families and community members. In the end, strong and excellent partnership programs go beyond policies and plans, and are driven by the actions and interactions of committed individuals throughout the school community.

Visit the NNPS website, www.partnershipschools.org

- Read past research summaries. (Click on Research and Evaluation.)¹
- 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* (Hutchins, et al. 2010) (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. 2010), visit the NNPS website, www.partnershipschools.org.
- 2) The (α 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.

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