

type 2

Communicating to improve partnerships for student success



NATIONAL NETWORK OF
Partnership Schools
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

Please make copies of *Type 2* for all members of your Action Team, Leadership Team, Improvement Team, and other interested partners!

Spring, 2008 No. 24

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2007 Schools and Districts Report Progress and Challenges in Partnership Programs

Schools and districts in NNPS reported progress on partnerships for the 06-07 school year on the annual NNPS UPDATE surveys. NNPS provided data summaries so that members can compare their own efforts to the work of districts and schools across the country. In addition, districts with eight or more schools in NNPS received customized reports of their own schools' responses on UPDATE for monitoring and reporting the quality of their work on partnerships. Each year, the surveys and summaries assist NNPS members to evaluate their programs.

Districts and schools in the 2007 sample were in urban, rural, and suburban communities across 36 states, D.C., and 3 Canadian provinces. They served racially, ethnically, linguistically, and economically diverse families and students. The districts and schools varied in how long they have worked with NNPS, from about one year to over 10 years.

School Data

Over 660 schools provided information on their programs in 2007. Some schools were in a planning stage (19%), had fair/average (26%), good (29%), very good (20%), and excellent (6%) programs. The results show schools' strengths and areas that need improvement.

Most schools at all levels (elementary, middle, and high) were implementing core program components. They had Action Teams for Partnerships (80%) and wrote action plans in 06-07 (78%) to increase family and community involvement. Ele-

mentary schools tended to conduct more activities and report more parental involvement, but many middle and high schools were working to organize and improve their practices, outreach, and results.

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NNPS Fees to Change in September 2008

On September 1, 2008, NNPS will raise fees for new members to join NNPS and for selected benefits and services. To date, grants to NNPS's research team have helped subsidize member services. In its next phase of development, NNPS must cover the costs of program facilitation and benefits for members.

Research and fieldwork conducted over the past five years have identified a range of services that districts and schools need to succeed with partnership program development. The new fee structure will offer members options for basic and advanced facilitation agreements.

As one example, membership fees will increase to \$200 per school and \$300 per district. This increase, the first since 2002, will enable NNPS to continue providing new members with a copy of the *Handbook for Action*, and all members with annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices*, semi-annual, *Type 2* newsletters, monthly e-briefs, on-call phone and e-mail consultations, and other basic communications from the "home base" at Johns Hopkins University. Conference

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Issues and Insights

Joyce L. Epstein
Director

A Good Mix: Improve Partnerships with Formal Structures and Flexible Processes

Some school improvement approaches are too rigid. Other approaches are too casual. Educators do not want strategies set in stone, but they do want a “backbone” that will support innovative design.

NNPS offers a unique mix of required structures and flexible processes that enable schools, districts, and states to develop effective – yet responsive – programs of family and community involvement. Over many years, NNPS has learned that each member of this network is unique. Schools, districts, and states vary dramatically in size, history, demographics of students and families, and policy contexts. Yet, all members of NNPS are similar in wanting more effective partnership programs.

Common Structures

NNPS’s requirements are based on years of research and extensive field work. District leaders for partnerships are guided to increase awareness of family and community involvement throughout the district, connect partnership plans with district policy, and assist every school to develop its own partnership program.

Schools are guided to have an Action Team for Partnerships, write and implement plans linked to school improvement goals using the framework of six types of involvement, and evaluate their work and progress. Over one thousand active members of NNPS are proving that highly diverse schools, districts, and states can accept these and other targeted and tested requirements, but they also need room for creative, original practices.

Creative Design

Some critics say that NCLB’s frequent tests restrict schools’ creativity and attention to students’ behavioral development and attitudes toward school. This may be true in some schools, but many NNPS schools are demonstrating a creative spirit. Each edi-

tion of *Promising Partnership Practices* proves that innovative involvement activities are being designed and implemented not only to boost students’ academic skills in reading, math, science, and other subjects, but also to improve student attendance, behavior, health, multicultural awareness, college and career planning, and to strengthen a welcoming and inclusive school climate.

Other critics say that district and state leaders only monitor schools, but do not help them improve. This may be true in some locations, but many NNPS district leaders are *facilitating* schools’ action teams to develop effective and resourceful partnership programs. And, many state leaders for partnerships are encouraging district leaders to build capacities to assist their schools.

A Magical Mix?

NNPS’s required structures for schools, districts, and states are specific – but few. There is plenty of room for customized choices and creative work on partnerships. The truth is that the mix of research-based structures and flexible processes is not magic. It still takes hard work to find the right leaders, foster collegial support, ensure adequate funding, and have time for sustained attention to partnership program development. The UPDATE data summarized in this issue show that schools and districts need time to build excellent partnership programs.

While not magic, the mix of required structures and flexible plans and practices is the best, tested way to organize leadership and programs on partnerships at all policy levels. This is not just say-so.

At the fall NNPS Leadership Development Conference, a panel of presenters included Judy Carson, state leader at the Connecticut Department of Education and Donna Marino, district leaders from **Middletown (CT) Public Schools**, Deidra McCollum, co-leader of partnerships in Pasco (WA)

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Elementary School Report

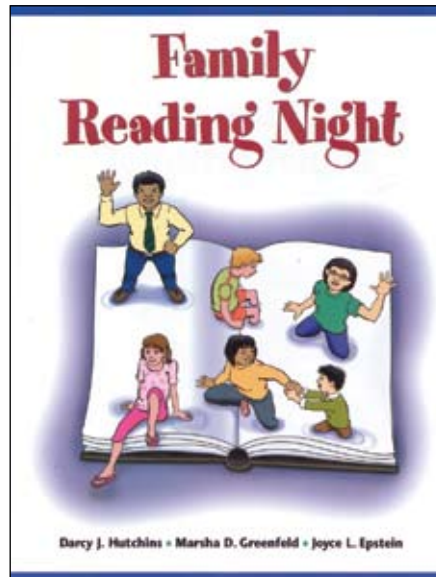
New NNPS Book Published *Family Reading Night*

Today, just about all schools set measurable goals in their school improvement plans to increase student success in reading and literacy. Family reading nights contribute to these goals by engaging students, parents, teachers, and others in activities that encourage youngsters to value, share, and enjoy reading, writing, and other language arts skills.

A new NNPS book, *Family Reading Night*, offers clear and practical ideas and guidelines for conducting these successful events. The chapters address ten reading themes – one for each month of the school year, ranging from “Books We Love” at the start of the school year to “Summer Reading.” The book outlines materials and activities for each theme, including:

1. *Whole group activity for students and parents to enjoy upon arrival.* For example, at a popular Dr. Seuss Night, students and families create imaginative animals, write make-believe facts about the creatures, and visit their own Zany Zoo to read about all of the creatures. At Poetry Night, students and families write an acrostic poem based on the first name of a member of their family to spotlight the person’s good qualities.
2. *Student presentation by one or more selected groups or classes.* At the Stories and Tales event, one class uses creative dramatics to present a short fairy tale to the whole group. On Biography Family Night, students ask “Who Am I?” and give clues to their identity as famous people.
3. *Break-out sessions for primary and intermediate grades or groups.* Students and families cluster by grade level for reading-related

activities reflecting classroom instruction. In Family Funny Reading Night, students and parents in the K-2 group read Amelia Bedelia and write a funny story of what might happen if Amelia visited them at home.



Each chapter also includes ideas for classroom and home connections and explorations in the community for teachers to use with all students and families, including those who could not attend the Family Reading Night. Guidelines are discussed for an Action Team for Partnerships to maximize attendance, plan for dinner, assess the need for interpreters for families who speak languages other than English, and other helpful hints. The appendix provides sample invitations, sign in, and evaluation forms.

NNPS Schools Get Creative

Family reading nights are popular activities in many schools in NNPS. For example, Reading Rumpus at the **Webster Stanley Elementary School** in Oshkosh, Wisconsin featured a live “monster,” an NFL quarterback encouraging reading, games, puppetry, and a read-aloud of

Where the Wild Things Are.

Hill Field Elementary in Clearfield, Utah sponsored Literacy Night with Dr. Seuss. Over 300 people enjoyed a visit by a real Dr. Seuss and his friends – Cat in the Hat, Grinch, Thing One, and Thing Two. Parents gained information about the components of the school’s literacy program: independent reading, reading aloud, fluency, and comprehension, and how to help students build these skills at home.

Fathers Reading Every Day (FRED), at **Roosevelt Elementary School** in Saint Paul, Minnesota, included dinner, story telling, guest readers, books to take home, and good fellowship. Dads, father figures, and some moms were encouraged to read with their child at home and gained strategies for reading aloud and for listening to their child read.

Other creative schools conducted a reading breakfast (Breakfast and a Book at **Whittier Elementary** in Pasco, Washington), reading at the beach (Birdneck Celebrates Christmas in July at **Birdneck Elementary** in Virginia Beach), and reading bingo (White Elephant Bingo at **Elmwood Elementary** in Naperville, Illinois).

See these and other family reading activities for the elementary and middle grades in the 2007 and prior collections of Promising Partnership Practices on the NNPS website, www.partnershipschools.org in the section Success Stories.

Why Family Nights?

When schools strengthen parents’ knowledge of and interest in reading and language arts, more students see that their families think reading, writing, spelling, grammar, speaking, and listening are important skills to master. By engaging community

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Meeting the Challenge

Steven B. Sheldon
Director of Research

Involve Fathers: Expand Expectations and Implement Innovations

Studies show that children whose fathers are involved in their lives have better social, emotional, and academic development. This positive effect of fathers on students' academic grades, over and above the influence of mothers' involvement, is even stronger in grades 6-12 than in younger grades (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). At all grade levels, however, schools' Action Teams for Partnerships have good reasons to continue working to involve fathers and father-figures.

Studies also indicate that fathers' involvement is less likely to occur than involvement by mothers. Among several reasons for this, gender role stereotypes and family structure (e.g., divorce and separation) are two major factors. Activities to involve more fathers in their children's education need to confront these two challenges.

Gender Role: Extend Expectations

Gender role stereotyping may manifest itself in assumptions about the "proper" role of fathers in children's education. For example, when teachers call a student's home, they may instinctively ask to speak to the mother. Or, the father may answer the phone and automatically hand it to the mother. Often, mothers are the only parents to talk directly to teachers.

One way to change this pattern is to explicitly invite fathers and the men in students' lives to participate in school activities. One such activity, DADS: Dads, Art, and Donuts with Students was implemented at **John Muir Middle School**, Milwaukee, WI, with the help of the **Wisconsin PIRC, Parents Plus**. At this event, specifically designed for fathers and other males important to boys and girls, student-adult pairs enjoyed breakfast and conducted an art project to place a digital picture on a t-shirt. In addition, a guest speaker from a community organization talked briefly about the important role fathers and men play in the development of adolescents. The activity – just one in the school's full Action Plan for Partnerships

– communicated to fathers that they are welcome and wanted at the school and in their children's academic lives.

Family Structure: Innovations Needed

Another difficulty in involving fathers relates to diversity in family structures and marital situations. Although rates of divorce have stabilized in recent years, nearly half of all marriages end in divorce. This reality means that, for many students, schools must establish separate connections with the mother and the father.

From preschool and kindergarten on, schools need to collect contact information about resident and non-resident parents so that communications can be sent to both parents. This information may be gathered at school registration and on annual emergency cards.

Increasingly, schools are reaching parents, including non-resident parents who live at a distance (typically fathers) through e-mail and the Internet. Teachers and administrators both need access to these contacts to connect with parents and to let students know that their families – however structured – are important to the school and for students' education.

Roberts Elementary School, in Wayne, PA, used the Internet in an innovative way. Students produced and broadcasted their own streaming video programs on Rob TV. A link to the videos on the school's website enables fathers (including non-resident fathers) and other family members who live at a distance or cannot come to school during the day to watch school musicals and other "televised" productions.

Accentuate the Positive

At **Community School #53**, Buffalo, NY, Fathers' Night Out aimed to increase positive interactions with fathers, grandfathers, big brothers, and other male figures in students'

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Middle and High School Report

A Secondary School Challenge: Organize ATPs in Large High Schools

It is no secret that large high schools face challenges in organizing their programs of family and community involvement. In all high schools – large and small – involvement declines if parents think that involvement is no longer needed. Involvement declines, too, if high schools are not welcoming places with well-planned partnership programs and practices.

There are many critical, age-appropriate family and community involvement activities at the high school level to improve students' successful transitions to the new school, attendance, behavior, course choices, homework completion, and postsecondary planning. Parents need good information on high school programs and opportunities for students. Indeed, some think that families and the community should be *more* involved – but in different ways – as students proceed through the teen years.

Basic Structures for Partnership Programs

In NNPS, all high schools are guided to organize their programs with essential components. They must create an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) with teachers, parents, administrators, and students; apply the framework of six types of involvement to select age-appropriate involvement activities; write a One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships; implement the planned activities; evaluate the quality of their work; and continually improve their partnership program every year.

Variations in ATP Organization

As NNPS Facilitators journey across school districts, we have learned that one challenge in large high schools with more than 2000 students is how to organize the ATP. Should there be

one whole-school team or more than one team for major school divisions?¹

One ATP with subcommittees.

Large high schools may organize one ATP with representatives from the major school divisions. The representatives may come from grade levels (9-12), programs (college prep, vocational), career academies (by specialty), or other school-within-the-school groups. As a committee of the School Council or School Improvement Team, the ATP will have “subcommittees” headed by the division representatives for each grade level or for each career academy to ensure that involvement activities respond to the needs of the students and families in these divisions.

Multiple ATPs. Some large high schools may find it easier to have one ATP for each major division. If grade levels define the school, each grade can have an ATP. If career academies define the school, each academy can have its ATP to plan and implement family and community involvement linked to its program. When there are multiple ATPs, a representative from each team will report to the School Council or School Improvement Team or to a coordinator for the council.²

Examples from the Field

Frederick Douglass Senior High School and **Patterson High School** in Baltimore City Public Schools each started with one ATP. Both recognized, however, that the ATP needed representatives from major school divisions to work together to plan and reach all families. The ATPs are conducting activities to help students make successful transitions to the school, improve attendance, and plan for college or careers.

At **Patterson**, the counselor from

each career academy serves on the ATP. This ensures that all academy principals and the whole school know about the ATP's plans and have opportunities for input. Newsletters, for example, are distributed across academies. At **Douglass**, alumni serve as “community members” of the ATP. They bring experience, energy, and expertise to motivate students to stay in school and do well. They also have been “friendly watch dogs” to ensure that the school has qualified teachers and administrators in an excellent learning environment.

Focus on an Important Goal

Bridgeton High School, a Talent Development High School in Bridgeton, NJ, has one ATP for the whole school. After its team training, the ATP started to work on the goal to improve students' postsecondary planning by involving ninth graders' families in helping students decide which career academy to choose for the 10th -12th grades. Starting with appropriate involvement in the freshman year, this ATP can build a series of activities for families and students at each grade level on post secondary planning.

Create a Welcoming Climate

As one activity in its One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships, **Middle Township High School** in Cape May Court House, NJ, hosted a cultural fair for the whole community. The ATP planned and organized the event to foster positive school, family, and community communications with musicians, cultural booths, ethnic foods, and activities linked to teachers' lessons and course credit. Students crafted “passports” that recorded their travel across cultures for commu-

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2007 Schools and Districts in NNPS Report Progress and Challenges

(Continued from page 1)

Meeting Challenges

As schools develop their programs, they face challenges to reach all families in ways that support student success. On UPDATE, a 9-item scale ($\alpha = .86$) asked ATPs to rate their efforts to involve all families, with responses ranging from not working on the challenge, to made fair progress, good progress, or solved the challenge.

Figure 1 shows that in 2007, most schools were working to recruit and train volunteers and to include diverse family representatives on school committees. Elementary and K-8 schools were more likely than secondary schools to try to get information to parents who could not attend meetings at school. They also were more likely to address the challenge of involving fathers in partnership activities (*also see Meeting the Challenge, p. 4 in this issue*).

Principals' Support. Data from 470 schools with two years of UPDATE data showed that principals' support for partnerships was linked to program quality. Schools that improved in quality from 06 to 07 were more likely to have principals who provided time for ATP meetings, allocated funds for activities in the One-Year Action Plan, publicized activities, had a strong vision of partnerships, and welcomed all families to the school.

ATP Comments. School survey responses were supported by written comments about improvements in the 06-07 school year. About 85% of the ATPs commented on changes in program development and improved outcomes, such as:

- *Children displayed enthusiasm when completing math problems.*
- *Student achievement increased as a result of support from our parents.*
- *[We] increased student attendance.*

- *Test scores increased in certain grade levels.*
- *Behavior incidents dropped by nearly 200 negative-incidents from last year.*

Needed Improvements.

UPDATE data also suggested that ATPs could improve the quality of their schools' partnership programs by taking action on six organizational strategies:

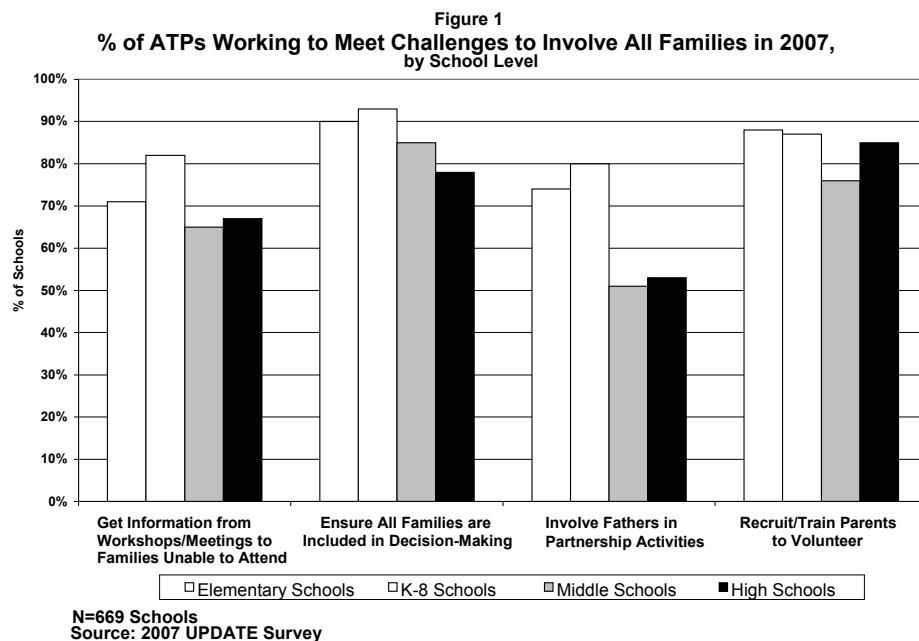
- **Meet monthly.** Some schools' ATPs are not meeting monthly. They need to set a regular schedule to discuss action plans, evaluate activities, and improve teamwork.
- **Organize committees.** More ATPs need to organize committees so that members can share leadership for conducting activities focused on specific school goals or on the six types of involvement.
- **Meet school challenges.** As shown in Figure 1, some schools need to address challenges to reach fathers and families who are not presently involved in their children's education.
- **Find funds.** Many ATPs reported inadequate funds for the activities

in their One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships. Adequate funding from Title I and other federal, state, and local sources must be obtained in order for schools to develop high quality programs.

- **Help teachers guide parents in how to help with homework.** With better information and feasible strategies, more parents could monitor and interact with their children on homework.
- **Sustain principals' support.** The 2007 UPDATE data and prior NNPS studies show that principals' support for family and community involvement is critical for schools to continually improve the quality of partnership programs.

District Data

One hundred and two districts in NNPS reported on district-level leadership and their work in helping schools develop partnership programs in the 06-07 school year. The districts varied in size from one school to over 200 schools. Leaders were at different



stages of program development, with about 24% in a start-up stage, 51% had a good start or good program; and 25% reported a very good or excellent program, overall.

Most district leaders in NNPS were implementing key program components. For example, in 2007, most conducted basic leadership tasks to review policy (83%), share best practices across schools (70%), and conduct training workshops (64%).

More Facilitation. The most intriguing information came from 79 district leaders with two-years of data in 06 and 07. Leaders who continued working on partnerships:

- Improved the overall quality of their districts' partnership programs
- Increased the number and quality of actions for direct facilitation to schools.

These leaders improved on all 18 items in the UPDATE facilitation scale ($\alpha = .94$). Figure 2 shows that in 2007, over 80% of district leaders in NNPS reported doing OK or Very Well in helping schools' ATPs understand and use the framework of six types of involvement, 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, helping ATPs develop a budget for partnerships, and visiting school teams on a regular schedule.

District Leaders' Comments.

Over 90% of the district leaders added open-ended comments on their progress at the district level and observations of their schools' work on

partnerships. They noted improvements on district policies and schools' actions plans. Some commented on new connections between involvement activities and 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.*

Needed District Improvements.

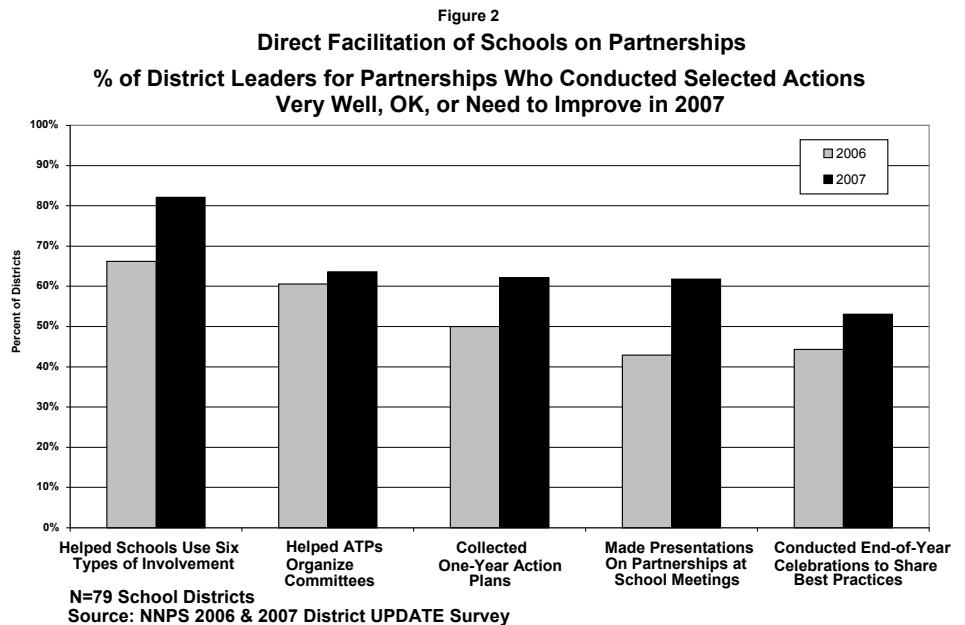
The 2007 data also showed that district leaders have "room to grow" to better organize their work and assist their schools. Three topics need attention by some or many districts:

- Write leadership plans. Over 60% of district leaders wrote leadership plans in 06-07. NNPS advises all leaders to outline and schedule their work— even those just starting their work on partnerships.
- Improve targeted, useful evaluations. Over 60% of the districts reported evaluating something about their district and school partnership programs, but most are not using systematic tools

and measures to document and analyze progress. NNPS advises district leaders to use UPDATE and evaluation tools built into the *Handbook for Action* to assess their own and their schools' work and progress.

- Identify funds. Many districts reported less-than-adequate funds for their partnership programs. This echoed the schools' reports, noted above. Other 2007 UPDATE data show that the NNPS approach is a very "thrifty" program, costing less than \$25 per child per year for both district- and school-level expenses for programs to involve all families in ways that link to student success in school.

The 2007 UPDATE data suggest that districts and schools in NNPS that continue their work on partnerships from year to year are likely to improve their programs, increase outreach to families, and improve the results of family and community involvement. Developing excellent programs of school, family, and community partnerships is an on-going process for district leaders and their schools. ♦



Our Growing Network

New Members in NNPS since September 1, 2008

SCHOOLS (105 new members) ★ Accident Elementary School (Accident, MD) ★ Achievement Centers for Children (Highland Mills, OH) ★ Alta View Elementary (Sandy, UT) ★ Ashley School (Ashley, ND) ★ Bell View Elementary (Sandy, UT) ★ Best of Both Worlds (Shaker Heights, OH) ★ Bingham Child Care (Cleveland, OH) ★ Bloomington School (Bloomington, MD) ★ Bonnie Branch Middle School (Ellicott City, MD) ★ Brenda Dillingham Family Child Care Home (Cleveland, OH) ★ Brentwood Elementary School (Raleigh, NC) ★ Broad Ford Elementary School (Oakland, MD) ★ Brown's Children's Paradise Family Child Care Services (Cleveland, OH) ★ Chapel Grove Elementary School (Gastonia, NC) ★ Chiawana High School (Pasco, WA) ★ Copperview Elementary (Midvale, UT) ★ Creative Early Learning Center (Garfield Heights, OH) ★ Creative Kids (Warrensburg, OH) ★ Crellin Elementary School (Oakland, MD) ★ Daniel Webster Elementary (Long Beach, CA) ★ Dennett Road Elementary School (Oakland, MD) ★ Desert Sands Middle School (Phoenix, AZ) ★ Draper Elementary (Draper, UT) ★ Dunloggin Middle School (Ellicott City, MD) ★ Early Childhood Enrichment Center (Shaker Heights, OH) ★ East Midvale Elementary (Midvale, UT) ★ Eastern Greenbrier Middle School (Ronceverte, WV) ★ Eastmont Middle School (Sandy, UT) ★ Edgemont Middle School (Sandy, UT) ★ Eight Mile School District #6 (Trenton, ND) ★ Fairmount Public School (Fairmount, ND) ★ Fairview Elementary School (High Point, NC) ★ Family Life Child Care Center of Berea (Berea, OH) ★ Family Life Child Care Center of East Cleveland (East Cleveland, OH) ★ Family Life Child Care Center of Lakewood (Lakewood, OH) ★ Family Life Child Care Center of Maple Heights (Maple Heights, OH) ★ Forestville Road Elementary (Knightdale, NC) ★ Fox Hollow Elementary School (Idaho Falls, ID) ★ Frank del Olmo Elementary School (Los Angeles, CA) ★ Friendsville Elementary School (Friendsville, MD) ★ Gateway High School (San Francisco, CA) ★ Gebhardt School (Black River Falls, WI) ★ Gilbert Middle School (Gilbert, SC) ★ Grantsville Elementary School (Grantsville, MD) ★ Gustav A. Fritsche (Milwaukee, WI) ★ Hamilton Middle School (Long Beach, CA) ★ Hanna Perkins School (Shaker Heights, OH) ★ Hartwell Elementary School (Hartwell, GA) ★ Hodge Road Elementary (Knightdale, NC) ★ Jordan Applied Technology Center – Sandy Campus (Sandy, UT) ★ Jordan High School (Sandy, UT) ★ Jordan Valley School (Midvale, UT) ★ Kempsville Middle School (Virginia Beach, VA) ★ Kiln Creek Elementary School (Newport News, VA) ★ Kitzmiller Elementary School (Kitzmiller, MD) ★ Knightdale Elementary (Knightdale, NC) ★ Lakewood Baptist Child Development Center (Lakewood, OH) ★ LaMoure Public School (LaMoure, ND) ★ Lindbergh Elementary (Mesa, AZ) ★ Majestic Elementary School (West Jordan, UT) ★ Mandaree Day Public School (Mandaree, ND) ★ Maple Tree Elementary (Milwaukee, WI) ★ Mary Stark Elementary School (Mandan, ND) ★ Mather Child Care (Cleveland, OH) ★ McMillan Child Care (Cleveland, OH) ★ Midvale Elementary (Midvale, UT) ★ Mount Jordan Middle School (Sandy, UT) ★ Neeskara Elementary School (Milwaukee, WI) ★ North Hart Elementary (Bowersville, GA) ★ Oakfield Child Enrichment Center Inc. (Cleveland, OH) ★ Olga Brener Academy (Sawano, WI) ★ Park Lane Elementary (Sandy, UT) ★ Parma Preschool (Parma, OH) ★ Peter Boe Jr. Elementary (Mayville, ND) ★ Pony Express Elementary School (Sacramento, CA) ★ Powel GT Magnet Elementary School of the Visual and Performing Arts (Raleigh, NC) ★ Prairie View Elementary School (New Salem, ND) ★ Precious Beginning FCCH (Cleveland, OH) ★ Roosevelt Middle School (Blaine, MN) ★ Rosenwald Elementary/Middle School (Society Hill, SC) ★ Route 40 Elementary (Frostburg, MD) ★ Rugby Public School (Rugby, ND) ★ San Carlos Junior High School (San Carlos, AZ) ★ Sanders Elementary School (Sanders, AZ) ★ Sandy Elementary (Sandy, UT) ★ Sandy's Darlin' Munchkins Family Child Care (Cleveland, OH) ★ Spooner Middle School (Spooner, WI) ★ Stevens Forest Elementary School (Columbia, MD) ★ Surrey Public School (Surrey, ND) ★ Swan Meadow (Oakland, MD) ★ TGU School District #60 (Towner, ND) ★ Tremont Montessori (Cleveland, OH) ★ U. S. Grant School (Milwaukee, WI) ★ Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Education Center (Peoria, IL) ★ Veterans Elementary School (Ellicott City, MD) ★ Wade Child Care (Cleveland, OH) ★ Waverly Park Elementary (Fort Worth, TX) ★ West Oak Lane Charter School (Philadelphia, PA) ★ White Shield School/Margaret Breuer Elementary (Roseglenn, ND) ★ Wilburn Elementary School (Raleigh, NC) ★ Willow Canyon Elementary (Sandy, UT) ★ Woodrow Wilson Primary School (Peoria, IL) ★ WSEM Archwood Head Start (Cleveland, OH) ★ WSEM Gilbert Head Start (Cleveland, OH) ★ Yough Glades Elementary School (Oakland, MD) ★

DISTRICT (8 new members) ★ Caldwell School District (Caldwell, ID) ★ Kennewick School District (Kennewick, WA) ★ Pasadena Unified School District (Pasadena, CA) ★ South Whidbey School District (Langley, WA) ★ Thomas County School System (Thomasville, GA) ★ Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools (Williamsburg, VA) ★ York Catholic District School Board (Aurora, Ontario, CA) ★

ORGANIZATION/UNIVERSITY PARTNERS (6 new members) ★ American University/Collaborative for Urban Education (Washington, DC) ★ Communities in Schools of Northeast GA (Hartwell, GA) ★ Georgia PIRC (Atlanta, GA) ★ Innovative Partner Solutions (Lisle, IL) ★ Texas Association of Partners in Education (Austin, TX) ★ WestEd Center for Prevention and Early Education (Sacramento, CA) ★

Current Active Membership in the National Network of Partnership Schools as of February 15th, 2008

Schools: 1114 Districts: 147 States: 21 Organizations: 66

Crucial Work by District Leaders: Conduct Basic and Advanced Team Training

District-level leaders are integral to schools' success in developing and sustaining comprehensive school, family, and community partnership programs. NNPS guides district leaders for partnerships to take two distinct and essential roles in improving programs of family and community involvement. The dual responsibilities are to (1) conduct district-level leadership and (2) to provide direct facilitation of schools' Action Teams for Partnerships to help them develop their school-based partnerships with all students' families.

One-Day Team Training

One crucial direct facilitation responsibility is to provide schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) with a basic, one-day workshop. The NNPS workshop, outlined in the *Handbook for Action*, helps new teams learn to use the framework of six types of involvement, meet challenges to reach all families, select involvement activities to boost student results, and use the action team approach. Teams leave the workshop with a draft One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships – a detailed schedule of activities that will involve families and the community to help more students succeed in school.

On the 2007 School UPDATE surveys, about 35.9% of 669 schools reported that their ATP received no formal training in partnership program development. Others reported that the chair, a few members, or the whole ATP received training. This statistic was matched on the 2007 District UPDATE, where 36.4% of 102 district leaders reported they had not conducted team training for their schools.

There were some legitimate reasons for the lack of training this year. Some districts and schools joined NNPS recently and had not organized a training schedule in 2007,

but 25.3% of district leaders noted that they planned to train teams in the next school year.

It is noteworthy that more than 60% of the district leaders in NNPS met the challenge of providing initial and advanced training to schools' ATPs in 06-07. For example, **Fort Worth Independent School District** (FWISD) joined NNPS in January 2007 and, soon after, the district

District leaders must provide ATPs with initial team-training and advanced or "refresher" workshops to continually improve the quality of schools' partnership programs.

facilitator trained his first cohort of ten schools' ATPs. Ten months later, he added and trained 20 more ATPs. Now, FWISD hired more partnership program facilitators, and the district can continue to "grow" its network of partnership schools.

Ongoing and Advanced Training

In addition to initial team training, advanced-training and "refresher" workshops may be needed to help schools sustain and continually improve the quality of their programs and the results of family and community involvement. At the start of the 05-06 school year, **Naperville School District 203** held a half-day training for roughly 70 leaders from each school's Home and School Association (parent organization) and School Family Community Partnership (SFCP) teams. The Fall Kick-Off Parent Leadership Training enabled the leaders of both groups to discuss how they would collaborate to improve their schools and increase student achievement through partnerships. Following the meeting, all participants had lunch at the District Superintendent's home.

The meeting "refreshed" the

spirit of collaboration and strengthened work on partnerships in all schools. Indeed, Naperville's leaders for partnerships "refresh" new team members from all schools every fall.

One way that the **Pasco School District**, located in Pasco, Washington, motivates its teams and sustains its partnership program is by holding specialized trainings for ATP members. One topic for the 06-07 school year was cultural diversity. A day-long workshop, Reach Out to Families: Cultural Competency Building, was conducted on a Professional Development Day in October. Another workshop, Latino Family Literacy, was held on a Saturday in April. Pasco's district leaders also conduct quarterly cluster meetings with ATP co-chairs to help them continue to learn new skills to strengthen their programs of school, family, and community partnerships.

Leaders Must Facilitate Schools

District-level leaders for partnerships have the important task of providing training and support to their school's ATPs. The initial training and ongoing workshops help build parents' and teachers' capacities to conduct effective partnership program initiatives.

NNPS's annual collections of *Promising Partnership Practices* describe these and other examples of how district leaders prepare and support their schools (at www.partnershipschools.org in the section Success Stories). Also, NNPS's District Leadership Institute each spring, Web Conferences, and Leadership Development Conference each fall help district leaders succeed in the dual roles of conducting district level partnerships and facilitating school teams to improve their partnership programs.

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Family Reading Night

(Continued from page 3)

partners in reading activities, students learn that other adults enjoy reading and sharing stories. Students' positive attitudes about reading may improve their motivation to learn and succeed in class and on tests.

Of course, the best way to increase students' reading and literacy achievement is to have high-quality instruction by every teacher for every student at every grade level. Family involvement, including well-designed family reading nights, supports excellent teaching and provides extra time for students to sharpen their reading skills. With high-quality teaching and family support, more students will achieve the literacy goals in any school improvement plan. ♦

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FAMILY READING NIGHT

Darcy J. Hutchins,
Marsha D. Greenfeld, and
Joyce L. Epstein
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Meeting the Challenge

(Continued from page 4)

lives. At the 3-hour event in 2007, an African American dance group performed, followed by activities for fathers, boys, and girls at booths for playing math games, making photos and picture frames, taking fingerprints, having dance lessons, and hairstyling. Dinner, a raffle, and take home books completed a celebratory evening that reinforced the connections of fathers, students, and schools.

Solving challenges to involve fathers in students' lives will require changing expectations, conducting innovative activities, and using new technologies – all hallmarks of strong school, family, and community partnership programs. ♦

Read about these activities in the 2006 and 2007 collections of *Promising Partnership Practices* on the website at www.partnershipschools.org in Success Stories.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (1997). *Fathers' involvement in their children's schools*, NCES 98-091 by C. W. Nord, D. A. Brimhall & J. West. Washington, DC.

Issues and Insights

(Continued from page 2)

School District and Valerie Aragon, principal of **Whittier Elementary School** in Pasco. They described excellent examples of how they are meeting NNPS requirements for well-structured programs infused with customized approaches and inventive practices.

The "NNPS Way" is helping states guide districts to assist schools to involve families in ways that help improve student learning and healthy development. With energy and enthusiasm, members of NNPS are showing the results of this good mix. ♦

SPOTLIGHT YOUR PROGRAM!

MAY 15

SUBMIT your best practice for the 2008 **Promising Partnership Practices**.

JUNE 30

RETURN the 2008 **UPDATE** and SUBMIT an NNPS **Partnership Award** application.

Watch the mail for these forms and opportunities.

ATPs in High Schools

(Continued from page 5)

nity information. Over 500 parents, students, and community members and 600 students, teachers, and staff participated in (2007).

Keep Improving Programs

Because high schools vary greatly in size and structure, each one must decide how to organize its teamwork on family and community involvement. One ATP with representatives from each major school division or separate ATPs in each major division can be effective. In either case, the team(s) must write and implement thoughtful plans with activities that involve families and the community to help students succeed in their courses and plan for postsecondary education. ♦

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NOTES:

1 Small and medium-sized high schools should follow the standard NNPS guidelines for ATPs.

2 Variations in ATPs and committees in large high schools also apply to very large middle schools and junior high schools..

Parent Liaisons on Action Teams Help Bridge Home and School

A case study conducted by Dr. Mavis G. Sanders, Principal Investigator and Senior Advisor to NNPS, explored how parent liaisons in a diverse suburban school district supported school, family, and community partnerships in their schools, and how the district leader for partnerships guided and assisted the parent liaisons. Liaisons served on schools' Action Teams for Partnerships, and their schools were members of NNPS.

The study identified four essential roles played by parent liaisons that helped schools minimize the influence of class and cultural differences on home-school relations. The liaisons provided: 1) direct services to families placed at risk; 2) support for teacher outreach; 3) support for school-based partnership teams; and 4) data for program improvement.

Direct Services to Families of Students Placed at Risk

During the course of the study, the district specialist trained and supervised nine parent liaisons, each of whom worked with approximately twelve to fifteen "focus" families in the district's lowest performing schools. Focus families were selected, primarily, based on the academic performance of their children and perceived need.

According to the liaisons, their direct support provided parents with the information needed to negotiate the complexities of the school system. The liaisons aimed to minimize the knowledge gap that can corrupt home-school relations for poor families and families of color.

Reported results for the focus families included greater involvement in their children's education at home and at the school; more home-

school communication; and more positive feelings toward the schools and school personnel.

Support for Teacher Outreach

The liaisons also supported teachers in reaching out to the families of diverse students by acting as "cultural interpreters" and by modeling outreach strategies that helped build teachers' capacities for partnerships. These actions by the liaisons helped teachers become "boundary crossers" and reach out to families who may otherwise have been left in the margins of the school community.

Support for School-Based Partnership Teams

Parent liaisons also worked with their schools' partnership teams to conduct school-wide activities that were accessible and relevant to the families of all students. In four schools visited by the researcher, partnership team members – including the school principals – underscored the important role parent liaisons played in providing family support, implementing family outreach, and garnering greater parent involvement for students' school success.

Data for Program Improvement

Each liaison completed a weekly report on the activities they conducted to assist their focus families, teachers, and schools' partnership teams using Epstein's framework of six types of involvement (Epstein, et. al., 2002). Liaisons also were required to collect achievement and attendance data for targeted students in the focus families.

In addition to tracking these student outcomes, parent liaisons and school-based partnership teams were encouraged to collect and analyze

demographic data for students, families, and their communities.

Parent liaisons were encouraged to have deep understanding and knowledge of their focus families so that they could provide "wraparound" services that would help the families better support their children's learning. Parent liaisons collected data on families' financial, health, and emotional needs and concerns. The data were documented in monthly activity reports to clarify the need for specific outreach activities, and discussed in monthly meetings to identify additional resources and actions that could further aid the families.

The parent liaisons' efforts were notable. The achievement data gathered by the liaisons and their activity reports provided the district specialist with important leverage to acquire funds necessary to expand the liaison program. ♦

From: Sanders, M. G. (In press). How parent liaisons can help bridge home and school. *Journal of Education Research*.

NNPS in Numbers

District leaders' reports of the percentage of schools assisted in 2007 that made:

10% little progress

39% some progress

51% good progress

* From 2007 District UPDATE.



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Partnership Calendar

2008

- March** Spring issue of *Type 2*.
- March/April** Invitation NNPS members to contribute to *Promising Partnership Practices 2008*. Due May 15.
- Eligible members will be invited to apply for NNPS Partnership Awards for 2008. Due June 30.
- April** Members will receive 2008 UPDATE in the mail. Due June 30 to renew NNPS membership for the 08-09 school year.
- April 17-18** District Leadership Institute in Baltimore for district leaders for partnerships in the “start-up phase” of program development. DLI prepares leaders to provide direct assistance to schools’ Action Teams and to establish district-wide leadership on partnerships.
- May 15** Promising partnership practices submissions due for the 2008 collection.
- June 30** 2008 UPDATE due to NNPS to renew membership for 08-09. NNPS will waive annual membership fees for all members who return UPDATE.
- June 30** Partnership Awards Applications due.
- November 4-5** Leadership Development Conference in Baltimore for new and experienced school, district, state, and organization leaders.

NNPS Fees to Change in September 2008

(Continued from page 1)

registration fees will change according to rising hotel costs. In the fall, members will be offered options for consultation packages for start-up and advanced training and for special services.

The scheduled changes will make NNPS’s facilitation services self-supporting. In this way, NNPS will be able to continue to assist all members to build their capacities for conducting effective and permanent partnership programs. ♦

NNPS Welcomes New Network Coordinator

NNPS welcomes **Jenn Ganss** as **NNPS Coordinator**. She oversees the distribution, collection, and processing of NNPS membership forms, fees, and UPDATE surveys. As Coordinator, Jenn organizes all data files and assists with the analyses of those data. She also helps school, district, and state leaders with their questions about NNPS. Members have already “met” Jenn as a coauthor of the 2007 UPDATE summary reports that all received.

Last fall, NNPS bid goodbye to Kenyatta Williams and Cecelia Martin, with many thanks and wishes for good fortune. Kenyatta, past NNPS Coordinator, worked with NNPS members for seven years. He completed his master’s degree and now works with a school system in Maryland. Cecelia, Senior Program Facilitator, presented workshops and assisted members on all aspects of program development. She is a specialist in family and community involvement with the Maryland State Department of Education and continues state-level connections with NNPS.

Meet Jenn Ganss and all of the NNPS staff on the website, www.partnershipschools.org. ♦