How District Leadership Supports Family and Community Engagement

www.partnershipschools.org

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Leadership

“Leaders don’t create followers, they create more leaders” Tom Peters

“A leader is like a turtle ---
to go forward you must
stick out your neck and
put your tail on the line”

From Carol C. Wilson, Ed.D., Leader of Yourself Ten Skills of Leadership

Think of a Leader You Admire

Who is that leader?

What about that leader do you admire?

Table Talk 1

What I admire

On a yellow post-it list 1 or 2 things that you think a good leader is (1 on each)

On a blue post-it list 1 or 2 things that a good leader does (1 on each)

Place all of the post-its in the center of your table. After looking at them, select the one that you think epitomizes effective leadership. With your right elbow neighbor take 2 minutes to share why you selected that attribute. Put all of the post-its back in the center of your table.

In today’s workshop we will....

1. Hear research highlighting the importance of district leadership
2. Learn about roles and responsibilities of NNPS district leaders
3. Hear from district leaders who are building effective partnerships in their schools and communities
4. Reflect on your own next steps for leadership

What Do We Know About Leadership for Partnerships

Research Spotlight

What have we learned studying NNPS schools and districts?
Organizational & Process Conditions

Schools whose program improved or maintained quality reported:

- Higher levels of principal support
- More types of district support
- More helpful district support
- Higher quality program implementation

Family and Student Outcomes

Studies also show that NNPS schools with stronger programs demonstrate:

- Higher rates of family involvement
- Greater gains in daily attendance
- Higher proficiency levels in Mathematics
- Higher rates of students attendance
- More positive school climates for partnerships

What Does Leadership Look Like in NNPS?

Leaders become great, not because of their power, but because of their ability to empower others.

A Leader in the Community isn’t Possible.

Be the kind of leader that you would follow.

What is in a name?

DISTRICT FACILITATOR FOR PARTNERSHIPS

A District Facilitator is a specialist charged by the school district to lead district-level family and community engagement programs and directly facilitate schools to help them strengthen school-based programs and practices of family and community involvement.

District-wide Program of Partnership

DISTRICT-LEVEL LEADERSHIP

DIRECT FACILITATION OF SCHOOLS

Partnership Program GOALS

Pasco School District, 2016
Washington

Little Rock School District, 2016
Arkansas
NNPS Expectations for District Leaders for Partnerships

- One FTE Facilitator can guide 15-30 school teams (e.g., NNPS Action Teams for Partnerships - ATP).
- Write and implement an annual District Leadership Action Plan for Partnerships.
- Have a budget for staff and program activities.
- Evaluate district-level and school-based partnership programs each year.

Leadership & Facilitation Strategies

Create Awareness
- Promote district policy

Align Program & Policy
- Link partnership programs with district policy

Guide Learning & Program Development
- Conduct a one-day team training

Share Knowledge
- Communicate on a regular basis

Celebrate Milestones
- Recognize progress

Document Progress and Evaluate Outcomes
- Evaluate program quality and impact

LEADERSHIP AND FACILITATION STRATEGY
Create Awareness

Actively promote the program and your connection with NNPS to key stakeholders.

Alvord Parent Involvement Week
Alvord Unified School District
Riverside, CA

LEADERSHIP AND FACILITATION STRATEGY
Align Program and Policy

Match plans for partnerships with policy statements and help schools link partnership plans to school goals for student success.

Roadmap to ATP Success
Pasco School District
Pasco, Washington

LEADERSHIP AND FACILITATION STRATEGY
Guide Learning & Program Development

Conduct One-Day Team Training Workshops for schools’ ATPs and ongoing professional development. Conduct Leadership-Level partnership activities for YOUR office.

Parent and Family Centers to Support Student Achievement
Los Angeles Unified School District
Parent, Community, and Student Services
Los Angeles, CA
LEADERSHIP AND FACILITATION STRATEGY
Share Knowledge

Communicate on a regular schedule, collect best practices, network with others locally and nationally.

District-Wide ATP Chair Retreat and Community Resource Roundtable
Kernswood School District
Kernswood, CA

LEADERSHIP AND FACILITATION STRATEGY
Celebrate Milestones

Recognize progress and excellence.

Our Time to Shine – CTHSS Regional Meeting
Connecticut Technical High School System

LEADERSHIP AND FACILITATION STRATEGY
Document Progress and Evaluate Outcomes

Evaluates teamwork, family and community involvement, activity, quality of district and school programs. Assess progress on YOUR office's leadership for partnerships.

Future Focus 203
Naperville Community School District 203
Naperville, IL

NNPS Resources:
UPDATE surveys - Annual Evaluation of Activities

Leaders in the Field

LORE SMITH,
CALCASIEU PARISH, LA

Calcasieu's Family Engagement Voyage

NATIONAL NETWORK OF PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS
MEMBERS SINCE 2005
Promote A Comprehensive Definition of School, Family and Community Partnerships

CREATE AWARENESS
Meet with Superintendent & School board.
Program information on district website.
Radio, TV and newspaper interviews.
Presentations at schools.
Presentations at our local public libraries.

ALIGN POLICY AND PROGRAM
Write District Action Plan for Partnerships.
Manage district budget.
Work with CAO on long-term Partnership programs & policies.
Assist school AFTs in linking partnership goals to school improvement plans.
Assist schools w/ budgets.

Train School Teams to Develop & Maintain Goal-Oriented Partnership Programs

GUIDE LEARNING AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT
1 Day Team trainings,
Refresher trainings,
Family trainings on Partnerships,
T.I.P.S. Development,
Attend school level AFTs,
Cluster trainings for District Chairs & Co-Chairs,
Attend School level PLCs,
S.M.J.J.E.S. (bus drivers)

DOCUMENT PROGRESS AND EVALUATE OUTCOMES
FP black board site,
Collect 1 Year Action Plans,
Provide written feedback after each school visit,
Requirement of annual School UPDATE,
District UPDATE,
Share results at cluster trainings,
Assist schools in the use of NAPS evaluation tools.

Serve As a Resource and Link for Partnerships

SHARE KNOWLEDGE
Board/Dept. Presentations,
Early Childhood Workshops,
C&I Mini Conference,
FP black board site,
PIO Holly Holland,
Grandparent Workshop – Police Jury,
LASATAP Conference,
LASPDAG Trainings

CELEBRATE MILESTONES
End of Year Celebration of Awards and PPRS,
Distribute CPSB PPP collection,
Thank you notes to staff and families,
Assist schools in recognizing and thanking partnership leaders,
Create presentations to share with all stakeholders.

Table Talk 2

Having listened to Loree Smith from Calcasieu Parish Schools, what did you hear in her presentation that best describes her leadership efforts?

Using Loree’s examples, the post-its on your table, and the 6 strategies in the NNPS framework as a guide how can you strengthen your leadership at your site to build partnerships?

Use the green post-it to write an action you would like to take next school year.
Leaders in the Field

HOLLY BOCCHI,
CLOVER PARK, WA

training offered 2-3 times a year
Table Talk 3

Listening to Holly Bocchi from Clover Park School District what did you hear in her presentation that best describes her leadership efforts?

Using Loree and Holly's examples, the post-its on your table, and the 6 strategies in the NNPS framework as a guide review your green post-it and add one more action you want to take next school year?

With your elbow neighbor share one of the green post-its.

All Group Sharing

What did you write on your green post-it that you can or will commit to doing this coming school year?

Is there a “wow” or “aha” moment that you had from this presentation that you would like to share?

What questions or comments do you have for any of us?

Thank you so much!

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at Johns Hopkins University

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Educators and families agree that school, family, and community partnerships are essential for children's success in school.

Based on more than three decades of research and the work of many educators, parents, students, and others, we know that it is possible for all elementary, middle, and high schools to develop and sustain strong programs of partnerships that help students succeed.

Districts, states, and organizations can establish policies and take leadership to help all schools develop excellent programs of partnerships.

As a member of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), you will be guided, supported, and recognized in your efforts to improve and maintain goal-oriented school, family, and community connections.

What is the National Network of Partnership Schools?

Established at Johns Hopkins University in 1996, the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) assists schools, districts, states, and organizations that are committed to developing strong programs of school, family, and community partnerships. Each Partnership School strengthens its program with an Action Team for Partnerships, the framework of six types of involvement to engage parents in different ways, and a written action plan for goal-oriented family and community involvement linked to the school improvement plan. Partnership Districts, States, and Organizations assist schools to develop, evaluate, and continually improve their programs of family and community engagement for student success in school.

Why Become a Member of NNPS?

★ Comprehensive handbook to guide partnership program development
★ Certificate of Membership
★ Invitations to attend leadership institutes for professional development
★ Type 2 Blog
★ Annual Collection, Promising Partnership Practices
★ Posters of six "keys" to successful partnerships in English and Spanish
★ NNPS Partnership Awards Program
★ Technical assistance by phone, e-mail, E-Briefs, website; webinars
★ Opportunities to participate in research and evaluation projects

Members benefit from the experience of the NNPS staff and by sharing ideas with other schools, districts, organizations, and states working to increase and improve partnerships. Communications share creative solutions for improving family and community involvement.

Who May Join the NNPS?

Membership is open to all schools, districts, states, and organizations that agree to the requirements listed on the following page.
Membership Requirements

Members work with NNPS to improve connections with students, families, and communities. Schools, districts, and states must meet a few goals and requirements.

At the SCHOOL LEVEL, each Partnership School

✓ Create an Action Team for Partnerships.
✓ Use the framework of six types of involvement to plan and implement a goal-oriented program of family and community engagement linked to school improvement plans.
✓ Allocate an annual budget for activities in the team’s One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships.
✓ Allocate time for an initial One-Day Team-Training Workshop and at least one hour per month for the Action Team for Partnerships to meet to plan and evaluate activities.

At the DISTRICT LEVEL, each Partnership District will:

✓ Assign the equivalent of one full-time facilitator to assist 20 to 30 schools to create their Action Teams for Partnerships. Part-time coordinators may work in districts with fewer than 20 schools.
✓ Allocate an annual budget for the district facilitator’s salary and activities to strengthen partnership programs.
✓ Assist each participating school to fulfill the requirements listed above for the school level.

At the STATE LEVEL, each Partnership State will:

✓ Identify a leader for school, family, and community partnerships.
✓ Support the leader and adequate staff to conduct leadership activities and outreach to districts and schools to improve goal-linked programs of family and community engagement.
✓ Allocate an annual budget for the work of this office.

Organizations use the NNPS Organization Membership Form.

ALL MEMBERS will:

✓ Complete an annual UPDATE survey to evaluate and report progress and to renew membership in NNPS.

To join NNPS, there is a $500 processing fee for schools, districts, states, and organizations. Annual renewal fees of $250 are sent with an end-of-school year UPDATE SURVEY to evaluate progress.

If your school, district, state, or organization is ready to develop strong programs of school, family, and community partnerships for student success, you are invited to join the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS).

For more information and membership forms visit www.partnershipschools.org and click Join NNPS.

Or contact NNPS, Johns Hopkins University, 2701 N. Charles Street, Suite 300, Baltimore, MD 21218
E-mail: nnps@jhu.edu Tel: 410-516-2318 Fax: 410-516-8890

Visit us at www.partnershipschools.org
Leadership & Facilitation Strategies

1. Create awareness - Actively promote the district’s partnership program and NNPS connections to key stakeholders.

2. Align program & policy - Integrate partnership plans and practices with district policies and procedures. Help schools link partnership plans to school goals.

3. Guide learning & program development - Conduct One-Day Team Training Workshops for schools’ ATPs and on-going professional development activities for district and school colleagues.

4. Share knowledge - Communicate on a regular schedule to increase knowledge about effective partnership programs, collect best practices, and network with others locally and nationally.

5. Celebrate Milestones - Recognize progress and excellence.

During Parent Involvement Week, banners flew at all schools in Alvord School District proclaiming, "Parent Involvement Matters: Forging Partnership with Parents, Students, and the Community for Better, Stronger Schools." School-based ATPs were new in Alvord two years ago. The Leaders for Partnerships wanted to create awareness about the goals of ATPs to engage all families in ways that increased students' academic and behavioral success in school. They also wanted to strengthen links between the District's PTA, the District's Leaders for Partnerships, and the ATPs in all schools.

District leaders gave their schools some choices. In the first year, half the schools agreed to establish ATPs to see how they worked and whether they could increase positive and productive connections with parents and others. By the second year, all schools had ATPs. The Superintendent expressed the expectation that all principals understood that family and community engagement was a district priority.

Parent Involvement Week put the district's and schools' commitment to partnerships in the spotlight. District leaders built on Project Appleseed's history of encouraging National Parent Involvement Day in conjunction with American Education Week in November. In Alvord, each school selected one day during that week to welcome its families, conduct an engaging activity, and to encourage parents and community members to become school volunteers.

The District Leaders for Partnerships shared a planning packet for Parents Involvement Week with all ATPs, including a planning schedule and a selection of activities from NNPS books of Promising Partnership Practices that schools' ATPs could adopt or adapt. At ATP network meetings, chairpersons shared their ideas with each other and submitted final plans in October to the Parent Engagement Office.

Six-foot banners were provided for festive flying at each school. All ATPs used flyers, marquee messages, and other strategies to invite parents to the school during Parent Involvement Week.

Each school planned unique activities such as: Classes or workshops for parents on grade level topics; a Principal's Coffee for discussions and questions about the school; the start of Family Fridays for parents to serve as reading buddies for students or groups; lunch picnics with books for parents and children to read together; Gratitude Day with an assembly, breakfast, and art activities focused on the theme of thankfulness; and many variations of presentations to introduce parents to Common Core State Standards. Morning, noon, or evening—one day or more—schools announced in their own way that they were becoming partnership places.

The Parent Engagement Office and other district leaders attended as many school events as possible. Students were excited to have their parents and others at school. Teachers took pictures and wrote news articles highlighting their events. The Director of Teaching and Learning, members of the School Board, teachers, and others expressed delight at the high parent participation rates at every school. District Leaders for Partnerships reported that over the past two years of introducing ATPs to the schools in Alvord, parents now expect to be welcomed and are participating more in their children's education at school and at home. It seems that Parent Involvement Week is becoming an everyday event in Alvord.

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ROAD MAP TO ATP SUCCESS

Pasco School District
Pasco, WA

If you don’t want partnership programs to be a secret in your district and schools, then it is necessary to raise the flag, use the bully pulpit, toot some horns, spread the word—in short—send clear messages about the importance of family and community involvement in children’s education. In Pasco School District, leaders for partnerships help all schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) create awareness about their plans and scheduled activities for family and community engagement. With good information, teachers, families, and community partners can, indeed, work together to increase students’ positive attitudes about school and learning.

One way to create awareness and strengthen partnerships is to publicize scheduled activities. One school’s ATP created a Road Map to help team members keep track of scheduled activities for family and community involvement. Pasco’s district leaders wanted to share this useful tool with all schools. They developed their own district Road Map to ATP Success with the theme Wizard of Oz/ Yellow Brick Road. The path through the school year included district-level partnership activities and meetings, and NNPS deadlines and opportunities for networking.

The district leaders encouraged the ATPs to create their own Road Maps showing the dates of the activities in their One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships. They agreed to provide snacks for one ATP monthly meeting for teams that completed their Road Maps and posted them in their schools for all to see.

Teams were creative. One APT went digital and created a PowerPoint presentation that ran on a TV in the front office. Another used the school’s theme for the year—In It to Win It—and included their ATP co-chairs’ pictures in a hot air balloon traveling across the road as each month’s partnership events came up. Road maps ranged from poster size to one that filled an entire wall. They helped ATPs visualize, record, keep track of, and share their schedules of planned partnership activities. Many ATPs enjoyed the district’s promise of nutritious snacks at a monthly team meeting.

The ATP chair at Pasco High shared that a security guard stopped to look at the road map. The chairperson saw the opportunity for recruitment, and how the guard is considering joining the ATP. At an elementary school, students viewed the road map on their route to the cafeteria and could remind their families of upcoming events. This school also posted pictures after the events of the children and their parents at the activities.

In monthly e-mail messages, district leaders for partnerships reminded principals and ATP chairs about keeping their Road Maps up to date and front and center in their schools. The district’s monthly ATP Connection newsletter featured a school and the way it used the Road Map as an attractive way to publicize partnership activities.

Pasco’s school-based ATPs know that their district leaders for partnerships always find new ways to help them improve their programs and share good work. In this district, schools learn from their district leaders, who, in turn, learn from their schools.

The Road Map for ATP Success was one strategy for helping ATP members pace themselves as they planned their work. It also served as a communicating tool to create awareness for everyone at the school about upcoming activities. The Road Map for ATP Success turned out to be a simple, yet effective, way to keep Pasco on the path to partnerships.

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Johns Hopkins University
School principals, teachers, and instructional staff want and need support from District Leaders for Partnerships to improve school-based programs of family and community engagement. In LAUSD, data on parents’ participation and parents’ requests for information showed that the district needed to take new approaches to increase the capacities of all schools to organize family engagement programs that would contribute to student achievement and success in school.

One of several new directions in LAUSD is using the schools’ Parent and Family Centers to serve as “Parent Classrooms” for workshops for parents on how to support children’s learning and development at home, and for improving two-way communications between parents and teachers.

The staff in the district’s Parent, Community, and Student Services Office identified topics, planned training for school Coordinators, developed materials that all schools could use, recruited schools, and conducted trainings. Principals of 100 schools were invited to send a team of one certified staff member and one Parent and Family Center staff as their Workshop Coordinators. The Coordinators would share information from the district’s trainings with the principal, teachers, and other Parent and Family Center staff before starting workshops for parents. Principals also agreed to support the Coordinators after the training in conducting workshops for parents.

To help schools encourage parents’ participation, district leaders also obtained infant, toddler, and preschool educational materials for each school’s Parent and Family Center to use with the young children whom parents brought to workshops. Title I funds were used to purchase some materials.

Six workshops were developed in the first year. One focused on family engagement with their children on early literacy skills. Books in English and Spanish were purchased. The Workshop Coordinators guided parents in ways to encourage children’s reading readiness and early literacy skills, which would prepare young children for kindergarten and the primary grades. Another session introduced parents to students’ language development with attention to the needs of English Learners.

One teacher Workshop Coordinator commented, “The training and materials will help us change the focus of our Parent and Family Center to a more academic one. Thank you [district Leaders for Partnerships] for developing the presentations for us to use with parents. We just don’t have the time to develop them ourselves.”

Parents who attended the workshops gained strategies and tools to use with their children at home. The workshops also gave parents information about their school and the system so that they would feel comfortable about communicating with their children’s teachers and accessing school, district, and community programs and services that would support their children’s progress. New workshops on instructional technology, planning college and careers, and understanding Common Core State Standards in math are planned for the first cohort of schools and additional schools.

District Leaders for Partnerships have important roles to play in helping all schools improve their programs of family and community engagement. This includes Type 1-Parenting activities such as Parent and Family Center Workshops. With attention to all components of goal-linked partnership programs, more families will be knowledgeable partners in their children’s education and more students will succeed in school.

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August was a good time for the Chairpersons of schools’ Action Teams for Partnership (ATPs) to reflect on the prior year’s program of family and community engagement and their plans for the new school year. Kennewick School District facilitated this process by asking more than a dozen ATP chairs to complete self-evaluation forms (adapted from one developed by the Pasco School District). Kennewick’s ATP Chairpersons identified areas of excellence, skills that had improved over the year, and leadership skills that they wanted to strengthen. The District’s Leaders for Partnerships analyzed the results and used them to design a one-day ATP Chair Retreat.

The Retreat began with a light breakfast and icebreakers. Each attendee received a folder containing an agenda, note paper, a copy of their own self-evaluation, and an evaluation to complete at the end of the day. The District Leaders for Partnerships welcomed the group and explained that the purpose of the day was to help all ATP chairs strengthen their leadership skills to continue improving their teams and their school-based partnership programs.

The first topic on the agenda was the art of delegating tasks to share leadership with others. Many ATP Chairpersons had reported that they struggled to effectively delegate tasks to others. The District Coordinators focused on how to assign meaningful roles to all ATP members and led the Chairs in a role-playing exercise. “Role play can be a very strong learning experience, but also may be a bit scary for some,” one of the District Leaders cautioned. “It is important to create a safe environment for learning.”

Next, the group focused on how to recruit and retain parents on their ATPs. This module explained the importance of personally inviting parents to participate, and maintaining their participation by soliciting and utilizing their input during ATP meetings. This module also included a role-playing exercise for ATP chairs to practice these skills. “I feel like I have a better understanding of how to involve parents,” an ATP Chair commented afterward.

The last module helped the ATP Chairpersons understand the “big picture” of the ATP model. The Chairs learned how to communicate what an ATP is and how it benefits a school community. Then, they were given time to use the information from the Retreat to “tweak” and improve their One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships for the next school year.

Thanks to the Chair Retreat, which cost $2,500, District Leaders noted a marked improvement in ATP shared leadership and parent involvement throughout the school year. “ATP Chairs were more intentional in their communications in team meetings about their action plans and progress,” a District Leader said.

Next year, Kennewick will gain four new ATP Chairpersons. To keep the retreat small and relevant, the District Leaders will conduct two separate trainings: one for new ATP chairs and one for experienced ATP chairs.

The Retreat shows how Kennewick’s District Leaders for Partnerships are responsive to their ATPs. They asked the Chairpersons what skills they wanted to strengthen and then provided targeted training on those skills. This kind of deliberate design of a Chair Retreat contributes to stronger leadership for effective partnership programs at the district and school levels.

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The Community Resource Roundtable—aka Resource Fair Meets Speed Dating—was designed by the innovative and spirited Leaders for Partnerships in the Kennewick School District. Some say this was a “match made in heaven.”

District leaders wanted to link 17 school-based Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) with useful resources in the community. Rather than a “wander-around-fair,” the leaders set up the event a la “speed dating.” Each school’s team had a short, focused conversation with each agency in attendance. This enabled school teams to meet and talk with potential community partners they would not have met otherwise.

The Community Resource Roundtable was part of a whole-day retreat that the district leaders conduct for ATP Chairs each year. The retreat is designed to build the leadership of ATP Chairs and to help them gather information and ideas from other teams about best practices that may be used or adapted in their school’s next One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships.

One District Leader was in charge of recruiting community agencies to participate. She created and distributed a flyer and attended community coalition meetings. She maintained a list of interested community partners and gave them contact information for the ATP chairs. About 35 community and business partners participated.

District leaders worked with the ATPs and with representatives from the community agencies. Based on the work of Dr. Mavis Sanders in NNPS (see Chapter 1.2 in the NNPS Handbook for Action, 3rd Edition), the district leaders brainstormed with ATP chairpersons about how different types of community partners can enrich the engagement activities in the schools’ One-Year Action Plans.

They also talked with the community partners about the schools’ goals for student learning and how the community partner’s resources might help produce results for the schools, students, and/or families.

The ATP Chairpersons were given tote bags to collect useful information from community partners that they could share with their whole teams. Kennewick’s district leaders spoke at several community coalition meetings about the Resource Roundtable and what they hoped the speed dates would produce for their schools and families.

District leaders prepared the room so that participants could move smoothly from one short meeting to the next, but still have privacy for their conversations. A time keeper was in the middle of the room to alert participants to move on to the next table after each 4-minute chat.

The “dating” portion of the event lasted 90 minutes, with about 30 minutes for ATP Chairs to follow up with agencies that were the best “match” for a school or where the ATP Chair wanted more information. At the end of the 2-hour session, district leaders debriefed the activity. The ATP chairs were totally energized by the event, one teacher exclaimed, “It was amazing! Everyone in one spot without having to make a million phone calls -- perfect! We now know who to contact and what would work best for our school.”

They say that there is such a thing as “love at first sight.” For many schools and community partners, the arranged meetings at the Community Resource Roundtable proved the point.

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CELEBRATING CULTURAL CONNECTIONS BROCHURES
NAPERVILLE COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT 203
NAPERVILLE, IL

District Leaders for Partnerships and the Core Team of advisors in Naperville Community School District 203 understand that students and their families bring multiple and complex cultural characteristics to school every day. These diversities are challenging, but offer many opportunities for enriching student learning and development. A Cultural Diversity Subcommittee of the Core Team was created to share knowledge on the countries of origin and cultures of the families of students in Naperville’s schools. This team developed a set of brochures for the district to welcome families to its schools and to help schools learn more about their families.

For content, the Core Team (leaders for partnerships) contacted the Chicago Field Museum Science & Education Department to access its Cultural Connections Guide to Teaching Diversity. The team also used information from an NNPS workshop linked to its book, Multicultural Partnerships Involve All Families. For format, the team followed a useful design that was posted at http://michaelalfavuzzi.weebly.com/cultural-diversity-brochure.html.

Naperville’s district committee developed Celebrating Cultural Connections-2-sided trifold flyers divided into six sections. The project began with three brochures on China, India, and Mexico—countries with the largest number of English Language Learners in the district. Additional brochures are planned—next for Lithuania and Korea. The sections in each brochure present general information about the country; cultural practices; tips for interacting with people from the country including culturally specific customs; and the educational system of the country. Two sections address education in Naperville CUSD 203 with information to help parents become partners in their children’s education.

Initially designed as a resource for teachers to learn about the countries from which students’ families originated, the final colorful and comprehensive brochures were valued as a general resource for educators, parents, students, and the community. They will be available in print and online. Said one parent, “It is the true spirit of our district that makes me so proud to be part of this community...” She noted that the committee progressed from a blank page, to focus group meetings with parents from different countries, to multiple drafts and improvements, and to the final brochures—Celebrating Cultural Connections.

The Director of Community Relations collaborated with building principals to recruit parents from each country. They participated in focus groups, gave reactions to drafts, and suggested ways to revise the content of each brochure. The Superintendent’s Diversity Advisory Council and all schools’ partnership team chairs and co-chairs also reviewed and commented on the brochures.

The brochures will be shared with staff and in print at the Welcome to 203—Back to School Fair in August. Electronic versions of the brochures will be posted for all families’ attention. The designers want all students and parents to know that their country of origin is important to the district and its schools. It is expected that the brochures will encourage more families to participate in school activities, knowing that teachers and others understand their origins. The Diversity Advisory Council Parent summed it up best by saying, “Thank you. This [brochure] says "WELCOME."

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Johns Hopkins University
OUR TIME TO SHINE – CTHSS REGIONAL MEETING

Connecticut Technical High School System
Middletown, CT

Time is always tight in the 17 busy schools in the Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS). District Leaders for Partnerships continually explore ways to make the most of the time they spend with schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs), including how they organize time at district-led workshops and activities on family and community engagement. The district leaders also know that ATPs are particularly interested in practical, useful, and tested practices that will help them improve their own school’s partnership program.

Chairs and co-chairs want their ATPs to be efficient and effective in how they use valued resources—time, money, people, and skills—to plan and conduct practices of family and community engagement that will help their high school students meet school goals for success each year and on-time graduation. ATP members also appreciate time to share their practices with each other, and to discuss challenges and find solutions to engaging more families in productive ways.

The CTHSS system receives students from 18-25 towns. Each school offers students dual curricula to meet all academic standards required for a CT diploma and all trade industry standards (OHS, competencies, licensing and contact hour requirements, safety standards, and industry assessment requirements). The geographic distances between the district and it schools means that meetings must be well planned on important topics to make travel worthwhile to all participants. One district-led regional gathering—Our Time to Shine—fulfilled these criteria. At this regional meeting, school ATPs discussed challenges and celebrated important milestones and accomplishments.

At Our Time to Shine, each ATP designed a visual presentation or display (e.g., poster, trifold, slide show) on one of its most promising practices. For example, several high schools shared family and community engagement to encourage students to improve reading skills and attitudes—still very important at the high school level.

All presentations were compiled and distributed to all attendees. A guest speaker addressed the group on the topic of ensuring modes of communication with diverse populations of parents in their school catchment areas. The Culinary Arts department at the centrally-located host school prepared and served refreshments. Technology experts at the school arranged for the electronics needed for the ATPs’ presentations.

Positive comments on the exit evaluations for Our Time to Shine validated the leaders’ expectations for the meeting. ATP members were glad to have time to share specifics with colleagues, opportunities to ask questions and discuss solutions to challenges, and a chance to hear a good speaker whose message complimented the purpose of the meeting. ATP members wrote, “Tonight was wonderful, I learned so much!” “The sharing was great!” and “Lots of ideas to integrate in our school’s Action Plan for Partnerships! – Sharing has been great- we need more of this!”

CTHSS Leaders for Partnerships also benefitted by hearing about the schools’ practices and by obtaining feedback on plans for future meetings of all schools’ ATPs. They will continue to base meetings on the needs and interests of the schools’ ATPs. Our Time to Shine gave the technical high schools located across the state an opportunity to highlight their good work, learn from each other, and improve their on-going partnership programs.

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Naperville Community School District 203 is always working to improve its schools and engage its families and the community in important ways. District leaders initiated Future Focus 203 to obtain ideas and suggestions for on-going improvements. A new Superintendent was settling in and a redistricting plan was settling down. The Superintendent was eager to have a better understanding of family and community values and priorities about education. His goal is to establish a positive, transparent, and collaborative decision-making process going forward in order to use resources effectively, serve an increasingly diverse population, and maximize student success.

He assembled a diverse group of 20 family and community members to plan and host a series of engagement forums for citizens across the district. The Facilitation Team was led by Co-Chairs who scheduled five community engagement sessions. Invitations were sent by video and flyers. The leaders met with local reporters, parent leaders, business partners, unions, and other key community stakeholders to encourage their participation and share their voices. The recruitment efforts were successful—nearly 500 families, students, staff, and community members attended at least one session.

Each meeting opened with a short presentation by members of the Facilitation Team. Each session was devoted to a different discussion topic including the state of the district, defining student success, programs of study, finances and resources, and facilities for learning. Attendees worked in small groups to discuss each topic, ask questions, voice concerns, and make recommendations. “By interacting in work groups, stakeholders learned from each other,” a Co-Chair explained. “They learned about different needs and concerns of parents with children at different grade levels.” A parent commented, “This process was pure genius!”

After each session, notes and videos of the presentation were posted on the District’s website for all members of the community to review. The meetings were filmed by a videographer and later edited into a 32-minute documentary. Future Focus 203’s meetings, summaries, and video cost about $30,000.

Students also were included as important stakeholders with ideas about school improvement. Focus groups were held at each high school to gather students’ ideas on defining student success. From the students’ feedback, it was clear that they were eager to have their social and emotional needs met while pursuing success in high school and plans for college or careers. Student success, they emphasized, should not just be measured by test scores.

The Facilitation Team analyzed the data from all sessions and presented their findings to the Superintendent and at an open forum. “Now, my job and the job of the District is to develop a plan with short and long term goals to show this community that we are listening,” he said.

Future Focus 203 required long hours from all involved, but was a valuable way to involve the community in decisions and directions for maintaining the district’s reputation for excellent education for all students. District leaders gained an understanding of diverse viewpoints that can be addressed with creative policymaking. They aim to use the results of this process to strengthen community support, ensure positive school climates, and promote positive academic, social, and emotional experiences for all students.

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INTERPRETER TRAINING PROGRAM

CLOVER PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT
LAKewood, WA

Many districts and schools across the country face the challenge of communicating with families who speak languages other than English at home. The U.S. Census Bureau reported that there are 382 languages spoken in this country. They are classified in 39 major language families, with 10 common language groups for students who are English Language Learners (ELL).

In Clover Park School District, families speak about 60 languages at home. District leaders know that when parents are left out of school and family communications, they cannot support their students' work and progress. By contrast, when parents are part of conversations with teachers, they can voice their opinions and support their children as students. The district wanted to solve the challenge of communicating with all parents in languages they can understand so that they could be partners with teachers in their children's education.

Clover Park developed a solution to this challenge. As one principal praised, "Using our own parents as interpreters provides a level of trust and comfort for our parents [and] staff. We can now meet the needs of our parents and teachers communicating at virtually any time." The homegrown Interpreter Training Program was developed when an external translation service ended. Although volunteers at some schools could help, the district wanted all schools to have trained, available interpreters, and to honor parents' time and talent by paying them for their service. They also wanted to follow the ethics of interpreting: confidentiality, accuracy, completeness, professionalism, and maintaining cultural consciousness.

The district partnered with the Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD) to provide six-hour training sessions twice a year, near the time for parent-teacher conferences, for anyone interested in becoming an interpreter for the district. PSESD also helped pay for these services, including the cost of fingerprinting.

Schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATFs) and staff advertised the program with flyers, on the district website, and in the community. They gave special attention to recruiting bilingual and multilingual family members. Most schools needed interpreters for parents speaking Spanish, but the district also wanted to have Korean, French, Russian, Ukrainian, Japanese, and Vietnamese interpreters to assist as needed. After they complete the training session and fingerprinting, interpreters may apply to work in other classified jobs in the district.

Requests for interpreters are handled by the district's Family and Community Partnership Coordinator. She stated, "This program has proven to be incredibly empowering for our interpreters and their families. They have become much more knowledgeable of the education system, which also helps their own children become more successful in school. We look to our interpreters as key communicators in their own neighborhoods and with their own families."

The pool of qualified interpreters is growing. The program is cost effective and is a "win-win" for everyone involved. The interpreters earn some income. They make connections and can network with other parents in the district. The non-English speaking families gain an advocate who helps them communicate with their child's teacher. The teachers are able to talk with all students' families, which helps the students, too. One excellent feature of the Clover Park design is that this year's monolingual parents may be next year's bilingual interpreters.

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BREAK BAGS

CLOVER PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT
LAKEWOOD, WA

District leaders in Clover Park knew that many students’ families relied on the district’s nutritional program to provide breakfast and lunch to their children. Of the district’s 12,000 students, over 70% receive free or reduced-price meals. The district works with local food banks to provide Friday Packs with food for students and families to use on weekends. District leaders for partnerships were concerned that some students could go hungry when school closed for extended breaks—Thanksgiving, Winter, and Spring. The District’s Family & Community Partnership Coordinator (FCPC), the director of the Emergency Food Network (EFN), and representatives from area churches and service clubs in the community met to talk about this reality.

Little Church on the Prairie in Clover Park provided food baskets for Thanksgiving to children and their families for about 20 years. The EFN added funds to the church’s budget to ensure that food was provided for several days. By combining and reallocating budgets, the committee of many partners developed Break Bag to help more families have food that would not spoil during three school vacations.

There were many challenges to solve. The District FCPC communicated with school counselors, secretaries, Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs), and Communities in Schools Site Coordinators to identify students who might need Break Bags during vacations. The committee of partners bought bags that were sturdy enough to hold 20-30 pounds of food each time, including seasonal fresh produce such as potatoes, onions, and apples, and staples such as canned goods, cereal, peanut butter, protein or snack bars, oatmeal, rice, and beans.

Each bag included a note in English and Spanish for students to return the bag to school in exchange for an activity or coloring book. The bags were, then, returned to the EFN for reuse on the next school break.

Break Bags is coordinated and managed by the District FCPS, with help from many partners. At the EFN warehouse, volunteers stuffed the bags on the Saturday before each break. Other volunteers (including soldiers from the local military base, district bus drivers, and JROTC students from the high school) loaded bags into cars or trucks for delivery to each participating school.

The EFN, Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, and a church paid for the food, which costs about $7.00 per bag. Last year, about 1,000 Break Bags were distributed 3 times a year to 27 schools (ranging from 5 to 130 bags per school, depending on need).

Sometimes family members came to pick up the bags at school. Usually, children took the bags home on the bus. For younger children, the Break Bags were divided into smaller units to reduce the weight. Elementary school students were happy to bring food home to help their families. Although middle and high school students worked without fanfare, the district leaders noted that among older students “no bags were ever left on the bus or unwanted.”

As the Executive Director of EFN said, “Many working families with children do not have access to food banks due to their work hours when food banks are open and/or lack of transportation. For these children the answer is a Break Bag.”

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