The authors gratefully acknowledge MetLife Foundation for its grant to the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships and National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University. The information in this report is produced by NNPS and no official endorsement by MetLife Foundation should be inferred.
Annual NNPS Report
2013 DISTRICT DATA

This annual report summarizes district leaders’ work and progress on programs of school, family, and community partnerships in the 2012-13 school year. Data are from the NNPS 2013 District UPDATE survey.

HEADLINES

- District Leaders for Partnerships in NNPS assisted over 600 schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) in the 2012-13 school year in diverse communities across the country.
- 40 District Leaders for Partnerships and their schools’ ATPs engaged over 130,000 families to improve the school climate and increase student success in school.
- The actions of District Leaders for Partnerships affected the quality of partnership programs at the district level (see figures 2-5 and table 2) and in all schools (see figure 6 and table 3).
- NNPS tools and services helped District Leaders for Partnerships organize and improve their work (see figure 8).

DISTRICTS IN NNPS FOR 2012-13 SCHOOL YEAR

In 2013, 40 District Leaders for Partnerships reported UPDATE data to NNPS and renewed district membership for the 2013-14 school year. Other districts (new members in NNPS) will complete UPDATE evaluations in 2014. Respondents included full-time and part-time Leaders for Partnerships in highly diverse communities in 20 states.¹

- Districts were located in large cities (22%), small cities (22%), suburban (40%), and rural (16%) areas. The districts varied in size from 1 school to 200 schools serving from fewer than 1200 to more than 68,000 students.
- Districts in the sample had been members of NNPS for 1 to 16 years. About half (50%) joined NNPS since 2008. About 8% were relatively new members that joined NNPS in 2011 and 2012 to strengthen their partnership programs.
- Districts served populations of students and families who spoke from 1 to over 80 languages and dialects at home, with an average of 40 languages spoken by students and families across districts.
- On average, across districts, 58% of the students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals in the 12-13 school year, ranging from 10% to 100% of students in these districts.
- Academically, about 33% of districts attained Average Yearly Progress (AYP at the district level) in 12-13—similar to districts nation-wide (Center on Education Policy, 2010). District AYP statistics are affected by various subgroup results across schools in the district. Despite the problems of AYP statistics, NNPS District Leaders for Partnerships continue to help schools engage parents and community partners in ways that contribute to students’ learning and success across the grades.
- Leaders for partnerships worked an average of 18 hours per week (about half-time) on partnership program development. Most leaders, especially in larger districts, had at least one or two colleagues working with them full- or part-time to help schools improve their partnership programs.
- Just about all district Key Contacts to NNPS (90%) expected to continue in their positions in the 13-14 school year. An NNPS study indicated that stable district leadership significantly influenced the quality of district and school partnership programs from one year to the next.

¹ Districts with Key Contacts who participated in the Annual NNPS Report 2011—2013 UPDATE.
What do the summary statistics tell us? **DIVERSITY IS A STRENGTH OF NNPS.** Districts in NNPS vary by size, demographics, geography, and academics. This means that—as a network—we can learn a great deal about effective leadership for programs of school, family, and community partnerships in very different communities.

**OVERARCHING GOAL FOR DISTRICTS IN NNPS:**
**DEVELOP HIGH-QUALITY, SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS**

District leaders painted “self-portraits” of their partnership programs by selecting one of six descriptions of their work at the district level and with their schools. Figure 1 shows that a few districts rated their program quality low (about 9% were in a “planning year” or “just beginning”). Most of these districts had recently joined NNPS.

**Figure 1: District Reports of Overall Partnership Program Quality in 2013**

![Bar chart showing distribution of district program quality ratings]

About one-third of the district leaders (35%) rated their programs as average with a good start or good program in 2013. These leaders reported that they were working with at least a few schools on partnership program development. Others (35%) reported a very good program in which the district leader used NNPS approaches with ATPs in most schools. Some (20%) reported an excellent program in which they work with all schools in their district, and believe their program is permanent or sustainable, even if district leaders changed.²

**NNPS GUIDES DISTRICT KEY CONTACTS TO LEAD IN TWO WAYS:**

1) Guide and conduct partnership activities at the district-level.
2) Facilitate school-based Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) so that every school builds its capacities to conduct effective partnership practices with all of its students’ families.

NNPS provides training, materials, tools, and on-going “on-call” communications to help district leaders become experts in partnership program development. Most district leaders benefit from NNPS training and tools that help them guide schools at all levels to form a team, write annual plans, implement goal-linked engagement activities for student success, and evaluate progress.

UPDATE surveys measure progress from year to year on essential elements of partnership program development: leadership, teamwork, written plans, facilitation/implementation, evaluation, collegial support, adequate funding, and networking (Epstein, et al., 2009). Each year, the Annual Report on UPDATE Data documents how district leaders in NNPS are doing on these responsibilities. The summary and discussion also give district leaders ideas to improve their programs during the next school year.
DISTRICT-LEVEL LEADERSHIP

Figures 2A and 2B report results for 6 items from an 11-item scale ($\alpha = .63$) on whether district leaders took basic steps to plan their work and conduct district-level activities on family and community involvement. In 2013, District Leaders for Partnerships conducted an average of 8.2 of the 11 activities in this scale. This indicates that most district leaders in NNPS are conducting many recommended activities to organize their offices and advance the district’s agenda for strong partnership programs.

The data in 2013 revealed a “steady-as-it-goes” pattern, building on results from 2012. Most district leaders were conducting basic leadership activities that NNPS recommends for (a) organizing their offices and working to become the district’s expert on partnerships and (b) guiding schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) so that each school can work effectively with its students’ families. These activities are important—essential—for a successful district culture of partnerships.

Figure 2A shows three of the most prominent district leadership actions: Near or over 90% of district leaders in 2013 identified their budgets for partnerships, conducted staff development on partnerships, and shared information with all schools on best partnership practices. These actions help build support and establish the legitimacy for the office on partnerships. Over 90% also reviewed the district’s policy on partnerships and conducted district-level workshops for parents at the district office.

Figure 2B focused on activities that are conducted by many district leaders in NNPS that other leaders should plan to conduct in the next school year. It is important for all district leaders to have an annual meeting with the Superintendent (or with their supervisor and other district leaders) to build support for the partnership agenda. To prepare for these meetings, District Leaders for Partnerships need to write an annual, Leadership Action Plan that clearly outlines their goals and activities for partnerships at the district and school levels.

About the same percentage of district leaders (47%) made grants to schools in 2013 as in 2012. More district leaders should seek funds to make small grants to schools’ ATPs to support their work on goal-linked partnership practices. Even small grants (e.g., $500) that require good school plans motivate schools’ ATPs to develop, implement, and share creative activities linked to school goals for student learning.
In open-ended comments, district leaders explained how their work at the district level improved in the past year.4

“This year family engagement has been included in the new District 5 year Strategic Plan. We have stronger relationships with school staff and principals and the District’s dialogue about family engagement is stronger.”

“[The district] increased school administrator interest, offered more programs for parents, replaced under-achieving coordinators, and provided more training opportunities for staff.”

“This year the district has decided to fund ATPs and non-title schools with the district budget. This was a huge accomplishment and will open ATPs up to all elementary schools interested.”

“[We made] better use of technology to share activities and successes in family engagement.”

“This year we used some of our funding to put together kindergarten literacy backpacks for 16 of our Title I schools. They are theme-based with books, materials, and activities to support learning at home.”

**FACILITATE SCHOOL ATPs**

Figure 3 displays five items from an 18-item scale (α = .97) that measured how effectively District Leaders for Partnerships assisted school-based ATPs to organize plans and practices that engaged their own students’ families in productive, goal-linked ways. District Leaders for Partnerships conducted an average of 11.8 of the facilitative actions either OK or very well, ranging from 2 to 18 of the activities. They reported other actions that they need to improve. Of course, even actions that are OK or progressing very well can continue to improve.

Figure 3 shows the range of responses on basic facilitation actions by District Leaders for Partnerships in 2013. About 70% reported that they assisted schools OK or Very Well in forming teams, collecting ATPs’ One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships, working to meet challenges to reach all families, and making presentations for the schools on partnership program development. Over 80% planned to guide schools’ ATPs to write One-Year Action Plans for the next school year. Fewer—between 52% and 62%—conducted monthly communications with school teams, held an end-of-year celebration to share best practices, and assisted ATPs to evaluate their work and progress. The remaining percentages of district leaders started working with schools on these actions, but said they need to improve their assistance to schools.

**Figure 3: District Leaders’ Reports of Assistance to Schools’ ATPs in 2013**
It is important to note that over 15% more district leaders in 2013 conducted end-of-year celebrations to share best practices than in 2012. This was the largest increase in facilitative actions by districts reporting data in both 2012 and 2013. It is an important improvement that contributes to the sustainability of partnership programs. End-of-year celebrations for full ATPs to come together to share best practices, discuss challenges, and write their next One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships are a multi-purpose activity that encourages reflections, shared learning, and recognition of progress.

The statistics in Figure 3 frame a challenge for all district leaders to consider which facilitative actions they want to improve this year and next year as they work to build their schools’ ATPs capacities organize and implement effective partnership programs. Studies show that when districts help schools strengthen their teams, collect plans, communicate regularly with the teams, conduct an end-of-year time to review and evaluate best practices, the schools improve the quality of their partnership programs and outreach to more and different families (Epstein, Galindo, Sheldon, 2011).

In open-ended comments, district leaders explained how their guidance helped schools’ ATPs improve their programs in the past school year.

“Schools that [worked with]...the District Team, demonstrated improved Family Engagement Programming. These schools developed action plans and events more strategically and effectively [than other schools] resulting in more family and community involvement and improvements in desired results.”

The level of creativity individual schools displayed [increased] as the schools tried to successfully reach out to their families and communities.

Partnership plans and activities have become a part of the fabric of the school.

Parents [are] more involved in school activities as a result of a more focused district approach.

More parents are in Co-Chair roles—currently, all but two schools have a Parent Co-Chair.

“[We observed that] student achievement increased through higher parental involvement.”

It is clear and encouraging that district leaders in NNPS are aware of the importance of helping school-based ATPs to increase their capacities to plan, conduct, and evaluate their own partnership programs. The district leaders’ comments echo a common theme: Schools ATPs respond positively to research-based approaches that help them engage all families in ways that support student learning and development (Sheldon & Jung, 2014).

**SUPPORT FOR PARTNERSHIPS**

A 13-item scale (α = .83) measured how much support District Leaders for Partnerships received from district, school, family, and community colleagues for their partnership programs. Scored 1-4 for no support, a little, some, and a lot of support, district leaders had a scale-score average of 3.4, indicating strong support from most colleagues. Figure 4 sets the bar high, showing only the groups that provided a lot of support for family and community engagement in 2013.

The strongest support came from colleagues who work closely with District Leaders for Partnerships. About 80% of district leaders reported a lot of support from Title I administrators at the district office and from the schools’ ATPs. About 70% received a lot of support from their Superintendents and school Principals. Some support increased dramatically from 2012 to 2013. For example, the number of district leaders reporting a lot of support from school principals increased more than 10% over last year. This increase is important because the support of the school principal influences the work and progress of the ATP.

More district leaders have work to do to strengthen support of the School Board and of teachers who are not on the ATP. All teachers conduct some communications and engagement activities with their own students’ families and, in so doing, contribute to the breadth and depth of their school’s overall partnership program. District Leaders for Partnerships can guide each school to recognize and account for all partnership activities conducted by individual teachers, counselors, and others by using the NNPS tool, *The Complete Picture*, on the CD in the NNPS Handbook for Action, Third Edition (Epstein, et al., 2009).
In open-ended comments, district leaders reported how they are strengthening collegial support for family and community engagement at the district level and in their schools.4

"We provided more opportunities for parents to give their input and feedback."

"More staff became involved in the process."

"Schools, teachers, and parents have developed a strong vision and commitment for parental involvement at the school and district level."

When district leaders connect with colleagues across departments and work collaboratively with other key groups, they strengthen the district culture of school, family, and community partnerships in all schools and with all families.

**SOLVE CHALLENGES TO INVOLVE ALL FAMILIES**

Challenges arise as districts and schools work to engage all families in children’s education. Figure 5 shows items on a 8-item scale ($\alpha = .73$) that measured whether or not District Leaders for Partnerships assisted schools to solve specific challenges or left it up to the schools’ ATPs to solve these challenges on their own. On average, district leaders assisted schools on 5 of the 8 challenges, but varied in which ones were addressed in 2013.

Most district leaders (about 80%) assisted schools’ ATPs to communicate clearly with families who spoke languages other than English at home and identified community resources for the schools. About 70% of district leaders helped in recruiting school volunteers and shared ideas with schools to increase the involvement of fathers. In 2013, we asked about a new challenge of smoothing students’ and families’ transitions to a new school. About 55% of district leaders were working with schools to improve the transition process.
On other challenges, more equal numbers of district leaders assisted or left solutions up to the schools. These included three school-based challenges: getting information to families who could not attend workshops at the school, having teachers guide parents’ involvement on homework, and ensuring diverse parent representation on school committees.

The data indicate that most district leaders are aware of and active in helping schools solve many important challenges to reach more and different families in their children’s education. Solving challenges is an indicator of advanced implementation of effective practices to move school programs forward with more equitable and important engagement.

SCHOOLS’ PROGRESS ON PARTNERSHIPS

District Leaders for Partnerships rated the progress of 624 schools that they assisted during the 12-13 school year. They noted how many schools made little, some, or good progress, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: District Reports of Schools’ Progress on Partnership in 2013

The pattern in Figure 6 matches reports in prior years showing that when district leaders guide their schools’ ATPs on research-based approaches, most school leaders, teams, and families begin to work better together. More than 65% of the schools rated by District Leaders for Partnerships made good progress in 2013, 28% made some progress, and 6.3% made little progress—mainly schools in early stages of work on partnerships.

ADEQUACY OF FUNDING FOR PARTNERSHIPS

A single item asked district leaders whether their partnership programs were poorly, adequately, or well funded. Because districts vary greatly in size (e.g., in 2013 from 1 school to nearly 200 schools), NNPS examines ratings of adequacy of funding for each location, rather than specific dollar amounts. We also convert dollars to per-pupil expenditures for partnership programs for comparability of costs across districts and schools that vary in size (see p.245 in Epstein, et al., 2009).

About 77% of the district leaders reported that they were adequately or well funded, as shown in Figure 7. This is incrementally higher than last year (70%). Adequacy of funds may link to perceived support (Figure 4) from Title I Administrators, whose budgets are the primary source of funds in schools that receive Title I funding. District leaders reporting inadequate funds (23% in 2013) have the task of building support for the partnership agenda and requesting and justifying funds to more effectively help all schools engage all families in ways that support student success in school.

In 2013, Title I continued to be the primary source of funds for partnership programs, as reported by 63% of District Leaders for Partnerships. District funds, community support, IDEA, and other federal programs (Title II, Title III, Race to the Top, and Migrant Education) also were listed among three main sources of funds for partnership program development.
Eight district leaders (21% of the sample) wrote proposals in the 2012-13 school year for extra funds for their partnership programs. Six of these (75% of the proposals submitted) were funded for $500 to $50,000, with an average grant of over $18,000. In all, the funded proposals added $110,000 to district and school-based partnership programs. NNPS serves as a catalyst for increasing district funds for partnership programs and is happy to write letters of support for members’ proposals for funding.

**USE OF NNPS PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT MATERIALS**

Figure 8 summarizes results of a 7-item scale (α = .91) that measured how District Leaders for Partnerships rated the usefulness of major NNPS tools and materials that are provided to all members. Coded from 1-4 for *not helpful* to *very helpful*, district leaders had an average scale-score of 3.5, indicating that most rated materials from NNPS as helpful or very helpful. Some district leaders used additional available services from NNPS that they initiated, including calling NNPS Facilitators for assistance, attending NNPS web conferences, and attending the NNPS fall Leadership Development Conference in Baltimore. Just about all (near 100%) who used the additional services rated them as helpful or very helpful. NNPS offers members a long list of benefits each year and encourages them to take advantage of these on-going and on-call professional development activities. (See the list of benefits and services at [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org) in the section Join NNPS.)

The annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices* and the NNPS website continued to lead the list of favorite products and services that are offered to members. Increasingly over the past few years, more
district leaders rated UPDATE surveys as helpful or very helpful in guiding districts and their schools to evaluate their programs’ progress and next steps.

USE OF NNPS EVALUATION TOOLS

A four-item scale (α = .79) was used to gauge districts’ emphases on evaluation, i.e., whether the district leaders evaluated their own programs and their schools’ programs. Of course, every district and school that sent in an UPDATE survey and renewed membership in NNPS for the next school year conducted an evaluation of their program’s progress, but some districts were more directive in guiding their schools’ efforts to evaluate their work and progress. There was a dramatic jump from 75% in 2012 to 90% in 2013 of district leaders reporting that they helped their schools evaluate the quality of their partnership programs. This is a good sign, as evaluating progress is the best way to ensure that improvements are made from one year to the next in organizing plans, reaching all families, and focusing family engagement on students’ learning (Sheldon, 2009; Sheldon & Jung, 2014).

The 2013 data indicate that NNPS products and services are well used and appreciated by most district leaders who are building their own expertise and the quality of their district and school programs.

SPECIAL FEATURE: How are District Leaders for Partnerships helping schools smooth the transition of students and parents to a new school?

Each year, NNPS selects a featured topic on the UPDATE survey to learn about a specific challenge facing districts and schools in organizing and implementing their programs of family and community engagement. In 2013, we explored whether and how districts and schools are helping students and their families make successful transitions and adjustments when they move from preschool to elementary, elementary to middle, and middle to high school and beyond.

District Leaders for Partnerships reported how many of their schools (all, some, a few, or none) invited students and parents to visit, meet teachers, and ask questions about an upcoming transition before the start of the school year. This included visits and meetings in the spring, summer, or early fall to ensure a good adjustment to the new school. Separate estimates were given for preschools, elementary, middle, and high schools. District leaders also reported how many schools conducted collaborative transition activities with their feeder or receiver schools to ease the transition for students and parents from one school to the next.

Most district leaders reported that all or most of their schools—at all school levels—invited students and parents to visit before the start of a new school year. Between 74% and 88% of district leaders reported that all of their schools held these meetings. Slightly fewer district leaders (between 68% and 83%) reported that all schools collaborated with their feeder or receiver schools to conduct transitioning activities. Preschools were most likely to invite students and families to visit before the start of the school year, and were most likely to collaborate with receiver elementary schools to help students and families move on to kindergarten and the elementary grades.

District Leaders for Partnerships who reported stronger collegial support had more feeder and receiver schools that worked together to conduct transition activities. These collaborations may be another indicator of collegial support for family engagement. Other analyses indicated that transition-related activities were unrelated to the demographics of the district.

Although schools may invite parents to visit, parents may or may not participate. NNPS will need more detailed data from districts and schools to understand whether and how many students and families are well-prepared to move to the next school level or whether this is a serious challenge. Earlier studies indicated that when good transitions are made, students are less likely to have behavior problems in the new school and are more likely to focus on class lessons and academic learning (Crosnoe, 2009). Most schools want more students to be ready to learn immediately on entry to a new school.
Over 90% of district leaders described at least one effective activity conducted by a school or the district to help students and their families make successful transitions to a new school and the next school level. A few typical and creative practices are listed in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. How are Parents and Students Prepared to Make Successful Transitions to New Schools?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAMPLE school activities for successful transitions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Elementary school invited preschoolers and parents to school four times a year for activities, parent workshops with guest speakers, and materials for preschoolers to prepare for kindergarten.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Schools conducted meetings for parents and students entering kindergarten.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The middle school principal visited each 5th grade class before students entered 6th grade. Parents were invited to attend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;Bridging to Middle School&quot; included a panel of former elementary students to help non-English speaking families and students understand how middle school works.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Each high school now has a team of students that are trained to help guide incoming 9th graders. Families are very much in the loop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAMPLE district activities for successful transitions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We provided families of students entering Pre-K and K with pertinent information and resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We made the registration process simpler, including open registration days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Preschool and kindergarten teachers discussed data to understand skills needed for kindergarten readiness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We provided parents with a FAQ/transition check list sheet to make sure parents have contact information of the school’s parent coordinator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A parent university session assisted parents to help their teen prepare for life after high school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District leaders’ ideas to IMPROVE the transition process</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We would like to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…have all kindergarten teachers meet children in casual settings with families (or home visits).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…increase workshops during the summer at different sites in the community (such as churches and apartment complexes) for the transition to a new school level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…create opportunities for ATPs to share best practices for improving transitions</td>
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<tr>
<td>…have all “receiver” schools’ ATP chairs meet with parents at the feeder schools about what to expect at their next school and ways to get involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… have 8th grade students and parents visit local colleges and universities prior to entering high school to set high school goals and to become knowledgeable of college entrance requirements, scholarships, and grants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

District leaders in NNPS know that parents and students need good information and answers to their questions to prepare to move from one school to the next. See other good activities on transitioning in each edition of Promising Partnership Practices on the NNPS website, www.partnershipschools.org in the section Success Stories.
NNPS uses the annual data from District UPDATEs to learn which measures contribute to stronger, more effective programs of school, family, and community partnerships. The 2013 data confirmed that a constellation of essential elements contributed to high-quality district leadership and assistance to school-based Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs). NNPS guides district leaders to continually improve their expertise on these essential elements.

Table 2 shows the constellation of variables that are significantly correlated with the overall quality of district partnership programs as well as other variables that are not significant influences on program quality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Elements of Program Quality</th>
<th>Demographics of Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership at District Level</td>
<td>Active Facilitation of School ATPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of District Partnership Program, Overall (Portrait Measure)</td>
<td>.655**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 40 Districts, 2013 District UPDATE
Zero-order correlations
*** p<.001, ** p<.01, * p<.05,
‡ p<.10 (near-significant). Districts with fewer students eligible for free/reduced-price lunch have slightly higher quality partnership programs. NS= Not significant

District leaders with higher quality programs, overall, were more likely to report that they conducted more leadership activities to organize and plan their work, and that they conducted more facilitation activities to guide their schools’ ATPs. These districts also reported stronger support from district, school, family, and community colleagues, and were more likely to evaluate district and school partnership programs. On this year’s special topic, districts with higher quality partnership programs reported that more schools at all grade levels conducted collaborative activities with their feeder and receiver schools to help students and families make successful transitions to their new schools. Also, the right-most column shows that districts that have been members of NNPS for more years had higher quality partnership programs, overall.

In regression analyses with all variables in Table 1, leadership, facilitation, and conduct of transition activities with feeder and receiver schools remained significantly and independently associated with the overall quality of district’s partnership programs. These three variables increased the adjusted $R^2$ or explained variance in district program quality from 7.6 % (background variables only) to 62.5% (all variables in Table 2).

It is just as important to note that the demographics of the districts in NNPS in 2013 were not significantly related to the quality of partnership programs, overall, nor to the associated variables. This echoes findings in prior years that districts in NNPS can be successful if they exercise leadership, facilitate their schools, build collegial support, and evaluate their progress, regardless of the location of the district, the socioeconomic status or linguistic backgrounds of the students and families, or the academic status of the district.

In other analyses of essential elements for high-quality partnership programs, we examined how two items on the Leadership Scale (Figure 2) related to actions to facilitate the work of schools’ ATPs.
Table 3 compares the association of district leaders’ facilitative actions with whether they reviewed district policy on family and community engagement and whether they wrote a Leadership Action Plan for the 2012-13 school year.

**Table 3. Contrasting correlations of leadership actions (review policy and write plan) with basic facilitative activities to assist schools to improve their partnership programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did the District Leader for Partnerships:</th>
<th>District Policy on Family and Community Engagement</th>
<th>Write a Leadership Action Plan for Partnerships for 2012-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help ATPs organize their teams?</td>
<td>.211 NS</td>
<td>.378*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help ATPs understand the 6 types of involvement?</td>
<td>.070 NS</td>
<td>.388*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help ATPs meet challenges to engage all families?</td>
<td>.047 NS</td>
<td>.443**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Held End-of-Year Celebration to share best practices?</td>
<td>.152 NS</td>
<td>.466**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped ATPs evaluate their work and progress?</td>
<td>.171 NS</td>
<td>.352*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 40 Districts, 2013 District UPDATE  Zero-order correlations.  ** p<.01, * p<.05.  NS= Not significant

District Leaders for Partnerships who wrote Leadership Action Plans for 2012-13 were more likely than those only reviewing district policy to help schools’ ATPs organize and improve their partnership programs. Reviewing district policy on family engagement was not significantly associated with district leaders’ actions to assist school ATPs, whereas writing a Leadership Action Plan was significantly associated with these and other facilitative actions.

The pattern of results indicates that not all leadership activities are equally important for helping school-based ATPs improve their schools’ partnership programs (Epstein, 2008). It is necessary—but not sufficient—for District Leaders for Partnerships to review and understand the district’s policy on family and community engagement. But, it is critical for District Leaders for Partnerships to write Leadership Action Plans each year that specify and schedule actions they will take to guide their schools’ ATPs to plan, implement, and evaluate an effective partnership program with their own students’ families.

There are no “secrets” to successful partnership programs. NNPS data in 2013 enhances reports from prior years to suggest that districts will succeed or fail—progress steadily or lag—based on:

(a) **strong leadership**  
(b) **clear intentions**  
(c) **willingness to use research-based structures and processes,** and  
(d) **ability to adapt the structures and processes to match the populations of families and students in their schools.**

This work can be done by any district—large or small, urban or rural, economically advantaged or strapped, with more or fewer families who speak languages other than English at home.

The data from 2013 are supported and enriched by stories from the field in the annual books of _Promising Partnership Practices_ in which NNPS districts and schools share best practices on how to improve their partnership programs in communities across the country.

In 2013, most District Leaders for Partnerships were moving forward on a steady pace to increase their knowledge, skills, and will to improve district and school-based partnership programs. Leaders who sustain their attention and efforts over time make measurable progress from year to year at the district level and in their schools in engaging all families with activities that help all students succeed in school.
How to Use This Report

Ask: How are this district and its schools doing on partnership program development? Are we engaging all families and the community in ways that support student success?

- Review the charts and tables to identify actions that your district presently does better than average—better than the other districts in NNPS. Celebrate your progress!
- List important actions that your district needs to improve this year and in the 2014-15 school year. Check the data and comments on leadership, facilitation, collegial support, and the other topics in this report.
- Read about new topics that may be important in your district. Consider “start-up” plans to address these issues.
- Based on your review and reflections, refresh your Leadership Action Plan for Partnerships for 2013-14 and draft your plan for 2014-15.

Professional Development from NNPS

- Use the NNPS website, [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org).
  Gather ideas for strengthening leadership and good practices at the district and school levels.
- Read the monthly NNPS E-Brief for news and ideas. Adapt and enhance the NNPS E-brief each month with local information for your school-based ATPs.
- Share the report with your supervisors to show how NNPS uses the UPDATE surveys from all sites in NNPS. Click on Research and Evaluation for copies of this report.5,6
- Register for the NNPS fall professional development conference and for NNPS web-conferences.
  - **District Leadership Institute – March 20-21, 2014** – for district and organization leaders who are new to NNPS or who are ready to conduct One-Day Team Training workshops with their schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships. To register, follow the path to DLI from the NNPS home page.
  - **Leadership Development Conference – October 23-24, 2014**
    The agenda and early-bird registration materials will be posted in April.
- Find good ideas in the annual collections of *Promising Partnership Practices*. Click on Success Stories. The **NNPS Members Only Code** gives active members free access to all books of *Promising Partnership Practices* and all NNPS Samplers.7
- See archived editions of *Type 2* newsletters. Click on Publications and Products.
- Send an E-mail to an NNPS Facilitator with questions about YOUR next steps at the district level to strengthen your program and assist your schools. Click on Meet the Staff.
- Scaling up? See School Membership Forms in the section Join NNPS.
NOTES

1) In 2013, data are from NNPS districts in 20 states: AR, AZ, CA, CT, FL, GA, ID, IL, LA, MN, MO, NJ, OH, PA, SC, UT, VA, WA, WI, and WV.

2) An “excellent” district program of partnerships is one where the leader writes an annual leadership plan; conducts important activities at the district level for all schools and/or all families; guides most or all schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships to work effectively with all families; and reports adequate funding, strong collegial support, and evidence that the program would be permanent even if leaders changed.

3) The internal reliability (α or alpha) of a scale indicates whether the items represent a common construct. Reliability coefficients of .6 or higher indicate that the items are related and consistent and that the scale is useful.

4) Open-ended comments were written by district leaders in response to a question on “what changed most?” over the past school year. Over 90% of the district leaders took time to respond to the question. This indicates that district leaders were willing to share their experiences with NNPS, even on the last page of the survey.

5) States and organizations in NNPS also are sent the summaries of school and district 2013 UPDATE data. There are too few states and too much diversity of organizations in NNPS to summarize their UPDATE data systematically. NNPS will continue to review the annual UPDATE surveys from states and organizations and tailor individual assistance to these members as they develop partnership policies and programs.

6) Copies of this report and summaries of past years’ UPDATE data are posted at www.partnershipschools.org. Click on Research and Evaluation for this year and for prior years’ reports.

7) See notable program reports and photos of districts that won NNPS Partnership District Awards and books of Promising Partnership Practices at www.partnershipschools.org. Click on Success Stories.

REFERENCES


