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.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Consistent with previous reports, the 2013 School UPDATE data indicate that most schools in NNPS are working to implement core components and essential elements that research shows affect the quality of partnership programs over time. Descriptive analyses of these data found important patterns of results.

Differences Across Grade Level

- Elementary and K-8 schools rate their overall partnership program quality higher than secondary schools.
- Elementary schools rate their program implementation higher than secondary schools.
- Elementary and K-8 schools reported greater progress meeting the challenges to family involvement than secondary schools.
- Elementary and K-8 schools reported greater percentages of teachers reaching out to engage families, as well as greater family participation in their children’s schooling.

Teacher and Parents Support

- Stronger programs are more likely to have a large percentage of teachers supportive of the partnership efforts.
- Stronger programs are more likely to perceive the large majority of parents as “good partners” in the education of students.

Areas of Potential Improvement for Schools

- About half of the ATPs reported that they do not meet monthly. This is an important requirement for developing and discussing plans, improving teamwork, and conducting evaluations of implemented activities.
- Many ATPs can improve their communication with families about the partnership program activities and progress.
- Schools reported the least progress meeting the challenge of getting information from workshops to families who are unable to attend. This practice continues to be the most challenging for elementary, K-8, and secondary schools.

Special Topic: Transitions

- Almost all schools reported conducting partnership practices to help families navigate the transition from one school to another.
- Elementary schools reported stronger communication with families about how they can monitor their children’s academic progress.
- Secondary schools reported strong efforts to invite incoming families to visit the school prior to the beginning of the school year.
In response to requests for information on partnership program development, NNPS provides this summary of schools’ 2013 School UPDATE data to all active members of the network. Districts, states, and organizations also will receive a summary of the 2013 District UPDATE data.\(^1\)

Schools should compare the data in this report with their own responses on the 2013 School UPDATE. ATPs can take pride in practices that are strong, compared to other schools across the country. ATPs should work this year to improve aspects of their programs that fall below NNPS averages or that do not reflect NNPS’s expectations for excellent programs. Studies indicate that schools that work on partnerships over time will improve the quality of their programs and results of family and community involvement (Epstein, et al., 2009; Sheldon, 2007, 2008; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004). Studies also show that District Leaders for Partnerships who guide school teams on to plan and implement goal-linked partnership practices will have schools with higher quality partnership programs (Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon, 2011).

NNPS guides all schools to plan, implement, evaluate, and continually improve their programs of school, family, and community partnerships. By doing so, schools’ ATPs should be able to report progress and new challenges on the 2014 School UPDATE survey in the spring. Also, ATPs will be invited to share their best practices with NNPS in the 2014 collection of Promising Partnership Practices. The deadline will be May 1, 2014.

SCHOOLS IN 2013 UPDATE SAMPLE

In 2013, 433 Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) reported UPDATE data. Surveys came from schools in 25 states. A majority of schools (67%) served students in the elementary grades (PK-6); 7.9% served students in PK-8; 13.2% of schools included the middle grades only (4-8); and 9.9% included high school grades only (9-12). Some schools (1.6%) served students from PK through high school and (.5%) combined middle and high school grades. For the purposes of reporting in the graphs below, elementary schools are combined with PK-8 schools (labeled Elementary Schools) and middle schools are combined with high schools (labeled Secondary Schools).

The largest percentage of schools was located in suburbs (33.3%), with the remaining schools in small cities (27.0%), large central cities (23.6%), and rural areas (15.9%). A large majority of schools (64.2%) received school-wide or targeted Title I funds.

On average, schools served students from varied racial and ethnic backgrounds. Across schools, about 39.5% of students were White (non-Hispanic); 39.1% were African American; 16.6% were Latino/Hispanic American; 2.8% were Asian American; 0.5% were Native American; and 2.0% were from other racial/ethnic groups. Individual schools included a range of minority students, from 0% to 100%. The families served by these schools spoke an average of 4.9 languages. In some schools, families spoke only English at home, whereas other schools served diverse families speaking up to 44 different languages and dialects.
OVERALL PROGRAM QUALITY

The annual NNPS School UPDATE survey provides each school’s Action Team for Partnerships an opportunity to reflect on the overall quality of its partnership program by identifying one of six program portraits. Each portrait represents a different level of program quality, beginning with a planning stage and continuing up to an excellent program.

Elementary schools tended to rate their overall program quality higher than secondary schools, which were more likely to rate their program as “Start-Up/Planning” or “Fair.”

- The largest percentage of schools (approximately 35%) reported that their programs were good, indicating that several activities were implemented for the six types of involvement, teams were working to meet challenges to reach all families, and most teachers and families at the school knew about the program for partnerships and the school’s work with NNPS.
- Elementary schools were far more likely than secondary schools to rate their partnership program as excellent (11.0% vs. 2.8% respectively) or very good (31.1% vs. 18.5%, respectively).
- Secondary schools were twice as likely to be in the Start-up/Planning phase of program development.

PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Several UPDATE measures indicated whether schools and their ATPs were implementing core components of NNPS’s research-based partnership program and how well schools were implementing a broad range of programmatic activities.
CORE COMPONENTS

Core NNPS program components were measured using a 6-item scale (α = .70). On average, schools implemented 5.1 of the 6 program components. ATPs were most likely to report that they had an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) of six or more people (89.5%); wrote (or planned to write) a One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships for the next (13-14) school year (91.9%); and had written an action plan for the 12-13 school year (90.0%). Schools were least likely (66.1%) to have participated in an end-of-year celebration to share activities and ideas on partnerships with other schools in the district.

- Over three-quarters (78.3%) of schools identified a budget for activities to involve families.

QUALITY OF IMPLEMENTATION

A 12-item scale (α = .93) measured how well ATPs organized and implemented the partnership program at the school. These program implementation actions included involving families in some activities for all six types of involvement in the NNPS framework: evaluating the activities conducted; and reporting information to all families, PTA/PTO, faculty, and staff. Schools gave one of four responses to each item, characterizing implementation as did not do the action, need to improve the practice, implemented the practice OK, or implemented the practice very well.

Consistently, elementary schools reported better implementation of their partnership programs than secondary schools.

Figure 2
% of ATPs Rating Partnership Program Implementation as OK or Very Well in 2013, by School Level

- On average, elementary and K-8 schools reported higher levels of program implementation than did middle and high schools.
Nearly every school in NNPS (97.4%) indicated that they link partnership activities to School Improvement Goals.
About 1 in 5 schools (19.8%) reported that they either did not evaluate or needed to improve the evaluation of activities on their One Year Action Plan for Partnerships.
Almost one-quarter (24.9%) of ATPs reported that either they did not meet in subcommittees of the full team or that this was something that they needed to improve upon.

ACTION TEAM FOR PARTNERSHIPS (ATP)

In NNPS, each school must have an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) or an equivalent committee of teachers, parents, and administrators working on family and community involvement. The ATP is responsible for planning, implementing, overseeing, and evaluating partnership activities that are linked to school improvement goals. As an official committee, the ATP should report its plans and progress to the School Improvement Team or School Council on a regular basis, just as other school committees report their work. Questions on the 2013 School UPDATE asked about the structure of schools’ ATPs, members of the team, subcommittee structure, frequency of meetings, funding for the partnership program, and the ATP’s effort to share plans and progress with the school community.

STRUCTURE

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

Almost 40% of all schools’ ATPs worked together as a single team. Of the schools that organized committees to develop and implement specific involvement activities, the largest percentage of ATPs formed committees as needed (46.5%).

- About 40% of middle and high schools organized their ATPs as a single, whole committee. This is not particularly efficient for secondary schools with complex organizational structures that need to develop ambitious partnership programs with families to ensure that students graduate from high school on time.
- Across all school levels, only 8.7% of schools organized their ATP with standing subcommittees focused on school goals, as suggested by NNPS.

MEMBERSHIP

NNPS suggests that each school’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) include at least two or three teachers, two or three parents, and one administrator, with one or two students at the high school level, and options for community partners and other educators and representatives at any level. On average, schools in NNPS had between eight and nine members on their ATPs. The most common ATP size was 6 persons.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

At nearly half of the schools’ (44.7%) ATPs reported they met monthly to plan and implement their partnership efforts.
- About half (51%) of all NNPS schools reported meeting less often than monthly.
- A small percentage of ATPs (4.6%) reported never meeting in the 2012-13 school year.
REPORTING OF PROGRESS

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

- ATPs were most likely to report plans and progress of their partnership programs to faculty members (87.7%).
- About 28% of schools reported that they did not or needed to improve their communication of partnership plans and progress with their students’ families.

Figure 3
% of ATPs Reporting they Share Program Progress With Others "OK" or "Very Well", by School Level

- Almost twenty percent (19.3%) of secondary Schools did not share information on partnership plans and progress with the PTA/PTO.

FUNDING

A single item asked ATPs to rate the level of funding for their schools’ partnership programs. The largest percentage of teams reported that they had adequate funds for their partnership program (57.8%). However, a sizeable portion of schools noted not enough funds (24.3%) or no funds (5.0%) for their programs. A few (13.0%) felt their family and community involvement programs were well funded.

ACTION TEAM SUPPORT

PRINCIPALS’ SUPPORT

School-based partnership programs need the support of the principal in order to be successful and sustained (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004). ATPs reported whether or not the school principal never, sometimes, often, or always provided support for ten actions of the partnership program (α = .93). Almost all schools (96.2%) reported that the principal attended ATP meetings at least sometimes; 83.2% of principals attend these meeting “often” or “always.”
Overall, principals were rated as highly supportive of partnerships at their school (Figure 4).

- Principals at both the elementary and secondary level were reported as highly supportive of the partnership programs in their school.
- Elementary school principals tended to be even more supportive of the partnership program than secondary school principals.
- 88.1% of ATPs reported their principal provided time for them to meet, and 83.1% reported their principal “always” or “often” attended the ATP meeting.
- A large majority of principals (84.5%) supported the partnership program at their school by bringing in community partners and/or resources.

![Figure 4](image)

**DISTRICT LEADERS' SUPPORT**

Schools’ partnership programs also benefit from the support of district leaders. In 2013, ATPs rated the quality of 7 types of district assistance ($\alpha = .91$), from *not provided*, to *not very helpful*, *helpful*, and *very helpful*. On average, school APTs reported between five and six supportive actions from their districts.

Schools reported that the district practices of disseminating information about partnerships and recognizing schools for strong partnership practices were the most helpful to their family and community engagement efforts (Figure 5).
• Schools nested within districts that are NNPS members reported more support for their partnership programs than did schools in districts that were not NNPS members.
• About 90% of ATPs reported that their district disseminated information on successful partnership practices, and 87.1% reported that their district recognized schools’ good work on partnerships.
• Based on ATP reports, districts were least likely to provide funding for partnership programs or provide technical assistance to the ATP on partnerships.
• Over 77% of district leaders helped their schools to evaluate their partnership program.

FIGURE 5
% of ATPs that Reported Support from District in 2013, by School Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>District member of NNPS</th>
<th>District NOT member of NNPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disseminated info on best practices</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized various schools' good work</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped schools evaluate their program</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided funds for partnership program</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided technical assistance on partnerships</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided workshops on partnerships</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with principals about SFC Partnerships</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District member of NNPS</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>District NOT member of NNPS</td>
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MEETING CHALLENGES TO REACH ALL FAMILIES

In addition to organizing their partnership programs, ATPs are expected to conduct and encourage other partners (teachers, PTA/PTO, community partners) to conduct activities that involve all families and community partners in ways that support student success. Schools’ efforts to solve challenges of outreach and the involvement of all families were measured with a 9-item scale ($\alpha = .87$). ATPs rated their attention to solving challenges from not working on the challenge, to making fair progress, good progress, or having solved the challenge. For each of the nine challenges, schools’ ATPs averaged between 2 and 3 on this scale, suggesting that most believe they are making between fair and good progress in trying to solve challenges to involve many families who would not become involved on their own.

Elementary and secondary schools were making between “fair” and “good” progress addressing the nine challenges listed in the UPDATE Survey (Figure 6).

• Elementary schools were more likely than secondary schools to be addressing the challenges.
• Just 29.7% of secondary schools made good progress involving fathers in 2013, compared to 58.3% of elementary schools.
• Schools reported the least progress on getting information from workshops and meetings to families who could not attend.
• On average, schools in NNPS recognize the need for partnerships to help students and families navigate transitions to the next level of schooling.
TEACHERS’ PRACTICES OF INVOLVEMENT

Five items identified the percent of teachers who conducted various family involvement activities, such as holding parent-teacher conferences with each student’s family, communicating with all students’ families, utilizing volunteers in the classroom, guiding parents in discussing homework with their children, and supporting the partnership program. Figure 7 shows the percentage of schools’ ATPs reporting that 75% or more teachers participated in activities to involve all families. Across the board, more elementary than secondary schools reported that at least three-quarters of their teachers were actively working to engage all families.
TEACHER PRACTICES AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT, BY PROGRAM QUALITY

Analyses explored the relationship between program quality and teachers’ efforts to involve and engage family members in children’s education. As shown in Figure 8, there was a consistent trend indicating that teachers in schools with a stronger partnership program were more likely to have a strong majority of teachers supportive of this work. Schools with programs that are just starting, in contrast, tended not to have widespread support from teachers for school, family, and community partnerships.

Schools reporting higher partnership program quality, overall, were more likely to have widespread support for partnerships among teachers. (Figure 8)

FAMILIES’ INVOLVEMENT IN PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

ATPs estimated the percent of families involved in various partnership activities, including Back-to-School Nights, parent-teacher conferences, volunteering to help the school or teachers, monitoring their child’s homework, and being good partners in their children’s education. Figure 9 shows the percentage of schools in which 75% or more of families participated in partnership activities.

Extensive family involvement that engaged more families was more common in elementary and PK-8 schools and less common in middle and high schools. (Figure 9)
FAMILY INVOLVEMENT, BY PROGRAM QUALITY

Analyses explored the extent to which the quality of schools’ partnership programs was associated with reports of pervasive family support and participation. Although not as dramatic as with teacher support for partnerships, ATPs reporting stronger partnership programs also were more likely to report large percentages of families as “good partners.”

Schools reporting higher overall partnership program quality tended to have higher percentages of families who were perceived to be “good partners.” (Figure 10)
**SPECIAL TOPIC: TRANSITIONS**

This year, the 2013 School UPDATE survey included a section asking ATPs about their efforts to help students and their families navigate the transition into their school or onto the next level of schooling. Schools reported whether or not they used various practices to keep families informed of the demands and challenges of entering a new school.

The use and effectiveness of partnership practices to support student transitions measure was an 8-item scale ($\alpha = .86$). ATPs reported the extent to which they implemented a practice well. Schools rated their implementation as *we do not do this*, *not so well*, *pretty well*, and *very well*. Schools with higher scores, then, were those that implemented more transition practices well.

Transitioning to a new school is a challenge for children, teachers, and families in a meaningful percentage of NNPS schools. About 40% of ATPs reported that 11-25% of their students struggle in their first year at the school. This suggests that it is important for ATPs to consider implementing partnership practices designed to increase school, family, and community collaborations to improve the transition process.

**Most ATPs (near 90%) reported they implemented many practices aimed to help students and families transition into the school. (Figure 11)**

**USE OF TRANSITION PRACTICES BY SCHOOL LEVEL**

There were some significant differences in the ways elementary and secondary schools were helping students and families transition from one school to the next, as shown in Figure 11.

- Elementary schools reported stronger communications with families about how they can monitor their child’s academic progress.
- Secondary schools reported stronger efforts to invite incoming students and their families to visit the school prior to the beginning of the school year.

![Figure X](image)

- **Elementary**
- **Secondary**

% of ATPs Reporting Schools Provided Support for Transitions "Very Well" in 2013, by School Level
ATTENTION TO TRANSITIONS, BY LOCATION

- Overall, schools across all geographic locations tended to rate their use of partnership activities focused on transitions as effective or highly effective.
- Schools were least likely to work with their “receiver schools” to help families coordinate the transition from one school to the next.

Schools varied in use of partnership practices focused on transitions by geographic location, as shown in Figure 12.

- Suburban schools were the most likely to rate their implementation of partnership practices as strong.
- Large urban schools were least likely view partnership efforts as “very effective.”

Figure 12
% of ATPs Reporting Schools Provided Support for Transitions Very Well in 2013, by Region

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www.partnershipschools.org

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

1) NNPS UPDATE data are analyzed each year in research studies to learn how the various scales and measures combine to affect the quality of district and school programs. For summaries of past years’ results of UPDATE data, visit www.partnershipschools.org, and click on Research and Evaluation. Also see annual books of Promising Partnership Practices (Thomas, et al. 2013) in the section Success Stories.

2) The (α or alpha) reports the internal reliability of a scale, indicating whether a number of items are correlated and represent a common construct. Reliability coefficients of .6 or higher indicate that a set of items is consistent and the scale is useful.

SELECTED REFERENCES


