



District Leadership Institute

**Sample Materials to  
LEAD and FACILITATE  
DISTRICT PROGRAMS OF PARTNERSHIP**



## NEWS YOU CAN USE

BRIDGEPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BRIDGEPORT, CT

The Leader for Partnerships in Bridgeport set a goal to work with other district and school administrators and with parent and community leaders to collect and report news that could be and should be shared throughout the district. In a busy district like Bridgeport, there are many good news stories that are known only by a few. The improved *BPS Parent News and Updates* covers topics of interest in English and in Spanish. Parents can read the newsletter online at <https://www.bridgeportedu.com/Parents/ParentInfo.html>. Hard copies are provided to parent leaders at their monthly meetings and are available for parents who prefer print copies.

Parents, teachers, and the community are interested in district-doings, school programs, and student success. The Bridgeport newsletter includes some familiar topics that are repeated each month, and timely topics that will surprise and delight readers. Common sections include Attendance Achievements, Principals Matter, Dates to Remember, Construction Updates, Promising Practices, and Monthly Menus for elementary and secondary schools. Timely and unique additions include such things as Year in Review and Summer Reading Lists in June. Each month's newsletter also features stories and pictures from a different school.

District leaders believe that some results may be attributed to the news reported from month to month. For example, there may be a link between reports in the section on Attendance Achievement and an increase in students' Average Daily Attendance. The newsletter reports attendance statistics by school. Students, teachers, and parents wanted to see their school featured as one of the best. Also, schools with students with perfect attendance each month are listed and all of these students are entered into a lottery. The first student chosen serves as Superintendent-for-

a-Day. Other students in the lottery are assigned other leadership roles such as principal, assistant principal, or guidance counselor for a day. All students with perfect attendance receive a certificate for their attendance achievement. Now, that is news of interest to everyone and may promote better attendance.

One month, the featured high school reported its Science Fair and students' projects, the number of books read by students, and other important awards including Inspiration Awards for Civic Leadership, School Leadership, and Teacher Excellence. Without timely coverage, no one outside of that school would know about the positive work of its students. Also, by having a list of district activities, individual schools can plan events with parents that do not conflict with those sponsored by the district.

According to one parent, "The [district] newsletter is really colorful. I like the monthly reminders and updates." Administrators and teachers also welcomed the opportunity to spotlight their partnership programs and practices, and their students' achievements. One teacher reported, "I like that the newsletter looks different every month. The news that is shared is always a welcome surprise!"

Everyone agrees that good things are happening in most schools, but, often, they are kept secret and not celebrated by other teachers, families, students, and the community. The *BPS Parent News and Updates* spotlights good work and many "happenings" so that more members of the Bridgeport community know about and take pride in the schools and their students.

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## WE ARE A STEM FAMILY

PASCO SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PASCO, WA

**P**asco School District is working to advance students' science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. This is an important topic because the local economy is based on STEM-related occupations in energy, conservation, agriculture, technological research, engineering design, and national defense.

Over the past two years, the district opened five STEM elementary schools and identified a STEM director to advance this agenda in all 21 schools in the district. The STEM director is working with Pasco's Leaders for Partnerships to increase communications with parents about STEM programs in their children's schools. To promote this agenda, these leaders conducted a session, We are a STEM Family, at a meeting for ATP Chairpersons. With new information, the ATPs at each school could inform their own students' parents about the district's STEM mission and their school-based programs. The STEM director also attended individual school ATP meetings as a guest speaker on the subject.

A Family Engineering Fun Night was conducted at the district office. Students and parents in the elementary and middle grades unleashed their creative energies to design engineering projects together. The main goal was for ATP chairpersons from all schools to see how to organize and conduct similar events for more families and students at their own schools.

Pasco's STEM initiative is enriched by key partners, such as Hanford, a former nuclear production complex located in neighboring Richland, WA. Hanford contractors have partnered with schools at many Family Science Nights. The Mid-Columbia STEM Education Collaboratory and the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory participated in the district's Family Engineering Fun Night with workshops and captivating demonstrations.

District professional development funds supported the session for ATPs and purchased

books on *Family Engineering* for every school in English and Spanish (e.g., see <http://www.family-engineering.org/store/>). A small grant for STEM program development was used to compile a box of resource materials that schools could borrow for school-based Family Engineering Nights.

By spring, seven schools conducted a Family Engineering Night. Students conducted projects such as building towers or skyscrapers and creating catapults or launchers. One favorite activity was Mining with Chocolate Chip Cookies. Families had to "excavate" the chips from soft and crispy cookies without damaging the cookies, as miners must do when mining precious stones.

Pasco Leaders for Partnerships plan to continue STEM ice breakers at every Cluster Meeting to continue to give ATP chairpersons ideas they can use at their own team meetings and with parents and students at their schools. The best way to reach many parent about STEM is for ATPs to include exciting and well-planned STEM-events in their One-Year Action Plans for Partnership. One ATP Chairperson who also is the parent of Pasco students noted, "Now, I see that we use engineering in so many areas of our lives. When [my children] say they want to become engineers, I can ask them, 'What type of engineer exactly would you like to become—computer, electrical, mechanical, or some other?' " It is clear that the district and schools see family and community partnerships as a way to boost students' immediate interests in STEM subjects and long-term options for engineers in the local job market.

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**CLUSTER BUSTERS: KEEP ATPs ENGAGED WITH ENGAGEMENT**

SAGINAW PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SAGINAW, MI

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

**P**roviding opportunities for schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) to network with each other helps them gather different perspectives and ideas to improve their own programs of family and community engagement. The Saginaw Public School District takes family engagement seriously. It is one of the district's priority goals.

Saginaw's 16 school ATPs meet twice each semester in clusters of four schools to network with each other. At the cluster meetings, the ATPs share good ideas, solve challenges, and receive technical assistance from the District's Family Engagement Specialist. Last year, the ATPs met once in a larger cluster of eight ATPs. All cluster meetings—with four or eight schools—encouraged a free exchange of ideas and feedback about what was working and what was not at the different schools. The cluster meetings were most useful when participants were not afraid to discuss difficult topics that needed to be solved and when they had meaningful conversations with each other about what goal-linked family and community engagement looks like. One teacher who attended cluster meetings said, "These meetings go straight to the point. Our Family Engagement Specialist makes the work feel not so overwhelming." In addition, an NNPS Facilitator provided a follow-up training workshop to ATPs.

Schools like to share their best practices with each other. Having parents who are on the ATP at the cluster meetings made a difference in the quality of interactions. Their presence was crucial for connections to be made and true partnerships to be forged. One parent happily shared, "I feel like I belong as part of the team. These meetings brought us all together on one page for my child."

The district's Family Engagement Specialist followed up cluster meetings with individual visits to each school. She met with

the ATP chairs or co-chairs, the building principal, parent liaison, and others. At the individual school meetings, participants discussed what had been learned at the cluster meetings and what was unique about their own school's path to improve family and community engagement and student success. Said one principal, "I liked the fact that we were able to share our plans and [were] given a model from our school district."

The leader for partnerships was placed on the agenda of the district's Administrator Council Meeting. There, she could talk with all principals in the district at the same time. It gave her an opportunity to provide principals with some tips to support the school's ATP and other family engagement activities. Topics included how principals (who are on the ATP) can follow up the actions taken after an ATP meeting, see that a budget for partnerships is allocated, obtain support from community partners, and monitor the school's progress on family engagement. One principal understood the whole picture: "Excellent opportunity to share ideas and see how the NNPS model can fit our district and school needs."

Cluster meetings and the district leader's discussions with principals are helping Saginaw's teachers, administrators, parents, and community partners view each other as partners in addressing the needs of the whole child, whole school, and whole community. As one noted, they have been able to "bust out" and "dig in" to partnership work. The schools are guided by the district's priorities, and well-functioning ATPs are working to engage more families and help more students succeed in school.

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## **BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION: HELPING NEW TEACHERS UNDERSTAND PARTNERSHIPS**

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KENNEWICK SCHOOL DISTRICT  
KENNEWICK, WA

**P**reparing new teachers to work well with families is a missing component in many preservice teacher education programs. Many new teachers graduate and enter classrooms filled with students from cultures different from their own. Helping new teachers understand the why and how of forming strong partnerships with all students' families is a goal of the district leaders in Kennewick. They created a two-prong program to help new teachers organize effective partnership programs with their own students' families.

The first component was the New Teacher Bag. Given an estimate of the number of new teachers coming to the district, the leaders for partnerships obtained district bags and filled them with some general classroom supplies; a flyer about how to work with district interpreters when communicating with families who speak languages other than English; a summary of the importance of school, family, and community partnerships; and simple steps to conduct these partnerships. The district leaders delivered the bags to the school mailbox of each new teacher at the start of the school year.

The second part of outreach to new teachers was a workshop on the district's approaches to family and community engagement. The leaders for partnerships worked with the Peer Assistance and Resource (PAR) program, which conducts monthly workshops for new teachers throughout their first year. The leaders for partnerships asked if they could provide a session on family and community engagement. PAR teachers, too, wanted to be sure that all new teachers received a strong foundation in partnerships.

The leaders for partnerships planned one-hour workshops for elementary and for secondary teachers. The workshops, conducted in September, included presentations on research showing why partnerships are crucial; a

touching video about the power of a teacher in a child's life; multiple discussion questions; information about how to form partnerships with families; time to share ideas; and time to draft a personal plan.

Feedback from the new teachers, PAR mentors, and building principals was positive. The new teachers were grateful for the training and new resources. One teacher was so enthused that his PAR mentor reported that he had made proactive and positive phone calls to connect with the parents of each student in his class. Principals were thankful that the district office was connecting with new teachers and providing quality professional development.

Early planning helped make both components of the district's approach to new teachers successful. Welcoming new teachers to the district also enabled schools to add new people with new ideas to their school-based Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs). All ATPs are guided by the district leaders for partnerships. Most importantly, the district's approaches helped new teachers learn—right from the start—that family and community engagement are part of the work of all schools and all teachers in the district.

Kennewick continues to increase the diversity of the cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds of its students and their families. Because the percentage of teachers from diverse backgrounds has not grown as quickly, it is imperative for the district to help all teachers establish strong partnerships with all families to increase the chances for all students to succeed in school.

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## Celebrate Milestones

### 2014 NNPS Partnership District Award

**Kennewick School District**  
*Kennewick, Washington*

#### **District-Level Leadership for Partnerships: *Tried and True***

##### ***The District's Book of Its Schools' Promising Partnership Practices***

Kennewick's Leaders for Partnerships and school-based Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) have been active participants in NNPS and contributors to the annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices*. The district's leaders knew that all schools were conducting good practices of family and community engagement, but not all schools could be included in NNPS's national collection.

To create awareness and pride in all of the good work in Kennewick's schools, the Leaders for Partnership published its own book called *Tried and True*. Every school shared one of its best practices conducted over the past two years to involve families and to increase student success in school.

Kennewick schools that received NNPS Partnership School Awards also were highlighted. A note from the editors and a foreword from NNPS Director, Joyce Epstein, were included in the book. The District Leaders for Partnerships collaborated with Kennewick's Director of Federal Programs to set up meetings with other district leaders and board members to share the *Tried and True* collection and to report the progress that is being made in improving programs of family and community engagement in the district.

## GLOW & GROW

### MIDDLETOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT

**F**or the Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) of Middletown Public Schools, district-level partnership coordinators know the importance of recognizing a year of work well-done. The coordinators also understand the benefits of cross-fertilizing ideas from school to school to help ATPs overcome their own challenges by sharing ideas and solutions. Articulating this process required a catchy title. The creative Middletown leaders had that covered, too.

The annual Glow & Grow Year-End Celebration for Partnerships gave school partnership and action teams the chance to celebrate their successes—that was the Glow—and to address new strategies that can be put into practice next academic year—and that was the Grow.

A number of goals were addressed by the annual wrap-up. Most immediately, the Celebration inspired Action Team members' passion, dedication, and support for partnership work and initiatives. Plus, the event enabled the Action Teams to disseminate their best practices and resources, giving successful ATPs a moment in the spotlight and motivating those at other schools to try some new initiatives.

The Grow & Glow event was booked at the beginning of the school year. District coordinators referred to it frequently in discussions with ATP Co-Chairs and members. Three months before the event, ATP leaders received a reminder to consider what they would share with others. Then, a month before, the District Partnership Coordinator sent out registration forms. ATPs were asked to register with at least a principal or assistant principal, two staff members, and two parents.

The registered teams played active roles in both aspects of the celebration. Not only were they participants and learners, but also presenters. Based on the information from the ATPs that registered, the district leaders for partnerships organized the event agenda for the ATP

presentations. This year's agenda included:

- » *An opening KSA-Plus Communications Partnership quiz, entitled "Is Your School Open to Partnerships with Parents?"*
- » *A School Compact Panel, during which three Middletown school teams discussed the process of creating a school compact, as well as talking about how they engaged students, parents, and staff in this process.*
- » *Individual ATP presentations on structure and performance evaluation.*
- » *Other presentations where ATPs highlighted some of their best practices.*
- » *A presentation by a community leader about resources available to ATPs that can be used to encourage families to become more engaged as advocates for their children's education.*
- » *The Jumping Hurdles and SFCP Action Team Checklist activities from the NNPS's School, Family, and Community Partnerships handbook.*
- » *Finally, reminders of upcoming important NNPS- and SFCP-related dates.*

In addition to the schedule of presentations, ATPs also shared best practices at a Resource Table. The District Partnership Coordinator advised others to tie in traditions that are fun and valuable. The Grow & Glow theme showed up in several ways, from the event flyers to the "Dirt Cake" that is always served at the celebration. As a result, wrote one district leader, "Everyone's enthusiasm and pride in this project shines through."

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# Meeting the Challenge of Tackling the Challenge of Evaluation

Steven B. Sheldon  
Director of Research

Developing and maintaining a strong partnership program is an important goal and on-going challenge for all members of NNPS. Studies show that schools with strong programs of school, family, and community partnerships have more parental involvement, higher levels of student achievement, and better student behavior and attendance.<sup>1</sup> Studies also indicate that when action teams evaluate their partnership activities, schools are more likely to improve the overall quality of their partnership program.<sup>2</sup> Many Action Teams for Partnerships, however, are not sure how to evaluate their partnership programs and what tools are available to help them.

## Evaluate to Improve, Not Pass Judgment

The process of evaluation is essential for gaining insight into a program's strengths and weaknesses, and for planning improvements. Evaluating a program and activities does not mean passing judgment about whether the program is good or bad. Rather, the purposes of useful evaluations are to clarify program goals, show whether and how implemented activities are helping to realize the stated goals, and suggest improvements. This information is essential for developing stronger, more effective partnership programs.

## Identify Evaluation Tools

**Use UPDATE.** To help Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) conduct meaningful and feasible program evaluations, NNPS provides several tools for schools and school districts. One of these is the annual *UPDATE* survey, which is mailed by NNPS to all members every spring. *UPDATE* gives ATPs the chance to reflect on the quality of key elements of program development and the involvement activities that were implemented during the school year. Members of the ATP are encouraged to meet to discuss how well the partnership program was organized, implemented, and supported by the entire school community. Open-ended questions ask the team to reflect on progress, challenges, and next steps for improving the quality of the program. The key to using

*UPDATE*, like all evaluation tools, is to be honest in these assessments.

**Use other assessments, inventories, and indicators.** In addition to *UPDATE*, other evaluation tools are available in Chapter 9 of the NNPS handbook, *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action, Second Edition*. Particularly valuable is the End-of-Year Evaluation (pp. 360-364). With this tool, ATP members can assess how well activities were implemented to involve families on each school improvement goal (e.g., to improve students' reading, math, attendance, behavior, or other goals). Throughout the school year, the ATP should reflect on and rate the degree to which each activity was successfully implemented. When ATPs take time for these reflections, the strengths and weaknesses of a school's partnership program and involvement activities become more visible.

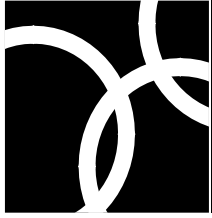
Those who want to assess progress in meeting challenges to reach all families, also may use and chart the ATP's annual responses to the *Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships* (pp. 330-334). This inventory asks whether actions for the six types of involvement are very successfully or need improvement. Along with the other NNPS tools noted above, this measure can help an ATP write the next Action Plan for Partnerships.

Finally, ATPs should take a look at the checklist on the quality of teamwork to help create the best ATP possible (p. 111 of the *Handbook for Action*). Starting the new school year with a well-functioning ATP will contribute to a stronger, more sustainable program.

## Plan to Evaluate

A well-organized team will set aside time to complete *UPDATE* and conduct other useful evaluations as the school year ends. Plan to devote at least one action team meeting to discuss the year's work. Encourage all ATP members to attend that meeting to incorporate diverse perspectives on how well the partnership program was implemented this year and what to improve

(Continued on page 11)



Annual Progress Report  
**NATIONAL NETWORK OF PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS**  
AT JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY  
RETURN BY **JULY 15, 2020** to RENEW MEMBERSHIP for the 2020-21 school year.

**2020 DISTRICT UPDATE**

**2020 SCHOOL UPDATE**

**2020 ORGANIZATION UPDATE**

**2020 STATE UPDATE**

Please complete this end-of-year evaluation and renew membership in the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University. The questions will help you and your colleagues reflect on this year's progress and will provide ideas for your plans for the 20-21 school year.

**By returning *UPDATE*, you show that you know it is important to *EVALUATE* your work and progress.** As an active member of NNPS, you will receive a copy of the new *Promising Partnership Practices 2020*, monthly *E-Briefs*, NNPS *Blogs*, wonderful website with member-only access to prior books of *Promising Partnership Practices* and all NNPS *Samplers*, on-call consultation with NNPS, free webinars, and the *Annual Report of 2020 UPDATE* data from all NNPS districts and schools. DISTRICTS with 8 schools or more in NNPS also receive a customized summary of **their own schools' *UPDATE* data** for use in local evaluation reports.

**NNPS requires a \$250 RENEWAL FEE sent with this *UPDATE* Survey.** NNPS pays a matching sum of \$250 to continue your membership benefits for the next year and to process the *UPDATE* data.

**I. NETWORK CONTACTS.** Please update the NNPS files with correct information for 20-21.

District/State/Organization/School

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Name of Key Contact(s) for 19-20 (THIS YEAR)

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