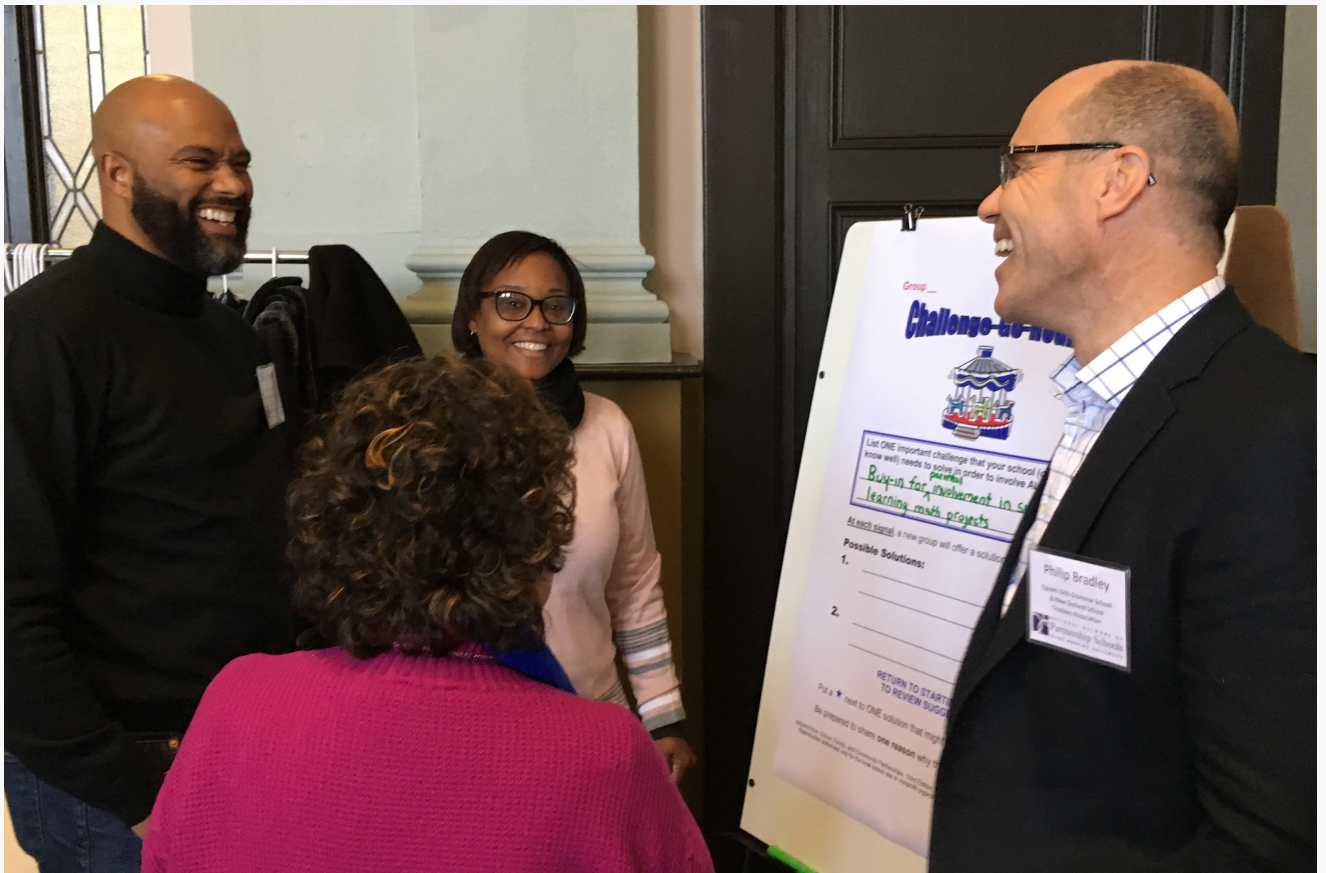


FEBRUARY 2019

Annual NNPS Report: 2018 District Data



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Cover photo: March 2018 NNPS Leadership Institute, Baltimore, MD

NNPS Report: 2018 DISTRICT DATA

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In NNPS, district leaders for partnerships take responsibility for improving programs of family and community engagement at the district level and in each school. At the district level, the leader for partnerships speaks for the superintendent to advance a partnership agenda throughout the district. At the school level, the district leader for partnerships guides each school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) to plan, implement, evaluate, and continually improve family and community engagement that supports success in school. Studies show that when district leaders and school ATPs are "in sync," schools become more welcoming places, more families become engaged in their children's education, and more students do their best in school and improve academic skills and behaviors (Epstein & Sheldon, 2016).

NNPS publications, training, tools for program development and evaluation, and on-going communications enable district leaders to guide school ATPs to continually improve their partnership programs. This "nested leadership" by school teams, district leaders, and NNPS helps all partners know that students' education is a shared responsibility of home, school, and community.

This report on data for the 17-18 school year, documents how district leaders across the country are working to fulfill these responsibilities for more effective and more equitable partnership programs.

2018 FEATURED FINDINGS

- The 26 district leaders for partnerships in urban, suburban, and rural communities assisted about **500 schools** to strengthen their programs and practices of family and community engagement in the 2017-18 school year.
- The district leaders estimated that their activities helped schools engage **over 75,000 families** in partnership activities. School ATPs and teachers added thousands more to the total of engaged families in the 17-18 school year.
- The special topic on the 2018 *UPDATE* was *family engagement on school safety and student behavior*. All district leaders (100%) reported having basic "rules" prohibiting drugs, weapons, bullying, and harassment. Only one quarter of the district leaders (26%) reported having policies for metal detectors to increase school safety—mainly in high schools.

District leaders in rural and suburban areas reported safer schools, overall, than did those in urban areas. After accounting for location, district leaders who reported higher percentages of schools "making good progress" on partnerships reported safer schools. This result suggests that district leaders for partnerships play a role in increasing school safety when they guide school ATPs to continually improve their programs of family and community engagement.

DISTRICTS IN THIS SAMPLE

Twenty-six district leaders for partnerships in highly diverse communities in 15 states provided data on their work and progress in the 2017-18 school year.¹ These districts renewed membership in NNPS for the next year to continue their partnership agendas.

- In 2018, districts were located in central cities (19%), small cities (31%), suburban (27%), and rural (23%) areas. The districts varied in size from a few schools to over 200 schools.
- Districts in the sample had been members of NNPS for from 1 to 22 years. Three districts joined NNPS in the past year. NNPS helps districts move forward from their individual starting points.
- Districts served populations of students and families who spoke from 1 to over 150 languages and dialects at home, with an average of 34 languages spoken by students and their families across districts. The districts averaged 13% of students who were English Language Learners (ELL), ranging from under 1% to 73% of enrolled students. In the past year, districts in NNPS have increased the number of home languages of their families and the percentage of ELL in their schools.
- On average, about 59% of students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals, ranging from 17% to 100% of students across districts.
- District leaders for partnerships worked about 21 hours per week on partnership program development—a little over half time. In some large districts, leaders had staff who helped on partnerships up to an average of 22 hours per week.
- Most district Key Contacts to NNPS (92%) expected to continue in their positions in the 18-19 school year. This is important because stable district leadership has been linked to continuous progress on district- and school-level partnerships from year to year (Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon, 2011).

Summary. Districts in NNPS serve socioeconomically, culturally, racially, linguistically, and geographically diverse students, families, and communities. The percentage of students in NNPS districts that are eligible for free or reduced-price meals and the percentage of ELL students closely match statistics for the U.S. as a whole (NCES, 2016, 2018). The diversity of districts and schools helps NNPS learn whether and how district leaders use NNPS’s research-based tools and materials to strengthen their partnership programs.

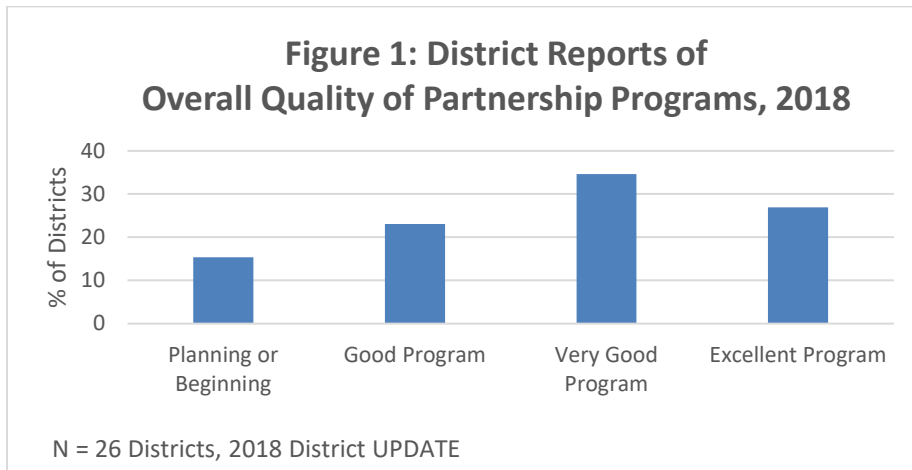
DISTRICT LEADERSHIP ON PARTNERSHIPS

NNPS’s mission is to “grow leaders” who will be experts on partnerships in their districts. NNPS publications, communications, and support aim to help district leaders organize their activities and facilitate school ATPs to work well with their own students’ families. The *UPDATE* survey asked district leaders to rate the overall quality of their partnership programs by painting a “portrait” of their progress to date.

OVERALL QUALITY OF PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

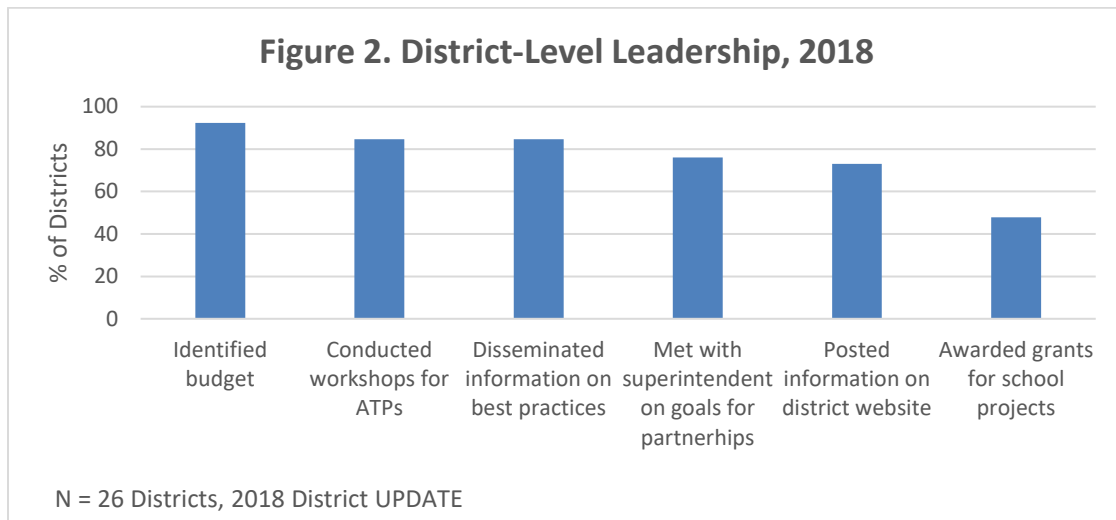
Figure 1 shows that some districts in NNPS (15.4%) were in a “planning or beginning” phase of their work on partnerships. They rated their program quality *low*, agreeing that their programs need “a great deal of work” to move forward. Others reported that their districts had *good* (23.1%), *very good* (34.6%), or *excellent* (26.9%) programs.

To report an “excellent program,” district leaders must state that their offices would be “*permanent*, even if leaders changed.” This is a high bar to reach, but growth this year in “good” and “very good” programs suggests that district leaders were working to improve quality of their programs, overall.



DISTRICT LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

Leaders reported their district-level partnership activities on a 15-item *Leadership Scale* ($\alpha = .75$).² Figure 2 shows that in 2018, a large majority of district leaders in NNPS planned their budgets (92%); conducted professional development workshops for school ATPs (85%); disseminated examples of best partnership practices (85%) to school ATPs; posted partnership information on the district website (76%); and met with the principals of their schools to discuss their partnership programs and ATPs (73%).



As in the past, a smaller percentage of districts made small grants to school teams (48%). NNPS encourages district leaders to identify funds for small grants (e.g., \$50-\$500) for school ATPs to support activities in their One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships. Even small grants tell school ATPs that the district is investing in their efforts to strengthen practices of family and community engagement.

In 2018, district leaders for partnerships conducted an average of 10.7 leadership activities of the 15 listed in this measure. The data indicate that these leaders were serious about fulfilling their roles and responsibilities in organizing their offices and guiding district-level work on family and community engagement.

COMMENTS ON LEADERSHIP

Nearly all district leaders reflected on how their leadership activities improved in the 17-18 school year. Here are a few of their open-ended comments.

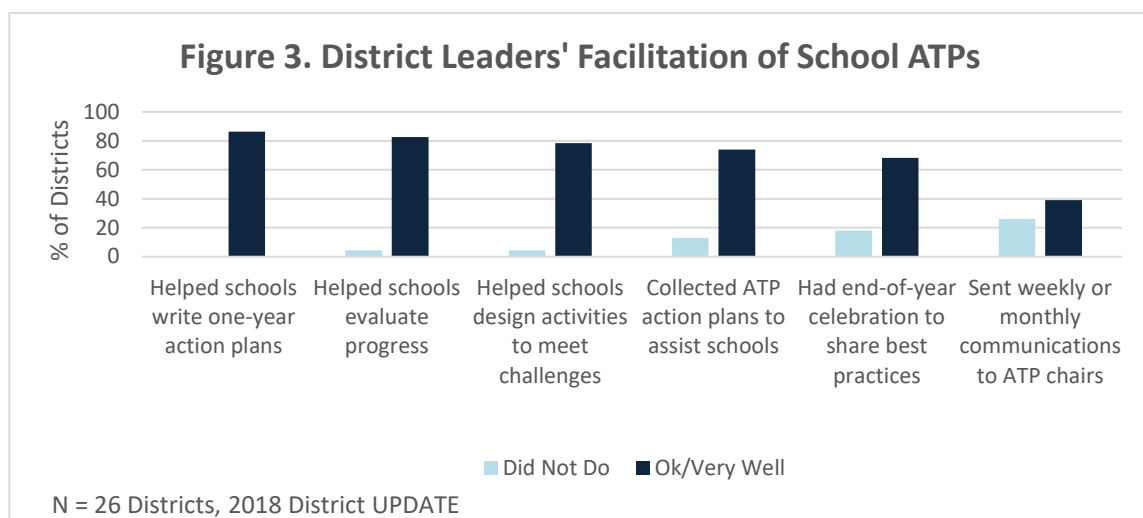
- Our strategic plan now includes key indicators to measure the growth and success of community partnerships.
- We conducted a District Community Wellness Fair.
- This year, we created and filled the position of Project Manager of Student Voice to enhance students' perspectives on partnerships.
- We kept the Public Affairs Office informed of all ATP dates and times of events at schools.
- The district hired parent engagement coordinators [who serve on school ATPs].
- Over 3500 people gave input to the district's Strategic Plan, and we regularly communicate with families and the community about progress.
- My colleagues and I strengthened the district's rubric for evaluation and aligned it with the NNPS six types of involvement, district goals, and School Improvement Process.

FACILITATION OF SCHOOL ATPs

In NNPS, district leaders for partnerships have a major responsibility to facilitate (or “shepherd”) the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at each school to build its capacities to work well with its students' families. Most district policies for family and community engagement require teachers, principals, and other school staff to work with parents as partners in students' education. To fulfill these directives, district leaders may use NNPS's evidence-based strategies to guide schools' ATPs to implement and continually improve effective and equitable programs of family and community engagement.

District leaders for partnerships represent the Superintendent, School Board, and others as they guide schools to develop their partnership programs. They make sure that schools form strong teams of parents, teachers, and administrators. They guide teams to select academic and behavioral goals from their own School Improvement Plans so that parents and community partners are engaged productively. They help ATPs write plans with goal-linked engagement activities, implement and evaluate the quality of outreach to families, and continually improve their practices. The goals, plans, activities, and outreach differ at the preschool, elementary, middle, and high school levels to meet the needs and interests of parents and specific goals for student learning and development.

NNPS measured how actively district leaders guide school teams with an 18-item *Facilitation Scale* ($\alpha = .91$). In the 17-18 school year, district leaders for partnerships conducted an average of 13.0 facilitative actions *OK* or *very well*, ranging from 1 to 18 activities. Figure 3 reports a few facilitative activities.



¹ Percentages do not add to 100%. Some leaders reported that they “need to improve” these facilitative actions.

Most district leaders guided schools to write One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships (86%), and nearly as many (74%) collected the plans to keep track of ATPs' progress. Most helped ATPs evaluate progress (83%). District leaders helped ATPs select or develop activities to meet some challenges to reach all families (78%), and most conducted end-of-year celebrations to share best practices and plan for the next school year (68%). Fewer district leaders (39%) communicated weekly or monthly with their ATPs in systematic ways (e.g., e-mail, Skype, Facebook, Twitter, etc.). NNPS encourages all district leaders for partnerships to add a periodic connection with their ATPs for the rest of this year, and in the future. The weekly or monthly communication lets ATPs know that the district leader cares about their programs and is available for information or assistance.

Other analyses indicate that district leaders' reports of actions on the *Leadership Scale* are not associated with years working with NNPS. By contrast, leaders who have been members of NNPS for a longer time do more activities on the *Facilitation Scale* to directly assist school ATPs ($r=.409$, $p<.05$).³ This suggests that all leaders—even those new to NNPS—start by organizing their offices and their own activities. Then, over time, leaders do more to guide school-based ATPs. The chain of events is important because NNPS studies show that when district leaders for partnerships actively facilitate school ATPs, the schools have higher quality partnership programs and involve more and different families. Further, when schools have more parents as partners, they report higher rates of student attendance (Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon, 2011; Epstein & Sheldon, 2016).

COMMENTS ON FACILITATION

On the UPDATE survey, district leaders described how they guide school ATPs to improve their programs, as in the following examples.

- We had a *Promising Practices Celebration* at the end of the school year for all school ATPs.
- I gave the schools a planning guide for their monthly ATP meeting agendas, and conducted an orientation session for new ATP chairs/co-chairs.
- Made monthly visits to schools to assist with planning and budgets.
- Four schools created and trained partnership teams, and began work on their action plans.
- Our schools have a better understanding of the importance of recognizing each family's strengths, assets, and differences.
- ATP plans were more intentional this year and we had an increase in parent leadership.
- Our new teams are working to establish their programs, and ATPs with turnover are working to rebuild.

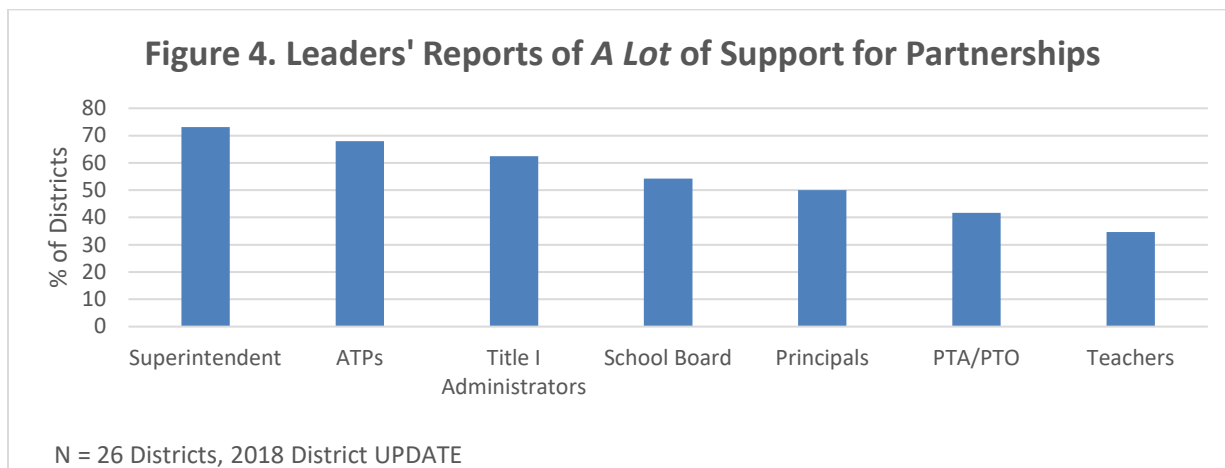
SUPPORT FOR PARTNERSHIPS

For many years, NNPS district leaders for partnerships reported that they do more and better work when they have strong support from their district colleagues. District superintendents must sign the NNPS membership form to show that they will support a partnership agenda. Other colleagues' support grows when district leaders take positive steps to strengthen family and community engagement at the district level and in their schools.

Figure 4 reports the percentage of district leaders who reported “a lot” of support from district and school colleagues for 7 items of a 13-item *Support Scale* ($\alpha = .94$). The items were scored 1-4 for *no support*, *a little*, *some*, and *a lot of support*. District leaders had an average scale-score of 3.19, indicating that most of them felt “some” support from most colleagues.

Figure 4 shows that 73% of district leaders in 2018 reported *a lot* of support from their Superintendent for their work on partnership program development, a slight increase over last year and a continuing trend in strong stronger support for partnership from Superintendents. Similarly, proportionally more district leaders reported *a lot* of support from their School Boards (54%)—a big jump from last year. Some district leaders have started to make periodic presentations to their School Boards on their partnership programs.

About 68% of districts reported *a lot* of support from their ATPs, which would be expected because district leaders guide their work. Fewer district leaders reported *a lot* of support from the school PTA or PTO, and teachers.



The percentages of district leaders who felt “*some*” *and* “*a lot*” of support were much higher. For example, 92% of district leaders reported *some and a lot* of support from ATPs. Nevertheless, the goal is for leaders to establish a lot of support from district and school colleagues to ensure continuity of work on family and community engagement for the long term. NNPS encourages district leaders to make colleagues aware of their work on partnerships and the work of school ATPs with reports, summaries, and announcements to their colleagues in district meetings, School Board meetings, publications, and collaborative projects.

COMMENTS ON SUPPORT

District leaders know they can do more and better work on partnerships with support from district colleagues, school leaders, families, and community partners. Here are a few comments on how this year’s district leaders are strengthening support for partnerships.

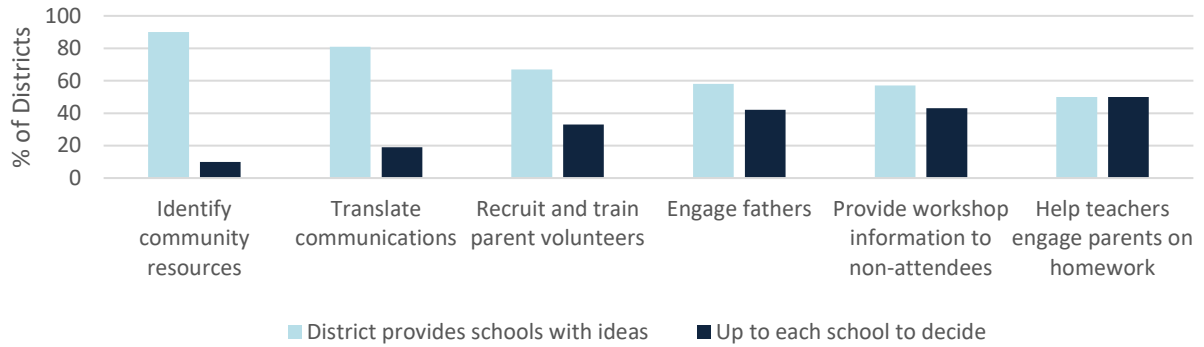
- I plan to meet monthly with the interim-superintendent on the district’s and schools’ partnership programs.
- The district launched a high school business course with 75 community experts as coaches and mentors to enhance curriculum with real-world applications.
- Our district partnership staff attended school-based events and meetings throughout the school year.
- My office disseminated more information on partnerships to school ATPs.
- The district provided incentives to support school activities for family engagement.

SOLVE CHALLENGES TO INVOLVE ALL FAMILIES

District leaders and school ATPs face many challenges to engage all families, including those who are, presently, “uninvolved” or “hard to reach.” NNPS measures whether district leaders and schools are seeking solutions to common engagement challenges, and whether district leaders guide school ATPs or leave it up to the schools to solve challenges on their own.

Figure 5 reports how district leaders approach specific challenges on an 8-item *Challenges Scale* ($\alpha = .73$). District leaders in this sample addressed an average of 6 challenges listed on the *UPDATE* survey, indicating on-going efforts to engage all parents. The patterns show that higher percentages of district leaders guided their schools to find community resources (86%), translate and interpret communications (77%), and recruit parent and other volunteers for schools (61%). By contrast, about equal percentages of districts help teachers engage parents with students on homework and leave it up to schools to solve this challenge (50%).

Figure 5. District Leaders' Assistance to School ATPs to Solve Challenges to Engage All Families, 2018



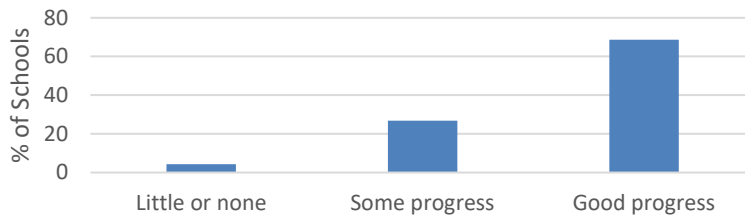
N = 26 Districts, 2018 District UPDATE

Percentages may not add to 100%. Some schools are not addressing these challenges yet.

SCHOOLS' PROGRESS ON PARTNERSHIPS

District leaders for partnerships reported working with over 500 schools this year, and rated their schools' progress. Figure 6 shows that district leaders noted that about 69% of their schools were making *good progress*; 27% made *some progress*, and 4% made *little progress*.

Figure 6. District Reports of Schools' Progress on Partnerships, 2018

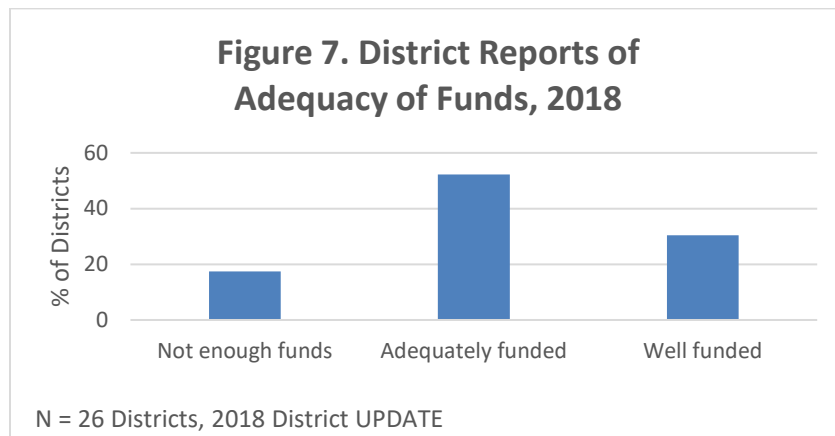


N = 26 Districts, 2018 District UPDATE

It is important to note that district leaders who reported having high-quality partnership programs, overall, also said that more of their schools are “making good progress” ($r = .596, p < .003$). Further, district leaders who conducted many facilitative actions to guide their schools also reported that more schools are making good progress with their partnership programs ($r = .603, p < .001$).

ADEQUACY OF FUNDING FOR PARTNERSHIPS

District leaders for partnerships reported on the adequacy of funds for their work on partnerships. Figure 7 shows that 83% of the district leaders reported that they were *adequately* or *well-funded*. Others (17%) noted *not enough funds*. The percentage with at least adequate funds increased this year over last year by about 8%. This may be connected to district leaders' reports that their superintendent and other administrators strongly supported the partnership agenda (Figure 4, above).

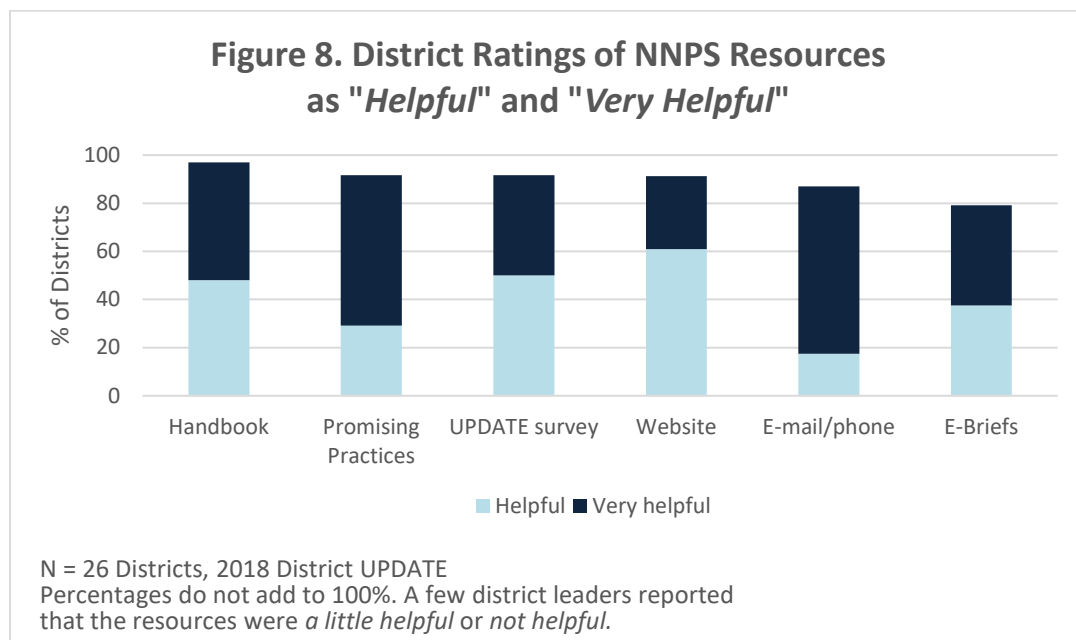


As in the past, most district leaders listed Title I, other Titles, and general funds as major sources of funds for district-level partnership programs. For more information on the average cost of partnership programs and funding sources for partnership programs in districts, schools, and states in NNPS, see p.254 in *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action, 4th Edition* (Epstein, et al., 2019).

Five district leaders for partnerships wrote proposals for extra funds in 2018. Four of them (80%) were funded for from \$500 to over \$32,000, with an average award of about \$12,000. NNPS will write letters of support for member districts that write proposals for extra funds for stronger partnership programs.

USE OF NNPS RESOURCES

Figure 8 summarizes results of a 7-item *NNPS Resource Use Scale* ($\alpha = .90$) that measured how district leaders for partnerships rated the usefulness of major NNPS communications and materials that were provided to all members in 2018. These included the NNPS *Handbook*, book of *Promising Partnership Practices 2018*, website, monthly *E-Briefs*, *UPDATE* survey and report on data, and (not shown) quarterly blog. Responses were coded from 1 to 4 for *not helpful* to *very helpful* to indicate whether district leaders used and valued NNPS products and services.



See the list of NNPS benefits and services at www.partnershipschools.org in the section *Join NNPS*.

Over 80% of district leaders reported that NNPS benefits and services were *helpful* or *very helpful* for improving their programs. About 92% of the district leaders visited the NNPS website at least a few times each year, and some checked in monthly. Other analyses indicated that district leaders who joined NNPS recently used more NNPS resources to develop their programs ($r = -.502, p < .01$). In early stages of program development, it may be particularly helpful to have clear and useful tools to guide school ATPs.

When members initiated contact with NNPS, they reported high satisfaction. For example, over 90% of those who attended the annual free webinar for district leaders and 87% of those who sent e-mails with requests to NNPS facilitators reported that these were helpful or very helpful resources.

ANNUAL EVALUATIONS

As a unique benefit to members, NNPS conducts annual evaluations of the quality and progress of their programs. District members complete an *UPDATE* survey to reflect on the topics covered (above) in this report.⁴ As an added benefit, district and organization leaders with eight schools or more in NNPS that submit the *School UPDATE* also receive a customized summary of their own schools' data each year to compare with data from all schools in NNPS.

Historically, formal evaluations of district and school partnership programs have not been conducted. Some educators check exit surveys from parents at workshops, or conduct general surveys of parent satisfaction with schools. Few district leaders assess the quality of plans, teamwork, and practices at the district level and in each school to engage all families in ways that are linked to goals for student success. Without program evaluations, it is not possible to monitor progress from year to year or have data to identify needed improvements. This year, nearly all district leaders in NNPS reported that they evaluated their own (89%) and their schools' (87%) programs of family and community engagement, and used the *UPDATE* survey as one assessment tool.

The data in the above figures suggest that many district leaders need to consider the following activities to strengthen leadership on partnerships:

1. **Fund small grants** (e.g., \$50 or more) to support specific goal-linked activities in schools' One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships. ATPs should propose how they will use funds to support activities that engage families and community partners to improve the school climate or increase students' academic or behavioral success.
2. **Build support** by making weekly or monthly contacts with the Chairs, Co-chairs, and members of schools' ATPs. This lets teams know that the district supports their work on partnerships.

Acknowledge the family and community engagement activities conducted by individual teachers and grade level teams. This lets all teachers know that their efforts are part of the school's comprehensive program of partnerships.

Present short summaries once or twice a year to the district School Board to keep members aware of the district and school efforts to implement the district's policy on family and community engagement.

3. **Scale up** your local "network" of partnership schools so that all schools have ATPs and are members of NNPS. This will ensure that the district receives the most valid data on the quality of all schools' *UPDATE* data.

Plans for Improvement. In completing *UPDATE*, district leaders reflected on how they could improve their programs in the next school year. Here are a few comments from district leaders on improvements at the district and school levels.

- We will work harder to link practices of partnership to goals for student learning.
- I will help schools focus family engagement on student attendance issues.

- We need to improve the number of families that support school events, and develop reading activities for families to use with their children at home.
- We are working to bring more families into decision-making roles and help schools improve two-way communications.
- I will give more time to address partnership needs, including communicating with ATP leaders.
- We are ready to expand our support to secondary schools.

SPECIAL TOPIC 2018

School Safety and Student Behavior

Each year, NNPS explores a new topic on the *UPDATE* survey. The 2018 *UPDATE* asked about school safety, family engagement, and student behavior. This is not a new concern for educators. Federal policies for *Gun-Free Schools Zones* and zero tolerance for guns at school date back to 1990. NNPS members have been reporting family engagement activities to improve safety and student behavior for over 20 years. However, recent violent incidents in schools have put safety in the spotlight. Today, federal, state, and local policies emphasize that schools must be safe, secure, and welcoming places for teaching, learning, and for school, family, and community partnerships.

School safety and the prevention of violence in schools have always been linked to measures of student behavior (Noguera, 1995). Students' good behavior, respect for others, and understanding differences help prevent thoughtless, mean, and violent acts. The attainment of all academic and behavioral goals depends on safe schools.

Often in the past, family and community engagement was ignored in developing and implementing school programs to improve safety and student behavior, except for notifications about bad or illegal activities. One focused study using a large, national data set indicated that family engagement (e.g., volunteers in school buildings, and alert attention to students' activities) was linked to reduced violence and less disorder in schools (Lesneskie & Block, 2017). We were interested in whether and how NNPS districts were guiding school to create positive connections with families and the community to support school safety and good student behavior.

In this initial NNPS exploration of school safety, the 2018 *UPDATE* survey included measures of district and school policies to ensure safety and to encourage positive student behavior; leaders' reports of the level of safety at their schools; and examples of effective practices that engage parents and the community to improve school safety and student behavior.

Official Policies. The 2018 *District UPDATE* asked leaders for partnerships to report whether their district had official policies for rules, social interactions, and legal actions to promote safety and good behavior. The full measure (17 items, $\alpha = .65$) included three subscales.

Rules. District leaders reported whether they had official policies for a code of student conduct, dress code, and rules against illegal drugs, weapons, bullying, harassment, and suspension. All 26 district leaders (100%) reported having policies and rules against the serious infractions, most had a code of conduct (92%), and some had a dress code (79%).

Social Interactions. District leaders reported whether they had official policies for seven social interactions to engage families and community partners in ways that supported students' good behavior ($\alpha = .77$). Items included having afterschool, positive behavior, and mentoring programs; workshops on internet safety; parent-teacher conferences; volunteer and security patrols at the school and in hallways.

Legal Actions. District leaders reported if they had official policies on tough controls for school safety. A three-item *Legal Actions Scale* ($\alpha = .78$) asked district leaders about policies for metal detectors, locker and backpack searches, and referrals to law enforcement officials. Only 26% of the district leaders said that their schools used metal detectors. By contrast, over 80% said schools conducted locker and

backpack searches, and referred serious infractions for to law enforcement. These policies were more apt to apply to high schools than to younger grade levels.

District leaders reported that information about official policies is posted on the district websites and in other documentation. Most leaders (60%) reported that each school was responsible for explaining rules and regulations to their students’ families. In part, this is because school messages to students and parents must be customized to refer to different safety concerns at different grade levels.

School Safety and Family Connections Rating. We asked district leaders about the overall safety of their schools. A five-item *Safe School Climate Scale* ($\alpha = .75$) asked whether schools in the district were safe and secure; had consistent discipline across schools; serious behavior problems (reverse coding); students and parents who knew the school rules; and teachers who knew all of their students’ parents.

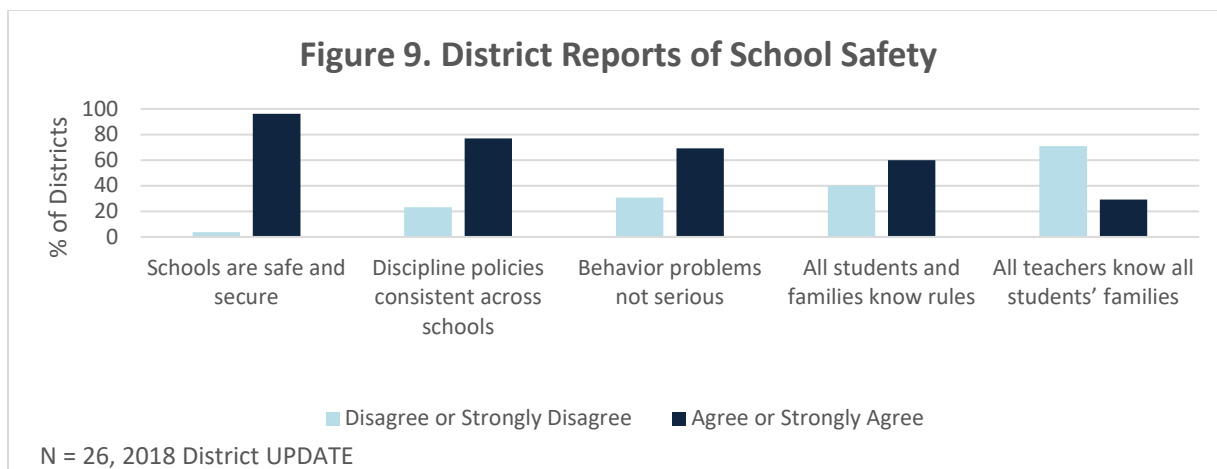


Figure 9 shows that nearly all district leaders reported that their schools were, in general, safe and secure. Nearly 80% said discipline policies were consistent across schools; over 60% reported that behavior problems were not serious, and 60% believed that students and families knew their school rules. However, the pattern flipped dramatically on reports of whether teachers knew all of their students’ families. Over 70% of the district leaders disagreed with that statement. Only about 30% of district leaders reported that all teachers knew all of their students’ families.

This is important because the item, “All teachers know all students’ families,” was significantly correlated with the statement, “Schools in this district are safe and secure” ($r=.508, p<.05$). Although all items in the *Safe School Climate Scale* contributed to the reliability of that measure, it seemed particularly important to know if all teachers meet and know their students’ parents or other main caregivers, including in middle and high schools. The connections of teacher-parent interactions and school safety must be explored in future studies.

Additional analyses showed that district location (urbanicity) significantly predicted greater school safety ($\beta = -.700, p<.000$).⁵ Compared to leaders in urban districts, those in rural and suburban districts reported safer schools, overall. With location taken into account, district leaders who reported high percentages of schools “making good progress” on partnerships reported safer schools ($\beta = +.338, p<.05$). The analyses revealed that these two variables—location and schools making progress on partnerships—explained 43% of the variance in district leaders reports of *Safe School Climate Scale*. This result suggests that district leaders for partnerships play an important role in increasing school safety in all communities—urban, suburban, and rural—by guiding school ATPs to strengthen and continually improve their programs of family and community engagement.

The NNPS inquiry into school safety and school, family, and community partnerships did not cover actions that districts take to prevent gun violence and life-threatening incidents in schools. Most districts and schools in the U.S. are, in fact, safe places—often oases for learning, as reported by the district leaders in NNPS. The exploratory data, however, provide important clues that district leadership and school-based

programs and practices of family and community engagement should be included in studies and discussions of how to improve and maintain school safety.

District Activities to Engage Families and Community on Safety and Behavior. Almost all district leaders (90%) provided examples of district activities to engage family and community partners on issues of school safety and student behavior. Chart 1 summarizes a few of the typical activities reported by district leaders.

| Chart 1. NNPS District Leaders' Examples of Effective Strategies to Engage Parents and the Community in Improving School Safety and Student Behavior |
|--|
| <p>Focus on Rules/Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each school reviews the district's <i>Parent Handbook</i> at Open House, asks parents to sign that they received the handbook and understand the district and school rules for student behavior.• This year students, families, and the community were involved in rewriting the code of student conduct, which includes most of the policies about safety and behavior. |
| <p>Focus on Social Interactions: Committees/Meetings/Shared ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The district organized two parent committees on School Safety and Eliminating Bullying. Each school sent at least two parent representatives for each committee. The representatives also heard about plans to maintain safe schools and asked questions of program administrators.• Our district organized a taskforce of family and community members to address issues of racism, bias and inclusion.• We hold quarterly meetings on school and community safety for stakeholders' input.• This district launched a mobile App that includes a Safe Schools line for students to report (anonymously) issues that pose a threat to school safety.• The district adopted PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports), and asks each school to communicate with parents about how to follow up good behavior activities at home.• The new superintendent is conducting regional meetings and listening sessions on many issues including school safety. |
| <p>Focus on Connections with the Law</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The local sheriff provided school resource officers.• The district welcomes visitors to all school buildings. Each building has a dual entry system where visitors (1) show ID, which is scanned through an FBI data base; and (2) receive a badge that must be worn while in the building. |

¹ See more examples of district activities to improve school safety and student behavior in sections of the NNPS annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices*, at www.partnershipschools.org in the section Success Stories.

Summary

We explored a constellation of correlates of the overall quality of partnership programs at the district level. Table 1 shows that leaders in districts with higher quality partnership programs reported doing important work to guide and improve family and community engagement. This includes strong district leadership on partnerships ($r=.509, p<.01$); active facilitation of schools' Action Teams for Partnerships ($r=.554, p<.01$); broad collegial support ($r=.559, p<.01$); and an emphasis on evaluation ($r=.654, p<.05$).

Districts with higher quality partnership programs also reported having more official policies on safety and behavior to guide their schools ($r=.420, p<.05$), particularly on rules for behavior and legal actions for serious infractions. Most importantly, there were connections between the overall quality of district partnership programs and leaders' reports of whether their schools were "making good progress" on partnerships at the school level ($r=.596, p<.01$).

Table 1. Correlates of the Overall Quality of Partnership Programs and School Safety

| | Leadership on Partnerships | Active Facilitation of School Teams | Collegial Support for Family and Community Engagement | Emphasis on Evaluation | Official Safety Policies (17-items) | Three Rules for Safety and Behavior (7-items) | Policy Policies for Social Interactions and Student Behavior (7 items) | Subscales Legal Actions (3 items) | Percentage Schools Making Good Progress on Partn'rshps | % Free or Reduced-price Lunch |
|--|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Quality of District Partnership Program, Overall | .509** | .554** | .559** | .654** | .420* | .516** | .251 (NS) | .428* | .596** | .196 (NS) |

Source: 2018 DISTRICT UPDATE, N=26.
Zero-order correlations: ** p<.01, * p<.05, NS= Not significant

The overall quality of district partnership programs was *not* significantly related to demographics of the district (e.g., percent of students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch; location/urbanicity, percent ELL students, size of districts). This means that, regardless of the demographic diversity of schools in a district, leaders for partnerships who “do leadership work” can produce high-quality partnership programs in schools throughout their districts.

CONCLUSION

The 2018 District UPDATE data confirm that leaders for partnerships in NNPS are working hard. In geographically, socioeconomically, racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse districts, leaders are using NNPS guidelines to conduct many organizational and facilitative activities, which increase the quality of district-level and school-based partnership programs. The district leaders for partnerships are helping hundreds of schools engage thousands of families in ways that create welcoming schools and that aim to improve student achievement, attendance, attitudes, behavior, and other important outcomes. Over time, as leaders saw that more of their schools were “making good progress” on partnerships, they also reported safer schools and more positive student behavior throughout the district.

Other districts that are not members of NNPS may have leaders who conduct many activities related to family engagement at the district level. However, most are not working as systematically as district leaders in NNPS to build the capacities of schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) or similar committees to work well with all students’ families on goals for student success. NNPS welcomes all districts with leaders for partnerships who are ready to join this agenda.

NOTES

- 1) In 2018, data are from NNPS districts in 15 states: AR, CA, CT, IL, LA, MI, MN, MO, PA, SC, UT, VA, VT, WA, and WV.
- 2) 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 that the scale is useful
- 3) r = correlation coefficient, which reports the strength of relationships between two variables.
- 4) States and organizations in NNPS also completed a 2018 UPDATE. We examine these data, but the samples are small and agendas are too varied to analyze aggregated data.
- 5) β = standardized beta coefficient, which permits us to compare more than one variable’s relationship with a dependent measure (here, *School Safety Climate*), after statistically controlling the other variable(s) in the model.
- 6) Copies of this report and summaries of prior years’ UPDATE data are posted at www.partnershipschoools.org . Click on Research and Evaluation.
- 7) See stories and photos of NNPS Partnership Award winners and books of *Promising Partnership Practices* at www.partnershipschoools.org. Click on Success Stories.

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HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

Review this report and reflect on how *your* work compares with reports from district leaders across the country.

- Check each section of the report. Think of *your* location.

Discuss with your colleagues and school teams:

What are we doing well now?

What can we improve in the next school year? In the next 3 years?

What advice or professional development from NNPS would help us meet our goals?

- Review your district-level *Leadership Plan for Partnerships* for the rest of this year and for the 19-20 school year. Retain good practices and consider needed improvements.
- Read the companion *Annual NNPS Report: 2018 School Data* (Sheldon, 2019).
- If your district has 8 schools or more in NNPS that completed the 2018 School *UPDATE*, you will receive a *customized report* from NNPS on your schools' data in the next week or so. See graphs that compare your schools with data from all schools in the *Annual NNPS Report: 2018 School Data*. Discuss these patterns with your school ATPs when you meet with them. Praise their good work and help them identify needed improvements.
- Contact NNPS with questions about this report or your next steps to improve district-level and school-based partnership programs.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FROM NNPS

Members of NNPS have many options for professional development to help them continually improve their programs of school, family, and community partnerships.

- **Visit the NNPS website:** www.partnershipschools.org.
- Read the monthly NNPS *E-Brief* for news and ideas. Use information from the *E-Brief* in your own communications with school-based ATPs. Make sure your IT office allows *E-Brief* and other email from NNPS, Johns Hopkins University, and from our Constant Contact service to reach you.
- Share this report with your colleagues and supervisors to show how NNPS uses *UPDATE* data to monitor progress on partnership programs across the country. Click on Research and Evaluation for downloadable copies of this report.⁶
- Register for an NNPS Leadership Institute in March or October. The next one is:
 - ✓ **Spring Leadership Institute – March 21-22, 2019** – 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 the Leadership Institute from the NNPS home page.
- Find good ideas in the annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices*. On the website, click on Success Stories.⁷
- Read the quarterly *Type 2 Blog* on new research and reports on important policies and practices. Share your views with NNPS. Follow the link to the *Blog* from the homepage.
- Follow NNPS on *Facebook* and *Twitter* for photos, notes, and newsletters from NNPS Institutes and from district and school members. “LIKE” NNPS on **Facebook** at: <https://www.facebook.com/partnershipschools> and follow us on **Twitter** at: https://twitter.com/NNPS_JHU.
- Scaling up? Ask your next set of schools to complete the *NNPS School Membership Form*. See the section Join NNPS at www.partnershipschools.org.
- Want on-site professional development? Contract with NNPS Facilitators to travel to your location to provide keynote addresses, presentations, and workshops to support your work and train your schools' ATPs. Contact an NNPS Facilitator for information.
- E-mail NNPS Facilitator—Brenda Thomas, bthomas@jhu.edu, with YOUR questions about next steps at the district level to strengthen your program and assist your schools.



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