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Annual NNPS Report: 2018 School Data

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Cover photo: Twin Lakes Elementary School
                Mountain View School District, California
                Family Biliteracy Event

Annual NNPS Report: 2018 School Data

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *2018 School UPDATE* data confirm past reports 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. This year, some analyses focused on the relationship between characteristics of Action Teams for Partnerships—ATPs (e.g., size, organization, meeting frequency) and program implementation, as well as family engagement outcomes. The special topic for 2018 explored school safety and climate.

Characteristics of *Excelling* Programs

- More likely to be preschools and elementary schools.

Program Organization and Structures

- More likely to implement the six core components of the NNPS program.
- Implemented higher quality partnership programs.
- More likely to have at least six people on their ATPs.
- More likely to have ATPs that meets monthly.
- Better at communicating about the program with all stakeholders (e.g., families, teachers, administrators, and district leaders).

Program Outcomes

- More effectively addressed challenges to engagement often faced by families.
- Reported higher percentages of teachers reaching out to engage families.
- Reported higher percentages of family participation in their children's schooling.

School Safety and Student Behavior

- Most schools reported that school safety and student behavior were not serious problems.
- Secondary schools reported more student problems with sexual harassment, bullying, alcohol and drug use, and possessing a weapon.
- Suburban schools tended to report fewer student behavior problems.

Predictors of Safe School Climates

- Excelling schools reported stronger school safety climates.
- Schools with principals who are more supportive of the partnership program had stronger safety climates.
- Schools that conducted more outreach to families had stronger safety climates.

ANNUAL NNPS REPORT
2018 SCHOOL UPDATE

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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., 2019; Sheldon, 2007, 2008; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004). Studies also show that District Leaders for Partnerships who guide school teams to plan and implement goal-linked partnership practices will have schools with higher quality partnership programs (Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon, 2011; Epstein & Sheldon, 2016). 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 identify new challenges on the next *School UPDATE* in the spring of 2019.

In response to requests for information on partnership program development, NNPS provides this summary of schools' *2018 School UPDATE* data to all active members of the network. Districts, states, and organizations also will receive a summary of the *2018 District UPDATE* data (Epstein & Hine, 2019). Schools should compare the data in this report with their own responses on the *2018 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. In the spring, ATPs will be invited to share their best practices with the entire National Network of Partnership Schools in the 2019 collection of *Promising Partnership Practices.*

Benchmarking Strong Programs. This summary report contrasts schools describing their partnership program as "*Very Good*" or "*Excellent*" (collectively referred to as "*excelling*") to those that described their program at lower stages of development. These analyses, we believe, provide benchmark levels of implementation that all schools can achieve. The result is a roadmap for all NNPS member schools toward partnership program excellence.

SCHOOLS IN THE 2018 *UPDATE* SAMPLE

In 2018, 353 Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) reported *UPDATE* data. Surveys came from schools in 14 states. A majority of schools (53.7%) served students in the elementary grades (PK-6); 1.1% served students in PK-8; 12.7% of schools included the middle grades only (4-8); and 11.9% included high school grades only (9-12). Some schools (0.8%) served students from PK through high school and five (1.4%) combined middle and high school grades. Sixty-five sites (18.4%) were preschools or early childhood centers. Given the large number of preschools, we analyzed these schools separately from elementary and secondary schools. For the purposes of reporting in the graphs below, we combined elementary schools with PK-8 schools ("Elementary Schools") and middle schools with high schools ("Secondary Schools").

The largest percentage of schools was located in small cities (36.5%), with the remaining schools in large central cities (28.2%), suburbs (22.8%), and rural areas (12.5%). A large majority of schools (62.3%) received school-wide or targeted Title I funds.

On average, schools served students from varied racial and ethnic backgrounds. Across schools, about 41.3% of students were African American; 34.5% were White (non-Hispanic); 18.3% were

Latino/Hispanic American; 2.0% were Asian American; 0.2% were Native American; and 3.3% were from other racial/ethnic groups. Individual schools included a range of minority students, from 1% to 100%. The schools served communities in which an average of 4.75 different languages were spoken. On average, NNPS schools had 14.4% of their students labeled as English Language Learners. In some schools, families spoke only English at home, whereas other schools served diverse communities speaking up to 38 different languages and dialects.

FINDINGS

OVERALL PROGRAM QUALITY

The annual NNPS *School UPDATE* survey provides each school's ATP 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.

> **Preschools and elementary schools tended to rate their overall program quality higher than secondary schools.**

Figure 1. Overall Program Quality, By School Level

Source: 2018 *NNPS School UPDATE*
N=353 Schools
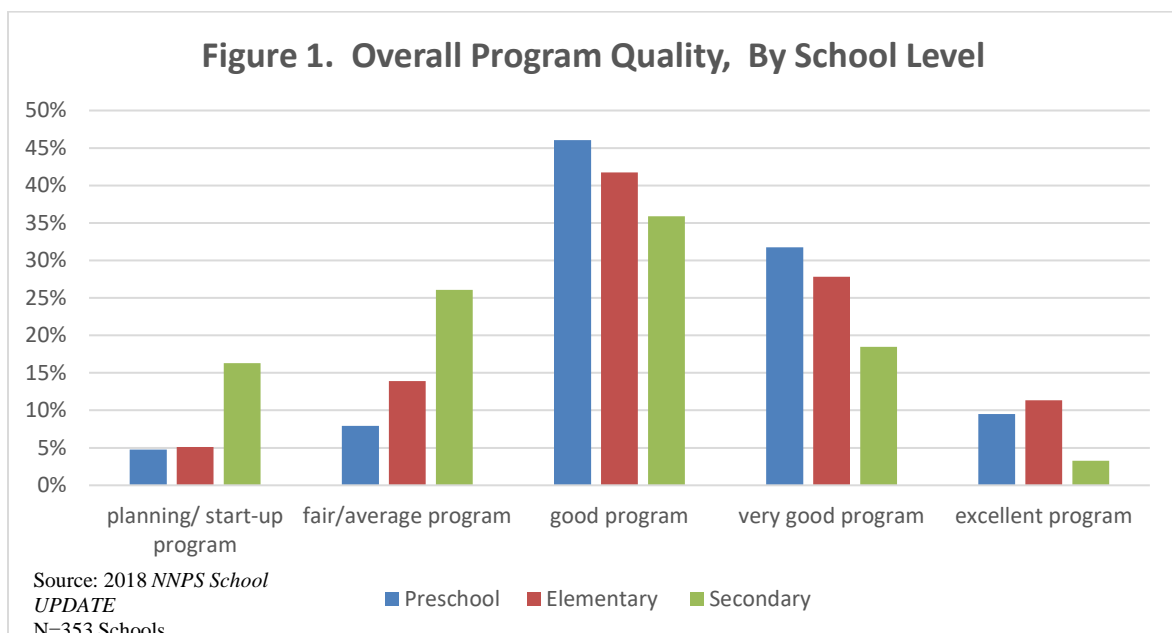
- The largest percentage of schools (about 41%) reported that their programs were *good*, indicating that several activities were implemented for the six types of involvement, teams were working to meet challenges to reach all families, and most teachers and families at the school knew about the program for partnerships and the school's work with NNPS, shown in Figure 1.
- This distribution and pattern of program quality ratings matches those found in previous NNPS summary reports. During any given year, some schools are implementing their partnership program at higher quality levels than others, with **preschool and elementary schools tending to report stronger programs than secondary schools, overall.**

EXCELLING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

In an effort to help NNPS members see the steps needed to develop a strong and sustainable program of school, family, and community partnerships, we contrasted schools that rated their programs as "*Very*

Good" or "*Excellent*" with schools that reported weaker programs. These schools were labeled as having *excelling* partnership programs. They were more likely to report that their schools formed Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs); wrote an annual action plans linked to student outcomes; met many challenges to reach more families; and mobilized teachers and parents to create an engaged school community.

- 123 schools (34.8%) were *excelling* in 2018 (26 preschools, 76 elementary schools, and 20 secondary schools) based on their program quality rating.
- Preschools and elementary schools were more likely than secondary schools to rate their partnership program as "*Excellent*" or "*Very Good*" (41.3% and 39.2% vs. 21.7%, respectively).

PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Several *UPDATE* measures indicated whether school ATPs were implementing core components of NNPS's research-based partnership program and how well schools were implementing a broad range of programmatic activities.[1]
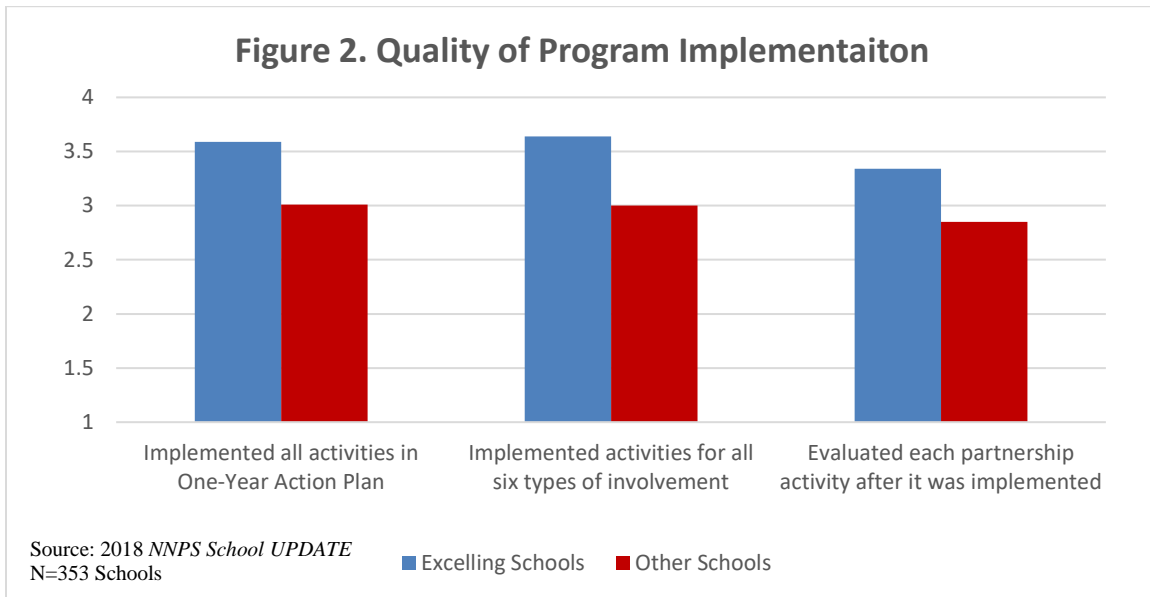
CORE COMPONENTS

Core NNPS program components were measured using six items. Schools, regardless of grade level or if they were excelling, implemented at least five of these basic components of the NNPS program model. ATPs were most likely to report that they had an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) of six or more people (90%) and that they had written or planned to write a One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships for the *next* (19-20) school year (92%). Schools were least likely (69%) to have participated in an end-of-year celebration to share activities and ideas on partnerships with other schools in the district.

- Excelling programs were more likely than weaker programs to implement each of the six NNPS program components, but were especially more likely to allocate funding for their family and community engagement efforts (88% vs. 72%).
- Analyses indicated differences in the extent to which preschools, elementary, and secondary schools implemented the core components of NNPS.
  - Preschools were more likely than elementary or secondary schools to have written an action plan for the 2017-18 school year (95% vs. 89% and 81%, respectively).
  - Elementary schools were more likely than preschools or secondary schools to report having an allocated budget for their partnership program (82% vs. 71% for preschools and for secondary schools).

QUALITY OF IMPLEMENTATION

A 12-item scale ($\alpha = .90$)[2] measured how well ATPs organized and implemented the partnership program at the school. These program implementation actions included involving families in 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 practice, *need to improve* the practice, implemented the practice *OK*, or implemented the practice *very well*.

> **Across all 12 measures of program implementation, excelling schools rated their practices higher in quality than other schools (See Figure 2).**

Figure 2. Quality of Program Implementaiton

Source: 2018 *NNPS School UPDATE*
N=353 Schools

■ Excelling Schools ■ Other Schools

- Preschools and elementary schools reported stronger program implementation of NNPS program components than secondary schools.

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 *2018 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 ATPs' efforts to share plans and progress with the school community.

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 8.5 members on their ATPs. For the sample as a whole, about 50% of schools (e.g., the median) had eight or more people.

- Excelling and other programs reported the same number of ATP members, on average.
- Preschools reported the largest ATPs (average of 9.1 people), compared to elementary and secondary schools that reported ATPs with an average of 8.7 and 7.6 people, respectively.
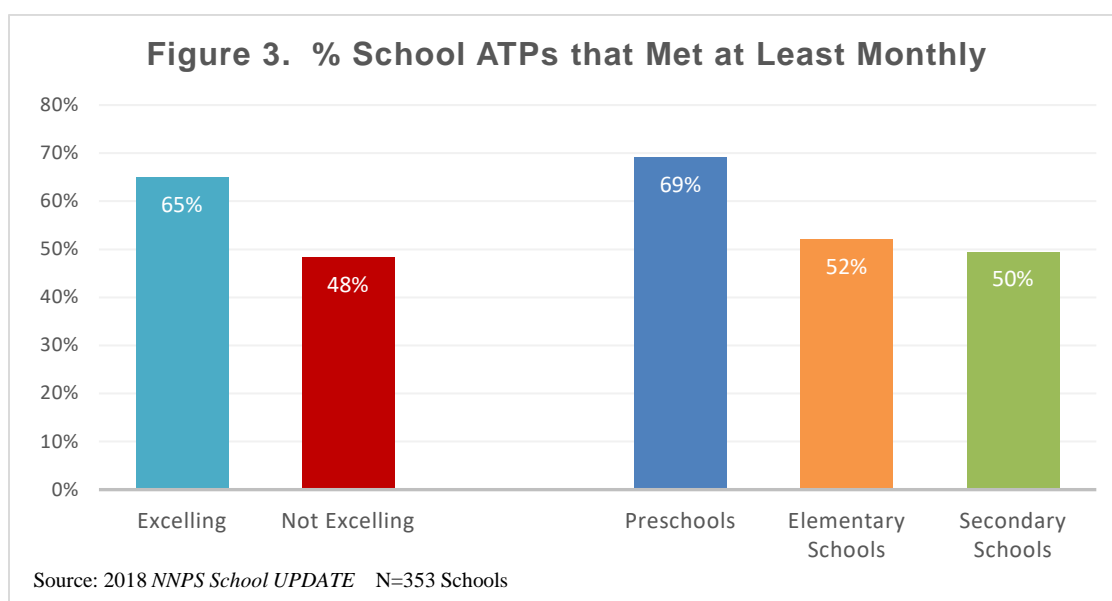
STRUCTURE

Prior NNPS studies and the *Handbook for Action, Fourth Edition* (see Chapter 3 in Epstein, et al., 2019) 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.

> **About one-third (35.4%) of all schools' ATPs worked together as a single team, while almost half (47.6%) formed committees.**

- Schools with at least 6 people on the ATP more often reported programs that were *Very Good* or *Excellent*, whereas those with zero to five people more often rated their program as "*Starting/Planning*" or "*Fair.*"

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

NNPS encourages schools to hold monthly ATP meetings in order to effectively plan and implement a comprehensive partnership program. In 2018, schools reported on the frequency with which their ATP met (See Figure 3).

Figure 3. % School ATPs that Met at Least Monthly

Excelling: 65%
Not Excelling: 48%
Preschools: 69%
Elementary Schools: 52%
Secondary Schools: 50%
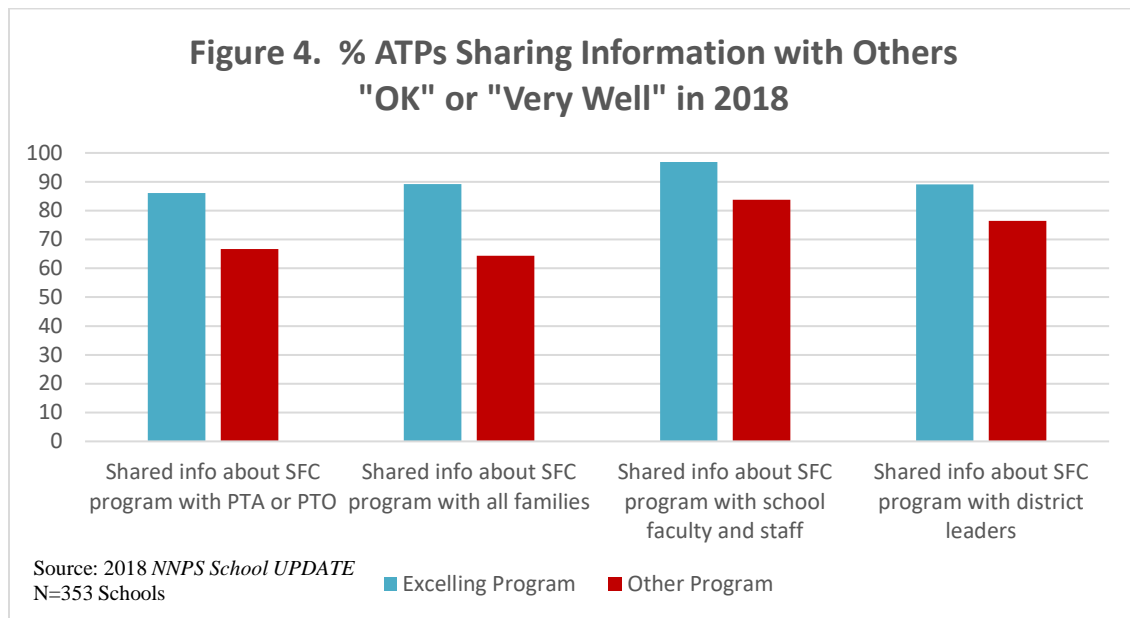
Source: 2018 *NNPS School UPDATE*   N=353 Schools

- ATPs in excelling schools were more likely to meet at least monthly than those in other schools (65.0% vs. 48.4%).
- Preschools were most likely to have ATPs that met at least monthly. Elementary and secondary schools did not differ significantly in how frequently their ATPs met.

REPORTING OF PROGRESS

NNPS recommends that ATPs report progress to various stakeholders, including the School Council, Faculty, District Facilitators, and other parent groups (PTO or PTA). As a school committee, an ATP should communicate with the overarching School Improvement Team or Council so that partnerships remain a priority at the school.

- Preschools and elementary schools were stronger than secondary schools at sharing information about partnership activities with their families and parent associations, as well as with their school councils.
- Secondary schools were as strong as preschool and elementary schools at sharing information about their partnership activities with faculty and staff, as well as with district leaders.
- Schools excelling in program implementation tended to share information about their work better than other schools (Figure 4).

The differences between the excelling and other NNPS schools were statistically significant and especially noteworthy in terms of ATP's communication with families and family organizations (e.g., PTA and/or PTO).

Figure 4. % ATPs Sharing Information with Others "OK" or "Very Well" in 2018

Source: 2018 *NNPS School UPDATE*
N=353 Schools

■ Excelling Program ■ Other Program

FUNDING

A single item asked ATPs to rate the level of funding for their schools' partnership programs. Figure 5 shows that the largest percentage of teams reported that they had *adequate funds* for their partnership programs (56.8%). However, a sizeable portion of schools noted *not enough funds* (23.1%) or no funds (5.0%) for their programs. Some (15.2%) felt their family and community involvement programs were *well funded*.

Figure 5. % Schools with Adequate or Well-Funded Programs

Source: 2018 *NNPS School UPDATE*
N=353 Schools
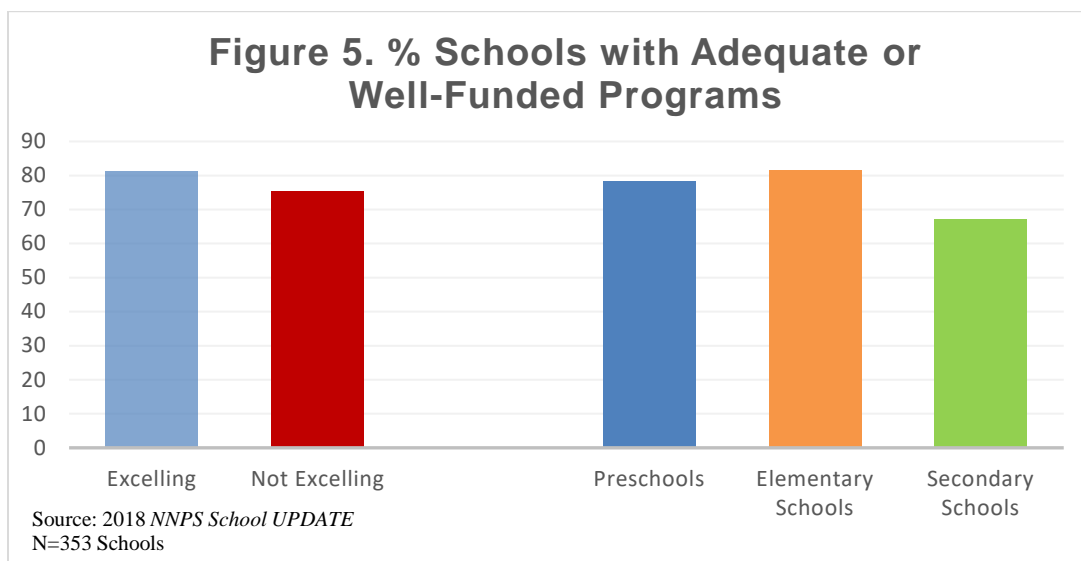
Title I is an important source of funding for school's family and community engagement efforts. These schools were far more likely to indicate that they had adequate funding for partnerships (83.7% vs. 66.5%).

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- Adequacy of funding <u>did not</u> distinguish excelling programs from the others.
- Secondary schools were the least likely to report adequate or well-funded partnership programs.

ACTION TEAM SUPPORT

PRINCIPALS' SUPPORT

To be successful and sustained, school-based partnership programs need the support of the principal (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004). ATPs reported the extent to which the principal *never, sometimes, often,* or *always* provided support for the partnership program. This scale asked about ten ways in which principals might support the ATP and/or partnership program at the school ($\alpha = .93$).

> **Overall, NNPS schools reported high levels of principal support. Those with excelling programs reported statistically stronger levels of principal support than other schools.**

- Overall, principals were rated as highly supportive of partnerships at their school
- Elementary schools tended to rate their principals as more supportive then secondary schools

DISTRICT LEADERS' SUPPORT

Schools' partnership programs also benefit from the support of district leaders. In 2018, ATPs rated the quality of 7 types of district assistance ($\alpha = .90$) as *not provided*, *not very helpful*, *helpful*, or *very helpful*. On average, school ATPs reported more than six supportive actions from their districts—one more supportive activity from districts than was reported last year.

> **ATPs with excelling programs reported more helpful district support than other schools.**

- Title I schools reported more helpful district support for their family engagement program than non-Title I schools.
- There were no differences in district support across locales.

COLLEGIAL SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS

Previous studies of NNPS schools show that high-quality partnership programs are characterized by strong support for the ATP from important stakeholders throughout the school community (Sanders, Sheldon, & Epstein, 2005; Sheldon, 2005). These colleagues include principals, other administration staff, school counselors, teachers, and parent associations.

- Schools with excelling partnership programs reported greater support from all of these sources, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Sources of Internal Support for Partnerships in 2018, Mean Scores by School Level
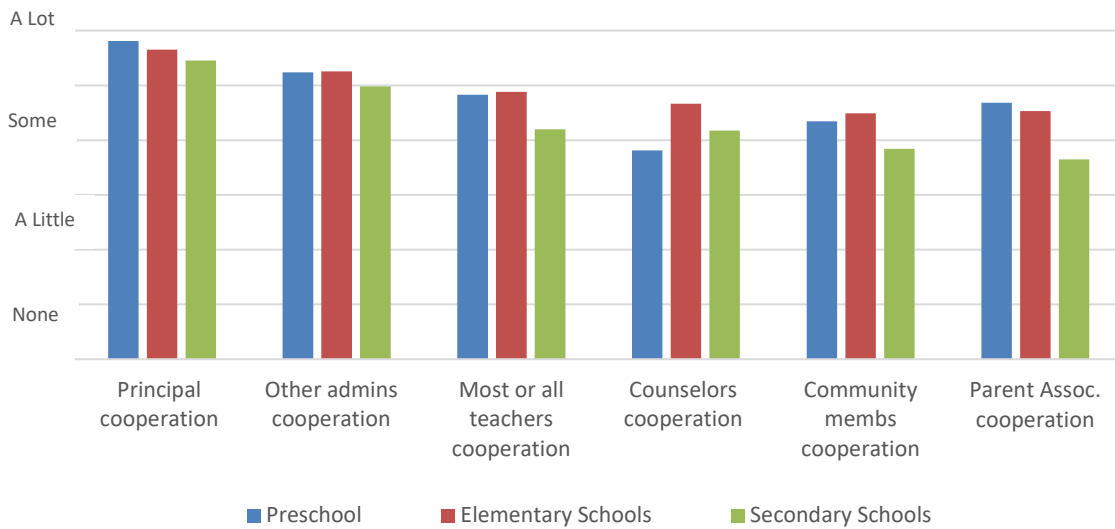
Source: 2018 *NNPS School UPDATE*   N=353 Schools

- Support from principals and other administrators was similar across school levels.
- Elementary schools reported greater support from school counselors than preschools or secondary schools.
- Secondary schools reported having significantly less support for their partnership program than preschools or elementary schools from teachers and parent associations.
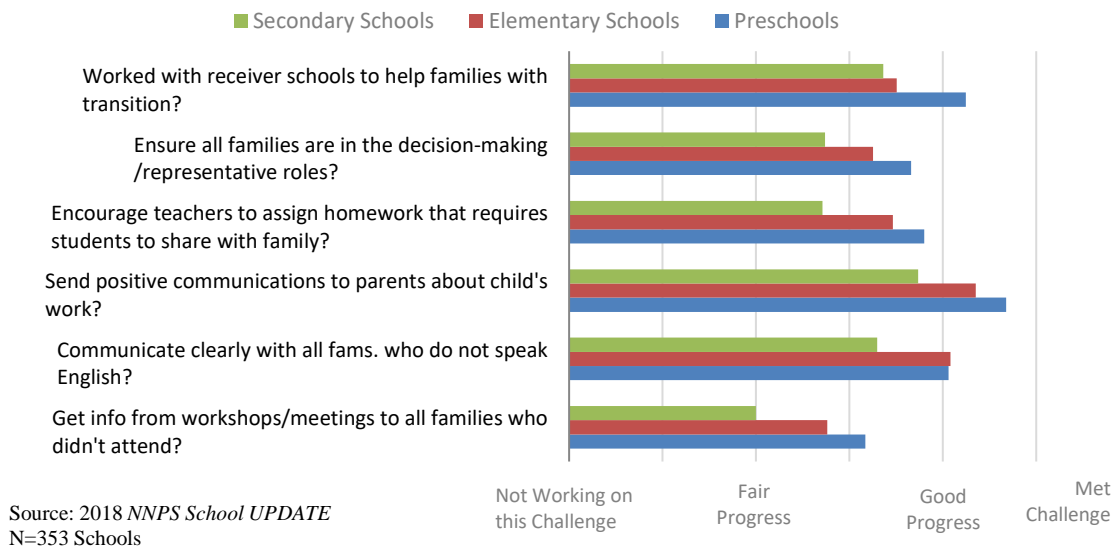
MEETING CHALLENGES TO REACH ALL FAMILIES

In addition to organizing their partnership programs, NNPS encourages ATPs to work with local partners (teachers, PTA/PTO, community partners) to conduct activities that involve *all* families and community partners in ways that support student success. Previous research found that schools' efforts to meet these challenges in their outreach to families were associated with higher student achievement and attendance rates (Sheldon, 2003, 2007). Schools' efforts to solve challenges of outreach and the involvement of all families were measured with a 9-item scale (α = .85). ATPs rated their attention to addressing challenges from *not working on the challenge*, to making *fair progress, good progress*, or having *solved the challenge*.

> **Excelling programs were more likely than other programs to be addressing each of the outreach challenges**.

- Preschools and elementary schools reported greater progress meeting each of the challenges to family engagement than secondary schools. Figure 7 reports the average (mean) score for each outreach challenge.

Figure 7. Extent Challenges were Addressed in 2018, Mean Scores by School Level

Legend: Secondary Schools, Elementary Schools, Preschools

Categories (top to bottom):
- Worked with receiver schools to help families with transition?
- Ensure all families are in the decision-making /representative roles?
- Encourage teachers to assign homework that requires students to share with family?
- Send positive communications to parents about child's work?
- Communicate clearly with all fams. who do not speak English?
- Get info from workshops/meetings to all families who didn't attend?

Scale: Not Working on this Challenge — Fair Progress — Good Progress — Met Challenge

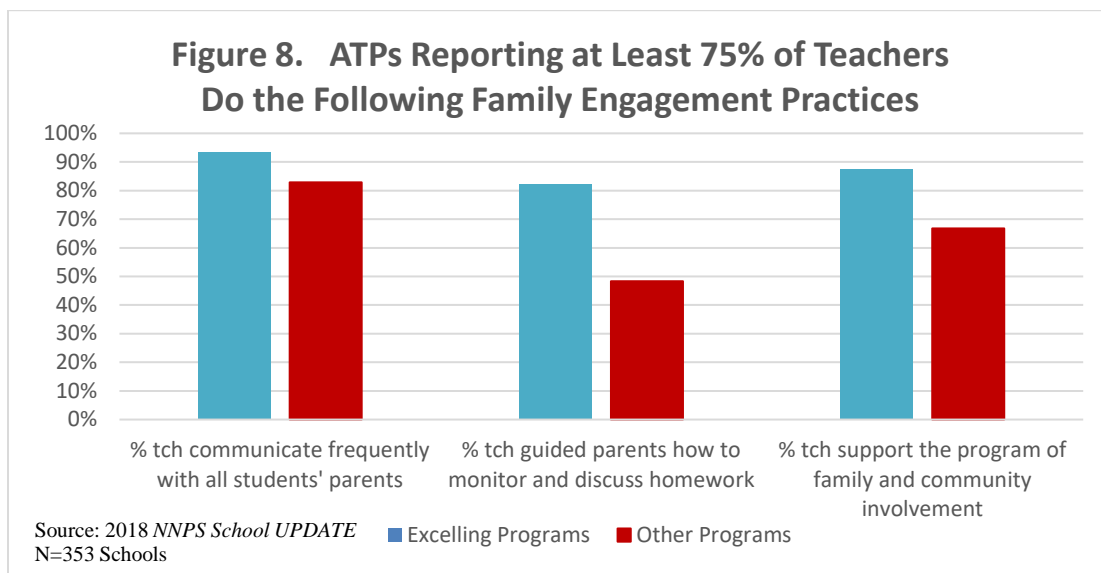Source: 2018 *NNPS School UPDATE*
N=353 Schools

- Schools located in large urban areas reported greater progress on meeting challenges to family engagement, overall.
- Title I status was associated with stronger efforts to translate communications for families who do not speak English.

TEACHERS' PRACTICES OF INVOLVEMENT

Six 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 8 shows the percentage of schools' ATPs reporting that 75% or more teachers participated in activities to involve all families.
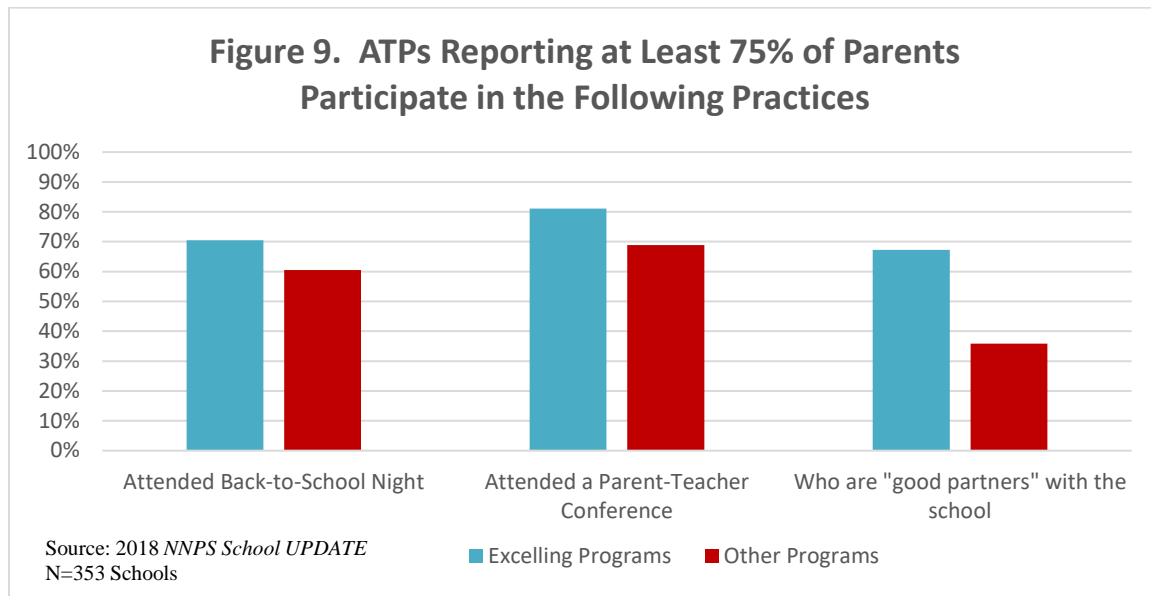
- Excelling programs were more likely to report that at least 75% of teachers implemented each of the family engagement practices.

Figure 8. ATPs Reporting at Least 75% of Teachers Do the Following Family Engagement Practices

Categories:
- % tch communicate frequently with all students' parents
- % tch guided parents how to monitor and discuss homework
- % tch support the program of family and community involvement

Source: 2018 *NNPS School UPDATE*
N=353 Schools

Legend: Excelling Programs, Other Programs

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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 engagement was more common in elementary and PK-8 schools than in secondary schools.**

Figure 9. ATPs Reporting at Least 75% of Parents Participate in the Following Practices

Source: 2018 *NNPS School UPDATE*
N=353 Schools

- Excelling programs were more likely to have at least 75% of parents involved, across all forms of engagement and across school levels (Figure 9).
- Fewer schools reported 75% or more of parents volunteering at the school than any other parent participation activity.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT, BY PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Analyses explored the extent to which the quality of schools' partnership program was associated with reports of family support and participation. Several measures of program implementation were associated with greater levels of family involvement. The following measures of schools' partnership program implementation were significantly associated with higher estimates of all forms of family involvement (See Table 1):

- Quality of Basic Program Implementation
- Principal Support for Partnerships
- Meeting Challenges to Family Engagement

> **School outreach to help families overcome challenges was the strongest correlate of almost all forms of family engagement (Table 1).**

Table 1: Correlation Coefficients for Program Implementation and Levels of Family Engagement

% of families who...	Basic Program Implementation	Principal Support	Meeting the Challenges
Attended a Back to School Night or Open House	.273***	.213***	.249***
Attended at least ONE parent-teacher conference this year	.315***	.266***	.353***
Volunteered to help school or individual teacher	.282***	.271***	.509***
Attended an event as a volunteer in the audience	.288***	.265***	.351***
Monitored and discussed homework w/ children	.209***	.226***	.382***
Are good partners with this school	.276***	.186***	.335***

Table 1 reports significant correlation coefficients. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Schools that were doing more to help families overcome typical challenges to family and community engagement were more likely to report higher levels of family engagement and more families who were "good partners" with the school.


SPECIAL TOPIC: SCHOOL SAFETY AND STUDENT BEHAVIOR

In the wake of mass shootings at schools in the past few years, school safety and student behavior have emerged as topics of great concern. The debates about how to keep students safe and healthy have identified a range of proposed practices from increasing the presence of weapons for adults on school grounds and increasing students' access to mental health services. Very little is understood, however, about how school, family, and community partnerships contribute to these conversations and potential solutions due in large part to the dearth of research on the topic. Considering the national conversation, NNPS included questions on the *2018 School UPDATE* asking ATPs to provide information about the extent to which student safety and behavior are issues at their school, as well as how they are working to engage families and the community around student behavior and safety.

PERCEIVED LEVELS OF BEHAVIOR AND SAFETY PROBLEMS IN NNPS SCHOOLS

Schools in NNPS, on average, did not report having major problems with any form of student behavior or school safety. (Figure 10)

Figure 10. Extent of Safety and Behavior Problems in Schools, 2018

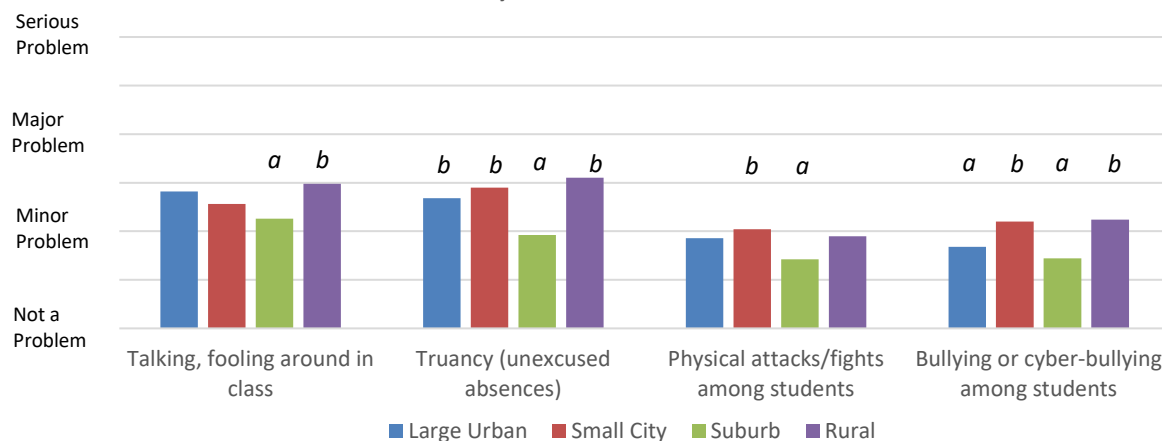Source: 2018 *NNPS School UPDATE*
N=353 Schools

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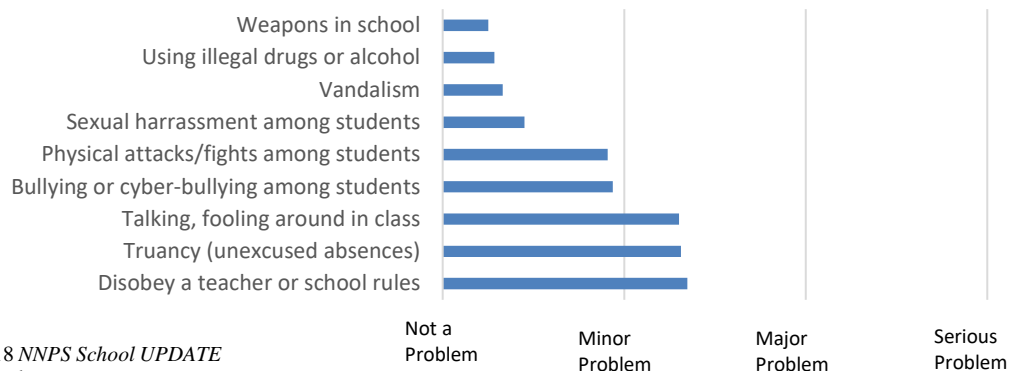
The data indicate consistent differences in safety and behavior problems associated with school level:

- Preschools reported lower levels of problems for each type of safety and behavior problem.
- Secondary schools reported greater problems than other schools with sexual harassment among students, bullying/cyber-bullying among students, use of alcohol and illegal drugs, and students possessing weapons at school.

There were differences in safety and behavior problems across locales, as shown in Figure 11.

- Schools in suburban areas tended to have lower levels of problems with students fooling around, truancy, physical fights, and bullying.
- Bullying and cyber-bullying was most problematic in schools located in small cities and rural areas.
- Schools in small cities reported more problems with physical fights among students than those located in suburban areas.

Figure 11. Extent of Safety and Behavior Problems in Schools, Across Locales in 2018

Source: 2018 *NNPS School UPDATE*
N=353 Schools

Note: Columns with different letters indicate statistically significant differences exist.
a = lowest   b= highest

EFFORTS TO IMPROVE SCHOOL SAFETY AND STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Safe School Climate

The 2018 School *UPDATE* Survey asked ATPs to report on the school safety climate and how their schools are working to ensure and improve student safety and good behavior. *Safe School Climate* was measured using a 5-item scale (α = .82) that asked ATP members the extent to which they agreed with the following statements: This is a safe school; this school's discipline is consistent for all students; teachers here know all of their students' families; rules for behavior are known by all students and families; and students feel comfortable speaking up if something is not right. Respondents could indicate whether they "strongly agreed," "agreed," "disagreed," or "strongly disagreed" with each statement.

- Secondary schools reported less safe school climates than preschool and elementary schools.
- Schools located in suburbs reported more safe school climates than those in other locales.

ATPs were also asked to report whether or not their schools employed various practices to ensure student safety. We categorized the safety practices into three groups: establishing rules, facilitating interpersonal interactions, and enforcing laws.

- Elementary and secondary schools were more likely than preschools to report establishing rules to improve school safety and student behavior. These practices include establishing student codes of behavior, dress codes, and/or adopting a school uniform.
- Elementary and secondary schools were more likely than preschools to facilitate interpersonal interactions to improve school safety and good student behavior. These practices include using restorative justice programs, after school programs, volunteers in the hallways, positive behavior programs, and community mentors.
- Secondary schools were more likely than other schools to use practices focused on laws and legal approaches to student safety. These practices include having metal detectors, employing security guards, and practicing lockdown drills.

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION and SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATES

We explored school climate in relation to partnership program implementation and quality.

> **Schools with excelling programs of family and community engagement reported safer school climates, overall, but did not differ from other schools on the number of practices implemented to promote student safety.**

To understand the relationship between school climate and partnership programs, we conducted Ordinary Least Square Regression analyses. These analyses allow for an estimation of how elements of the NNPS program predict the school safety climate and safety practices, after taking into account demographic characteristics of schools (i.e., grade level, locale, percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, etc.).

The additional analyses indicated that, secondary schools and schools with more students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch reported lower levels of School Safety Climate. With these demographic variables statistically controlled:

- Schools with principals more supportive of the program of family and community engagement reported safer school climates.
- Schools that conducted strong outreach to meet challenges to engage all families reported stronger safer school climates.

NOTES

1) NNPS *UPDATE* data also are analyzed each year in research studies to learn how the various scales and measures in this report 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. 2018) in the section Success Stories.

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

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- For a more complete description of the NNPS school and district approach to school, family, and community partnerships
- Read past research summaries. (Click on Research and Evaluation)[1]
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- Send an e-mail to an NNPS Facilitator with questions about YOUR next steps in strengthening your program of family and community engagement. (Click on Meet the Staff)
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