



NATIONAL NETWORK OF
Partnership Schools
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

SPECIAL REPORT

SUMMARY 2007 UPDATE DATA FROM SCHOOLS IN NNPS

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January 2008

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SUMMARY

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In response to requests for information on program development and positive feedback from members about last year's summary report, NNPS is providing this summary of schools' *2007 School UPDATE* data to all active members of the network. Districts, states, and organizations also will receive a summary of the *2007 District UPDATE* data.

SUMMARY

The *2007 School UPDATE* data indicate that most schools in NNPS are working to implement core components and essential elements that NNPS has found affect the quality of partnership programs over time. Presently, elementary schools conduct more activities and report more parental involvement than middle and high schools. Still, many middle and high schools in NNPS are organizing their Action Teams for Partnerships (ATP) and are working to improve their programs, just as elementary schools do.

The data also suggest several ways for schools to improve the organization of their partnership programs:

- Many schools' Action Teams for Partnerships do not meet monthly. This is an important requirement for developing and discussing plans, improving teamwork, and conducting evaluations of implemented activities.
- Many ATPs have not organized committees to share leadership for implementing activities that focus on specific school goals or on the six types of involvement.
- Too many schools need to solve the challenge of getting fathers actively involved in their child's education, especially in the middle and high school grades.
- Many schools continue to struggle to allocate funds for their partnership program efforts and activities.
- Some elementary, middle, and high schools did not receive assistance from their district leaders in the form of workshops on partnerships, meetings with the principal to support partnerships, and in helping schools' Action Teams for Partnerships evaluate the quality and progress of their partnership programs.
- More schools need to help teachers guide parents to monitor and discuss homework with their children. When teachers do so, there tend to be more families who engage in those activities.
- Principals need to continue their strong support for family and community involvement, as this support is critical for schools to maintain and improve partnership program quality.

NNPS expects all schools to continue to plan, implement, and evaluate their programs of school, family, and community partnerships. By doing so, schools' ATPs will be able to report progress and new challenges on the *2008 School UPDATE* survey next spring.

Schools may compare the data in this report with their own responses on the *2007 School UPDATE*. ATPs should take pride in practices that are strong, compared to other schools across the country. ATPs are invited to share their best practices with NNPS in the 2008 collection of *Promising Partnership Practices*. Ideas are due May 15, 2008 and can be submitted at any time at www.partnershipschools.org in the section Success Stories, click on Submit a Practice/Online.

ATPs should work this year to improve aspects of their programs that fall below NNPS averages or that do not reflect NNPS's expectations for excellent programs. Studies indicate that schools that work on partnerships over time will improve their programs, outreach, and results of family and community involvement (Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Sheldon, 2007; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004).

SCHOOLS IN 2007 UPDATE SAMPLE

In 2007, 669 Action Teams for Partnerships reported *UPDATE* data. Surveys came from schools in 36 states, the District of Columbia, and Canada. A large majority of schools (60.3%) served students in the elementary grades (PK-6); 10.1% served students in PK-8; 12.7% included the middle grades only (4-8); and 9.2% included high school grades only (9-12). A small percentage of schools (1.7%) served students from PK through high school and (1.4%) combined middle and high school grades.

The largest percentage of schools was located in large, central cities (36.6%), with the remaining schools in small city (21.1%), suburban (23.1%), and rural areas (19.1%). A large majority of schools (70.1%) received school-wide or targeted Title I funds.

On average, schools served students from varied racial and ethnic backgrounds. Across schools, about 36.0% of students were African American; 13.9% were Latino/Hispanic American; 42.5% were White, and 7.6% were from other racial/ethnic groups. Individual schools included a range of minority students, from 0% to 100%. The families served by these schools spoke an average of 4.2 languages. In some schools, families spoke only English at home, whereas other schools served diverse families speaking up to 70 different languages and dialects.

FINDINGS

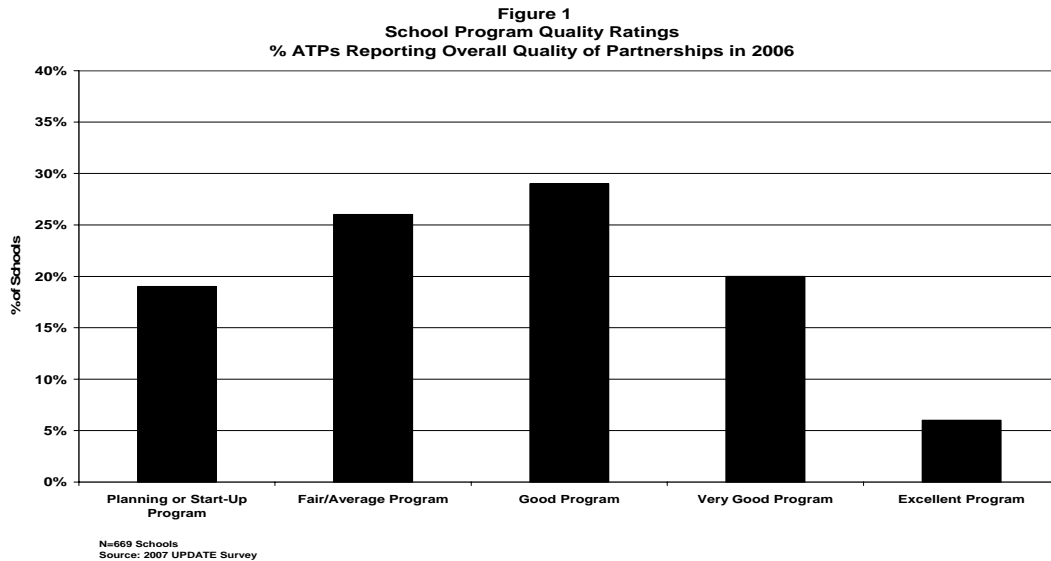
OVERALL PROGRAM QUALITY

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

Schools in NNPS reported a near-normal distribution in the quality of their programs (Figure 1). A few were in a *planning phase* or *start-up phase*; some reported a *fair* or *average* program; more said their program was *good*; others reported a *very good* program; and a few identified an *excellent* program.

- About 19% of schools were planning or just beginning their programs. Just over 6% reported excellent programs, with almost all aspects of a sustainable program in place.
- The largest percentage of schools (29.1%) 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.

- No high schools and only 2.3 % of middle schools reported having an excellent partnership program.

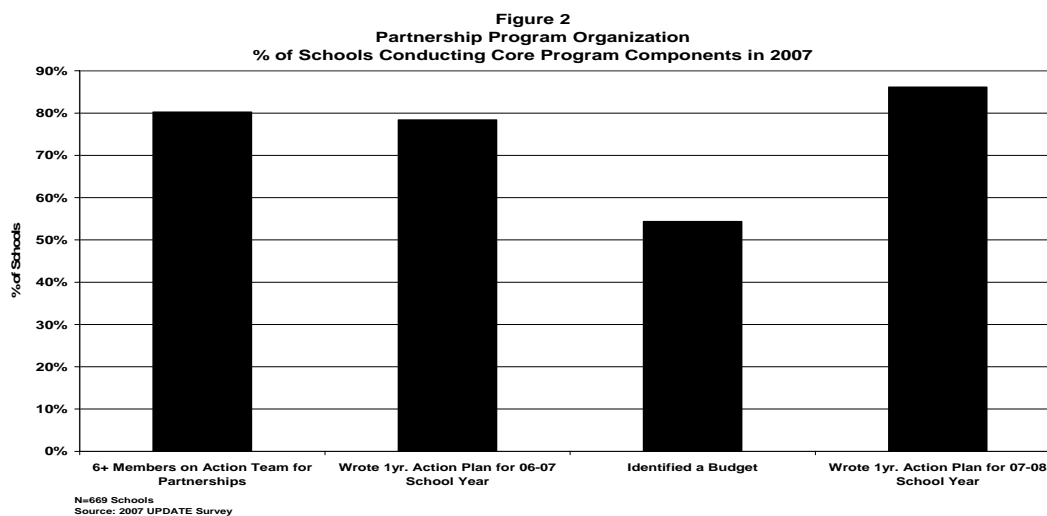


PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

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

CORE COMPONENTS

Core NNPS program components were measured using a 6-item scale ($\alpha = .70$).² On average, schools implemented 4.04 out of 6 program components. Schools were most likely to report that they wrote (or planned to write) a One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships for the *next* school year (86%); had an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) of six or more people (80%); and had written an action plan for the 06-07 school year (78%), as shown in Figure 2.



- Elementary schools were most likely of all schools to have identified a budget for their partnerships efforts (59%).
- Other analyses show that in 2007, elementary schools (67%) also were most likely to replace departing ATP members on their action teams (not shown).

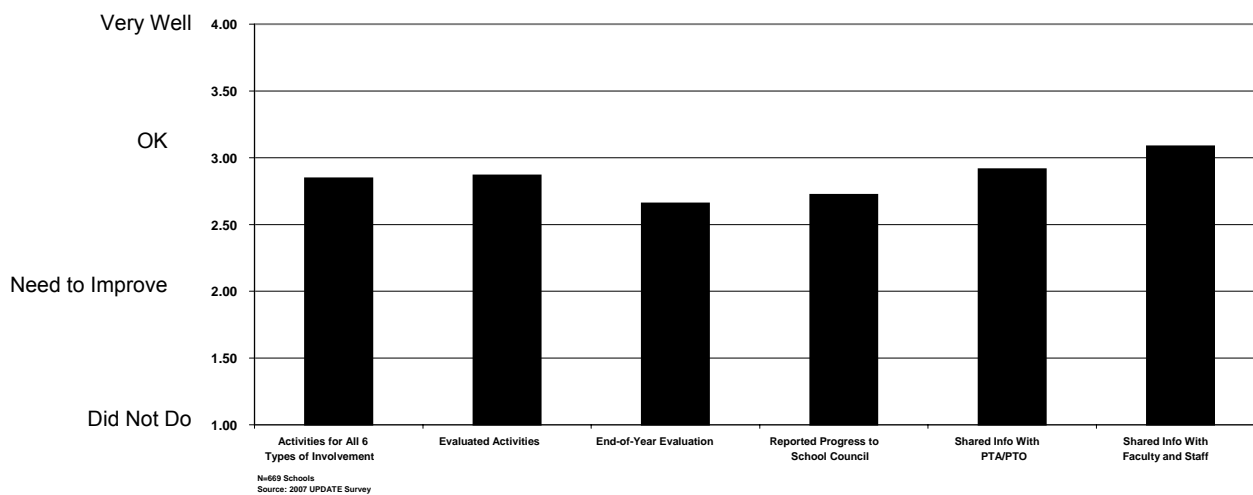
QUALITY OF IMPLEMENTATION

A 13-item scale ($\alpha = .94$) measured how well ATPs organized and implemented the partnership program at the school. These program actions included involving families in some activities for all six types of involvement, evaluating the activities conducted, and reporting information to all families, PTA/PTO, and faculty and staff. Schools gave one of four responses to each item, indicating if they *did not do* the action, *need to improve*, were *OK*, or implemented *very well*.

Most schools reported that they were implementing key NNPS program elements “OK,” as shown in Figure 3.

- Elementary schools, generally, reported higher levels of program implementation than did other schools.
- Schools were weakest in evaluating their programs at the end of the year to reflect on the progress made and to identify areas for improvement.
- Overall, schools were most confident in their implementation of activities to support school improvement goals and in their scheduling activities throughout the school year (not shown).

Figure 3
Average Level of Implementation of Key Program Elements in 2007



Although most schools had many activities in place to organize their work on partnerships, some schools lagged behind the others in implementing various elements. For example:

- Almost 30% of K-8 schools indicated that they did not share information about their partnership program with the school council.
- Elementary schools consistently reported better communications with the range of school, family, and district partners.

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 or work group, the ATP should report its plans and progress to the School Improvement Team or School Council on a regular basis, just as other committees report their work. Questions on the *2007 School UPDATE* asked about the structure of schools' ATPs, members of the team, subcommittee structure, frequency of meetings, and funding for the partnership program.

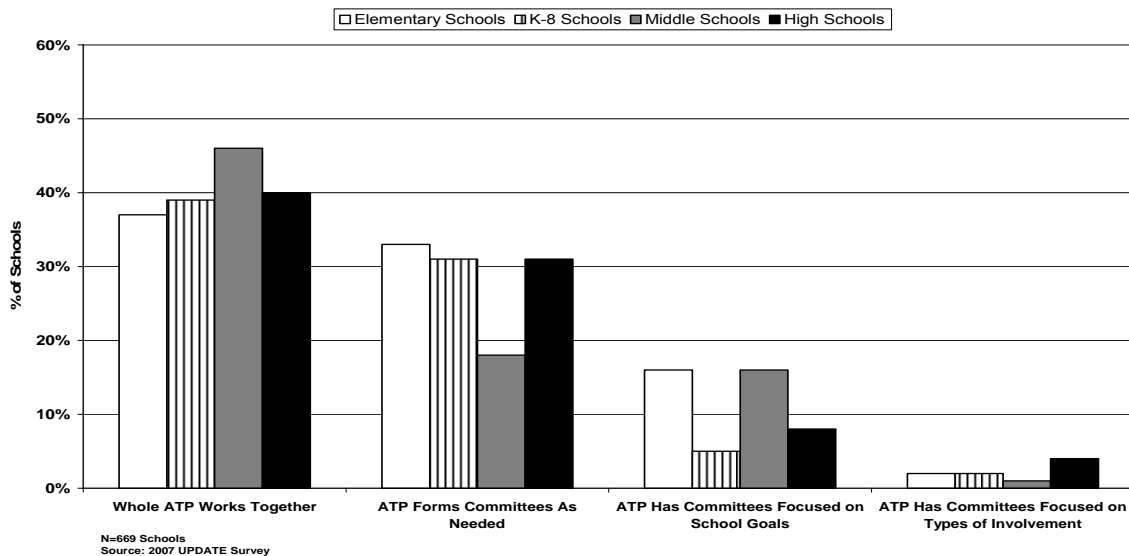
STRUCTURE

Prior NNPS studies and the *Handbook for Action, Second Edition* (see Chapter 3 in Epstein, et al., 2002) suggest that the ATP should have committees to conduct more practices of family and community involvement. With committees, ATP members and others not on the team can share leadership for different activities.

About 39% of all schools' ATPs worked together only as a whole team. Of the schools that organized committees to develop and implement involvement activities, most ATPs formed committees as needed, as shown in Figure 4.

- Elementary schools were most likely to organize their ATPs into subcommittees “as needed.” This indicates that they may form an ad hoc committee to implement an upcoming partnership activity.
- Middle and high schools were most likely to organize their ATPs as a single, whole committee.

Figure 4
% of School Reporting How Action Teams are Organized in 2007, by School Level



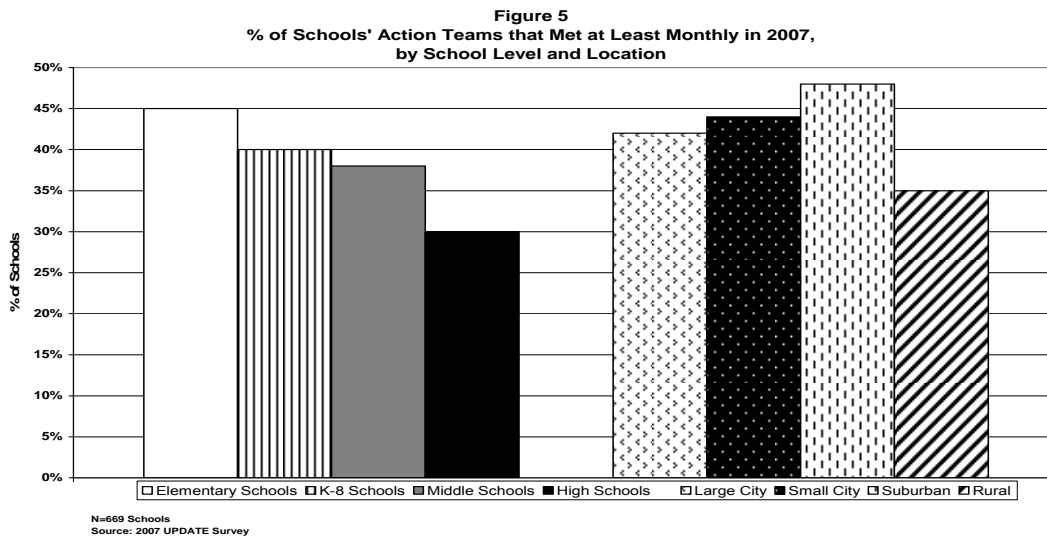
MEMBERSHIP

NNPS suggests that each school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) include at least two or three teachers, two or three parents, and one administrator, with one or two students at the high school level, and options for community partners and other educators and representatives at any level. On average, schools in NNPS had between eight and nine members on their ATPs. Some schools, mainly in their planning phase, had not yet formed an ATP and had no members, and others had as many as 34 people.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

Fewer than half of the schools' ATPs (41.9%) met at least monthly to plan and implement their partnership efforts, as shown in Figure 5.

- High schools and rural schools' ATPs were less likely than others to meet at least monthly.



FUNDING

A single item asked ATPs to rate the level of funding for their schools' partnership programs. The largest percentage of teams reported that they had *adequate funding* for their partnership program (48.9%), although others noted that they received *no funds* (15.8%) or *not enough funds* (25.7%) for their programs. A few (9.6%) said their family and community involvement programs were *well funded*.

Overall, most schools (58.5%) were managing with the available funding, possibly because most schools in NNPS receive Title I funds, which require that districts and schools allocate some funding for family and community involvement (Sheldon, 2007).

ACTION TEAM SUPPORT

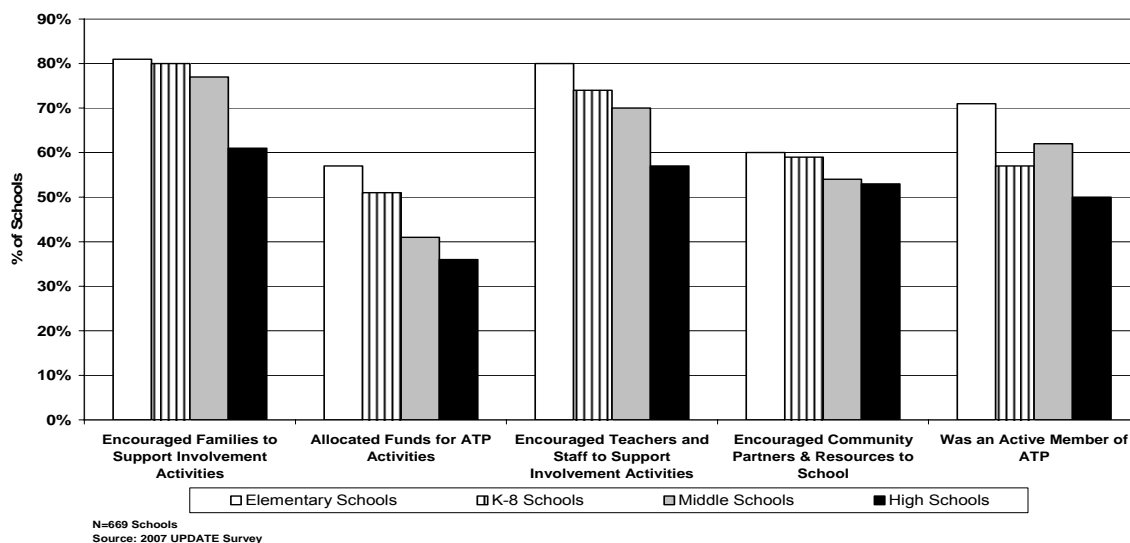
PRINCIPALS' SUPPORT

Partnership programs need the support of the school principal in order to be successful and sustained (Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004). Almost all schools (96%) reported that the principal was a member of the action team for partnerships, as NNPS requires. ATPs reported whether or not the school principal provided *no*, *some*, or *a lot* of support for nine actions for the partnership program ($\alpha = .91$).

Overall, principals were rated as highly supportive of partnerships at their school (Figure 6).

- Principals were most supportive in welcoming families to the school. Almost 98% of schools reported their principal was either *some* or *a lot* welcoming of all families.
- Principals were least supportive in allocating funds for partnerships.
- Principals were also less likely to help *a lot* in establishing school-community partnerships.

Figure 6
ATP Reports of "A Lot" of Support from Principal of Partnerships in 2007, by School Level



DISTRICT LEADERS' SUPPORT

Schools' partnership programs also benefit from the support of district leaders. In 2007, ATPs rated the quality of 7 types of district assistance they received, from "not provided," to "not very helpful," "helpful," and "very helpful" ($\alpha = .90$). Schools reported receiving an average of between 5 and 6 supportive actions from their districts.

Schools in NNPS, regardless of grade level, reported that the support they received from their district leaders was helpful or very helpful to their work on school, family, and community partnerships.

- Most schools (82.1%) reported that their districts provided information about partnerships.
- Over 63% of schools reported that their districts provided general funds to support partnerships. This was the least common form of support districts offered schools.
- About 30% of schools reported that their district did not provide workshops on partnerships, offer technical assistance on partnerships, meet with the principal about strengthening partnerships, or help the school evaluate the quality of its partnership program.

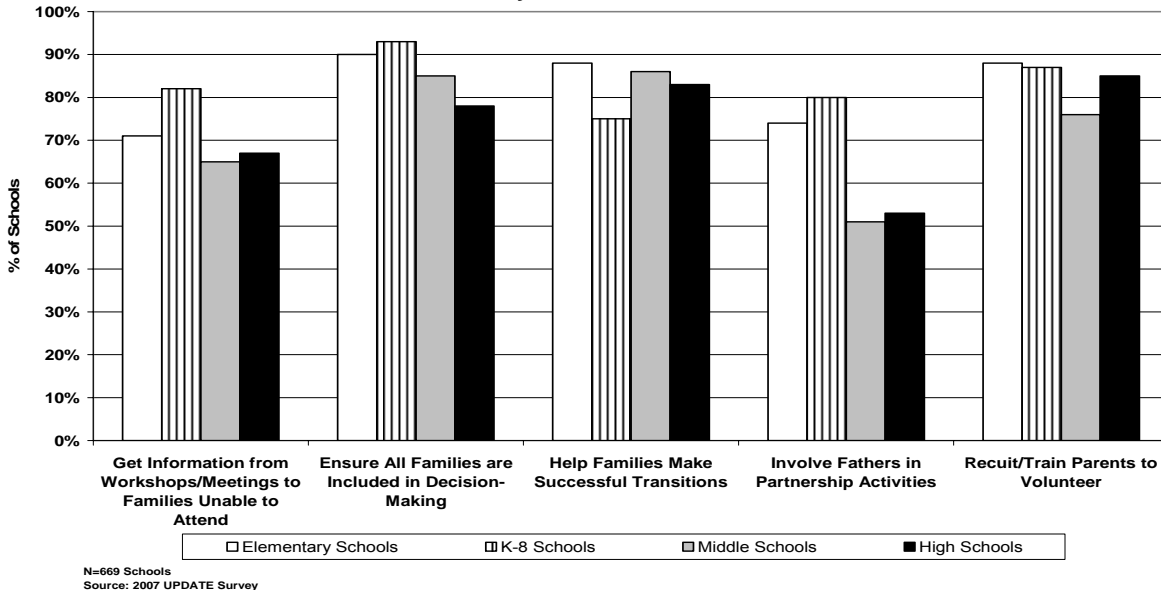
MEETING CHALLENGES TO REACH ALL FAMILIES

In addition to organizing their partnership programs, ATPs are expected to conduct and encourage other partners (teachers, PTA/PTO, community partners) to conduct activities that involved all families and community partners in ways that support student success. Schools' efforts to solve challenges of outreach and the involvement of all families were measured with a 9-item scale ($\alpha = .86$). ATPs rated their attention to solve challenges from *not working on the challenge*, to making *fair progress*, *good progress*, or having *solved the challenge*. Schools' ATPs averaged 2.52 on this scale, suggesting that most are making between fair and good progress in trying to solve challenges to involve many families who would not become involved on their own.

The vast majority of NNPS schools were working to overcome many challenges to help more families get involved in their children’s schooling, as shown in Figure 8.

- Schools were least likely to be working on the challenge of developing ways to involve fathers or father-figures in partnership activities. Elementary and K-8 schools were more likely than middle or high schools to work on getting fathers involved in their children’s education. However, over 30% of all schools reported that they had not yet begun working on this challenge.
- Schools were also less likely to give information from workshops or meetings to all families who could not attend.
- Almost all schools said that they were taking some steps to send home positive communications about children’s work and to use community partners to help meet school improvement goals (not shown).

Figure 7
% of ATPs Working to Meet Challenges to Involve All Families in 2007,
by School Level



- Middle and high schools were more likely than K-8 schools to work with “receiver” schools to help families make successful transitions with their children to the next school they attend.

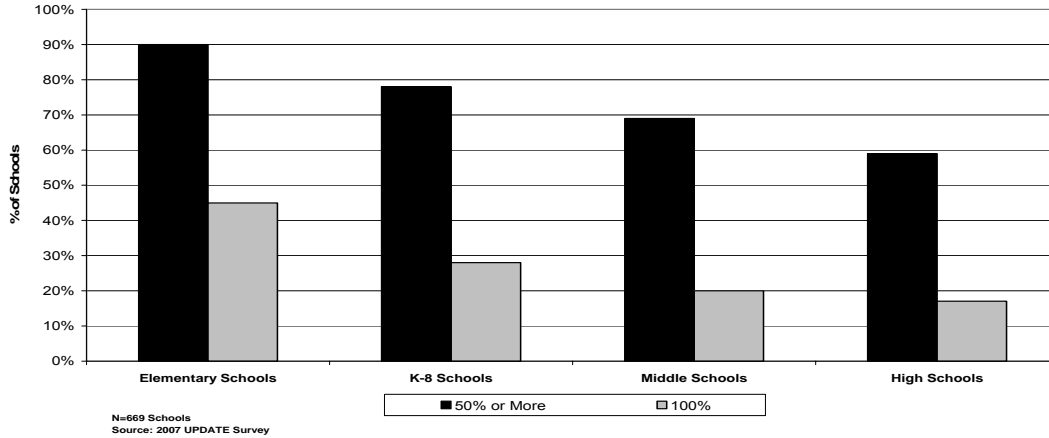
PRACTICES OF INVOLVEMENT

Five items identified the percent of teachers who conducted various family involvement activities, such as holding parent-teacher conferences with each student’s family, communicating with all students’ families, utilizing volunteers in the classroom, guiding parents in discussing homework with their children, and supporting the partnership program. At least half of the ATPs reported that 50% or more of the teachers conducted these activities to involve families in various ways.

ATPs also estimated the percent of families involved in various partnership activities, including attending a Back-to-School Night, a parent-teacher conference, volunteering to help the school or teachers, monitoring their child’s homework, and being good partners in their children’s education. The following charts illustrate how teacher practices and family involvement varied by grade level.

Family involvement was more common in elementary and K-8 schools, becoming less frequent as the grade level of the school increased.

Figure 8
% of Schools Reporting Teachers Who Support School's Partnership Program in 2007,
by School Level



SUPPORT FOR THE SCHOOL'S PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

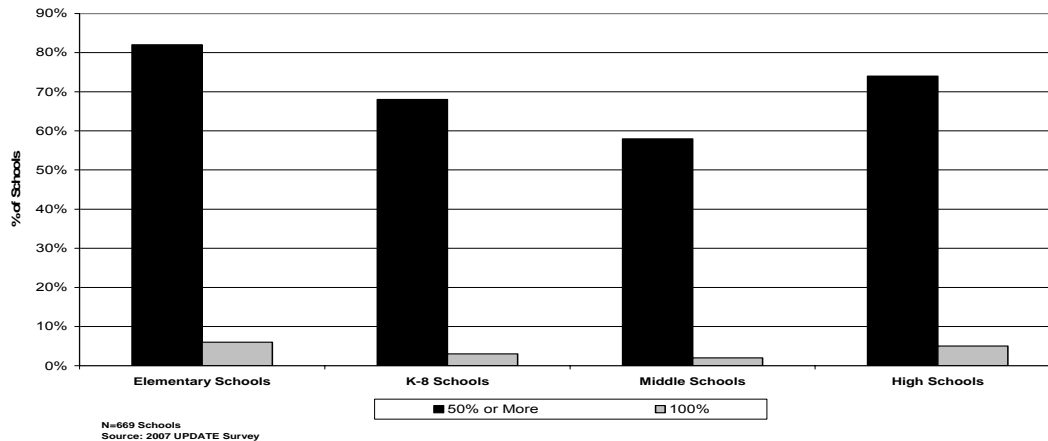
Teachers

- A majority of teachers at all school levels supported their school's partnership program.
- Elementary schools tended to have a broader base of support for partnerships from teachers and staff than did middle or high schools. About 90% of elementary schools' ATPs reported that at least half of the teachers supported their partnership program, and 41% of the elementary schools reported that all (100%) of the teachers supported their school's program of family and community involvement.

Families

Figure 9 reports ATPs' estimates of the percentage of families who were good partners with the school in their children's education.

Figure 9
% of Schools Reporting Families Who are Good Partners in Education in 2007,
by School Level



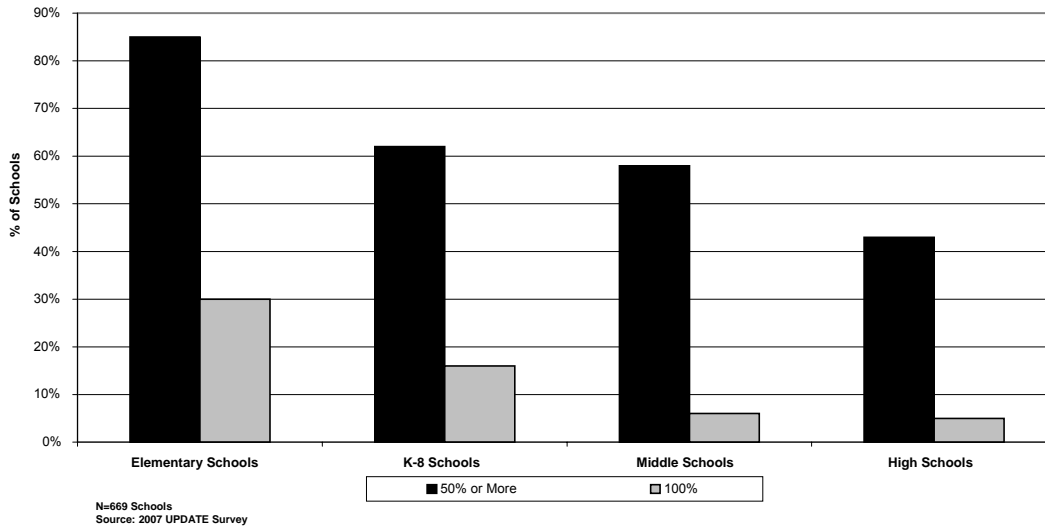
- Over half of all schools' ATPs reported that at least 50% of all parents were "good partners" with the school. Middle schools tended to report the smallest percentage of families who were "good partners."

MONITORING OF HOMEWORK

Teachers

- High schools reported the smallest percentage of teachers guiding parents to monitor or discuss homework with students.

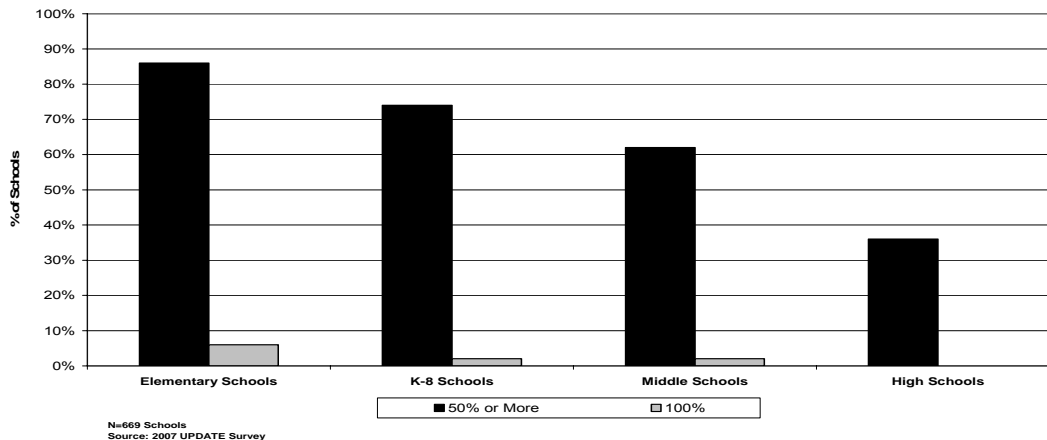
Figure 10
% of Schools Reporting Teachers Who Guide Parents How to Monitor and Discuss Homework,
by School Level



Families

- Over 85% of elementary schools reported that at least 50% of all teachers guided parents on how to monitor and discuss homework with their children, as shown in Figure 10. Similarly, about 86% of elementary schools reported that 50% or more of all families monitored and discussed homework with their children (Figure 11).
- High schools reported the smallest percentage of parents monitoring and discussing homework with their children.

Figure 11
% of Schools Reporting Families Who Monitored and Discussed Homework with Children,
by School Level



SCHOOL COMMENTS

The 2007 *School UPDATE* asked ATPs to comment on *what changed most* in their programs of family and community involvement during the 06-07 school year. About 85% of the schools wrote comments on changes in their programs. The vast majority noted positive program developments.

- Many commented on improved implementation and family responses. This includes providing information to parents, benefits to their program from parent surveys or program evaluations, more volunteers, more participation in workshops and meetings, varied activities for the six types of involvement, more positive relationships among teachers, parents, and the community, and more participation over all.
- Some noted changes in collaborative leadership, including establishing subcommittees for Action Teams for Partnerships; attending to challenges to reach diverse parents who are not yet involved, fathers and extended family members, and community partners; explicitly linking their action plans to their school improvement goals; and closer collaboration in planning partnership activities among school groups including teachers, the PTA or PTO, the Action Team for Partnerships, and School Improvement Team.
- Others noted observed results for students due to goal-linked family and community involvement. The reported results of involvement on improving attendance, reading, math, and student behavior reflect school observations of the same results reported in NNPS and other formal research studies (see reviews of NNPS research and publications list at www.partnershipschools.org in the section Research and Evaluation).

The following are typical comments from many ATPs on what changed most in the 06-07 school year:

IMPROVED PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

- *We introduced our teachers to the value of an action team and now have their support for FSC committees.*
- *Teachers have learned new ways to communicate with [students] parents*
- *Greater focus on needs of entire family rather than just child*
- *The planning process for the upcoming year has been improved based on surveys and feedback from parents and community*
- *A more focused-goal approach to organizing...*
- *More cohesiveness between parents and teachers*
- *Teachers made 5 parent contacts per month*

IMPROVED FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

- *More families were able to attend the activities because we offered 2 time slots*
- *We increased parent participation by 20% at most activities*
- *More parents of special education students were involved*
- *We have increased the involvement of Limited English Proficiency families*
- *We have been better at corresponding with our Spanish-speaking families*

IMPROVED RESULTS FOR STUDENTS

- *Student behavior improved this school year*
- *Increased student achievement*
- *Children displayed enthusiasm when completing math problems*
- *Student achievement increased as a result of support from our parents*
- *Increased student attendance*
- *Test scores increased in certain grade levels*
- *Behavior incidents dropped by nearly 200 negative-incidents from last year*

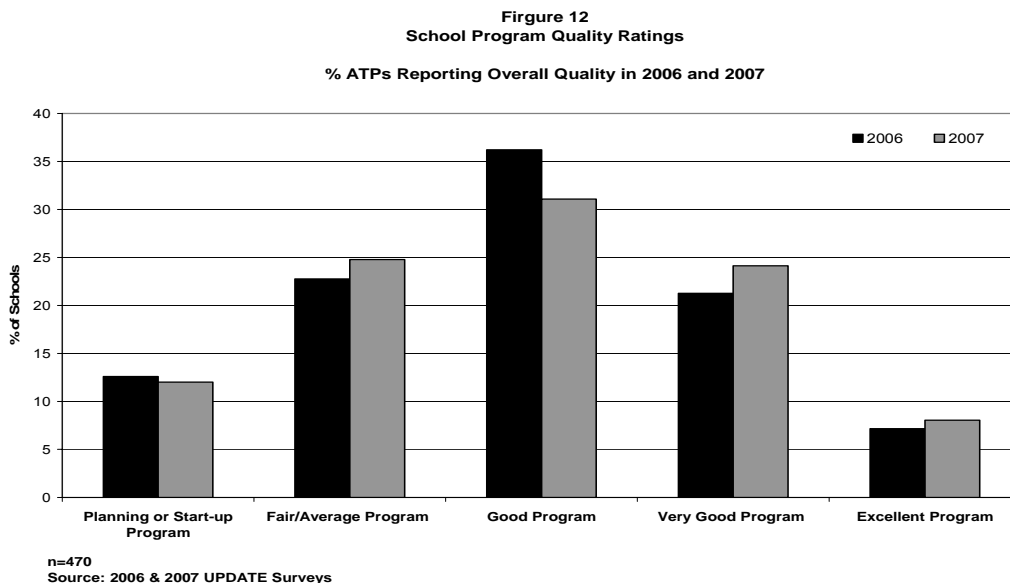
COMPARISON of SCHOOLS' 2006 and 2007 UPDATE REPORTS

This section of summarizes results from 470 schools that returned the NNPS *School UPDATE* for the past two years (05-06 and 06-07 school years). Most schools maintained levels of implementation for their partnership program.

OVERALL PROGRAM QUALITY

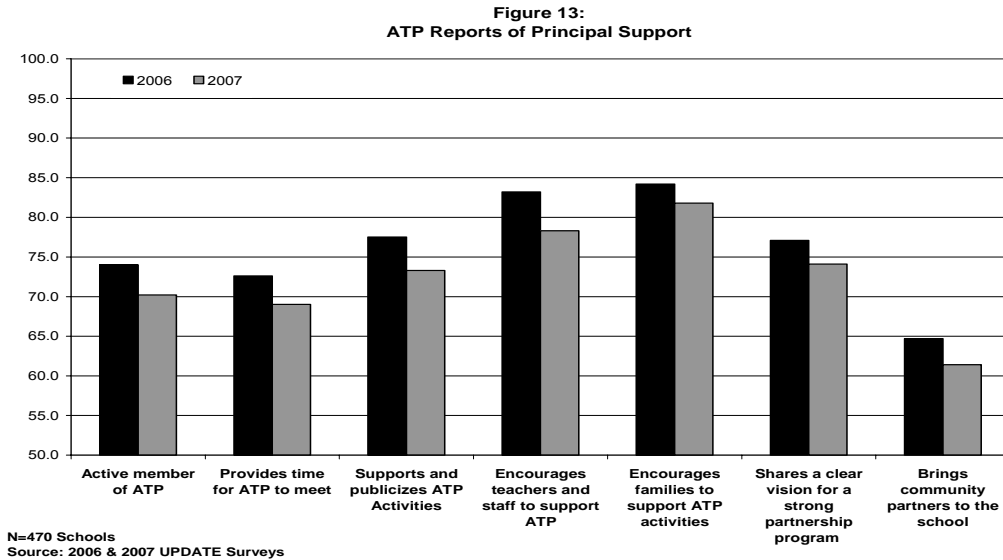
Schools in NNPS reported similar patterns of overall program quality from 2006 to 2007, but there were some changes. Overall, a smaller percentage of schools rated their programs as “good” in 2007 and larger percentages of schools rated their programs as “fair/average” or as “very good” (Figure 12).

Further analyses revealed that almost half of the school ATPs (48.2%) reported no change in the quality of their partnership program, whereas 23.2% reported a decline in program quality and 28.5% reported an increase in their quality rating. Changes in schools’ “portraits” of their overall partnership program indicate advances or reductions in the number of activities implemented, attention to challenges to reach all families, and/or awareness of the ATP’s work on partnerships by teachers, parents, and students at the school.

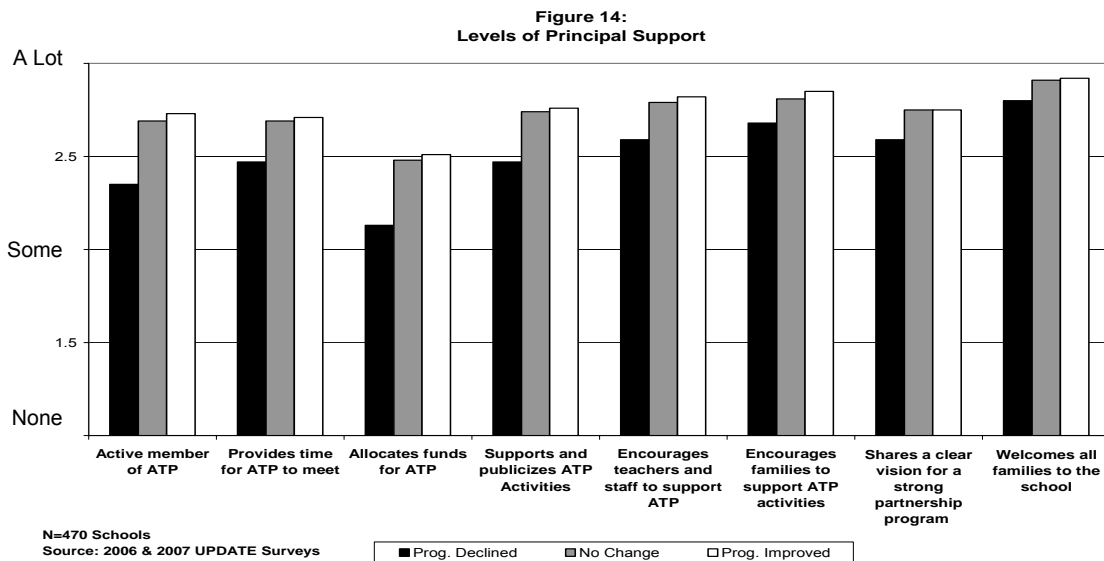


PRINCIPAL SUPPORT

The vast majority of school ATPs reported a great deal of principal support for partnerships in 2006 and 2007. However, comparisons of the percentage of schools where principals provided “a lot” of support indicated small, but consistent declines across the activities (See Figure 13).



In addition, for every form of principal support except bringing in community resources, ATPs that reported maintaining or improving overall program quality rated their principal as more supportive than those whose programs declined in overall quality (Figure 14). These differences in principal support were statistically significant.



How To Use This Report

This report summarizes results of the *2007 School UPDATE* survey on program development for the 06-07 school year. YOU should use this report to help assess your school’s progress in its program of family and community involvement.

- Use this summary to compare the responses on your school’s *UPDATE* with others in NNPS to identify how you are progressing and ways to improve this year and in plans for 08-09.
- Use the *UPDATE* summaries to report on progress to your full faculty, PTA, district leaders, and others in your school newsletter and/or website.

NOTES

- 1) NNPS *UPDATE* data are analyzed each year in research studies to learn how the various scales and measures combine to affect the quality of district and school programs. For a summary of results of studies collected over the past five years and access to *Promising Partnership Practices* (Maushard, et al, 2007), visit the NNPS website, www.partnershipschoools.org.
- 2) The (α or alpha) reports the *internal reliability* of a scale, indicating whether a number of items are correlated and represent a common construct. Reliability coefficients of .6 or higher indicate that a set of items is consistent and the scale is useful.

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