Tried & True

A selection of best practices to boost student achievement through school, family and community partnerships.
A Note from the Editors:

To begin, we would like to thank you for all the time, dedication, and effort that you have put into the mission of Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and your continuous work with teachers, families, and our communities. Your leadership has truly yielded amazing results in our schools. We hope that you enjoy this 3rd edition of Tried and True, a publication dedicated to all the astounding practices that each ATP school in our district does. Our wish is that you would use this not only to commend yourselves for the amazing work you do but to spark ideas on how we can continuously improve our student achievement through authentic family and community relationships. Thank you again for all that you do.

If you have any questions about a certain practice in this book, please contact us. For more information about ATP and National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) please visit www.partnershipschools.org.

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Awards

The Kennewick School District and several schools have received Partnership Awards from the NNPS at Johns Hopkins University.

Schools, districts, state departments of education, and organizations with excellent programs of school, family, and community partnerships are invited to apply for NNPS’s Partnership Awards each spring. These awards recognize members that have worked with NNPS for at least two years, demonstrate high quality plans and practices, and make continuous improvement in their partnership programs from year to year.

2010
Park Middle School
Kennewick School District

2011
Amistad Elementary School
Park Middle School
Edison Elementary School
Kennewick School District

2012
Amistad Elementary School
Edison Elementary School
Eastgate Elementary School
Kennewick School District

2013
Amistad Elementary School
Eastgate Elementary School
Westgate Elementary School
Park Middle School
Kennewick School District

2014
Amistad Elementary School
Park Middle School
Kennewick School District

2015
Vista Elementary School
Westgate Elementary School
Kennewick School District

2016
Lincoln Elementary School
Park Middle School
Vista Elementary School
Washington Elementary School
Kennewick School District

2017
Vista Elementary School
Westgate Elementary School
Kennewick School District
A Note from NNPS

Congratulations to Kennewick School District and its schools on the publication of a new edition of Tried and True: A Selection of Best Practices to Boost Student Achievement through School, Family, and Community Partnerships.

The best part of Kennewick’s program of school, family, and community partnerships is that it keeps growing and improving. At NNPS we know that “scaling up” includes two major components: (1) increase the number of schools that use research-based approaches in practice, and (2) continuously improve the quality of all partnership programs. With sustained support from Superintendent Dave Bond and other colleagues, and creative advice and assistance from excellent District Parent Involvement Coordinators—Sarah Del Toro, Annabell Gonzalez, and Kelly Bolson, the district and its schools have been scaling up in both ways since joining NNPS in 2008.

The district has increased the number of schools that have Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) to plan and implement goal-linked partnership practices.

- Now, 21 schools are members of NNPS.

All ATPs have worked to keep improving the quality of their programs of family and community engagement. They use the NNPS annual UPDATE survey to evaluate progress and improve outreach to more and different families each year. Parents have responded and students have benefitted.

In the past two years (since the last issue of Tried and True), the district earned Partnership District Awards in 2016 and 2017. Over these two years, 5 schools (Lincoln ES, Park MS, Vista ES, Washington ES, and Westgate ES) earned Partnership School Awards.

District activities were published in the NNPS annual books of Promising Partnership Practices 2016 and 2017 along with activities from 13 schools (Amistad ES, Canyon View ES, Cottonwood ES, Eastgate ES, Edison ES, Highlands MS, Keewaydin Discovery Center, Lincoln ES, Park MS, Ridge View ES, Vista ES, Washington ES, and Westgate ES). This is a noteworthy record of networking.

Well done!

The good work of Kennewick is being shared with hundreds of districts and schools in NNPS across the country. We look forward to on-going excellence by the district and all schools as we continue to walk together on the path to partnerships.

Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D.
Director of NNPS

November 2017
Epstein’s Six Types of Involvement

Keys to Successful School, Family, and Community Partnerships

**Parenting**
Assist families in understanding child and adolescent development and in setting home conditions that support children as students at each grade level. Assist schools in understanding families.

**Communicating**
Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.

**Volunteering**
Improve recruitment, training, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school and in other locations to support students and school programs.

**Learning at Home**
Involve families with their children in learning at home, including homework, other curriculum-related activities, and individual course and program decisions.

**Decision Making**
Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, action teams, and other parent organizations.

**Collaborating with the Community**
Coordinate community resources and services for students, families, and the school with business, agencies, and other groups, and provide services to the community.

Academic Goals

Math
Some people think of math as a “monster.” Others see that monsters can be used to help children enjoy math. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and math teachers thought about their goals for student success in math and for family engagement in academic subjects. They knew that many students thought math was “hard” and not so interesting. They knew that many students loved monsters. So, they planned to bring the two together to prove that math and monsters could both be conquered. Beat the monsters! See math as fun! Save the day! Invitations in Spanish and English went home to all families. Notices were placed on the reader-board in front of the school, and morning announcements encouraged students to come with a parent.

At Monster Math Night, math monsters created by the students decorated the walls of the cafeteria. Math games set up for each grade level focused on particular “monster” skills linked to math standards and required basic skills. A collection of school math games supplemented the games linked to the theme. This created a busy math scene for students and parents. In the games they played, students showed their parents how they solved problems focused on adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing, geometry, math Bingo, and early algebra. “I like playing games on the iPads,” said one student who found the digital games.

A group of Math Avengers put on a skit to show how they vanquished monster math problems. The Avengers also circulated to talk with parents, students, and teachers. They helped students use math monster combat skills. Students answered the Math Avengers questions and won treats when they answered correctly. Students who needed help figuring out a problem were assisted to the right answer and, then, received a treat. One student was particularly jazzed, “Monster Math Night is the coolest. I just beat my teacher at a dice game. Did you see Math Man? This is so fun.”

Parents learned a lot about how math was taught at each grade level, and experienced how math games could be played at home to help students master basic math skills. Teachers met many parents they had not known before.
help students master basic math skills. Teachers met many parents they had not known before. Parents met other parents who had also been confused about math. Monster Math brought people together. About 130 parents, as many students, many teachers and some community partners attended, bringing almost 300 together to see how math was not really monstrous at all.
Ready! For Kindergarten is a national program to help students master skills for success in kindergarten. The national program started over a decade ago in the Kennewick School District. In three classes each year, parents learn and practice age-appropriate academic and social skills that reinforce what children are learning in preschool. The goal is that by age 5, students master 26 skills that help them start and stay on grade level when they enter kindergarten. See readyforkindergarten.org/about-us.

Washington Elementary serves a diverse student population with close to 20% bilingual students and nearly 80% of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The teachers and Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) identified a need to strengthen the engagement of parents with the READY! For Kindergarten program by adding and adapting some materials. To prepare for this, all members of the planning team attended two workshops to adapt and extend the content of the program’s materials designed for preschoolers and to make the program applicable to kindergarten children and families. Most importantly, teachers aligned all materials with Common Core State Standards to ensure that students would be on grade level with strong skills.

Specific needs of parents at the school, including a large number of Spanish speakers, were woven into the adaptations to the program materials. All materials were translated into Spanish. Take home bags of all materials were prepared for parents who participated in the training workshops. Preschool and kindergarten teachers worked with the ATP. Teachers personally invited parents to attend, especially parents of students who still needed to master the targeted skills. They followed up with phone calls, reminders, and reminder stickers-on-students to stress the importance of attending the Ready! classes. Child care was provided by one of the school’s community partners.

The teachers believe that their personal connections were essential. Nearly 50 parents attended during the year. Parents were excited that they were learning how to help their children at home and that they received the resources to conduct all activities. The total cost to the school for the resources was just under $150. As one parent said, “This was a great opportunity! I am using the tools I got in the classes and really see how they are helping my son at school and at home.” READY! For Kindergarten Plus at Washington Elementary School set goals to enable parents to help their
This was a great opportunity! I am using the tools I got in the classes and really see how they are helping my son at school and at home.

Pre- and post-test scores were collected on a district assessment for 24 children whose parents were in the fall workshop sessions and who used Spanish and English versions of the Ready! For Kindergarten Plus materials with their children. All 24 children showed large gains on these tests from fall to spring. Tests in later grades will measure whether students sustain grade level skills.
Academic Goals

Reading
Kindergarten teachers wanted parents to understand different academic expectations and have a resource to help support learning at home. Through parent and family contact many people have approached teachers expressing the desire to help their child be successful in kindergarten but, unaware of how to help academically. There are 18-21 different languages spoken at Westgate. Teachers instill in parents that any academic support at home in their home language will help them at school and transfer into their English language development. Many parents that speak a language other than English still wanted a way to help their child be successful academically in English.

Westgate’s Kindergarten brought the DVD proposal to the school’s ATP. With the support of the members, the teachers wrote a proposal and received grant money to buy DVD’s and DVD cases for all incoming kindergarten students. The kindergarten team then went through the Common Core State Standards and chose English Language Arts and math standards to highlight on the video. Teachers collaborated and modeled these skills for parents and students to watch as a resource to support learning in the home.

The DVD’s included 50 sight words the children need to master. There was an increase in students being able to read all 50 words by the end of the year. Parents were involved in getting students to read and practice the sight words. Students seemed excited about the DVD’s and would often talk about seeing their teachers at home on the TV. Parents expressed gratitude and shared how surprised they were to see some of the things their child works on at school.
Dr. Seuss made an appearance at Vista Elementary School’s literacy night for students in kindergarten and grade 1 and their parents. He bore a suspicious resemblance to the school principal! Nevertheless, the celebrity was very welcome. Rumor had it that Dr. Seuss wanted to help Vista’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and teachers celebrate his birthday with students and parents at a family literacy night. The goal was to help parents of the youngest students learn about the school’s literacy curriculum and the tools that would enable them to support their children’s literacy learning.

The ATP’s subcommittee for this event met three times to plan all components. They wanted to increase parent attendance over previous years. They decided that having a theme would be fun and wanted to help students and families remember to attend. Celebrating Dr. Seuss’s birthday and Read Across America Day seemed to be a good idea, said the ATP team, “We also liked the idea of creating an easy game to support children’s foundational reading skills at each grade level.” The kindergarten teachers selected a consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) bingo activity and the first grade teachers chose a Sight Word Go-Fish game. Teachers introduced the games in class so that students could “teach” their families how to play at Dr. Seuss Night and at home.

Dr. Seuss showed up early to greet everyone at the front door and guide them down the hall where dinner was served, donated by the school’s community partner, Little Caesars Pizza. Over 250 parents and their 93 children attended. They ate picnic style. Then parents went to the library with the school’s reading specialist to learn about the school’s reading program, goals for kindergarten and first grade, and strategies they can use at home, in the car, and on walks. The information was presented in English with Spanish translation via headsets. A representative from Mid-Columbia Libraries discussed reading resources for families that were available on the library’s website. Parents could sign up for library cards, if desired. Then, parents picked out a free book for their child that was donated through a local reading foundation. Meanwhile, students were in their classrooms playing the literacy game with their teacher. Parents met their children, learned the games, and then took their child to the gym for Dr. Seuss to read aloud one of his stories.
Once Upon A Time K-1 Reading Night
Edison Elementary School

Reading has the power to take us anywhere, to see anything, and to be anybody. This notion combined with a commitment to establish a solid foundation in reading skills, as well as a lifelong love of reading, inspired Once Upon a Time, Edison’s K-1 reading night. Designed and planned by K-1 teachers, reading specialists, and Action Team For Partnership members, Edison Elementary played host to a very magical night. With a heavier focus on community involvement, invitations were accepted from our local library, 21st Century (an academic enrichment program), and the Mid-Columbia Reading Foundation. To publicize the event, flyers were sent home in applicable languages, and to drum up extra excitement K-1 staff dressed in theme as fairy tale figures the day of the event.

Parents and family members gathered in the gym for a greeting from the principal followed by a musical performance by both grade levels. Students rejoined their families and collected their magic pouch -- a bag filled with not only a map and list of activities planned for that evening, but also at-home activities and resources for parents to help develop literacy in the home. Families then made their way to students' homerooms.

In their homerooms, each teacher had a unique activity planned. While the specifics of each activity varied, they all focused on important, fundamental, and developmentally appropriate skills: sound segmentation, initial sound identifying & matching, rhyming, and more in both English and Spanish, as appropriate. The evening was structured as such to allow students and their families to travel...
they offered for those third, fourth and fifth graders. The Mid-Columbia Reading Foundation was able to provide resources to parents and a free book for students in attendance.

Reflecting on the night, it was a great success. Not only were teachers & staff members able to initiate and strengthen relationships with families, but community members were able to make contact with those who could be served. While over the course of the night, a few oversights were noticed – mostly concerning serving 100% of our multilingual questions and needs – the goals of the night were met, beyond our fantasies: classroom activities focusing on take-home skills, family connection to community resources, positive connection to families, and providing a book to all attending students.

Not only were teachers & staff members able to initiate and strengthen relationships with families, but community members were able to make contact with those who could be served.

Taking place early in the year, Once Upon a Time allowed for parents and families to connect with a local community members and services. The Mid-Columbia Library provided a representative who not only gave information about the library system, but also allowed for students and parents alike to sign up for library cards. 21st Century was able to connect with parents about older siblings regarding the before & after school support services.
The first science fair at Eastgate Elementary School took a different approach from most science fairs. The Action Team For Partnership and science teachers were not sure if students had a good understanding of how to plan and conduct an individual project or if students’ families were comfortable with discussing, monitoring, or helping their child with an experiment and presentation. Rather than ask all students to complete their projects at home, each teacher planned to conduct a science fair project as a class. A topic was selected, but students had to come up with questions and procedures, type them up, and present the findings to a judge.

Depending on the grade level and project problem, teachers provided access to ideas, background research, materials, and time for students to work. Teachers also taught scientific procedures so that the students were learning how to be scientists. They guided the class to create a display board summarizing the project for the fair. Students were responsible for the presentations to judges. In most cases, the classroom was the science “lab” and the student scientists worked together. Along with the whole-class projects, some students worked in small groups or individually. Fifth grade students who wanted to go beyond the class topic could participate in an after school science club to develop and conduct individual and partner projects. The club met for 90 minutes once a week for ten weeks. In some cases, students with different abilities and talents worked together. For example, the teacher for the club observed two girls who were best friends working together on a science project. One girl was a high performing student and the other struggled with most academic tasks. Both succeeded as partners on the inquiry-based science project. The high achiever was stretched by taking responsibility to evaluate the data. The struggling student grew by taking responsibility to organize and write the project report.

The 21st Century After-School Coordinator contacted parents to encourage them to attend and participate in the school’s science fair. Because the after-school program has regularly scheduled family nights, she was able to collaborate with the ATP and science teachers to increase the number of parents attending the science fair. The afterschool staff...they caught the spirit of inquiry and announced that they were going to go home that night and do the experiment as a family.
also helped set-up, run activities, and clean up after the fair. Eastgate also worked with a high school science teacher who came to the elementary school with several advanced high school students to serve as judges for the science fair. Additional community involvement came as a local museum attended the science fair and provided hands-on activities for students and their families. The poster boards that summarized each class’s findings were displayed in hallways around the school in time for parent-teacher conferences. As families moved through the building, many took the time to stop and read the boards. One family wondered about the results of one of the experiments. Instead of closing their minds, they caught the spirit of inquiry and announced that they were going to go home that night and do the experiment as a family.

The Action Team For Partnerships wanted to provide an opportunity for families to engage together in various STEM activities. During a staff meeting they presented the event idea and details hoping to increase attendance and interest, and it worked! All hands were on deck the night of the event, including student leaders and staff.

Each grade-level team was asked to come up with one idea of a STEM activity they would set up and run during the night. This helped improve school and staff buy-in and increase staff participation. The day of the event a couple of teachers even dressed up like mad scientists to encourage the students to come that night!

Families had so much fun doing the STEM opener activities then working on the other experiments. It was a great opportunity for families and staff to mingle together in a low stress, light hearted way. The goal for the night was that kids got excited about STEM and families felt welcomed and appreciated at our school. They exceeded their goal!
Academic Goals

Other Activities
The Action Team For Partnerships and teachers at Cottonwood and Edison Elementary Schools both conducted activities to help students and parents think positively about the benefits of homework for student learning and to encourage conversations about students’ ideas and work at home. At Cottonwood, the meeting with parents and students about homework focused on students in grades K-2. Students and parents gathered to build a three-section collapsible privacy wall or “homework station” where students can retreat at home to do their work in their own quiet space. Parents and students picked up directions on how to build a sturdy homework station to use at home. Each student received a packet of age-appropriate learning tools, including alphabet charts, number charts, math operations, sight words, and color words to take home to help them on various homework assignments. They also could choose printouts of motivational quotes and sayings, and crayons to decorate their stations. Teachers circulated to meet families, answer questions, and provide advice.

At Edison Elementary, the 2nd grade teachers wanted to work collaboratively on this year’s event to bring students and families together as a grade-level community. Teachers set up tables around the school gym to explain expectations for students’ homework, distribute materials and resources for students and parents, and to answer questions about how to help at home. At Edison, other features included a presentation by the public librarian about online reading resources and how to obtain a library card. At each table, teachers demonstrated games, activities, and tips to use when students and parents worked together on homework. At another table were materials, such as donated pizza boxes and math supplies for students and parents to build and decorate a privacy “homework station” as a designated place for students to do their work.

Both schools had a similar purpose, but each one customized its activities. At Cottonwood, teachers in grades K-2 met to discuss materials for the resource packets for students. They made sample homework stations. At Edison, the 2nd grade teachers gathered materials and contacted the local library to be a partner for the homework night. The schools were variously supported by an ATP budget,
PTO funds, Title I funds, and donations. They advertised the meeting to encourage parents of children in the targeted grade levels with fliers, reminders, and social media platforms. The ATPs, teachers, and other partners (e.g., PTA or PTO and community groups) may address similar topics—such as homework—and use their creative powers to develop activities that meet the needs of their own students and parents. Teachers know that homework helps students practice new skills and get ready for the next lesson. They also know that parents can be powerful, positive motivators, but want information on how best to help at home. In their own ways, Cottonwood and Edison demonstrated how schools, families, students, and the community can collaborate to improve the homework process.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Sunset View Elementary decided that in order to best serve their families and students, they should work first to build the capacity of their school staff to understand the backgrounds of their families. One of the areas they identified that needed more knowledge was in the area of trauma. Through a connection in our local health department, the ATP scheduled a public health nurse who is an expert on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and how that trauma can impact behaviors and learning.

The nurse presented the training to staff during two separate training sessions. The first one focused on what happens to the brain under high levels of stress over a long period of time. The second session was about what the school can do to help build resiliency in children and families. This training was the beginning of very meaningful and healthy discussions about the kids and families Sunset View serves and provided them with a different lens they could use to better understand them.

While this activity didn’t directly impact families like an event would, it did help change the conversation about students and families that can have a tendency to be marginalized at school. Instead of pointing blame, Sunset View staff have begun to seek a deeper understanding and an authentic attempt to build relationships. Next year, Sunset View plans to further develop purposeful relationships with their families and students.
Labels, especially negative ones, are a risky business. They may give the wrong impression about students’ abilities to succeed. Although they know that risk factors are present in students’ lives, the educators at Park Middle School decided to classify all students as “at-hope” and not “at risk.” The concept grew from the national group called Kids at Hope that works to help all students find their strengths and have confidence in a bright future.

Park planned a Celebrating Student Success project to spotlight the various talents and abilities that put students “at hope,” including those with artistic, music, technology, and other talents.

They started the project by focusing on student athletes. The school’s athletic director wanted to inspire more students to try out for a team sport—something new for students entering middle school. He wanted students to join a team and to learn that athletics—even as a hobby or interest—could be important in their futures. Advertising posters were created by the students for the first Celebrating Student Success ceremony for athletes. About 100 students and 50 parents attended, along with a dozen community members who served as athletic coaches for the school.

The evening showed students “at hope” in action. Student leaders led the staff in the Treasure Hunter’s pledge: “As an adult and a treasure hunter, I am committed to search for all the talents, skills, and intelligence that exists in all children and youth. I believe all children are capable of success. No exceptions!” Student leaders also led the students in the Kids at Hope pledge, which they recite at school every day: “I am a Kid at Hope. I am talented, smart, and capable of success. I have dreams for the future and I will climb to reach those goals and dreams every day. All children are capable of success. No exceptions!”

The principal spoke about the need for all students to have hope for their futures and how the school would support their dreams for success. As part of the awards ceremony, the audience watched highlights from the school’s fall sports season. Coaches for the fall sports teams recognized three student-athletes per sport to receive a certificate. Their photos were displayed on the large screen while the coach spoke about their
Sometimes to understand what is happening, it is necessary to check in with those closest to the action. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Highlands Middle School asked the school counselors about the challenges faced by their current middle school students. The discussion included topics such as preventing drug abuse, depression, suicide and self-mutilation, sexual abuse, dating violence, domestic violence, and online predators. These were serious challenges, indeed. To ensure that the discussion would be responsible, accurate, and helpful, the planners compiled a list of community resources who could help with presentations and information. As organizations agreed to participate, the school counselors worked with them to select the most pressing topics that would be of interest and importance to parents.

Individual calls were made to almost every student’s home to offer a personal invitation to a parent. Because the school has a large Hispanic population, care was taken to make each call in the language spoken at home. The district’s Federal Programs Department and bilingual staff assisted the school with these calls. Reminders also went home the day before the event.

Over 220 parents attended the discussion. Headsets borrowed from the district were available for Spanish translation. As presenters addressed their topics, they also identified the kinds of behaviors students might exhibit if they were struggling with the issues being discussed. The speakers offered coping strategies and shared resources in the community where the families could get confidential and expert assistance. Many brought takeaways (e.g., brochures, contact information, information from presentations) for families. One parent commented, “I was not aware of...
these resources in our community. It gives me comfort to know I have a place to turn if I or any of my family members need help.” After the presentations, dinner was provided. This enabled parents to meet and talk with each other and with the presenters. Some families used this time to ask the presenters their own questions.

The efforts of the ATP and school colleagues to ask parents to come to school to discuss difficult topics paid dividends in attendance. The principal observed, “It was obvious that the personal phone calls home in multilanguages were effective in getting our families to attend.” Although the discussion touched on many heavy themes, the focus on helping students and parents survive—and thrive—in the middle grades was very important.

The success of students is the shared goal of teachers, parents, and the students themselves. Therefore, sober, honest, and helpful discussions are needed to prevent problems before they get too serious.

Highlands Middle School is establishing itself as a place in the community where everyone feels welcome and where students’ safety and well-being are paramount.

When Park Middle School experienced the tragic suicide death of one of its 8th grade students, leaders knew it was time to talk about student health with all students and their parents. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, counselors, and administrators designed Healthy Teen—a series of discussions on aspects of teen health that, ultimately, reached over 400 parents and over 860 students.

In October, Red Ribbon Week called attention to need to prevent drug abuse, sponsored by the annual National Red Ribbon Campaign. Students were encouraged to “take the pledge” to not use illegal drugs or alcohol by signing a large banner now hanging in the cafeteria. The school linked their Spirit Week with Red Ribbon Week. The accompanying Family Night was well attended by more than 200. This included a pizza dinner with a questionnaire at the tables to prompt families to think
...a series of discussions on aspects of teen health that, ultimately, reached over 400 parents and over 860 students.

about drug abuse prevention. There was a drug and alcohol awareness video, a presentation entitled on How to Talk to Your Kids about Drugs, a DEA officer presentation about drug and alcohol offenses and legal outcomes, and a question and answer session.

In February, the series focused on physical health. Fun activities were planned to involve the whole family and that could be incorporated in daily life with little effort. The PE teacher organized the activities. A sports medicine teacher presented information on the connections of physical activities, a healthy brain, and the importance of sleep. Community partner Tri-Cities Community Health presented information about nutrition, as families were served a sub sandwich, baked chips, and bottled water. Another community partner provided fresh fruit smoothies for dessert. A local food bank conducted a short nutrition survey and sent families home with boxes of food that included fresh fruits and vegetables.

In May, No More Stigma helped the school participate in Mental Health Awareness month. This included videos of school counselors talking about mental health. The intervention specialist created videos on what “stigma” means in society. At the family night in May, several community agencies presented information on mental health. There were numerous sessions for families to choose from. These sessions were: healthy relationships, trauma and resilience, eating disorders, suicide prevention, and online safety.

The focus on teen health was a positive one for The Action Team For Partnerships and Park Middle School as a whole.

Meet the Bus and Greet the Walkers!

Eastgate Elementary School

The specific goals of this practice were to build relationships between students, families, and school staff. The Action Team For Partnerships (ATP) wanted to bridge the gap between school and home and allow teachers to see families in their home environment. The long term goal is to do actual home visits. They want to start small, and show families that teachers have an interest in being part of their community. As the relationship grows, their plan is to move toward with home visits. During end of year conferences, 12 teachers walked down the hill to the trailer park where many of students live. With crayons and coloring books to pass out,
they wished students and families a happy start to their summer. The activity supports school improvement goals because as relationships build between school and home, behavior improves. Students want to do well for teachers who care; and parents are supportive of teachers with whom they’ve built a relationship. In order to start this practice the ATP emailed staff to sign up to “Meet the Bus!” An ATP Co-chair accessed bus routes, assigned stops to 1-3 teachers per stop, and emailed the plan to staff. The really fun part was that teachers then got to tell students to expect a visitor at their stop! Staff met the bus at their assigned stop before pick up time, socialized with kids and families, and passed out granola bars. Staff also took pictures to show on the school Facebook page and some staff rode bus back to school with students. They then extended the practice to meet walking students in order to reach more families. The response from both staff and students was overwhelmingly positive.
Climate of Partnership Goals
Parent Involvement is Not Language Specific

Each year, the Kennewick School District conducts four district-level family engagement activities. In the spring, parents select the topics they would like to learn more about and the district leaders for partnerships plan how they will address those topics in the upcoming school year. In the past, the district focused on providing information and support to parents in English and Spanish. However, now, more than 20% of the districts’ 2,800 English Language Acquisition students speak a different language other than Spanish. Recognizing the diversity of languages among students’ families, the leaders expanded language support services to include all families in the four district-sponsored family engagement activities.

Leaders began working with a local interpreting business. The interpreters are well trained, and families are comfortable with the interpreters and feel that they can ask more questions. Several district colleagues helped things go smoothly. For example, for each activity, the district’s Immigrant and Refugee Parent Liaison greets the interpreters and goes over the content of the event with them. Presenters are given tips on how to present a session with an interpreter. They are guided to speak slower and in relatively short segments to allow the interpreter to translate the information; avoid idioms and acronyms; use simple words if possible; avoid changing ideas mid-sentence; avoid asking more than one question at a time; use humor carefully; speak directly to the parents, not the interpreters; and limit the number of words on PowerPoint slides. Sometimes, a small number of parents can sit in proximity to an interpreter, which encourages parents to ask questions more easily. Sometimes, a large number of parents speaking a single language are best served by headsets.

The district has been requesting interpreters for 2-5 languages at each activity over the past year. Interpreters make a big difference. One teacher noticed that parents’ changed their expressions, and remarked, “It’s amazing to see how happy parents are when they’re able to express their opinions and share their ideas.” The district has seen an increase in the engagement of diverse parents. More parents know how to check grades.
in PowerSchool and more are able to set up conferences with their child’s teachers. Students also benefitted from their engaged parents. One parent reported, “Now that we get flyers in our language we know that we can attend these meetings. When the messages were only in English, we didn’t know the meetings were for us.” Parents’ increased engagement has led to observed improvements in student behavior in several schools. The children know that teachers can communicate with their parents regardless of language differences.

Kennewick’s schools have followed the district’s lead in working with interpreters, borrowing headsets, and encouraging the participation of all families. Hearing information in their own language is simply a game changer for many families. Enabling families to connect with their child’s school with interpreters and translation services is the first step for engaging parents in their children’s education. Many of the families begin to learn English and, over time, no longer need translation services. Some begin to help newcomers and other families in their language group. Opening lines of communication with all families increases parents’ engagement at school and at home.
Partnership with Plymouth

Sage Crest Elementary School

Almost half the staff at Sage Crest Elementary implemented a “Follow the Bus” activity to the town of Plymouth, WA. Plymouth is a half our car ride from the school, and takes almost twice as long in the school bus. Twenty-five students make this trip every day and they wanted to show the students they care where they come from and appreciate that they travel such a long distance to school every day.

They stopped at the first house on the route then continued to the Post Office where they chatted with students and their families before heading back home. It was great to have some face to face time with these parents because they generally communicate via phone, even for conferences. The goal was to help them feel welcomed into the school community and feel like an important part of the school culture. The parents were overwhelmed by this gesture and commented that it meant a lot to them.

Sage Crest is a brand-new school, so they have the opportunity to create the culture and environment they want for students and families. They seized this opportunity and plan on continuing this practice to other neighborhoods in their boundary area.

Handmade blankets given out at hospitals warm the hearts of those who receive them. The blankets are also a source of pride and accomplishment for the people who make them. Just ask the students and parents at Ridge View Elementary. As one parent noted, “It was wonderful to see my children and other students creating something that will benefit someone in need.” The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and others adapted this activity—Layers of Love—from a similar event conducted at a nearby school. They sent home flyers, email, and text messages inviting students and parents to attend the blanket making night. They requested donations of fleece in solid colors and prints and other materials. Parents and local fabric and craft stores donated materials. Volunteers pre-cut the
fleece into 3’ x 3’ squares. Students and family members made blankets from two pieces of fleece, fringe, ties, and decorations. The blankets were given to various medical institutions. Recipients included newborns in intensive care, cancer patients, pregnant mothers, and others. By the end of the night, the families had produced 80 blankets for the community. As the families turned in their completed blankets, they learned which local institution would receive them. The sight of everyone working together for the benefit of the community was inspiring, as one teacher explained, “I loved seeing all the families, especially dads, come together with their children to create such a thoughtful gift.”

The school’s advice for others conducting similar events is to ensure that there are enough fabric scissors for all participants, because they are more useful than regular scissors for cutting fleece. They also suggest using tables in the cafeteria for craft work to accommodate family members for whom it is difficult to work on the floor. Although the main focus of Layers of Love was for students, parents, and other family members to work together on a good project, the organizers included ways for parents and students to conduct some academic learning activities. Math activity sheets dealing with measurement concepts linked to blanket making were distributed during the evening, along with some writing activities. Students also gained empathy for others as they learned about others’ needs. They refined fine motor skills in cutting and sewing blankets and they brought teamwork to a new level.

Attendees completed a short survey that asked several questions about how well organized the activity was, what the family most enjoyed, and what would make Layers of Love even better. The responses were very positive. On the survey, one student cut to the heart of the matter, “I liked helping people.” Reactions from the community also were positive. One community member contacted the school saying, “I’ve heard that Ridge View students are making blankets to donate. What a wonderful idea!” The spirit of giving seemed to catch hold for some participants. One student enthused, “This is so fun! I can’t wait for my family to make more blankets and donate them on our own!”

By the end of the night, the families had produced 80 blankets for the community.
Vista and Southgate Elementary Schools both have experienced a demographic shift in the past five to six years. Their Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) decided that they could connect families with useful community resources by combining a Community Resource Fair with other popular events families already attended. At Vista this was their Back to School night; Southgate combined it with their Art Walk and book fair. Southgate’s ATP partnered with their PTG to provide pizza and water bottles to all those attending. It was a well-attended event. The night of the event student leaders, ATP members, and other staff volunteers distributed tickets to all attendees so they could redeem for dinner. They also used the tickets to count our attendees. In all there were over 300 people and 15 community resources in attendance. The goal of this practice was to proactively increase family awareness of community resources and to encourage attendance at a positive school event in a fun and welcoming environment.

At Vista’s Resource Fair parents visited the school the traditional open house way, and met their child’s teacher, but also had opportunities to meet and talk with people from the community who offered valuable resources to families and children. About 15 booths were set up in the gym by representatives of the selected organizations. They answered questions and provided information about their services. Families who were unable to attend could pick up an envelope with information from the community booths in the front office. This is another way that schools can solve the challenge of getting information to parents who cannot attend a scheduled activity. Participating organizations were recruited with input from the County Resource Coordinator and by using 211—the call center in all states dedicated to providing community information and referral services.

In all, the Community Resource Fair at both schools was a relatively straightforward activity that had a meaningful impact for the school and its families. There were no costs, but families received significant benefits. The combined event style ensured that Southgate and Vista families felt welcome, increased knowledge about the community, and gained access to resources of value.
Follow the Bus
Lincoln Elementary School

As the school bell rang, students at Lincoln Elementary poured out of the school and into their buses to go home. At the same time, 16 members of the school staff (i.e., teachers and counselors) poured out of the school into four cars to travel to their destination. It was the day to Follow the Bus. Follow the Bus had been in planning stages for a while, and parents knew to expect it. Flyers were sent home to let the families know that teachers would be coming to their bus stop after school to meet them as they picked up their students. The day before they were scheduled to Follow the Bus, teachers put stickers on the students announcing that they hoped to meet parents and family members at the students’ bus stop the next day.

Teachers also prepared for the trips, including creating plans for drivers, plans for traffic, and plans for conversations with parents. The cars were ready and waiting for the bus when it arrived at the selected stop. On one occasion, the teachers’ caravan followed the school bus to a neighborhood where 40 students lived and many families came to meet the teachers. Teachers brought popsicles to share with everyone. Some students were met by their parents, and some went quickly home and brought their grandparents and siblings back to the bus stop to meet their teachers. Students also shared their favorite toys and new skills (e.g., riding a 2-wheeled bike) with the staff. Some parents invited teachers into their homes. They visited with families, discussed the importance of homework, and were given a tour of where students did their assignments. Parents expressed thanks to the teachers for coming to see them.

The visits helped build caring connections between home and school. The day after the visits, some students related how the teachers came to their neighborhood. Other students asked when teachers would follow their bus to meet their families. The school received donations of candy canes and mittens for teachers to bring along when they followed a bus in the winter. The school’s population is changing to include more students who are English language learners and more students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The changing demographics were instrumental in the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) seeing that teachers needed to actively reach out to connect with their students’ families. At Lincoln, Follow the Bus schedules are varied to visit areas where there are many families, and where parent-teacher...
To improve students’ awareness of the connection between school skills and real-world applications and to increase family engagement, Amistad Elementary School created the Amistad Community Garden. The garden is a place where teachers can help students use math skills (e.g., measurement, fractions, number sense), science concepts (e.g., plant development and cycles, soil knowledge), and language arts activities (e.g., observations, poems, stories). The large and useful garden was a big project, but the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, and administrators believed it had real value, in part because many of the school’s families are farm workers. However, many of these families live in apartments and do not have gardens of their own.

The goal was to use the garden as a way to connect the school and community, to increase family and community engagement at the school, and to increase parents’ interactions with students at home on skills and attitudes they were learning in the classroom. All of the conditions were ripe. Spring was right around the corner and Amistad had an area that was perfect for a garden project. The school’s community partner at the Kennewick Kiwanis Club was interested in working with students, educators, and parents on a new project. The school started to move forward with the help of third grade Dual Language students. With good plans in place, Kiwanis helped procure the necessary items—plants, soil, and wood. Then, the building phase began. Parents were asked to help, with hopes of increasing the involvement of fathers with students about the garden.

Despite the busy spring schedule for parents who do farm work, a good turnout of 18 fathers and 5 mothers came to assist the school to prepare the garden. Everyone had a job to do on Building Day. Some parents visits would be most impactful. It was easy to convince teachers to participate because the goal was transparent and the early results were very positive. At Lincoln Elementary School, Follow the Bus is a good way to connect with families of students and to gain a better understanding of students’ neighborhoods and life after school. The teachers are on the road to creating a stronger program of school, family, and community partnerships.
helped children assemble garden beds, while others tilled the soil. A few served as “scarecrows.” Students helped supervise, guide, and help the parents to ensure that the garden was developed and planted according to their plans. Math was involved as students verified the measurements of the garden beds and their layout in the space. Once the beds were ready, the students helped plant their “starts” that they had begun as seeds in their science class.

All partners—students, teachers, parents, and community—will continue to collaborate on chores such as weeding and caring for plants. In the summer, summer school students will take over. All partners hope to reap the rewards of the fruit, vegetables, and herbs that were planted. The garden cost around $250 in materials for the wood, plants, and soil. Some donations were received from the local nursery and from the Kennewick Kiwanis Club. Students immediately made connections between problems to solve in the garden with things they were learning in math and science class. Teachers will continue to build these connections as the garden grows. Parents also were aware of the importance of students learning from the garden. One parent noted, “This is a great way to teach kids about where food really comes from.”

Leaders at Lincoln Elementary School knew that parents’ presence at the school can have a profound effect on children. Further, research indicates that the involvement of fathers and father figures adds an extra influence on children’s learning, behavior, and commitment to school. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), principal, and teachers at Lincoln wanted to encourage more fathers and father figures to spend some time at school and add a bit of excitement to students’ school days.

They developed Dads and Drills, scheduled four times during the year in October, January, March, and May. With the repeat schedule, families could find time to put at least one of the days on their calendars. Although named to attract “dads,” all adults in children’s lives—male and female—were invited to participate. Reminders were plentiful in the school newsletter, on flyers, and on the school marquee. The 4th and 5th graders decorated the gym with motivational slogans to encouraging participation.

About 50 parents or other family figures attended each event, along with their students, teachers, and others. The “drills” were stations or locations for physical fitness and academic skill building activities. The fitness activities were developed with a personal trainer from the community.
The Action Team for Partnerships wanted to encourage more fathers and father figures to spend some time at school and add a bit of excitement to students’ school days. He and his assistant designed some of the stations and they brought special equipment to the school for some Dads and Drills. Different activities were scheduled on the four days to keep things interesting for students and repeat attendees. Fitness stations included a balance of races, organized games (e.g., basketball), balance activities, juggling (with the principal), speed stacking, and fun skills (e.g., hula hoops). Academic activities challenged students with grade-appropriate basic skill-building, such as reading sight words and producing math facts combined with wall climbing. Some activities were so popular that they were included in all fitness sessions. Other activities varied from time to time. There also was one station for students and adults to gather information on healthy practices. For example, Dentistry for Kids and Benton Franklin Health District participated and shared useful information on maintaining good health. Dads and Drills began at 8 a.m., before the start of school. Students and their dads, moms, grandparents, and other caregivers went through stations that interested them at their own pace. If parents had to leave for work, students could continue for the full scheduled time. Many attendees invested themselves with enthusiasm. One student asserted, “I’m going to beat my dad on the scooters. I’m super fast.” After 25 minutes for a workout, participants were given water bottles and snack bars. The gym teacher, then, had a short time to prepare for the school day. On Dads and Drills days, the mix of exercise, academic brain-jogging, and a snack proved to be an energizing way to start the day.
Amistad’s Action Team For Partnerships (ATP) number one goal for the Amistad Block Party was to create a welcoming environment of trust and relationships between the faculty and families. A diverse team of bilingual teachers, specialist and teachers from grades 1st – 5th, were brainstorming how to get faculty more involved and willing to go on home-visits to increase student achievement and parent support with learning at home. After communicating the idea of creating relationships between the faculty and families, staff stated that they were interested in participating in a block party.

The ATP planned and organized the first annual block party in September to start the school year with knowledge about where their students are from. They spent about $250 on popsicles, ice and garbage bags for the event. 21st century

We walked as a staff across the street and walked through the apartments, passing out popsicles, talking to families, dancing to music and taking pictures.

provided a mobile speaker for music and the Kiwanis club provided ice-coolers to transport the popsicles. The staff, para educators, teachers and administrators met outside in their school jerseys after school with ice-coolers filled with popsicles. They walked as a staff across the street and walked through the apartments, passing out popsicles, talking to families, dancing to music and taking pictures. Families began to trickle in and hang out with staff. Everyone was having a fun time with karaoke and dancing. Staff and parents were taking pictures and building relationships. A group of teachers also went walking around the neighborhood passing out popsicles and letting families know where Amistad staff were located so they could join in. It was such a fun afternoon.
As boundaries in the Kennewick School District continue to shift and change, Sunset View Elementary has noticed a change in their student demographics. Rather than see this as a challenge, the staff knew there were strengths and opportunities they needed to uncover in their students and families. So, after participating in the Poverty Simulation with district leaders, the Principal and ATP team decided the whole staff needed to share this experience so that everyone could understand the stressors of poverty and the impact it can have on family engagement.

Their first step was to contact United Way of Benton and Franklin counties. They were able to secure a date on a Wednesday to enable as many staff as possible to attend. Teachers met in the library for a brief introduction and moved into the cafeteria where the simulation was stationed. Upon entry each person was given a name tag with a new name and position in the family (ex: Steve Smith, father, age 35).

Participants sat with their family and quickly went over the information they were given. They learned who was employed or attended school, looked over their finances and also familiarized themselves with the services, programs, and businesses around the room. Some of the resources were school, bank, jail, grocery story, bail bonds, etc. At the sound of the bell they moved about the room for the simulated week.

Students went to school, people who were employed went to work, unemployed family members visited offices to try and get services. Every 15 minutes was a week in the life of a person living in poverty. At the end of the hour, they were brought together to debrief and share feelings about the experience. At a later staff meeting, the staff reviewed further and more people shared because of the additional time available to digest the experience and reflect on the implications it can have on classrooms.
Over the last two years, teachers at Hawthorne Elementary have been able to visit the Ron Clark Academy (RCA) in Atlanta, Georgia. After the first teams went to RCA, the teams returned inspired, encouraged, and motivated to implement some of the practices witnessed there; RCA truly provides a high rigor education for their students. This increased academic rigor aligns with our school’s improvement goals in that raising the rigor will then increase our students’ academic achievement.

RCA is also an inclusive environment where it felt like a family, not only for students and staff, but also for visitors, and more importantly, even for families. The RCA teams (or “Runners”) at Hawthorne wanted to bring that same feeling back to our own school, to create a positive school culture and climate that can be felt by all who walk through our doors.

The biggest practice that Hawthorne has brought back from attending RCA is the Den (House) System. At Hawthorne, all students and staff are “sorted” (spun on a giant wheel) into one of four dens ("dens" rather than “houses", in order to fit Hawthorne’s mascot of the bears), with each den representing one of our school-wide rules. On any given day, any Hawthorne staff could award den points to any student for their particular den when that student was going above and beyond in following one (or more) of those school rules. Each den competes against the others to see who will win during each trimester, with the end of year champion earning a big party. These points also carry over into school-wide competitions and donation opportunities, such as the canned food drive, MAP testing, and Jogathon, even in our special events/night such as Math Night and Reading Night. The students (and staff too!) love this competition, and it really pushes them to do their best in all that they do. By having students from all grade levels and even staff in each den, it helps students to feel included as a part of our Hawthorne family, no matter what grade they are in.

A new portion of the den points has been added to further parent involvement in their child’s education and include parents in our dens: Parents can now earn den points too!

To encourage parents to get involved...
by volunteering and helping (either in projects/work for teachers at home or at the school itself), any parent who volunteers 10 hours throughout the school year will earn a ONE HUNDRED point bonus for their child’s den! By encouraging parents to not only earn points but also to be involved in some capacity at their child’s school, it gives families a role in our school as well, and helps them to also take pride in their child’s school. We have had great results in our school climate by implementing the den system, and look forward to seeing the further benefits of including parents and parent involvement in this system as well.
The staff at Cascade Elementary wants their building to be a warm and welcoming environment for both parents and students. To help set this foundation, the secretary and principal worked with the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) to build “Welcome Bags” for students who enroll or transfer to Cascade. The bags contain valuable information to ease the jitters in starting a new school. Contents of the bag include a magnet with school contact information, the school’s handbook, a list of staff with pictures, a district calendar, a list of events scheduled, a district volunteer application, the current monthly newsletter, their new teacher’s welcome letter, classroom policy page, and supply list.

Every item in the bag plays an important role in welcoming parents and students. The magnet is an opening for communication... Cascade wants parents to call the school with questions or to let them know their child will be absent. The handbook shows that Cascade is a place where rules are followed and important. The staff list with pictures gives new students insight as to who they are walking the halls with and it puts “faces with names” so walking new halls isn’t so intimidating. A list of events helps parents to plan and write those events on our district’s calendar. The volunteer application is Cascade’s way of letting parents know that they are wanted and since they are already filling out paperwork, it is the perfect time to submit the form. The recent newsletter puts parents right in the know from the moment they enroll their child so they can jump right into becoming involved and a part of our community. Finally, the welcome letter, classroom policies and supply list from the teacher lets the student know the teacher is looking forward to meeting them, and they can have an idea as to the teacher’s expectations before they start their first day.

We have found that not only do these bags help new parents and students feel welcome and prepared to start a new school, they have greatly reduced the stress on teachers when having a new student added to their roster.
of welcome letters, supply lists and classroom policies at the beginning of the year, and having the office store and distribute them when needed throughout the year, teachers are able to focus on welcoming the student, not the paperwork involved in getting them settled into their class. Overall, they have made the transition of moving to a new school easier for everyone involved. The bags continue to be a work in progress, with additional items added as they are found to be helpful.

Culture Night at Westgate

Westgate Elementary is unique among schools, with over 20 languages spoken by their students, they are brimming with cultural assets. Due to this fact, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and the school as a whole had been developing the idea for a Culture Night for several years. Many of the Westgate families who come from other countries can become overwhelmed by the American school system. Recognizing that one of their defining characteristics as a school is cultural diversity, the ATP wanted to celebrate that fact and help families and children feel welcome at the same time.

The ATP knew that they wanted to develop a cultural night that was authentic and relevant to the families that their school serves; not a touristic approach to culture. With this in mind, they sent home an initial flier in the spring that requested parent input about the event. Kindergarten teachers, the school’s ESL teacher and staff at the district bilingual office shared information about the event during home visits. Once the date was set for the following fall, a second flier was sent home with more detailed information about the event. The ATP also promoted the night on regular social media channels and the school reader board. Students made posters that were hung around the school to build excitement and knowledge of the event.

During culture night families were greeted at the entrance with a handmade world map on canvas where each person could put a pin in the map to mark where they are from. The hallways throughout the school were decorated with the different cultural projects each grade level worked on including poetry, art, and...
historical facts. Families, school staff, and community members were all invited to bring a dish to share. The ATP was worried that families would be too burdened with the idea of bringing food to share, but many families brought items. The cafeteria tables were overflowing with dishes from 6 different continents! In the gym they featured an interactive art project that everyone could add their own mark to.

All told, more than 500 people attended the event. Teachers commented in the weeks following that they had noticed families feeling much more comfortable and welcomed at their school. This was a complete success! The Westgate ATP plans to make their Culture Night an annual event.
District Level Goals
Preparing new teachers to work well with families is a missing component in many preservice teacher education programs. Many new teachers graduate and enter classrooms filled with students from cultures different from their own. Helping new teachers understand the why and how of forming strong partnerships with all students’ families is a goal of the district leaders in Kennewick. They created a two-prong program to help new teachers organize effective partnership programs with their own students’ families. The first component was the New Teacher Bag. Given an estimate of the number of new teachers coming to the district, the leaders for partnerships obtained district bags and filled them with some general classroom supplies; a flyer about how to work with district interpreters when communicating with families who speak languages other than English; a summary of the importance of school, family, and community partnerships; and simple steps to conduct these partnerships. The district leaders delivered the bags to the school mailbox of each new teacher at the start of the school year.

The second part of outreach to new teachers was a workshop on the district’s approaches to family and community engagement. The leaders for partnerships worked with the Peer Assistance and Resource (PAR) program, which conducts monthly workshops for new teachers throughout their first year. The leaders for partnerships asked if they could provide a session on family and community engagement. PAR teachers, too, wanted to be sure that all new teachers received a strong foundation in partnerships. The leaders for partnerships planned one-hour workshops for elementary and secondary teachers. The workshops, conducted in September, included presentations on research showing why partnerships are crucial; a touching video about the power of a teacher in a child’s life; multiple discussion questions; information about how to form partnerships with families; time to share ideas; and time to draft a personal plan. Feedback from the new teachers, PAR mentors, and building principals was positive. The new teachers were grateful for the training and new resources. One teacher was so enthused that his...it is imperative for the district to help all teachers establish strong partnerships with all families to increase the chances for all students to succeed in school.
PAR mentor reported that he had made proactive and positive phone calls to connect with the parents of each student in his class. Principals were thankful that the district office was connecting with new teachers and providing quality professional development.

Early planning helped make both components of the district’s approach to new teachers successful. Welcoming new teachers to the district also enabled schools to add new people with new ideas to their school-based Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs). All ATPs are guided by the district leaders for partnerships.

Most importantly, the district’s approaches helped new teacher learn—right from the start—that family and community engagement are part of the work of all schools and all teachers in the district. Kennewick continues to increase the diversity of the cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds of its students and their families. Because the percentage of teachers from diverse backgrounds has not grown as quickly, it is imperative for the district to help all teachers establish strong partnerships with all families to increase the chances for all students to succeed in school.
The Community Resource Roundtable—aka Resource Fair Meets Speed Dating—was designed by the innovative and spirited Leaders for Partnerships in the Kennewick School District. Some say this was a “match made in heaven.” District leaders wanted to link 17 school based Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) with useful resources in the community. Rather than a “wander-around-fair,” the leaders set up the event a la “speed dating.” Each school’s team had a short, focused conversation with each agency in attendance. This enabled school teams to meet and talk with potential community partners they would not have met otherwise. The Community Resource Roundtable was part of a whole-day retreat that the district leaders conduct for ATP Chairs each year. The retreat is designed to build the leadership of ATP Chairs and to help them gather information and ideas from other teams about best practices that may be used or adapted in their school’s next One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships.

One District Leader was in charge of recruiting community agencies to participate. She created and distributed a flyer and attended community coalition meetings. She maintained a list of interested community partners and gave them contact information for the ATP chairs. About 35 community and business partners participated. District leaders worked with the ATPs and with representatives from the community agencies. Based on the work of Dr. Mavis Sanders in NNPS (see Chapter 1.2 in the NNPS Handbook for Action, 3rd Edition), the district leaders brainstormed with ATP chairpersons about how different types of community partners can enrich the engagement activities in the schools’ One-Year Action Plans. They also talked with the community partners about the schools’ goals for student learning and how the community partner’s resources might help produce results for the schools, students, and/or families.

The ATP Chairpersons were given tote bags to collect useful information from community partners that they could share with their whole teams. Kennewick’s district leaders spoke at several community coalition meetings about the Resource Roundtable and what they hoped the speed dates would produce for their schools and families. District leaders prepared the room so that participants could move...
smoothly from one short meeting to the next, but still have privacy for their conversations. A time keeper was in the middle of the room to alert participants to move on to the next table after each 4-minute chat. The “dating” portion of the event lasted 90 minutes, with about 30 minutes for ATP Chairs to follow up with agencies that were the best “match” for a school or where the ATP Chair wanted more information. At the end of the 2-hour session, district leaders debriefed the activity. The ATP chairs were totally energized by the event, one teacher exclaimed, “It was amazing! Everyone in one spot without having to make a million phone calls -- perfect! We now know who to contact and what would work best for our school.” They say that there is such a thing as “love at first sight.” For many schools and community partners, the arranged meetings at the Community Resource Roundtable proved the point.
KSD Workplace and Student Non-Discrimination Statement
The Kennewick School District provides equal access to all programs and services without discrimination based on sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sexual orientation, including gender expression or identity, the presence of any sensory, mental or physical disability, or use of trained dog, guide or service animal by a person with a disability, and provide equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following employees have been designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination:

Civil Rights & Equity  Section 504, Title IX
Douglas Christensen  Jack Anderson
(509) 222-5010  (509) 222-5004
doug.christensen@ksd.org  jack.anderson@ksd.org

Federal Programs Citizen Complaint Procedures
In accordance with state law, KSD is required to disseminate the Federal Programs Citizen Complaint Procedures free of charge to families. If you would like a copy, download it from the KSD webpage at www.ksd.org/departments/federal/default.aspx, pick one up at the KSD Administration Center, or call the Federal Programs office at 222-5091.