

Wisconsin's Award-Winning Partnership Schools: How'd They Do That??

By Ruth Anne Landsverk

Three Wisconsin schools have been named Partnership School Award Winners by the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) since 2005. The schools include two-time winners **Webster Stanley Elementary**, Oshkosh; and **Grant Elementary**, Wausau; as well as **Spooner Elementary**, Spooner School District. Only a handful of schools nationally receive this recognition from NNPS each year for their outstanding partnership efforts.

What partnership practices do these Wisconsin schools have in common? Following, is a glimpse into 10 things award winners “do right.” Wisconsin NNPS award-winning schools:

1. **Have Action Teams for Partnerships (ATP)** to organize and conduct partnership activities. Both Webster Stanley and Grant call their ATPs the site council.
2. **Prepare ATP members** for their roles. Webster Stanley gives its ATP a notebook full of information about the school's partnerships. Grant conducts its first ATP meeting as a potluck dinner with the PTO, sharing the school's mission and partnership goals.
3. **Include parents, teachers, and community members** on the ATPs. Webster Stanley includes two students, as well as members who represent other school improvement efforts.
4. **Encourage the ATP to cooperate with other school and community groups.** Spooner's ATP collaborated with the Title I Resource Team to plan the third annual Family Math Day. Grant invites the whole neighborhood to school events to build positive community relationships.
5. **Communicate among ATP members between meetings.** Grant e-mails a tentative agenda and meeting notes, inviting members to comment and to bring their ideas.
6. **Connect ATP efforts to school goals.** Spooner serves children and families in 21 townships spread over 540 miles. All partnership activities are designed to build relationships among families, school staff, and community members in addition to strengthening academic achievement.
7. **Have school principals who strongly support the ATP.** The principal is an ATP member in all three schools and acts to bring school staff and families together.
8. **Have school policy that supports the ATP.** The Oshkosh School Board's family involvement policy uses the NNPS framework as its model for partnerships in all district schools. The district hosted a partnership retreat for all school site

councils to share goals, celebrate successes, and discuss ways to improve partnerships.

9. **Take time for the ATP to evaluate its work.** Grant students increased their test scores because of partnership efforts, leading to more involvement from parents and community members. Webster Stanley bases each One Year Action Plan on data collected from surveys, including focus groups, DPI Characteristics of Successful Schools Surveys at <http://goal.learningpt.org/winss/sample.htm>, and NNPS evaluation forms.
10. **Celebrate partnership successes** with end-of-the year recognition gatherings, kudos in the school newsletter, and recognition by the school board.

Which practices does *your* school ATP carry out? You'll be receiving NNPS 2009 Partnership Award applications in the mail this month. **Consider submitting your ATP's efforts for special recognition by NNPS and earn a \$500 prize!** To learn more about NNPS partnership awards and winners, go to www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/awards/index.htm. Let's spotlight some of the wonderful efforts of VISTAs and continue Wisconsin's proud history as a partnership leader!