



A quarterly update from your U.S. Department of Education Promise Neighborhoods Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) team

As we approach the beginning of winter, the Promise Neighborhoods TTA (Promise TTA) team is pleased to bring you some exciting updates to close a productive year and begin looking ahead at what is coming in 2025. In this issue, we invite you to join us in [celebrating Elson Nash's retirement](#) and the [Promise Neighborhoods that made headlines](#), as well as [helpful resources](#) to consider as we enter the new year. Additionally, the Promise TTA team shares information about the upcoming [Promise Neighborhoods and Full-Service Community Schools National Network Conference](#). From Tuesday, December 10, to Wednesday, December 11, Promise Neighborhoods will have the chance to connect, learn, and reflect on all that was learned this past year. If you have conference-related questions, please contact [pnfscsconference@westat.com](mailto:pnfscsconference@westat.com). Program teams may send up to four representatives to the conference, and we will offer a waitlist for additional attendees. The Promise TTA team looks forward to seeing everybody there!



## Promise Neighborhoods TTA Highlights

### *Join us in celebrating Elson Nash's retirement!*

Elson Nash, director of the School Choice and Improvement Program Division at the U.S. Department of Education, which houses the Promise Neighborhoods and Full-Service Community Schools programs, will be retiring at the end of 2024.

Elson Nash has been instrumental in advancing the vision of Promise Neighborhoods and place-based work at the U.S. Department of Education. He first began as team lead for the Promise Neighborhoods and Full-Service Community Schools programs in 2012, building relationships and making connections across technical assistance providers and grantees. In 2021, he became director of the School Choice and Improvement Program Division, where he oversees a portfolio of programs aimed at improving the lives of children across the nation through community engagement and wraparound services. In this role, Elson Nash has significantly strengthened and expanded place-based programs, building robust partnerships across both public and private sectors. He leaves a legacy of centering communities and their needs as key drivers of change, while fostering intentional cross-sector collaborations.



We thank Elson Nash for his years of work and dedication to the Promise Neighborhoods and Full-Service Community Schools programs. Join us in celebrating his work and thanking him for his service to Promise Neighborhoods when you see him at the 2024 Promise Neighborhoods and Full-Service Community Schools National Network Conference.



## Meet Your Newest Neighbors

### *Have You Met the FY 22 and FY 23 Promise Neighborhoods?*

Throughout 2024, we highlighted several fiscal year (FY) 2022 and FY 23 grantees. This quarter, we are focusing on the trends and accomplishments of our newest cohort's initial year of implementation. Join us in celebrating the great work your newest neighbors achieved in their first year. For more information about the FY 22 and FY 23 grantees, find their [infographics](#) on the Promise Neighborhoods website!

#### *Early Childhood*



- **Tracking kindergarten (K) readiness.** Five FY 22 and FY 23 grantees began to track kindergarten readiness trends in Year 1, using data aligned with *Guidance Document*<sup>1</sup> recommendations.
- **Establishing partnerships.** Many grantees established strong partnerships with early learning facilities and community organizations, including one grantee that is building connections with every early learning facility within its county footprint. This grantee conducted a needs assessment with each facility and introduced staff to an evidence-based curriculum to ensure that instructional practices aligned with state kindergarten readiness standards.

#### *K–12*



- **Offering professional development.** Several grantees focused on leadership development and capacity building at the school and classroom levels. One grantee implemented a comprehensive leadership development program to provide a year of intensive training for new school principals. This grantee also offered specialized literacy training to a cohort of interventionists and coordinators to support students' reading achievement.
- **Expanding access to support services.** Grantees made strides in expanding access to academic and social-emotional support, particularly for students who face systemic barriers to success. One grantee implemented an afterschool tutoring program to help third-grade students pass the state's mandatory literacy assessment.

#### *College and Career*



- **Offering dual-credit courses.** Several grantees made strides toward establishing dual-credit offerings, which will enable students to earn college credits while working toward their high school diploma.

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<sup>1</sup> Comey, J., Tatian, P.A., Freiman, L., Winkler, M.K., Hayes, C., Franks, K., and Jordan, R. (2019). *A Guidance Document for Promise Neighborhoods on Collecting Data and Reporting Results (FY2017/2018 ed.)*. Urban Institute. U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved March 31, 2024, from [https://promiseneighborhoods.ed.gov/pdf/measuring-performance-a-guidance-document-for-promise-neighborhoods-on-collecting-data-and-reporting-results\\_0\\_508c.pdf](https://promiseneighborhoods.ed.gov/pdf/measuring-performance-a-guidance-document-for-promise-neighborhoods-on-collecting-data-and-reporting-results_0_508c.pdf).



## Family and Community Supports

- **Developing community engagement strategies.** Several FY 22 and FY 23 grantees developed successful community engagement strategies. Two grantees took advantage of the excitement around the program's launch to host and attend community events, raising awareness about Promise Neighborhoods and its relevant programming initiatives. One grantee engaged 5,400 residents at 50 different community events.
- **Addressing housing needs.** Two other grantees found success in addressing housing-related issues. To mitigate persistent learning loss related to high mobility rates within the footprint, one grantee supported 70 families in moving into new units built within the Promise Neighborhood footprint.
- **Addressing access to healthy foods.** Several grantees focused on access to healthy foods. One grantee successfully served 243 families through a partnership with a produce distribution organization that coordinated two community healthy food giveaways of locally grown collard greens.



## In the News

### Which Promise Neighborhoods Made Headlines?

**Promise Heights Promise Neighborhood (FY 18 grantee):** [Promise Heights Showcased at White House Panel on Funding](#). On October 3, Oprah Keyes, director of strategic partnerships at the Center for Restorative Change within the University of Maryland School of Social Work, spoke as a panelist representing Promise Heights at the U.S. Department of Education and White House virtual panel series, [Blending and Braiding: How to Make it Easier to Use Different Funding Streams to Meet the Needs of the Whole Child](#). As a follow-up, the University of Maryland published a news story highlighting Keyes' role in the panel and the funding work the Center for Restorative Change has accomplished.

**Hope Zone Promise Neighborhood (FY 22 grantee):** [Dayton Gun Violence: A Call to Action After a Deadly Year for Young People](#). At least 200 community members gathered in West Dayton on September 19 and marched in the first-ever Hope Zone Youth for Peace Gathering to condemn and call for an end to a wave of gun violence that affected the Dayton community this year. Several people spoke at the rally, including many young community members who gave speeches and read poems.



Hope Zone community members march to end gun violence



**West Philly Promise Neighborhood (FY 16 grantee):** [West Philly Promise Neighborhood Publishes Community Brief](#). West Philly Promise Neighborhood recently published a brief, *Models for Community-Academic Partnerships: West Philly Promise Neighborhood*, as part of a series that spotlights successful community-academic partnerships. The goal of the series is to help researchers and community members learn more about coming together to improve health.

**Evansville Promise Neighborhood (FY 23 grantee):** [Evansville Promise Neighborhood Hosting Event Aimed at Connecting Families to Early Childhood Resources](#). Evansville Promise Neighborhood hosted a free community event—Little Kids, Big Promise—on September 7 to connect families to early childhood resources. The event included giveaways and activities for children. Local organizations attended the event to share information about services and provide enrollment information.



## TTA Talk

### *What Is the Promise TTA Team Planning and Curating for Grantees?*



Visit the [Promise Neighborhoods Google calendar](#) for dates and descriptions of all upcoming events.

### **Next Quarter: We Look Forward to Seeing You at the Following Events**

#### **Looking Ahead: Start Planning for These Events**

**Tuesday, December 10–Wednesday, December 11, 2024:** [Promise Neighborhoods and Full-Service Community Schools National Network Conference](#). We are looking forward to seeing you at this year's conference, *Marching Forward for Student Success*. The conference will be held in person from Tuesday, December 10, to Wednesday, December 11. If you have conference-related questions, please contact [pnfscsconference@westat.com](mailto:pnfscsconference@westat.com).

**Virtual Course: Sustaining the Infrastructure of Promise Neighborhoods.** This early 2025 virtual learning opportunity will prepare PN grantee teams to address sustainability questions using a structured process, exercises, and tools. Over four sessions, attendees will learn from FourPoint Education Partners and other experts about sustainability approaches and apply that learning to the development of a plan for maintaining infrastructure over time. Attendees will also receive feedback on their sustainability plans during one-on-one conversations with FourPoint Education Partners. Registration information has gone out to FY21 and FY22 grantees, as well as a few additional grantees. Grantees should register for the course in teams of three. If you have any questions or concerns about the course, please contact Emily Verburg at [everburg@urban.org](mailto:everburg@urban.org).

#### ***U.S. Department of Education–Sponsored Webinar Series***

**Blending and Braiding webinar series:** The Department of Education is co-sponsoring this webinar series with the White House. The Blending and Braiding webinar series aims to increase awareness and understanding of how organizations can blend and braid federal, state, and local funds to make essential services more accessible for students and families. You can find the recordings of the previous sessions on the [Promise Neighborhood website](#). The last session will be on January 16, 1:00–2:00 p.m. ET. [Register for the webinar!](#)



## ***Communities of Practice***

Thank you to everyone who attended the Communities of Practice (CoP) series this year! As a reminder, CoPs will resume meetings starting in February 2025.

**Department of Education Program Officer office hours.** We will continue offering monthly calls with the U.S. Department of Education Program Officers. Please refer to the Promise Neighborhoods Google Calendar for updated dates and times. Please contact [PromiseTA@westat.com](mailto:PromiseTA@westat.com) with questions.

## **Helpful Resources**

### **Did COVID-19 Shift the “Grammar of Schooling”?**

In 2020, COVID-19 dramatically changed what the classroom looked like for both students and faculty. Virtual and, eventually, hybrid learning moved instruction away from the Grammar of Schooling, or the constructs and practices characteristic of education in the United States. The University of Michigan and National Bureau of Economic Research’s Brian A. Jacob and Michigan State University’s Cristina Stanojevich highlight how, as a product of adaptive learning during and after 2020, many instructors turned to virtual learning and management systems, such as Google Classroom and Schoology. [Read findings](#) and learn how they may reflect instruction in local schools.

### **A Quantitative Study of Mathematical Language in Upper Elementary Classrooms**

Harvard University’s Zachary Himmelsbach and colleagues explored the use of mathematical language in upper elementary U.S. classrooms. They found that, while students are irregularly exposed to mathematical language during instruction, teachers who consistently used such language were more effective at raising student test scores. More about teacher efficacy and the use of mathematical language is available in the [full report](#).

### **Rubric for the Authentic Engagement of Student Parents**

The Urban Institute’s Kate Westaby and colleagues developed a rubric to support student parents who are pursuing an undergraduate education. The rubric functions as a self-assessment tool, enabling organizations, programs, or initiatives to assess themselves and their projects over time. If your Promise Neighborhood is supporting student parents, Westaby and colleagues’ rubric is a great resource to guide planning and assistance. [Access the rubric and read the full report](#).

### **Transforming Schools: A Framework for Trauma-Engaged Practice in Alaska**

Developed by former Promise Neighborhoods grantee STEPS AK, this framework integrates lessons learned by school staff and community members in Alaska with a school-wide, trauma-engaged approach to improve academic outcomes and well-being for all students. Access the [Trauma-Engaged Resources](#).

## **Insight Into the Promise Neighborhoods Program**

### **Why Investing in Community-Led Initiatives Is Crucial to Helping Families Thrive**

In [Why Investing in Community-Led Initiatives Is Crucial to Helping Families Thrive](#), Lezley Lewis, assistant director of the Rise Family Support Center, provides insight into how the Uptown and Druid Heights Promise Neighborhood has transformed Pennsylvania Avenue in Baltimore, Maryland. Specifically, the Promise Heights Initiative aims to set up young people for success, and it connects pregnant and parenting people with services to promote family stability. The initiative has made strides by cutting the infant mortality rate by 75 percent from 2009 to 2019, while also increasing kindergarten readiness and educational outcomes among elementary and middle schools. Overall, Lewis states that such progress is due to “trusting and investing in community



members ... and providing residents with the tools they need to advocate and develop solutions tailored to their community.”

### **Insights for Current and Future University- and College-Based Grantees**

[Insights for Current and Future University- and College-Based Grantees](#) provides four key takeaways for colleges and universities interested in pursuing Promise Neighborhood grants. For any Promise Neighborhood working with higher education institutions, the report effectively outlines key strategies that can enhance planning, engagement, and support.

### **You May Have Missed ...**

**StriveTogether Network Membership Webinar:** On October 17, the Promise TTA team hosted a webinar to introduce grantees to the StriveTogether network. StriveTogether is a network of more than 70 cradle-to-career initiatives across the country seeking to improve outcomes for children. This webinar was designed for Promise Neighborhoods grantees to learn about the network, its membership process, and how it supports its members and the broader field. Please contact [PromiseTA@westat.com](mailto:PromiseTA@westat.com) for the recording.



## **Data Deep Dive**

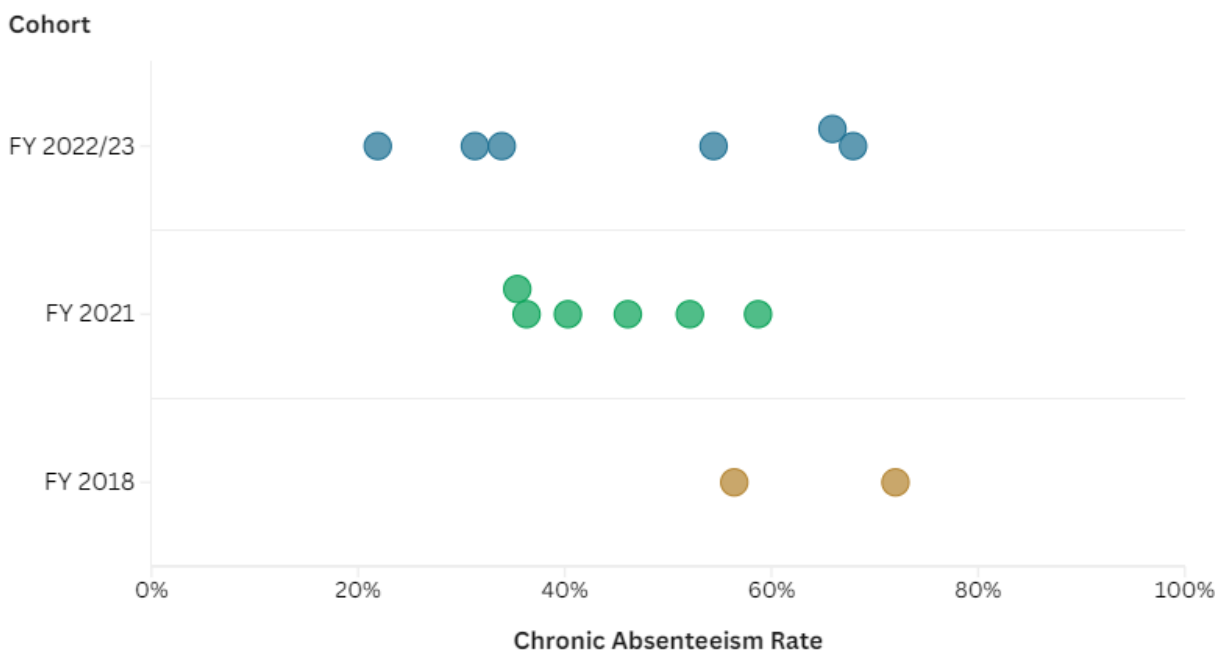
### *What Does Chronic Absenteeism Look Like in the FY 22 and FY 23 Cohort?*

Chronic absenteeism, defined as missing at least 10 percent of days in a school year for any reason, including excused and unexcused absences, is a pressing issue for schools across the country. Monitoring the prevalence of chronic absenteeism is key to developing and implementing solutions. All Promise Neighborhood grantees track and report on chronic absenteeism rates in their target schools. In the 2023 ad hoc reporting cycle, FY 22 and FY 23 grantees reported more variability in chronic absenteeism rates than any other cohort, as illustrated by the figure below. This reflects the diversity of the latest cohort’s community contexts, and suggests that while the broader issue is widespread, grantees will likely need tailored approaches to combat the specific causes of absenteeism in their communities.



## Chronic Absenteeism Varies Within Cohorts

FY 2022/23 grantees show the widest range in chronic absenteeism rates in the 2023 ad hoc data submission.



## Funding Opportunities

*Where Can Promise Neighborhoods Seek Funding to Sustain and Grow Their Impact?*

### Head Start Competitions

In 2011, the federal Office of Head Start established the Designation Renewal System, which holds Head Start programs accountable by ensuring they meet certain quality benchmarks. Programs that do not meet one or more of these benchmarks must compete for their grant funding. While most programs keep their funding after the competition, the process is meant to improve the Head Start program, increase staff pay, and involve more community partners. You can find out whether Head Start funding in your community is open for competition by visiting the [Notice of Funding Opportunities \(NOFO\) Locator](#). Nearly \$700 million is up for grabs! Applications are expected to be released in late fall.

### FY 24 AmeriCorps State and National Grants

[AmeriCorps](#) aims to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. [FY 24 AmeriCorps State and National Grants](#) are awarded to eligible organizations including Indian tribes; institutes of higher education; local governments, including school districts; nonprofit organizations; state service commissions; and states and U.S. territories. Applicants should engage AmeriCorps members in



evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions to strengthen communities. Applications are due January 23, 2025.

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