

FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS THRIVING TOGETHER

Building capacity in the Road Map Project Academic Parent Teacher Teams initiative

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About Education Northwest

Founded as a nonprofit corporation in 1966, Education Northwest builds capacity in schools, families, and communities through applied research and development.

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Executive summary

In 2019, the Community Center for Education Results (CCER)¹ partnered with WestEd and the Stolte Family Foundation to pilot and ultimately expand the use of Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT), a research-based model of family engagement, in the Road Map region. Motivation to implement APTT grew from a need to deepen and expand family engagement in Road Map schools.

Building on existing family engagement efforts, the *Road Map Project Academic Parent-Teacher Teams* is a three-year initiative to support seven schools across two districts—Highline Public Schools and Seattle Public Schools—to develop educator and family capacity for data-driven collaboration focused on improving student academic outcomes. During the grant period, APTT pilot schools will receive three years of professional development and technical assistance from WestEd APTT coaches to implement the APPT model.

At the request of CCER, Education Northwest is conducting an external evaluation of this three-year initiative. This report describes Year 1 implementation (2019-20), lessons learned, and associated changes in educator and family capabilities, connections, cognition, and confidence. The evaluation found that educators implementing APTT believe the program, with the support of WestEd, was helpful in building educator and family capacity to support student at-home learning, as well as school-family relationships—even though they could not fully implement the model during 2019–20 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key findings



Schools received supports from WestEd coaches, as well as regional, district, and school leaders, and built organizational capacity to implement APTT

- Educators reported feeling supported by their WestEd APTT coach during implementation and appreciated opportunities to learn more about the model.
- School leaders worked with their staff and WestEd APTT coach to establish schoolwide structures and supports for APTT and family engagement, as well as address implementation challenges.
- District leaders aligned districtwide goals, policies, and resources to support participating schools.
- Regional supports from CCER created opportunities for cross-sector shared learning and promotion of the APTT initiative.

¹ CCER is the backbone organization of the Road Map Project, a collective impact initiative that seeks to “increase equitable policies and practices in our education systems and dramatically improve outcomes for children and youth, from cradle through college and career.” The Road Map region spans seven school districts in King County, Washington. For more information, see <https://roadmapproject.org>.



Capacity building

Educators in participating schools reported positive changes in their capacity and confidence to implement APTT and family engagement best practices

- Most school leaders reported improvements in their capacity to create structures and processes to support APTT implementation.
- A majority of teachers reported improvements in their capacity and confidence to implement core features of APTT, as well as parents' skills and confidence to support their children's learning.
- Some educators reported positive changes in their ability to promote authentic family-school partnerships in Year 1.



Partnerships

Educators reported positive changes in their ability to build connections between staff members and families

- Teacher confidence to facilitate relationship-building activities in APTT events increased.
- Educators reported improvements in their ability to build connections between parents and in their communication with families.



Beliefs and values

Educators reported positive changes in beliefs and values to improve family engagement

- At least half of educators reported improvements in broadening families' beliefs and their own beliefs about the family's role in education.

Considerations for Year 2 implementation

Before the pandemic, the Road Map Project APTT initiative began to build a foundation that allowed educators to support student learning and well-being during distance learning.

- School readiness to implement APTT involved creating strong systems and processes for family engagement in districts and schools, as well as buy-in at multiple levels, particularly with teachers.
- Logistical challenges to implementation (such as translation, time, and costs) were in the process of being addressed in Year 1.
- Adaptive challenges to implementation (such as teacher buy-in to the process and the ability to customize the model) were reported as considerations for scaling up and sustaining APTT.

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Introduction: Building capacity in the Road Map Project APTT initiative

Strong partnerships between parents² and schools are key to student success (Jeynes, 2005, 2007). Yet traditional approaches to parent involvement in education, such as PTA meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and open house do not always provide a clear role for families to support student academics. Therefore, it is important for districts and schools to create conditions and opportunities for educators and families to build their capacity for authentic family-school partnerships (Mapp & Henderson, 2002) and address specific student learning targets, and create aligned support strategies. Accessing these opportunities can become even more difficult in schools serving students and families with multiple language and cultural backgrounds.

With the support of the Community Center for Education Results (CCER) *Road Map Project Academic Parent-Teacher Teams* (APTT) initiative, participating schools in the Highline and Seattle school districts accessed various resources and supports to build educator and family capacity to address—and ultimately improve—student academic outcomes³ by:

- Implementing a research-based model of family engagement, that is, APTT
- Growing educator and family capabilities (skills and knowledge), connections (relationships and networks), confidence (self-efficacy), and cognition (shifts in beliefs and values) for authentic family-school partnerships (Mapp & Henderson, 2002) to support student outcomes
- Developing a multilevel system of supports to scale and sustain family engagement efforts

Initiative overview

In 2019, building on existing family engagement efforts in the Road Map region,⁴ a cohort of seven elementary schools began a three-year pilot to implement APTT with coaching and support from WestEd. APTT is a research-based model of family engagement focused on school-family partnerships that uses three classroom wide family *team meetings* (known as APTT Team Meetings) and one

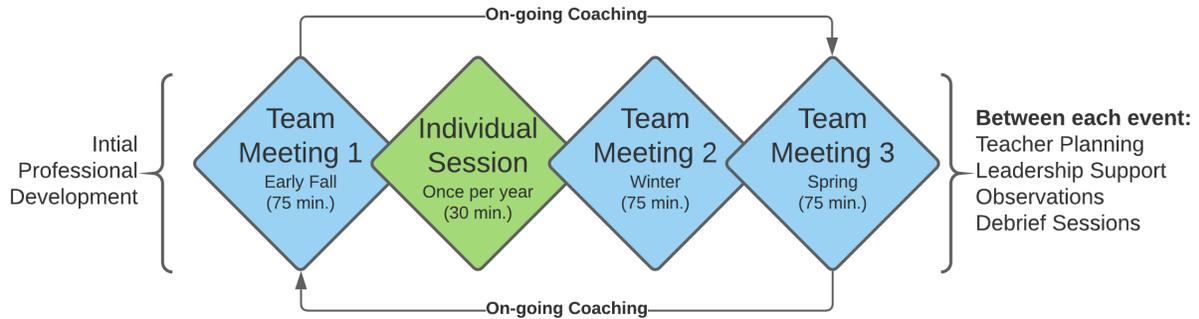
² We use the term “parents” broadly to include all types of biological and nonbiological parents, family members, and primary caregivers who support a child.

³ See appendix B for a description and theory of change model of the Road Map Project APTT initiative.

⁴ The Road Map region spans seven school districts in King County, Washington.

individual session with teachers and families to help families better understand and support their children’s learning (see figure 1).⁵

Figure 1. Road Map Project APTT implementation cycle



Source: Graphic adapted from WestEd for the Road Map Project APTT initiative.

CCER partnered with APTT coaches from WestEd (a nonprofit research, development, and service agency) to provide technical assistance and coaching to all seven participating schools. APTT training and support services for schools included:

- Hosting regional informational sessions to provide an overview of logistics, overarching principles, the philosophy of family engagement, the cycle of supports, and program outcomes
- Providing initial two-day professional development sessions for administrators and teachers
- Supporting teacher planning sessions and observing APTT Team Meetings three times a year
- Helping school leaders facilitate APTT Team Meeting debrief sessions, planning meetings with the school leadership team, and helping collect APTT feedback through family focus groups

On March 13, 2020, Governor Jay Inslee announced that all K–12 public schools in Washington state would be closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, APTT schools were only able to implement 1 or 2 out of 3 APTT Team Meetings in Year 1 and were not able to implement the individual sessions with families.

⁵ See appendix A for an overview of the Road Map Project APTT initiative and a description of the APTT model and services.

Key findings



Schools received multilevel supports from CCER district, and school leaders, as well as WestEd coaches, and built organizational capacity to implement APTT.



Most educators in participating schools reported positive changes in their capacity and confidence to implement APTT and family engagement best practices.



Educators reported positive changes in their ability to build connections between staff members and families.



Educators reported positive changes in beliefs and values to improve family engagement.

About this report

In 2019, CCER contracted with Education Northwest to conduct a three-year external evaluation of the Road Map Project APTT initiative. This report summarizes changes in educators' and parents' capabilities, connections, cognition, and confidence to support student learning in the first year of the initiative. Along those lines, this report aims to provide insight on regional, district, and school efforts to implement a research-based parent engagement model in schools serving students and families from multiple language and cultural backgrounds.

At the end of 2019–20, Education Northwest evaluators gathered feedback on supports for the Road Map Project APTT initiative, changes in educators' and parents' ability to effectively partner to improve student academic outcomes, and bright spots and lessons learned during Year 1 of implementation.

The overarching evaluation questions are as follows:

1. To what degree are schools implementing the APTT model as intended, and what factors support implementation and scaling?
2. What evidence is there of changes in school culture and capacity for family-school partnerships?
3. How is implementation of the APTT model associated with student learning?

The findings presented in this report are based on the analysis of three data sources (table 1).

Table 1. Road Map Project APTT initiative evaluation data sources

Source	Description
Surveys	During spring and summer 2020, the evaluation team sent a survey to teachers and administrators to gather feedback on schools' implementation of APTT. In total, 61 teachers completed the survey, with an average response rate of 67 percent. At least one leader from each school completed the survey, for a total of 12 respondents.
Interviews	Evaluators gathered information via Zoom interviews with school leaders, their staff, and CCER and district leaders (n = 18).
Implementation documents and other literature	The evaluation team reviewed WestEd APTT services documentation and APTT training materials and literature.

Note: See appendix C for the evaluation and methodology behind these analyses.

This report is organized as follows:

- Chapter 1 offers an overview of **school, district and WestEd supports** to implement APTT
- Chapter 2 describes how schools **built capacity** and **confidence** for APTT and family engagement
- Chapter 3 provides examples of how APTT **strengthened school-family partnerships** to support student academic outcomes
- Chapter 4 describes lessons learned and offers considerations for future implementation.

Chapter 1. Systemic supports for APTT implementation



Key finding: Schools received supports WestEd coaches, as well as regional, district, and school leaders, and built organizational capacity to implement APTT

Motivation to implement APTT grew from a need to deepen and expand family engagement in Road Map schools

The decision to implement APTT in the Road Map region came from a desire from CCER and district leaders to make family engagement practices “closer to student outcomes,” align district strategic plans with family engagement, and “tighten” school practices (CCER leaders, personal communication, December 2, 2020). In interviews, district and school leaders said they were motivated to implement the process due to its alignment with school and district goals, as well as a desire to improve or deepen family engagement within schools.

Although a few schools had experience working with families on specific academic goals for their children, most schools held “traditional” family engagement events that primarily focused on creating welcoming environments or providing general information. Two schools had experiences with family engagement programs or models that connected families to student academics, but educators described them as being less structured, having less two-way communication with families, and being unsustainable due to insufficient funding or support. One school leader said implementing APTT was the “first time” their school had an event focused on teacher-family partnership and academic learning.

Educators reported feeling supported by their WestEd APTT coach during implementation and appreciated opportunities to learn more about the model

WestEd APTT coaches worked alongside teachers to develop their capacity to implement the model with fidelity. Teachers implementing APTT received a one-day initial training, APTT teacher planning sessions with a coach, and APTT Team Meeting observations and debrief sessions. On the survey, teachers and leaders said the initial immersive training and the APTT planning sessions were the most useful events they attended.

Educators generally reported feeling very supported by their WestEd coach. In interviews, school staff members highlighted the following aspects of their coach’s approach:

79 percent of teachers and 100 percent of school leaders reported that they received adequate supports from WestEd to implement APTT.

- **Being responsive to teachers’ needs and concerns** during implementation by attending and supporting APTT Team Meeting events and being available via email or text to answer questions on various topics, such as how to engage families.
- **Helping teachers prepare and implement APTT Team Meetings**, such as identifying and preparing materials, as well as troubleshooting issues during the event.
- **Training and coaching staff members on the model’s format and content in immersive and engaging ways**, such as role-playing the APTT Team Meeting experience.

School leaders also received an APTT district orientation and ongoing support from their coach with scheduling yearlong APTT activities, leadership training, and debriefs with their leadership team. On the survey, school leaders said that other than the APTT teacher planning sessions and initial training, the APTT Team Meeting observations and debriefing sessions with their leadership team and WestEd coach were the most helpful supports they received.

“[WestEd APTT coaches] run a really tight ship ... [and] came in with a lot of expertise ... The professional development was engaging. It was applicable. They gave teachers all the tools that they needed to be successful with this.”

– School leader

School leaders worked with their coach and staff to establish schoolwide structures and supports for APTT and family engagement, as well as address implementation challenges

At each school, administrators, leadership team members, and the APTT champion (i.e., the school staff member appointed to support and/or coordinate all APTT meetings) worked with their APTT coach to create structures and coordinate supports for implementation. In interviews, teachers said the most useful supports they received from their leadership team were guidance, ample time and substitute coverage for meeting preparation, help with family engagement, support with preparing meeting resources. Teachers also said they appreciated having school leaders seek feedback from them.

School leaders created yearlong implementation plans, identified time and resources for staff members to plan events, and supported family outreach and communication. School leaders worked with WestEd and their teams to

schedule the meetings early in the fall⁶ and provided substitutes for staff members to prep for the events during the school day. In interviews, several teachers said they valued receiving ample time from leadership to prepare for and implement APTT.

Leaders engaged families in various ways that teachers found useful, such as getting families to sign up for events, hiring interpreters, and encouraging teachers to be present for families during events. Additionally, they established school-level communication strategies (including robocalls, translated emails, interactions with families on campus, and mentions in weekly school updates) to promote APTT Team Meetings.

School leaders found resources to support APTT implementation and sought opportunities to obtain feedback to improve the process. In interviews, most teachers said they appreciated school leaders' help with identifying and acquiring resources to implement APTT Team Meetings, such as asking families to help prepare for events, as well as coordinating child care and food logistics during the meetings.

Several teachers expressed gratitude for school leaders' willingness to provide guidance and seek feedback from them. For example, teachers at three schools said they appreciated how school leaders attended and provided input during meetings. Another teacher valued their leaders' interest in frequently asking teachers for feedback on the process. This responsiveness to teachers' implementation needs led to at least two schools changing the way they delivered APTT in Year 1, such as presenting the material as a grade-level team or using different content.

“[School leaders] found ways to support us with [APTT] by finding parents’ support. We had other parent volunteers from PTA come in and help cut games, print games, put things together. I think that was really supportive because a lot of people, myself included, were using the amount of work we had to do to create [a] scapegoat for [not reaching out to families].”

– APTT teacher

Most teachers agreed that they received appropriate supports from school administrators (74 percent) and teacher leaders (73 percent) to implement APTT.

⁶ Schools were not able to implement the full APTT cycle in Year 1 because of a late start in the fall, inclement weather, and the shift to distance learning in early March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

District leaders aligned districtwide goals, policies, and resources to support participating schools

District leaders coordinated with district staff members and school leaders, as well as teacher unions and technical assistance providers, to create a multilevel model of supports for implementation.

District supports included providing consistent messaging, policies, and resources across district and school sites, as well as actively participating in the APTT professional development process. Interviews with CCER staff members highlighted how district leaders and staff members create a structure that allowed them to “stay in the know” and support building leadership teams by creating consistent communication between district and school stakeholders. Educators at two schools highlighted the unique support that district staff provided, such as stipends, child care, and teacher prep time for implementation.

District leaders also participated in training alongside school planning teams, observed APTT Team Meetings, and attended debrief sessions. Several educators said they appreciated having a district representative present during APTT planning and events. Providing opportunities for reflection and counsel during planning meetings was cited as especially helpful, given the perspective of district leaders and staff members on districtwide goals and strategic plans.

Regional supports created opportunities for cross-sector shared learning and promotion for APTT

CCER served as a cross-sector “negotiator,” “convener,” and “thought partner” for district, funder, technical assistance provider, and evaluation stakeholders in Year 1. District leaders appreciated the regional supports CCER provided leaders and staff members. These included promoting alignment with strategic plans and existing work, as well as sharing lessons learned. In interviews, district leaders also said CCER leaders and staff members acted as a “cheerleader” for APTT with district and school stakeholders to build support and enthusiasm for the initiative.

“CCER’s role was to observe the APTT meetings, teacher planning meetings, [and] leadership debriefs and to follow up with the district leaders individually because their needs and their districts were unique ... [It] was my job to [listen to staff members’ needs and] liaison that back to the district leaders or to our funders.”

– CCER staff member

91 percent of school leaders agreed or strongly agreed that they received appropriate supports from the district office to implement APTT.

Chapter 2. Building capacity for APTT and family engagement



Key finding: Most educators in participating schools reported positive changes in their capacity and confidence to implement APTT and family engagement best practices

Coordinated supports from CCER, district, and school leaders and ongoing coaching from WestEd APTT coaches helped educators and families make progress in building their capacity and confidence to implement APTT and increase family and community engagement (see figure B1 in appendix B).

Most leaders reported improvements in their capacity to create structures and processes to support APTT implementation

Overall, the majority of leaders said their confidence had improved some or a lot over the course of 2019–20 in creating structures and processes to support APTT implementation (see figure D4 in appendix D).

Specifically, 89 percent of leader survey respondents reported some to a lot of positive changes in their ability to:

- Model APTT best practices for their staff
- Lead APTT debriefing sessions with their staff
- Establish family engagement as a core strategy to improve teaching and learning
- Provide outreach and communication about the APTT process to families

In interviews, two teachers supported these findings; they said APTT had improved their leaders' ability to engage parents by providing a new structure for engaging families and a clear communication strategy.

Areas where leaders reported the least improvements were aligning a yearlong implementation and support plan to school initiatives and providing teachers with consistent and protected time to plan and prepare for APTT meetings. Specifically, only 55 percent of leaders reported some or a lot of positive changes in these areas since the start of implementation.

Over 75 percent of leaders saw improvements in their ability to outline specific staff roles to support APTT and build capacity for staff members and families.

A majority of teachers reported improvements in their capacity and confidence to implement core features of APTT, as well as parents' skills and confidence to support their children's learning

Educators interviewed at all schools said teachers were feeling more comfortable with APTT and its expectations—and that their confidence in their abilities had grown—after one year of implementation. In interviews, staff members said they were being “pushed out of their comfort zones” in facilitating APTT Team Meetings and that they had fostered deeper collaboration with their colleagues.

Overall, half of APTT teachers have improved in their confidence and capacity to engage with families to use student data and academic activities to support student learning. Teachers reported slightly more growth in their ability to explain and model academic concepts, data, and activities with families (see figure D5 in appendix D) than in their ability to engage families in activities and discussion related to improving student academic outcomes (see figure D6 in appendix D).

In interviews, educators cited several aspects of APTT that contributed to this growth. Specifically, the model helped:

- **Build teacher capacity in identifying student skills, using assessments, and describing data.** Teachers at three schools highlighted how APTT helped them focus on specific knowledge and skills that students needed to obtain and to be able to communicate this information to multiple audiences, not just students.
- **Create a schoolwide structure and process for sharing student data, modeling activities, and talking about student progress.** One teacher said that before APTT, these areas were left up to the individual teacher and/or grade level.
- **Clarify information about ways to support learning at home,** particularly through modeling. One teacher described how modeling teaching topics directly to families helped remove any disconnect between school and home.
- **Focus parent-teacher conferences on specific student learning goals.** Teachers at two schools said APTT aligned what types of information was being shared in conferences across grade levels, particularly information on what families can do at home to support learning. Conversations with families also helped build educator understanding of each student's context for learning.

59 percent of teachers reported growth in their ability to explain foundational grade-level skills to families and model activities for families.

Approximately half of teachers implementing APTT reported at least some or a lot of growth in their ability to collaborate with families to provide student academic supports (49 percent), support families in their practice activities (49

percent), and facilitate discussions on rigor and achievable goals (51 percent), which suggests continued support for all teachers in these areas.

Educators at all schools reported that parents gained knowledge about important skills, standards, and the ability to track their children’s progress, as well as improved confidence in their ability to support their children’s education. As a result, educators observed that parents understood how to modify strategies to support their children’s needs, were more aware of their children’s learning level, and were increasingly engaging with their children on schoolwork.

In interviews, staff members at all schools said APTT Team Meetings—particularly modeling the activities families were expected to do at home—helped them clarify information for families on skills and goals, as well as the ways they can help their children at home. They also said APTT Team Meetings helped make student learning “concrete” for families (for example, helping families understand “the why” of selected skills and how they build into later learning), and how to set ambitious, yet realistic goals for their child. Two teachers said that providing specific data on a student’s progress during the APTT Team Meetings made it relevant for their family and that the visual data displays were helpful for non-English-speaking families.

“[APTT] is a really great way to bring the parents in. [W]e’ve actually had them pretend they were students ... and it was really eye-opening for them. And they were, like, ‘Oh, my gosh, this makes so much more sense now. I understand this now. I can help my kid with their homework better now.’”

– APTT teacher

About 50 percent of educators reported positive changes in their ability to promote authentic family engagement

By the end of Year 1, about half of APTT leaders and teachers reported improvements in their ability to implement strategies for authentic family engagement. Teachers saw the most growth in their ability to help plan or facilitate activities that enhance family engagement (46 percent) and their ability to provide opportunities for parents to build their capacity and leadership (43 percent) (see figure D8 in appendix D).

Leaders reported growth in their ability to improve family engagement in terms of providing a welcoming and respectful school environment for parents and families (55 percent) and providing opportunities to build families’ capacity to collaborate with educators (55 percent) (see figure D9 in appendix D). Leaders

44 percent of leaders and 43 percent of teachers reported growth in prioritizing family goals and concerns for school improvement.

saw the least improvement in their ability to structure parent-teacher conferences to foster collaboration between families and their children's teacher (22 percent), which was not surprising due to schools not being able to offer individual family-teacher conferences in the APTT model due to the shift to distance learning at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter 3. Evolving partnerships to improve student outcomes



Key finding: Educators reported positive changes in their ability to build connections between staff members and families

When educators and families make progress in building their capacity to implement APTT, we would expect to see improvements in family-school partnerships and family-to-family relationships (see figure B1 in appendix B).

Teachers' confidence to facilitate relationship-building activities in APTT events increased

On the survey, over half of teachers indicated some or a lot of increased confidence in their ability to engage families in relationship-building activities during APTT Team Meetings (see figure D7 in appendix D). In interviews, staff members at all schools said community-building activities, such as icebreakers, during APTT Team Meetings helped educators build staff-to-parent and parent-to-parent relationships, as well as create a “safe space” for learning. One teacher said the icebreaker activity was a way to “break down barriers” and build rapport with educators and families. Teachers also described families as feeling more comfortable with contacting teachers, as well as sharing contact information with one another, after the event.

62 percent of teachers saw at least some improvement in their ability to engage families in discussion to share ideas and strategies.

Educators reported improvements in their ability to build connections between parents and in their communication with families

Overall, leaders reported higher confidence than teachers in their ability to build connections (see figures D10 and D11 in appendix D)—specifically, in:

- Building parent-to-parent relationships and networks (67 percent vs. 46 percent)
- Promoting two-way family-teacher communication (44 percent vs. 32 percent)
- Connecting families to community agencies and services (33 percent vs. 26 percent)

Overall, communication between school staff members and parents improved at all schools. In interviews, educators reported positive changes in their school's overall approach to communication with and outreach to families. For example,

teachers said they reached out more frequently to families and that the APTT process helped them gain better understanding of families.

Several educators also reported increases in family participation in school events. For example, teachers at two schools said their school had established active partnerships with some parents, and teachers at two different schools said APTT may have led to a more diverse set of parents being engaged in school activities.



Key finding: Educators reported positive changes in beliefs and values to improve family engagement

At least half of educators reported improvements in broadening families' beliefs and their own beliefs about the family's role in education

Overall, teachers reported greater positive changes in their ability to broaden families' beliefs about their role in their children's education than in their own ability to recognize families' funds of knowledge as a resource (see figure D12 in appendix D).

During interviews, educators observed the following changes that occurred as a result of APTT:

- **Teachers increased their understanding and appreciation of families funds of knowledge.**⁷ Teachers at three schools said they were beginning to see the value in learning more about their students from their students' families—and as a result, they were having more meaningful conversations with families.
- **Parents were developing a new understanding of their role in supporting student learning at home, despite language barriers.** Teachers at two schools described the pride parents took in their ability to help their children grow academically and make progress through the games learned at APTT Team Meetings.

Educators in two schools observed positive changes in students' knowledge of their progress and growth, as well as changes in the use of APTT activities at home.

“I heard from the parents, ‘We want to know, can you do math next time?’ ... I had parent voice, talking about what they want, and so we were going to make the shift to do math.”

– APTT teacher

⁷ Families' and students' funds of knowledge can be described as “academic and personal background knowledge, accumulated life experiences, skills and knowledge used to navigate everyday social contexts, and world views structured by broader historically and politically influenced social forces” (OSPI, n.d.).

Chapter 4. Lessons learned in Year 1 of implementation



APTT leaders and staff members identified key technical and adaptive challenges to implementation

The APTT process involves a cycle of reflection and improvement after each APTT Team Meeting. As a result, all school leaders were actively addressing lessons learned from technical and adaptive challenges to implementation during Year 1.

Technical challenges to implementation included translation, time, support for APTT Team Meeting preparation, and family event logistics

Across all schools, educators described the ongoing challenge of providing translation for all languages at school events. Due to the interactive nature of APTT Team Meetings, translators for certain languages (such as Somali) were not always available. One teacher said that before APTT, there was an “assumption that the families have the resources to figure it out,” such as having a trusted community member translate for them. A few teachers said the model does not necessarily address implementation incompatibilities in schools with dual-language programs or classrooms in which more than three languages are spoken.

Moving forward, leaders at four schools specifically asked for better tools to engage with multilingual families, such as cost-effective ways to get multiple forms of communication and event instructions translated. One leader said getting documents translated for their school can take up to seven days and costs \$100. They felt this was unsustainable for their school’s limited family engagement budget, which they felt should go to supporting other aspects of APTT events.

Time and support for teachers to plan and prepare for APTT Team Meetings remained an issue for some schools. Although all schools had time to plan for APTT Team Meetings, several teachers felt more time should be allotted, given the amount of preparation time required. Several schools had established a system to create meeting activities and materials through leadership and parent supports, but a few teachers said this task largely fell to them and/or their grade-level team. One teacher suggested that they be given additional event preparation time so that their event planning time could also include deeper discussions of their goals and possible modifications to the model that would

Technical challenges are often easy to identify and have a tangible solution that could be implemented quickly.

enhance implementation. Another educator said they should have more time to plan and prepare in the summer.

In Year 1, leaders were actively addressing challenges associated with hosting APTT Team Meetings. Beyond issues with translation, some leaders realized at their first event that they underestimated family turnout and ran out of food or didn't provide enough child care. Although these issues were addressed at the next Team Meeting, a few staff members said they needed additional funding to provide stipends, food, and child care to increase family participation. When reflecting on the lack of family attendance, leaders and teachers identified that families with multiple children at the school were unable to attend simultaneous APTT Team Meetings or had conflicting work schedules. At least two schools were providing additional nights for their APTT Team Meetings to address these issues.

Adaptive challenges primarily involved gaining teacher and family buy-in for APTT

Teacher buy-in varied across schools. Based on interviews with leaders, not all schools were able to get full teacher buy-in before implementation. Leaders who did build interest in and buy-in for the model focused on specific grade levels with interested teachers, allowed certain modifications to event delivery, or were in schools that had implemented programs similar to APTT. Interviews with educators, district leaders, and CCER staff members suggested that lack of teacher buy-in affected APTT implementation.

Despite multiple efforts, families at some schools were not present or engaged at APTT events. Educators suggested several reasons for the lack of family participation, such as insufficient outreach efforts by teachers, little to no prior teacher relationships with families, and/or the general decline of family involvement in later grades. Teachers at schools with low family participation requested additional support from community-based organizations on outreach efforts, professional development on how to engage all families during events, and more opportunities early in the fall to build relationships with families.

“We know how important it is having relationships with the parents and getting buy in to partner with us. [T]hey have much more influence than we have [on improving student outcomes]. So, getting them involved right away [would help build relationships].”

– APTT teacher

Adaptive challenges require changes in values, beliefs, and approaches to the work. It is harder to come to consensus with adaptive challenges, and they are not quickly solved.

Considerations for future implementation

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Road Map Project APTT initiative began building a foundation that allowed educators to support student learning and well-being during distance learning. In interviews, educators, district leaders, and regional leaders shared lessons learned and considerations for sustaining APTT, as well as scaling the model to other schools in the Road Map region. They also discussed what conditions would support future work.



Identify and/or establish school readiness for APTT before implementation

Educators mentioned several school readiness factors that helped with implementation of an evidence-based family engagement initiative, such as clear alignment with school and district goals or the vision for school improvement; additional support for implementation from school staff members, district leaders, and/or families; and overall teacher buy-in for APTT. Educators also said barriers to implementation, such as lack of teacher buy-in or overall school readiness to implement an evidence-based family engagement initiative, must be addressed before scaling the model. They suggested doing so through **clearer expectations and communication about the district and school's commitment to APTT implementation and professional learning**. For example, by having school leaders attend the APTT orientation and training alongside school staff to gain clarity about the process. One interviewee suggested that district leaders **work to align teacher professional development with APTT training**.



Work with district and school leaders to address technical and adaptive challenges to implementation

Sustainability requires novel solutions to challenges related to translation and interpretation; funding; and time and support for effective collaboration among teachers, families, and school leaders to plan and implement APTT. It also requires that schools can adapt the model to their local context (for example, dual-language or multiple-language schools). Interviewees suggested that school leaders **clearly plan out the year of implementation** via fully articulated processes for communication, adaptations, relationship building, and ways to distribute leadership for implementation. CCER staff members recommend **creating a school-level "design team"** to work with the district to adapt APTT to fit local needs. While WestEd coaches suggested **including other district and school leaders**, such as family liaisons, instructional specialists and special education coordinators and staff, to support and address these technical and adaptive challenges as part of an overarching organizational effort.



Create ongoing collaboration across the Road Map region to ensure communication and engagement and to reveal lessons learned across schools and districts

Finally, successful scaling of APTT requires a coordinated effort to share lessons learned concerning school readiness for implementation, best practices, and overcoming common

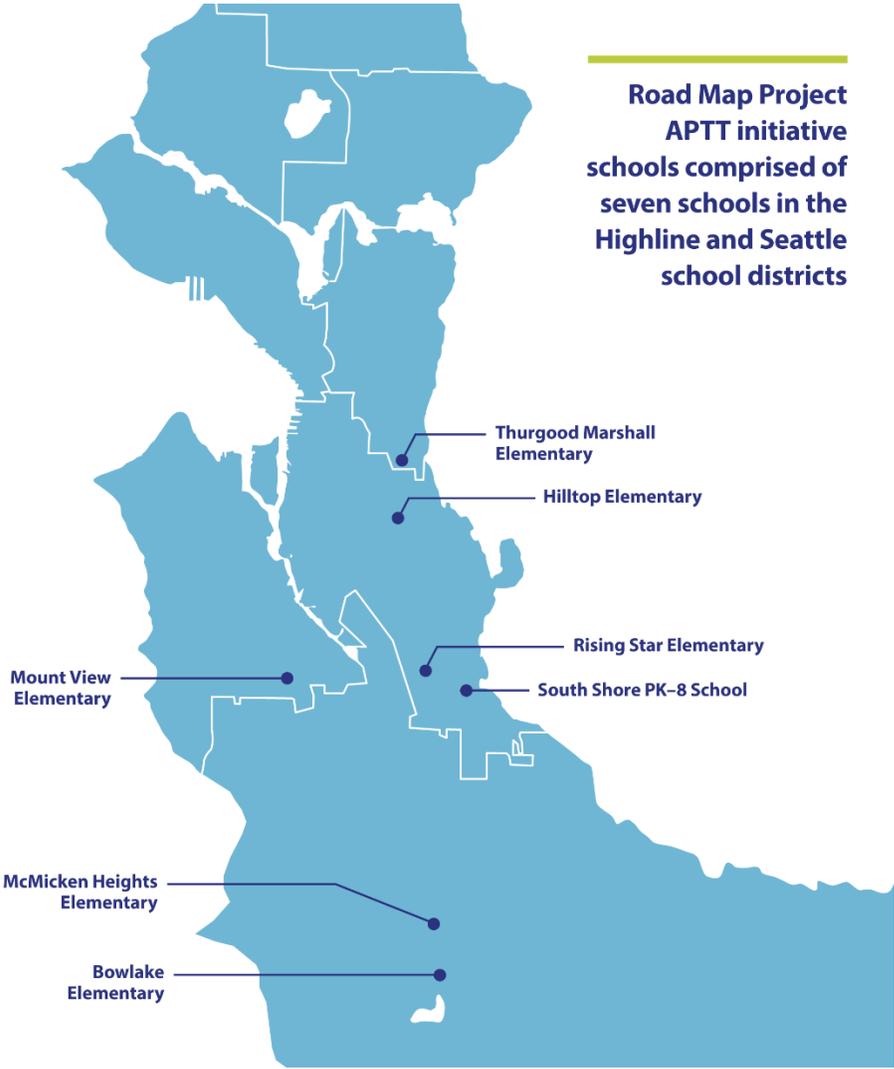
challenges. For example, one school leader requested that they be connected to other school leaders and teachers implementing APTT to troubleshoot common challenges. District and regional leaders – such as CCER – are uniquely positioned to **facilitate local and regional communication and collaboration to implement research-based programming.**

Appendix A: Overview of the Road Map Project's Academic Parent-Teacher Teams initiative

In the 2019-20 school year, building on existing family engagement efforts in the Road Map region, a cohort of seven elementary schools began a three-year pilot to implement Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT) with coaching and support from WestEd.

The seven schools—McMicken Heights Elementary, Hilltop Elementary, Mount View Elementary, Bow Lake Elementary, Rising Star (Van Asselt) Elementary, Thurgood Marshall Elementary, and South Shore PK-8 School—are part of Highline Public Schools or Seattle Public Schools (figure A1). They were all selected through a competitive proposal process.

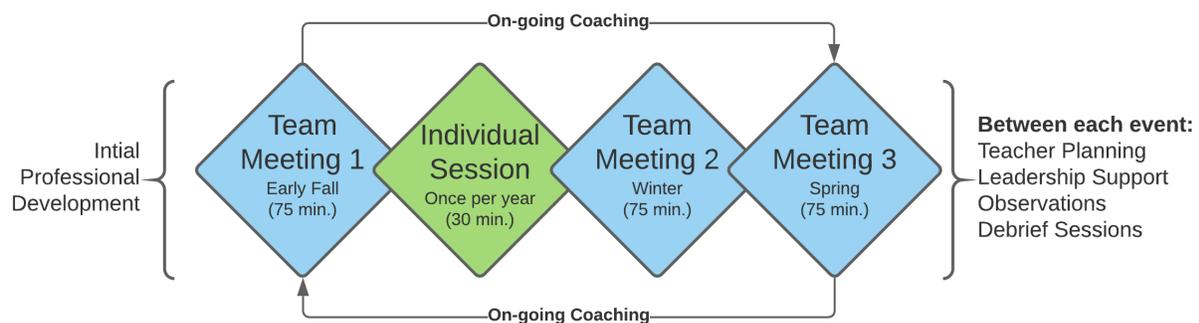
Figure A1. Schools participating in the Road Map Project's APTT initiative



Academic Parent-Teacher Teams model and support services

APTT is a research-based model of family engagement focused on partnerships between families and teachers. It establishes “systemic pathways for teachers to share grade-level information, tools, and strategies that families can apply at home and in the community to accelerate student learning” (WestEd, 2017, p.1). Now part of WestEd, APTT was developed by Maria Paredes in 2009 to help families better understand and support their children’s learning. The APTT model “aligns grade-level learning concepts, student performance data, and family-teacher communication and collaboration” (WestEd, 2017, p.1). WestEd APTT coaches work alongside school leaders and teachers to develop their capacity to implement the model with fidelity. APTT uses three classroom wide family *team meetings* (known as APPT Team Meetings) and one *individual session* with teachers and families during the school year to help families better understand and support their children’s learning.

Figure A2. Road Map Project APTT implementation cycle



Source: Graphic adapted from WestEd for the Road Map Project APTT initiative.

The Road Map Project APTT yearly implementation cycle (figure A2) involved:

- **Initial professional development** that provided a one-day initial training with the principal, instructional coach, and teachers and 2 – 3 hours of leadership training with the principal and APTT Champion
- **Teacher planning sessions** where the APTT coach facilitates teacher planning on-site with each grade level and the principal and APTT Champion.
- **Leadership support** from APTT Coach to facilitate a principal check-in session with staff during the on-site visit. Also includes on-going remote coaching with APTT coach during the school year.
- **APTT Team Meeting observations** by the APTT coach, principal and APTT Champion.
- **Leadership debrief sessions** facilitated by school leaders and APTT coach that occur on-site after APTT Team Meetings. Includes setting improvement goals for each APTT cycle.

Academic Parent-Teacher Teams in the Road Map Region

Background

In 2014, the Community Center for Education Results (CCER), the backbone organization of the Road Map Project, and its partners learned about APTT at the Harvard Family Engagement Institute. Carlina Brown-Banks, senior director of community engagement, said CCER and its partners were excited because APTT was a “tactical thing people could take back” to their own districts to enact the concepts in the *dual capacity framework*.⁸

After attending the Harvard Family Engagement Institute, a few Road Map schools and districts started to experiment with APTT or APTT-like strategies. However, they faced challenges due to the financial cost of the model, as well as difficulties implementing and sustaining it without outside support.

In 2018, Brown-Banks invited Paredes to the Road Map Project’s Family Engagement Institute and began a conversation about a regional approach that would make APTT more attainable in Road Map Project districts. This approach was based on models in other states. Brown-Banks later recommended APTT as the “most researched” family engagement model for Stolte Family Foundation to fund in the Road Map region.

During interviews, Brown-Banks and Tiesha Clark, CCER family engagement manager, said CCER had multiple reasons for advancing APTT as a regional model. First, they saw APTT as a way to operationalize key elements of the dual capacity framework through activities that moved schools to deepen their engagement with families. Second, APTT focuses on engaging families directly in learning, which supported CCER’s goal of demonstrating that family engagement affects student outcomes. Third, CCER viewed the model as an opportunity for districts to support a common strategy across multiple schools—a practice expected to support the sustainability of family engagement in the schools, based on lessons learned from the national Race to the Top initiative.

The COVID-19 Pandemic in Washington State

On March 13, 2020, Governor Jay Inslee announced that all K–12 public schools in Washington state would be closed from March 17 until at least April 24. This meant that the APTT implementation cycle was not complete for all schools; most had completed only one or two APTT Team Meetings with families in Year 1. Inslee also released the following guidance for schools: “State assessments are canceled for the remainder of the 2020 school year.” These included the Smarter Balanced assessments in English language arts and math. Therefore, the quantitative student data analysis scheduled for 2019–20 was canceled. In addition, Education

⁸ Dual capacity framework (Mapp & Henderson, 2002) outcomes involve school leaders, staff and family members building their capabilities, connections, confidence, and cognition for authentic partnership to support student outcomes.

Northwest mandated that employees work from home and restrict their travel, in compliance with Oregon's stay-at-home executive order. As a result, in-person site visits and focus groups with families originally scheduled for spring 2020 were canceled.

Appendix B: Road Map Project APTT initiative’s theory of change

The Road Map Project APTT initiative is seen as a catalyst for authentic family-school partnerships and an extension of prior family engagement efforts in the region (CCER, 2020). As such, the initiative’s theory of change outlines how the various participants, resources, activities, and resulting interim outcomes can lead to long-term impact (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004). Drawing from the dual capacity framework of parent engagement (Mapp & Henderson, 2019), the APTT model, and discussions with CCER and Maria Paredes (the founder of APTT), the evaluation team developed a theory of change to describe the multilevel APTT and family engagement activities, supports, and approaches to achieving shared goals. Figure B1 describes regional, district, WestEd, and school activities during the initial APTT implementation phase (Years 1 and 2).

Figure B1. Road Map Project APTT initiative’s theory of change (implementation phase summary)

Inputs	Regional and district activities	WestEd activities	School activities	Interim outcomes	Long-term outcomes
Who?	Foundational			Increased staff interest in and capacity for APTT	Student achievement is continuously improved
WestEd APTT coaches	CCER provides regional support to convene district leaders and APTT stakeholders	APTT coaches provide foundational support to the school in establishing APTT structures and processes	School leaders create an implementation plan, use selected strategies to develop readiness and commitment for APTT with staff members, and build relationships with families		
School principals/ APTT champions	District leaders receive training, identify APTT schools, provide foundational supports, and champion the initiative		Teachers receive training to implement APTT	Improved instructional practice	The APTT process is scaled in and/or across Road Map Project districts
APTT teachers				Increased family and community engagement	
Families in APTT	Ongoing			Increased district interest and engagement in APTT	
District leaders and staff members	CCER provides ongoing “thought partnership” with district leaders and APTT stakeholders	APTT coaches provide ongoing support to school leaders to guide implementation	Teachers, led by school leaders and APTT coaches, receive coaching and training as they engage in cycles of improvement to foster the conditions to support high-quality APTT implementation		
Community Center for Education Results (CCER)				APTT coaches provide support for APTT team meetings and debrief sessions three times a year	
What?	District leaders provide resources, connections, and support for school-level implementation				
APTT curriculum and materials					
APTT schools					
School readiness					

Appendix C: Evaluation methods

Each year of the evaluation will provide robust information about implementation of the APTT model within culturally and linguistically diverse school districts, and insights into the success and challenges of teacher and family partnerships to improve student outcomes. Using this information, WestEd and CCER will be able to understand whether and how data-driven models such as APTT build the capacity of educators and families to support student learning in historically marginalized communities.

This report documents implementation activities and identifies lessons learned during Year 1 about multilevel approaches to APTT implementation that can inform future work for CCER, districts and schools in the region, and other stakeholders. The findings draw from interviews with school leaders and teachers implementing the Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT) initiative in the first year of the evaluation as well as a leader survey and document review of APTT activities.

Evaluation questions

The evaluation will address three core issues:

- The implementation, scaling, and sustainability of APTT in creating the conditions for authentic family-school partnerships
- Changes in the capacity of educators and families as they implement APTT in four areas outlined in the dual capacity framework (Mapp, 2019)—capabilities, connection, cognition, and confidence
- Improvements in student outcomes in classrooms where APTT is being implemented

The overarching evaluation questions are as follows:

1. To what degree are schools implementing the APTT model as intended, and what factors support implementation and scaling?
2. What evidence is there of changes in school culture and capacity for family-school partnerships?
3. How is implementation of the APTT model associated with student learning?

Methods

Education Northwest used a concurrent mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2009) to collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data, triangulating data from multiple sources.

Interviews

The evaluation team interviewed school leaders and at least one teacher at five of the seven participating schools in June and July 2020. Overall, 15 individuals (ten teachers and five school leaders) participated in an online interview. Principals at two schools chose not to participate in any interviews due to timing, that is, due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to distance learning. Interview questions focused on APTT implementation and supports from WestEd, changes in educator and family capacity to implement APTT and create authentic family-school partnerships, and any bright spots and lessons learned during the first year of implementation. The evaluation team then used content analysis methods to explore patterns and themes across responses.

Survey

The evaluation team administered a survey to all teachers and leaders in schools implementing APTT in June, August, and September 2020. Survey questions focused on perceptions of school conditions and supports to implement APTT, confidence to implement APTT best practices, changes in family engagement, and overall program feedback. The survey was developed in consultation with WestEd and CCER, as well as through document review of the APTT process and dual capacity framework (Mapp, 2019).

Survey respondents

At least one leader from each of the seven schools responded to the survey, for a total of 12 school leader respondents. Five schools had more than one of their leaders complete a survey. Of these 12 respondents, 10 were school administrators, one was an instructional coach, and one was an instructional facilitator. Overall, 61 teachers across all schools completed the survey, with an average school survey response rate of 67 percent (table C1). Schools' teacher survey response rates ranged from 27 to 100 percent. In total, 46 percent of teacher respondents were from Seattle Public Schools, and 54 percent were from Highline Public Schools. Most teacher respondents taught kindergarten through grade 3. In addition, 79 percent of teacher respondents had taught for five or more years overall, and 54 percent had taught for five or more years at their current school.

Table C1. Year 1 teacher survey respondents by grade level and school district

	Seattle Public Schools		Highline Public Schools		All	
	Percentage	N	Percentage	N	Percentage	N
Kindergarten	36%	10	30%	10	32%	20
Grade 1	29%	8	18%	6	23%	14
Grade 2	25%	7	30%	10	27%	17
Grade 3	14%	4	27%	9	23%	14
Grade 4	4%	1	6%	2	5%	3

Note: Teachers were allowed to mark multiple grades. As a result, the percentages total to more than 100 percent of the 61 teachers who completed the survey.

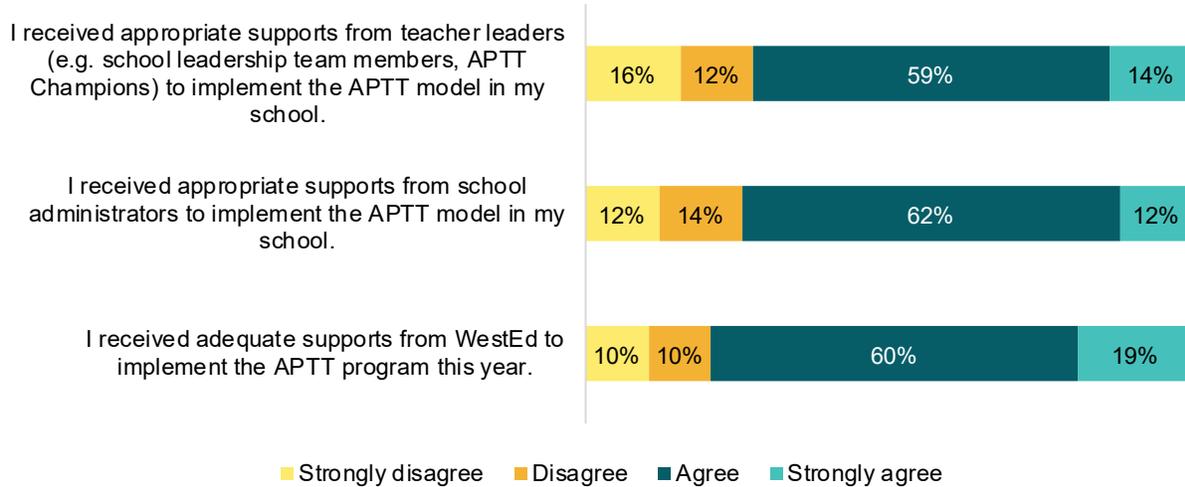
Document review

In December 2019, the evaluation team reviewed documentation from WestEd to identify and describe the services provided to schools implementing APTT in the Road Map region. Documents included Year 1 WestEd support activities, descriptions of the APTT cycle of supports, site visit schedules, and various training materials. In addition, the team reviewed, counted, and categorized WestEd coaching activities and services that were provided to APTT schools. Education Northwest will provide WestEd with a copy of this report to check for accuracy and to provide additional details before finalization.

Appendix D: APTT school educator survey responses

The evaluation team administered a survey to all teachers and leaders at seven schools implementing the Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT) initiative in June, August, and September 2020.⁹ The following are a selection of figures that display survey findings.

Figure D1. Teacher perceptions of school and WestEd coach supports, 2019-20 (N = 58)

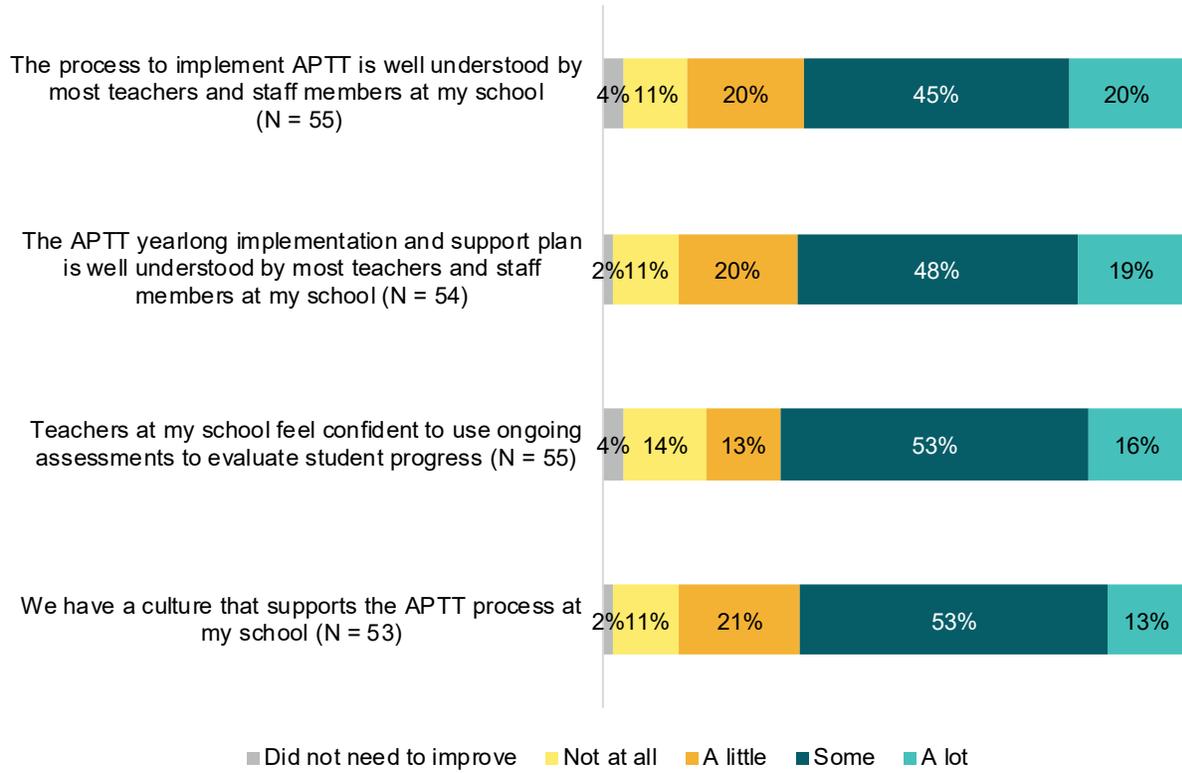


Note: APTT is WestEd's Academic Parent-Teacher Teams program.

Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2020 APTT teacher survey data.

⁹ Data collection was paused in July at the request of district leadership due to the need for staff to address distance learning concerns during the pandemic.

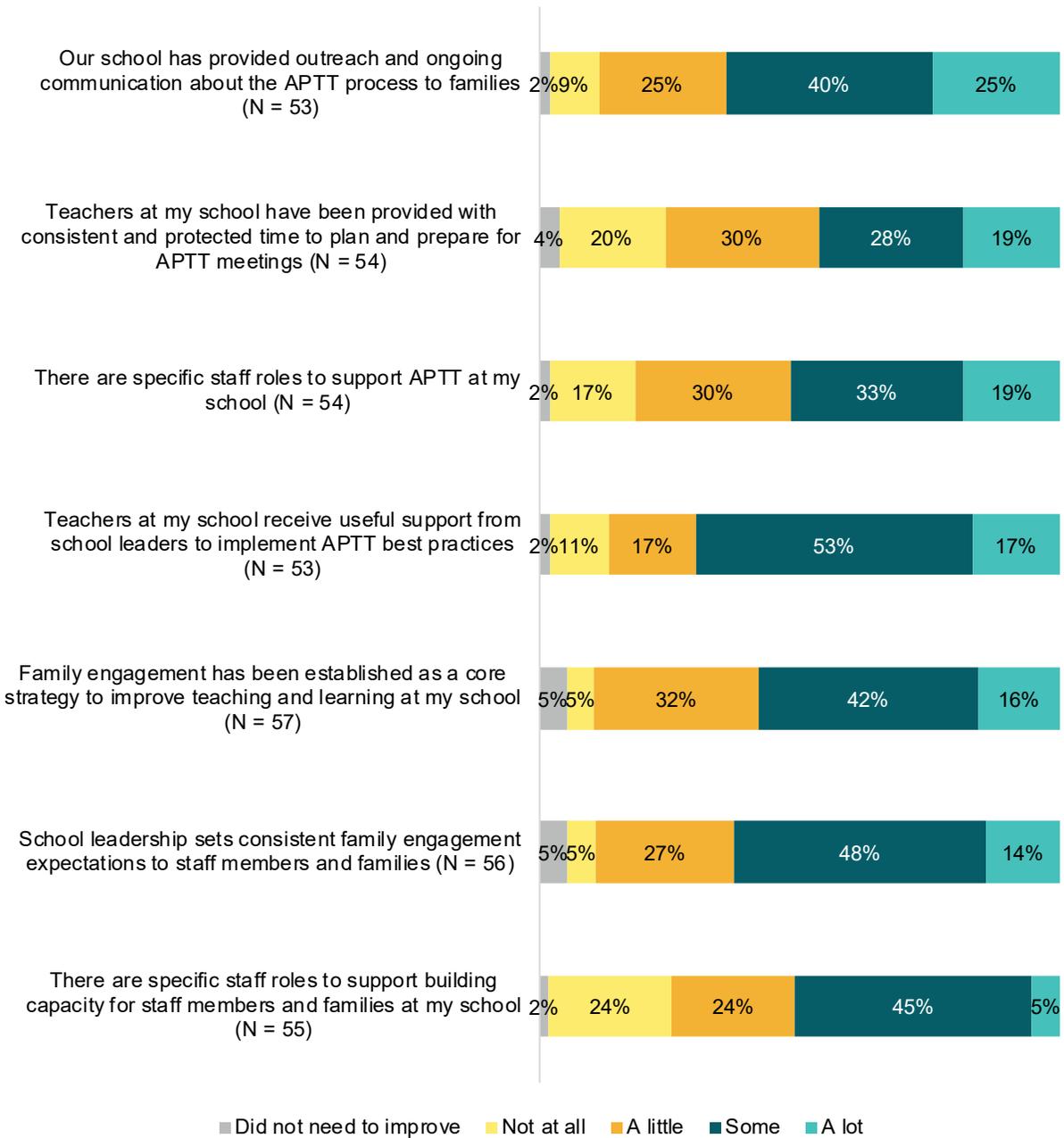
Figure D2. Teachers' perceptions of school staff members' understanding and support of APTT, 2019–20



Note: APTT is WestEd's Academic Parent-Teacher Teams program.

Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2020 APTT teacher survey data.

Figure D3. Teachers' perceptions of school leaders' support of APTT, 2019–20

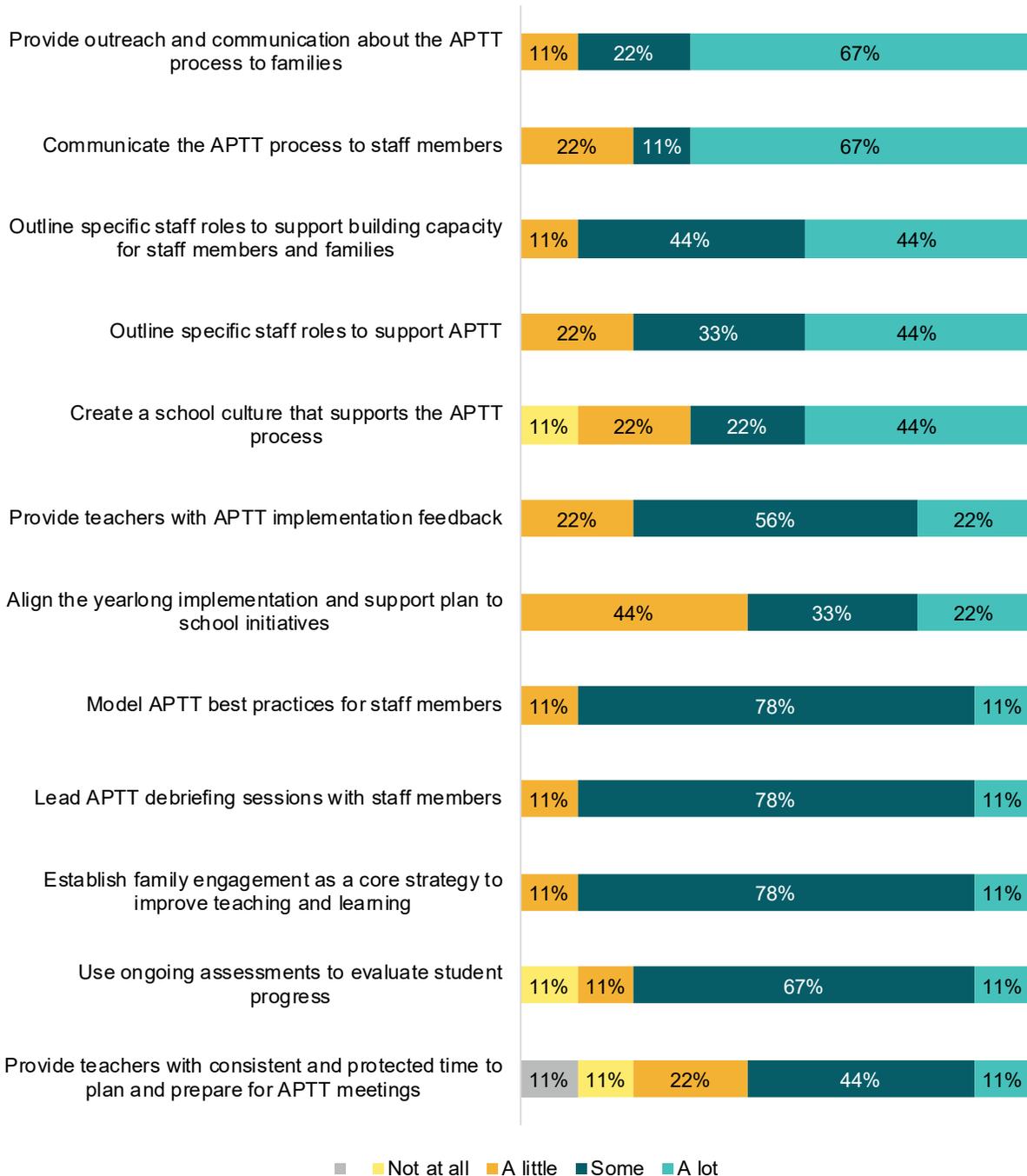


Note: APTT is WestEd's Academic Parent-Teacher Teams program.

Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2020 APTT teacher survey data.

Figure D4. School leaders' confidence in their ability to support and implement APTT, 2019–20 (N = 9)

I am confident in my ability to ...



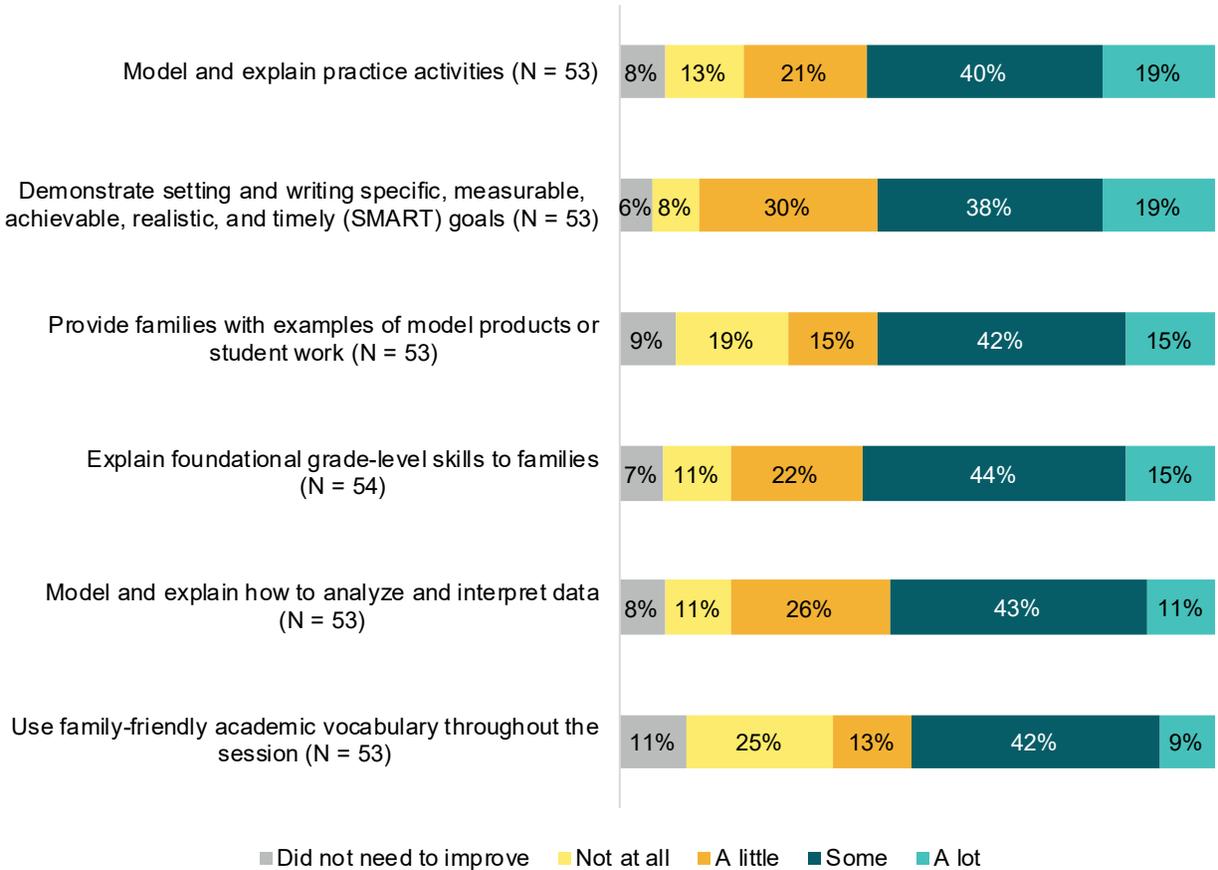
Note: APTT is WestEd's Academic Parent-Teacher Teams program.

Note: Percentage totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2020 APTT leader survey data.

Figure D5. Teachers' confidence in their ability to explain and model academic concepts, data, and activities with families, 2019–20

I am confident in my ability to ...



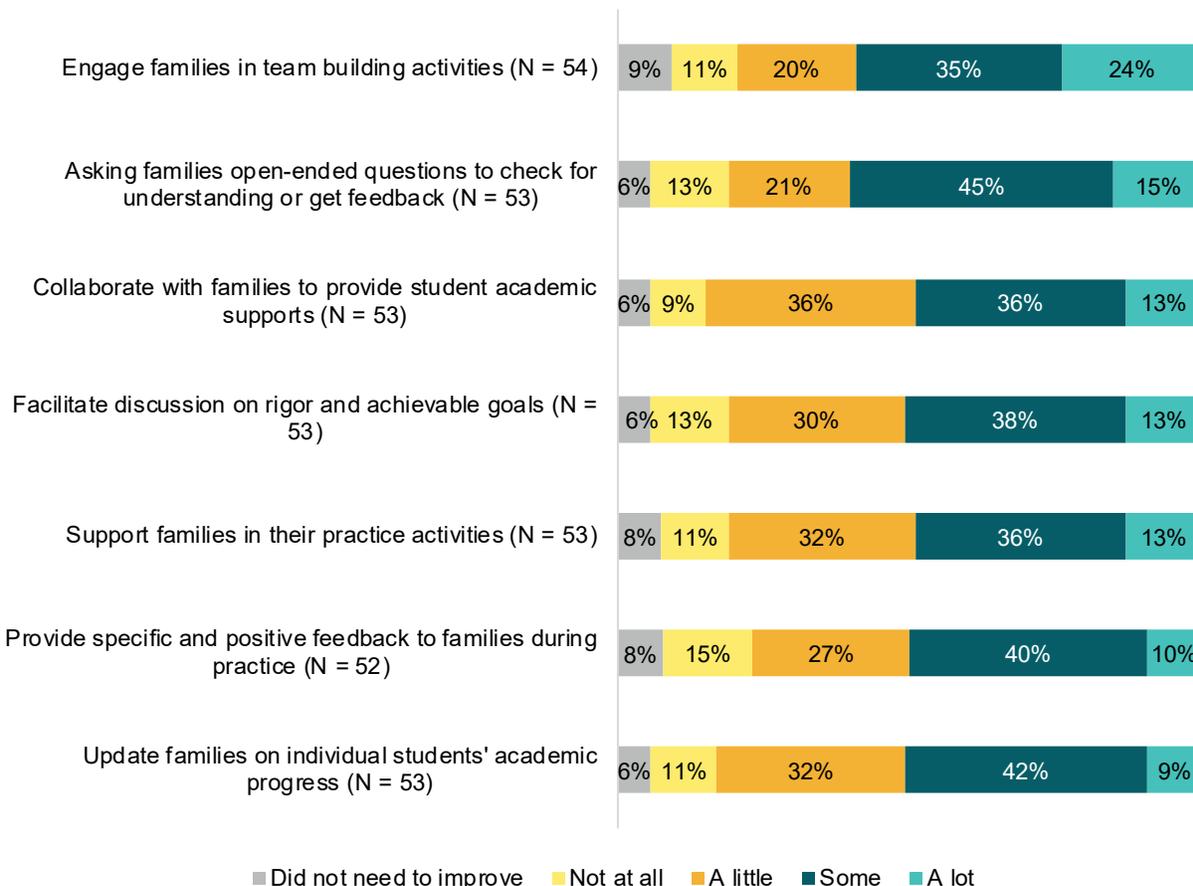
Note: APTT is WestEd's Academic Parent-Teacher Teams program.

Note: Percentage totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2020 APTT teacher survey data.

Figure D6. Teachers' confidence in their ability to engage families in activities and discussion related to improving student academic outcomes, 2019–20

I am confident in my ability to ...

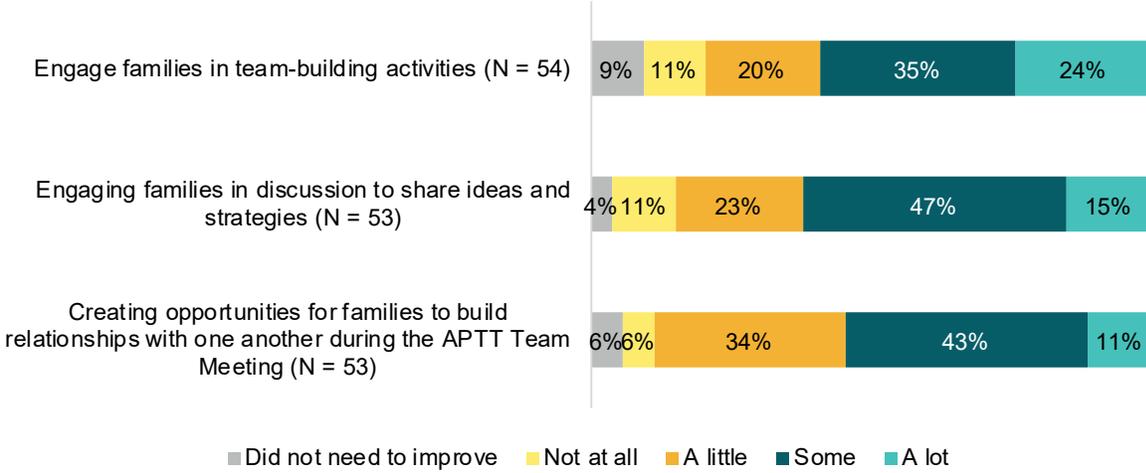


Note: APTT is WestEd's Academic Parent-Teacher Teams program.

Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2020 APTT teacher survey data.

Figure D7. Teachers' confidence in their ability to engage families in relationship-building activities, 2019–20

I am confident in my ability to ...

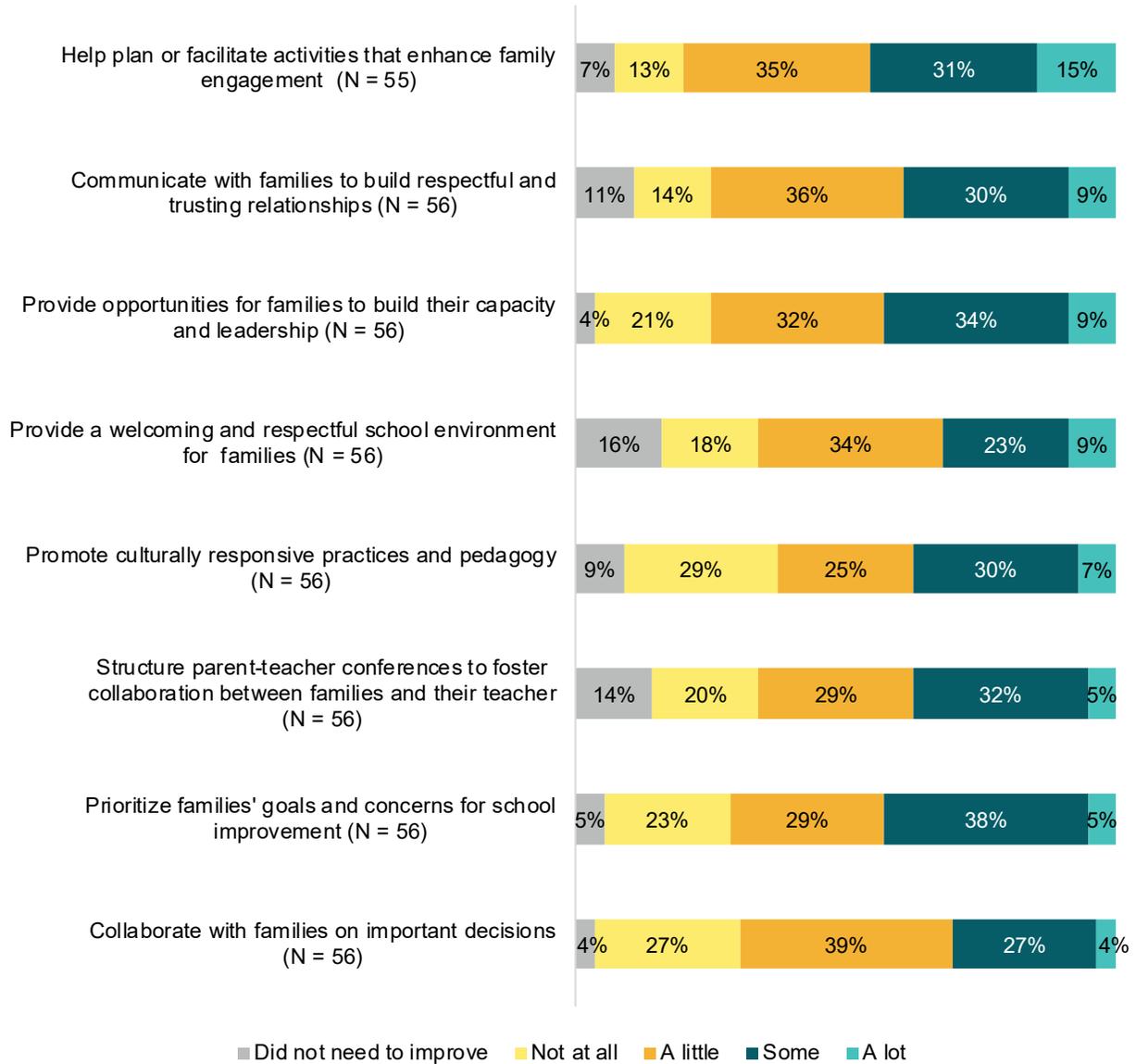


Note: APTT is WestEd's Academic Parent-Teacher Teams program.

Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2020 APTT teacher survey data.

Figure D8. Teachers' confidence in their ability to implement strategies that promote authentic school-family partnerships to support student success, 2019–20

I am confident in my ability to ...

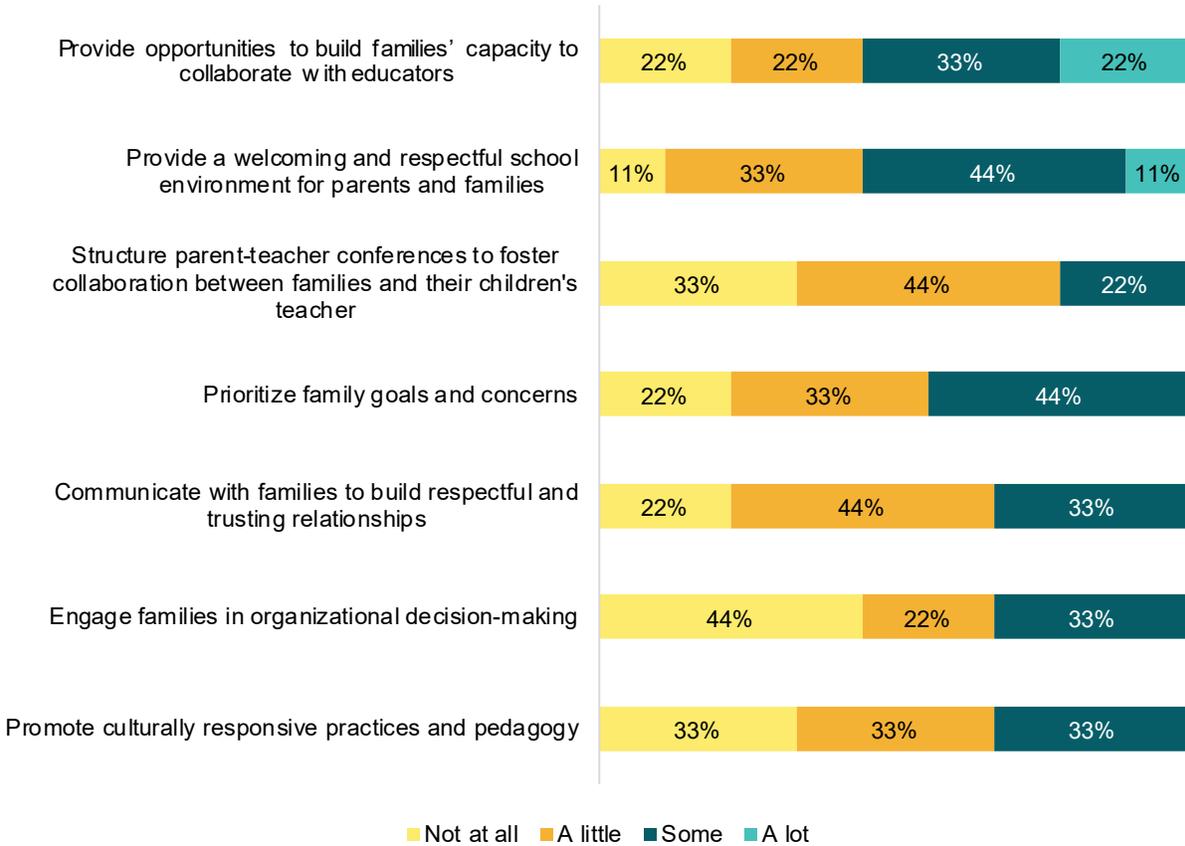


Note: APTT is WestEd's Academic Parent-Teacher Teams program.

Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2020 APTT teacher survey data.

Figure D9. Leaders' confidence in their ability to implement strategies that promote authentic school-family partnerships to support student success, 2019–20 (N = 9)

I am confident in my ability to ...



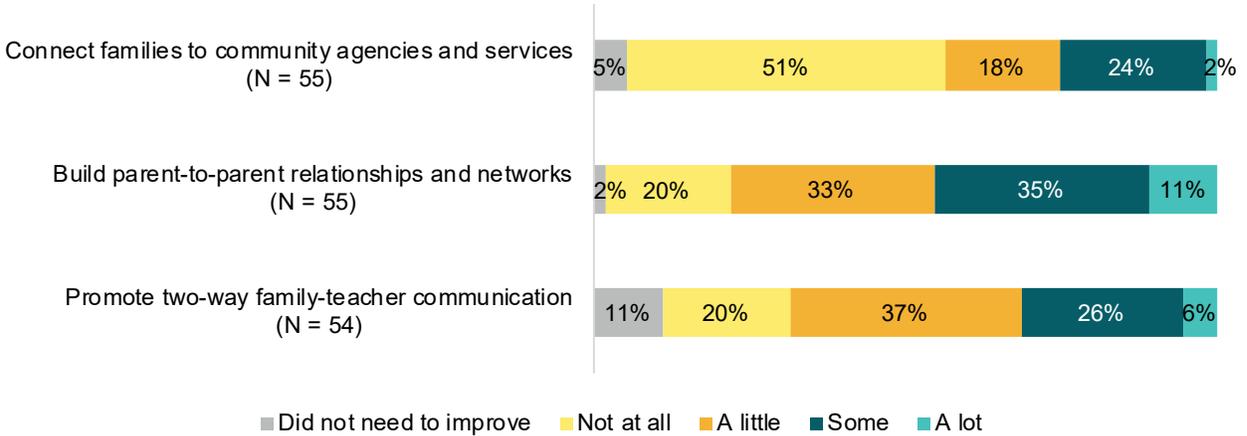
Note: APTT is WestEd's Academic Parent-Teacher Teams program.

Note: Percentage totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2020 leader survey data.

Figure D10. Teachers' confidence in their ability to build connections among school staff members, families, and community agencies, 2019–20

I am confident in my ability to ...

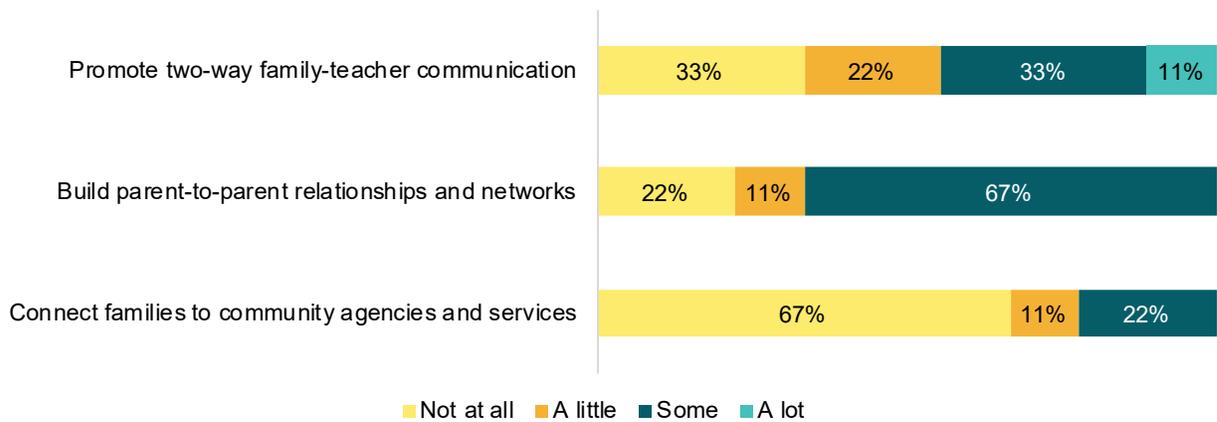


Note: APTT is WestEd's Academic Parent-Teacher Teams program.

Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2020 APTT teacher survey data.

Figure D11. Leaders' confidence in their ability to build connections among school staff members, families, and community agencies, 2019–20 (N = 9)

I am confident in my ability to ...



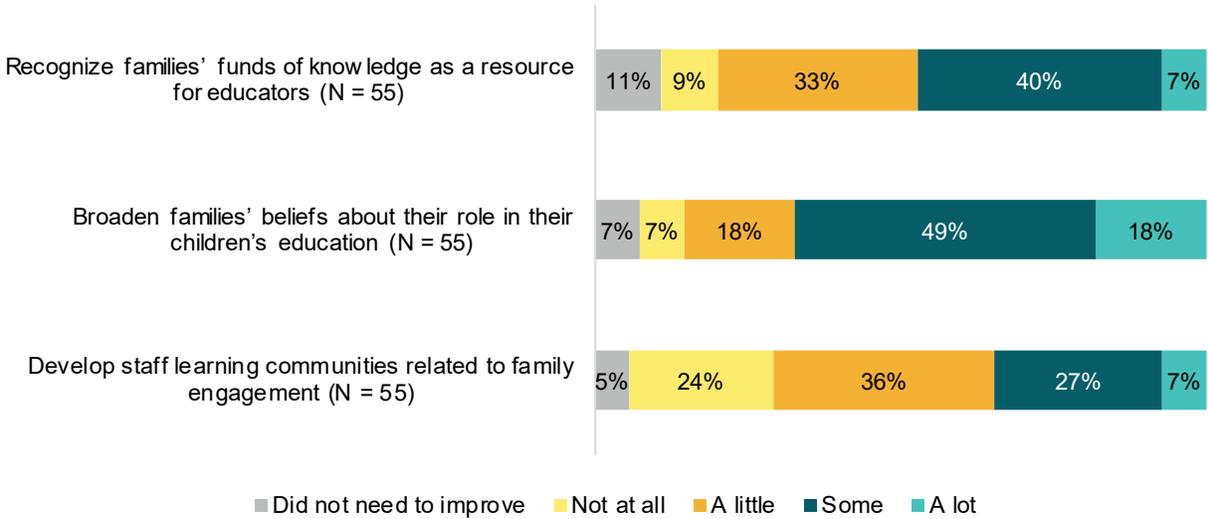
Note: APTT is WestEd's Academic Parent-Teacher Teams program.

Note: Percentage totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2020 APTT leader survey data.

Figure D12. Teachers' confidence in their ability to foster beliefs and values to improve family engagement, 2019–20

I am confident in my ability to ...

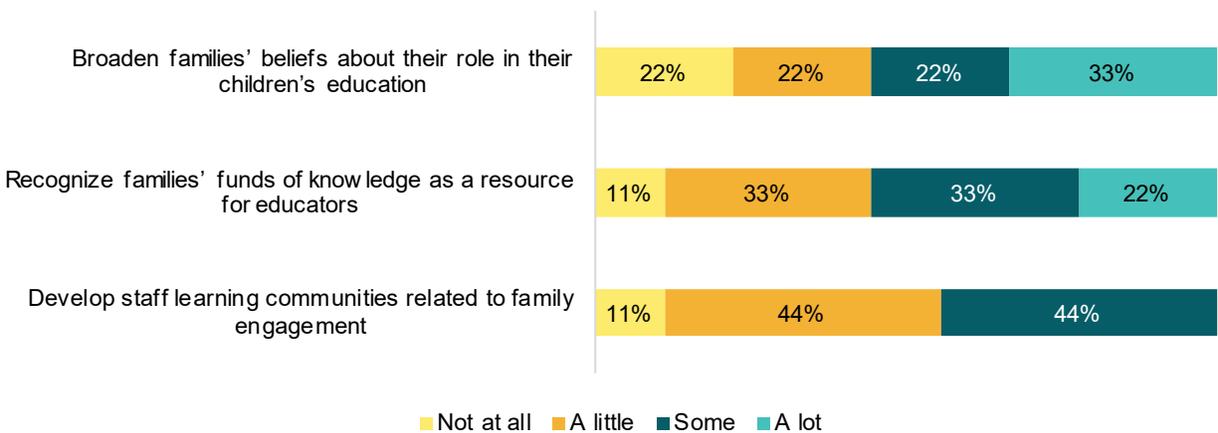


Note: APTT is WestEd's Academic Parent-Teacher Teams program.

Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2020 APTT teacher survey data.

Figure D13. Leaders' confidence in their ability to foster beliefs and values to improve family engagement, 2019–20 (N = 9)

I am confident in my ability to ...



Note: APTT is WestEd's Academic Parent-Teacher Teams program.

Note: Percentage totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Education Northwest analysis of 2020 APTT leader survey data.

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