# USING DATA TO SPUR NEW CONVERSATIONS ABOUT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Thursday afternoon, 3:45 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.

The role that NNIP partners can play in understanding public education issues in their communities varies based on the school district’s policies, internal analytic capacity, and interest in using data analysis to improve decisions. No matter what the local environment, NNIP partners are well-positioned to contribute to this area through their holistic understanding of neighborhoods and connections with the diverse education stakeholders.

Several recent developments reinforce the value of our NNIP partners’ broader perspective and analytic expertise. The spread of public school choice increases the importance of analysis by student residence in addition to by school. Furthermore, developing “community schools” to address the needs of parents and children requires an understanding of the health and financial challenges that families face. The adoption of the “Promise Neighborhood” model promotes integration of public schools into a full continuum of services and emphasizes the use of data for ongoing assessment and program evaluation.

Besides examples from our panelists, other examples of recent analysis relating to public schools include:

* [Examining charter school enrollment patterns](http://mpip.temple.edu/mpip/documents/Policy_Brief_Charter_Schools.pdf) (Philadelphia)
* Assisting in decision rules for school closings (Washington, D.C.)
* [Assessing the potential of “walk-to-school“](http://walkboston.org/sites/default/files/KidsAreCommutersToo_Final_7_16_12.pdf) [programs (](http://walkboston.org/sites/default/files/KidsAreCommutersToo_Final_7_16_12.pdf)Boston)
* [Tracking school mobility and potential causes (](http://www.neighborhoodindicators.org/activities/partner/ohio-student-mobility-research)Columbus)

In this session chaired by Jenn Comey from NeighborhoodInfoDC, partners will share lessons about working on school issues in partnership with public school systems and external organizations and give advice to partners interested in starting education-related analysis and engagement. (about 10 minutes each).

Jordan Wirfs-Brock will relate The Piton Foundation experience in contributing to the [Regional Equity Atlas](http://milehighconnects.org/equity-atlas.html), which explored how the expansion of Denver's light rail system relates to access to a wide range of services. Piton Foundation contributed the education chapter, which looked at the relationship between transportation, educational opportunities, and school choice.

Bob Gradeck will describe the evolution of PNCIS relationship with the Pittsburgh Public School system, expanding from operational help such as realigning attendance boundaries in advance of school closings to understanding parents’ school and residential choices and identifying opportunities for aligning community development and efforts aimed at attracting and retaining families.

Matt Barry will share The Piton Foundation ethnographic project to learn how low-income and Spanish-speaking parents access information about schools, and Piton’s plans for follow-up in collaborating with the Denver public school system.

Steve Spiker will describe Urban Strategies Council analysis of behavior indicators for African-American boys, including suspensions, absenteeism, and drop-off risk, and their conversations with the public school agencies about recommended policy changes to reduce the disparities

We will then have an open plenary discussion to allow other partners’ to share their experiences and ask questions of the panelists.

**Questions for Discussion**

* What guides, tools, or training should the partnership develop to help partners beginning or continuing engagement in school issues?
* Are there national organizations that NNIP should connect with to share NNIP partner case studies demonstrating the value of analysis of student-level data?
* What specific approaches or school issues are common to several sites and likely candidates for cross-site projects?