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CITY CAMPAIGN
For Urban School Reform

Research for Action

STRONG COMMUNITIES, GOOD SCHOOLS

Measuring Success in Education Organizing

An analysis of telephone interviews conducted by the Cross City Campaign
for Urban School Reform, in collaboration with Research for Action, under the auspices
of the Indicators Project on Education Organizing.

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INDICATORS PROJECT ON EDUCATION ORGANIZING

Analysis of Telephone Interviews
June 2000

Introduction

The Indicators Project on Education Organizing is a collaborative action research project to examine and make a case for the roles and results of community organizing in reforming schools, improving student achievement, and revitalizing communities. The project grows out of the work of the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform to strengthen the roles of parents[1] and community members as full school reform partners. Cross City Campaign invited Research for Action (RFA) to be its research partner in this project. RFA uses collaborative inquiry processes to bring parents, community members, educators[2] and students together to examine and reflect on their efforts and has conducted both local and national studies on parent and community participation in school reform.

The audiences for The Indicators Project include funders and educators, as well as community organizing groups themselves. The project will examine the role of community organizing in developing a community constituency for reform and in improving teaching and learning in public schools. The project asks what indicates success in education organizing and how is it measured. It also asks what support community organizations need to do the work well.

A set of beliefs shapes the direction of this research effort. The data that is collected is meant to make visible and credible the basis of those beliefs to the funding community and to educators. Overall, the project is grounded in the belief that parents and other community members' participation in school reform is critical to change schools and to sustain reform. Another belief is that education organizing contributes to making communities stronger through its dual emphasis on strengthening public institutions and building public leadership.

The engagement of parents and community members in school reform requires that the walls between schools and the world outside become more flexible and porous (Henry, 1996; Katz, Fine & Simon, 1997; Sarason, 1982). An assumption is that permeable boundaries ultimately benefit both students and communities. Parents and educators become directly accountable to each other for children's success in school. When schools value what parents bring, teachers can better engage students in their work.

Community organizing challenges the traditional separation of school, family and community domains. Another benefit is that community organizing redresses social, economic and political inequities with the goal of supporting the educational achievement of all children

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[1] Parent is used to refer to any caretaker, including biological and foster parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles or other adults entrusted with the care of a child.
[2] Educators refers to school professionals, including teachers and administrators.

(Anderson, 1998). It also serves as a catalyst for reform, reinforcing and sustaining school improvement through active connections between schools and the outside community (Fullan, 2000.) Through the processes of community organizing, parents and community members gain skills and power and build networks that strengthen their neighborhoods and their participation in schools. The depth of such reform should be measured, in part, by the extent teachers, administrators, and community leadership work together and sustain dialogue and effective reform activity (Rollow and Bryk, 1993).

In seeking to identify indicators of success of community organizing, this project documents the work of these groups and identifies evidence that their efforts are making a difference. In looking for indicators, we ask what measures of success are credible to what audiences? Two related questions are what kinds of financial, staffing and other resources are needed; and, what are the indicators of organizing capacity necessary to carry out this work?

This report is based on data from a telephone survey, the second phase of data collection in this project. Prior to selecting sites for the telephone interview, we carried out an inventory of groups doing community organizing around education issues and found over 150 groups doing such work. Out of those groups, we chose to interview by telephone a sample of nineteen, representing variation in terms of key characteristics. We chose five sites from among the telephone interview sample for intensive case studies, and analysis of data from the first round of visits in spring 2000 will be presented in a forthcoming report.

The telephone interviews were conducted between December 1999 and March 2000 by Research for Action (RFA) with executive directors and/or lead organizers of the sample groups. The interview data provide an opportunity to identify the range and breadth of the work going on in the field and a first step in developing indicators and measures of the difference the work of these groups make. Our understanding of the work and of indicators and measures will continue to develop through the five case studies.

The questions RFA asked in the telephone interviews fell into five categories: 1) the issues the groups address and how the issues are determined; 2) the variety of strategies the groups employ for addressing the issues; 3) the support the groups need to carry out their work; 4) what the groups have accomplished and how they measure their success; and 5) the challenges and barriers the groups face. RFA piloted the interview questions with two groups, slightly revising the survey for the remainder of interviews.

In two sections of this report – the description of the groups and the presentation of indicators -- we represent our data and analysis largely in chart form with introductory narrative. Part II describes the sample of telephone interview groups through a series of tables of key variables. Part III presents an inductive analysis of indicators, strategies, data sources and measures derived from the telephone interview data. Part IV presents the major needs the groups. It lays out a beginning framework of indicators of success. Part V offers a brief summation of the major findings.

Part II: Description of Community Organizing Groups

As noted above, the nineteen groups RFA and Cross City Campaign staff jointly selected for the telephone interview sample came from a database RFA has created of approximately 150 community organizing groups working on school reform nationwide. The groups are active in urban and rural neighborhoods and areas with a concentration of low-income, often racially, ethnically and linguistically minority families; the schools these populations attend are frequently under-performing schools. The groups use social processes of relationship building among parents and community members in order to identify shared concerns about children's schooling and take collective action that challenges inequity. Their purpose is to develop a powerful membership base and develop local leadership that can leverage change to improve children's school experience. The relationship building promoted by community organizing, both within and across communities, schools and school districts is geared toward transformation at individual, community and institutional levels.

The database is not comprehensive of all groups that share these features and ways of working, but is a work in progress. RFA located the groups through lists provided by funders, organizing networks and personal referrals, Internet and web site searches and references in journals and articles. With the help of Cross City Campaign, the data on each group was cross-checked directly with the group.

The Tables below describe the distribution, range and variety of the 19 groups selected for telephone interviews. In making the selections, RFA and Cross City Campaign aimed to create a sample that was well distributed regionally and included several rural groups. The target constituencies or membership of the sample groups were to represent racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse populations. The interview groups were also intended to represent the major community organizing traditions.

Table I (p. 5) shows the regional distribution and organizational affiliation of the 19 groups. The groups are distributed across every major U.S. region and include groups in both urban and rural locales. The major community organizing networks (ACORN, DART, Gamaliel, IAF, NTIC and PICO) are represented as well as independent groups. Two groups have significant university connections.

Table II (p.6) shows the number of years the groups have been working and the racial/ethnic composition of their membership or constituency. Notably, the interview sample includes a significant number of "mature" groups: Forty-two per cent (8) have been doing community organizing for more than 11 years. Members or constituents of the groups are residents of low-income neighborhoods or areas and include African American, Caribbean, Chicano, Latino, Asian American and white populations.

Table III (p.7) indicates the focus, scale and scope of the groups in the sample. Seventy-four per cent (14) are multi issue groups. The majority began organizing around other community issues, e.g. affordable housing, homelessness, drugs, and living wage, before engaging with education issues. They reported, however, that they turned to education issues at the insistence of their members, who were concerned about their children's lack of success in

school. A common perception among the groups is that education is the most difficult arena in which to organize for change. Several respondents suggested that the difficulty stems from the mystique of educators' specialized knowledge. This mystique works to reduce the confidence of community members and parents in their own knowledge and their legitimacy to critique the institution.

Table IV (p. 8) indicates the levels of staffing and funding of the sample groups. With only slight exception, both staffing and funding levels of the groups are relatively small. All but two groups have less than nine on staff including executive directors, grant writers, office support staff and organizers; a typical community organizing group has 2-5 organizers. Forty-seven per cent (9) operate on annual budgets of less than $250,000. Consideration of indicators of success needs to take into account both staffing and budget levels of these groups and what can realistically be accomplished by such small-scale efforts.

TABLE I: DISTRIBUTION & AFFILIATION OF THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZING GROUPS

Organization Name	State	LOCATION		Nat'l Net	AFFILIATION	Univ
		Urban	Rural		Ind	
All Congregations Together	LA			PICO		
Alliance Organizing Project	PA					
Austin Interfaith	TX			IAF		
Blocks Together	IL			NPA		
Bronx ACORN	NY			ACORN		
Challenge West Virginia	WV					
Logan Square Neighborhood Association	IL					
Lowell Alliance for Families and Neighborhoods	MA					
Metro New York	NY			IAF		
Milwaukee Inner City Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH)	WI			Gamaliel		
Mothers on the Move (MOM)	NY					
Oakland ACORN	CA			ACORN		
Oakland Community Organizations	CA			PICO		
People Acting for Community Together	FL			DART		
Powerful Schools	WA					
Program for Academic and Cultural Enhancement of Rural Schools (PACERS)	AL					
San Diego Organizing Project	CA			PICO		
Southeast Education Task Force	MD					
Southern Echo	MS					
SUMMARY		16	3	10	7	2

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TABLE II: AGE AND CONSTITUENCY OF THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZING GROUPS

Organization Name	AGE in Years				CONSTITUENCY			
	<3	3 to 5	6 to 10	>11	African American	Latino	Caucasian	Other
All Congregations Together			•		•		•	
Alliance Organizing Project		•			•	•	•	
Austin Interfaith				•	•	•	•	•
Blocks Together			•			•	•	
Bronx ACORN		•				•	•	
Challenge West Virginia	•						•	
Logan Square Neighborhood Association				•		•		
Lowell Alliance for Families and Neighborhoods		•			•	•		•
Metro New York				•	•	•	•	
Milwaukee Inner City Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH)				•	•	•	•	
Mothers on the Move (MOM)			•		•	•		
Oakland ACORN				•	•	•		•
Oakland Community Organizations				•	•	•	•	•
People Acting for Community Together				•	•	•	•	•
Powerful Schools			•		•	•	•	•
Program for Academic and Cultural Enhancement of Rural Schools (PACERS)			•		•	•	•	
San Diego Organizing Project				•	•	•	•	•
Southeast Education Task Force		•			•		•	
Southern Echo			•		•			
SUMMARY	1	4	6	8	14	13	13	6

TABLE III: FOCUS, SCALE & SCOPE OF THE WORK OF THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZING GROUPS

Organization Name	FOCUS		SCALE			SCOPE	
	Multi Issues	Single Issues	Schools Neighbor-hoods	City Region District	State	School Change	Policy Change District/State
All Congregations Together							
Alliance Organizing Project							
Austin Interfaith							
Blocks Together							
Bronx ACORN							
Challenge West Virginia							
Logan Square Neighborhood Association							
Lowell Alliance for Families and Neighborhoods							
Metro New York							
Milwaukee Inner City Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH)							
Mothers on the Move (MOM)							
Oakland ACORN							
Oakland Community Organizations							
People Acting for Community Together							
Powerful Schools							
Program for Academic and Cultural Advancement of Rural Schools (PACERS)							
San Diego Organizing Project							
Southeast Education Task Force							
Southern Echo							
SUMMARY	14	5	13	12	4	11	16

TABLE IV: STAFFING & FUNDING LEVELS OF THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZING GROUPS

Organization Name	STAFF			FUNDING		
	<5	5 to 9	>10	100,000-250,000	251,000-400,000	401,000-900,000
All Congregations Together				•		
Alliance Organizing Project					•	
Austin Interfaith				•		
Blocks Together					•	
Bronx ACORN					•	
Challenge West Virginia				•		
* Logan Square Neighborhood Association						•
Lowell Alliance for Families and Neighborhoods				•		
Metro New York					•	
Milwaukee Inner City Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH)				•		
Mothers on the Move (MOM)					•	
Oakland ACORN					•	
Oakland Community Organizations					•	
People Acting for Community Together				•		
* Powerful Schools						•
** Program for Academic and Cultural Enhancement of Rural Schools (PACERS)				•		
San Diego Organizing Project				•		
Southeast Education Task Force				•		
Southern Echo						•
SUMMARY	6	11	2	9	7	3

*Logan Square & Powerful Schools Support significant program budgets.

**It is likely that many "staff" receive university salaries.

Part III: Indicators of the Contribution of Community Organizing to School Reform

The telephone survey data provide the foundation for a framework on "indicators" of the success of community organizing for school reform. We developed a working set of "indicator areas" based on an analysis of the strategies described by the groups in our telephone survey sample. It is in these indicator areas that community organizing groups make their particular contributions to school reform. We drew on a number of conversations and readings about developing and using indicators to help organize our information in the format presented here (Goldstein, 2000; Kingsley, 1998; Rich, 1995.)
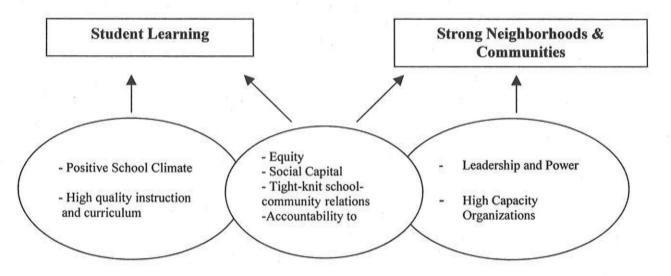
Work on indicators is evolving in a variety of domains, particularly in examining neighborhood and education quality and child well being. (Kingsley, 1998; Education Week, 1998; Annie E. Casey, 1999.) The Urban Institute's National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership involves several sites across the country in refining and operationalizing systems for using indicators in evaluating community initiatives and judging progress. The neighborhood indicators project specifies several "benchmark" areas of neighborhood quality, and then asks – what measures exist that would provide a way to judge progress in each benchmark area?

Here we identify indicator areas associated with the end goals of community organizing for school reform -- *improved student learning* and *strengthened neighborhoods and communities*. As several of the people we interviewed told us, these two goals are inextricably linked – good schools contribute to strong communities and strong communities support schools to succeed as institutions. Through our analysis, we identified eight indicator areas in which the work of community organizing groups falls --all areas, which have been associated with the improvement of children's learning and/or strengthened neighborhoods. Some of these areas are familiar language in school reform, but we did not pick them abstractly. These indicator areas best characterize the set of strategies and outcomes the groups in our sample use to judge their own progress towards meeting the goals of improving student outcomes and strengthening communities. The indicator areas are:

1) Equity
2) Accountability to parents and community
3) Positive school climate
4) High quality instruction and curriculum
5) Social capital
6) Tight-knit community school relations
7) Community power
8) High Capacity Organizations

Some of these indicator areas are directly associated in the research literature and in practice with improving student learning, such as high quality instruction and positive school climate. Others are more directly associated with building strong neighborhoods and communities -- such as building local leadership and power and developing high capacity organizations. There are also some indicator areas that contribute to both student learning and strong neighborhoods and communities directly -- equity, social capital, and tight-knit school-community relations, and

accountability to parents and community. The chart below illustrates the relationship of the indicator areas we identify here to the end goals of improving student learning and building strong communities.

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┌──────────────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────────┐
│    Student Learning      │          │  Strong Neighborhoods &  │
│                          │          │        Communities       │
└──────────────────────────┘          └──────────────────────────┘
        ↑         ↖              ↗          ↑

   ╭────────────╮  ╭────────────╮  ╭────────────╮
   │ - Positive │  │ - Equity   │  │ -  Leadership and Power │
   │ School     │  │ - Social   │  │                         │
   │ Climate    │  │ Capital    │  │                         │
   │            │  │ - Tight-knit│  │ -  High Capacity       │
   │ - High     │  │ school-    │  │    Organizations        │
   │ quality    │  │ community  │  │                         │
   │ instruction│  │ relations  │  │                         │
   │ and        │  │ -Accountability to │             │
   │ curriculum │  │            │  │                         │
   ╰────────────╯  ╰────────────╯  ╰────────────╯
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Several of these indicator areas are not uniquely the domain of community organizing, but also are on the agendas of state and district level educators and other non-profit organizations. Even where there is overlap, however, community organizing adds a critical dimension. For example, state or district-initiated reform efforts may also aim for improved school climate and instruction, but community organizing efforts customize, support, and add momentum. States and districts may consider equity among their goals, but community organizing contributes persistence in pursuing equity, as well as political momentum. Other indicator areas are more uniquely the focus of community organizing, including social capital, leadership and power, and accountability to parents and community.

While the strategies themselves come from the interviews, the data sources and measures listed in the tables that follow do not strictly come from the interview data. We draw on our own knowledge and logic to suggest both how to measure success within the indicator areas and where data might exist.[3] In addition, we should note that groups are at different places developmentally as far as their education work and there is no absolute standard that we can draw or that we mean to imply. The measures have to be considered in light of the number of years a group has been in existence, the size of its staff, and the scale and scope of the group's work. Defining standards offers another opportunity for participation of the case study groups, as well as the advisory group.

Representing the indicators areas schematically runs the risk of oversimplification of social processes and dynamics. These areas are not discreet, linear, or sequential; in practice,

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[3] We have discussed indicators and measures with both the community organizing groups in our case study sample and the national Indicators Advisory Group. The Advisory Group includes funders, community organizers and academics.

they are overlapping and interactive. In part this is represented in the tables by the repetition among the strategies.

The tables that follow summarize our data on community organizing strategies in the eight indicator areas. We provide a brief narrative for each, along with a quote from the interviews that illustrates and further defines each indicator area. The tables have three columns. The "Strategy" column describes the kinds of activities these groups engage in or promote in their work on school reform. The "Data Sources" column identifies where documentation may exist or could be developed to measure their success. The "Measures" column suggests quantitative and qualitative evidence of the contribution of community organizing activities to improving schools, student learning, and strengthening communities.

INDICATOR AREA 1: EQUITY

A common focus of community organizing is addressing the uneven distribution of resources, often a result of long-standing economic and racial segregation. Community organizing groups have documented disparities and seek parity for minority and low-income communities, in terms of funding, staffing, facilities, and program quality.

"NOT ONLY DID THESE CAMPAIGNS RESULT IN THE REALLOCATION OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN RESOURCES, BUT THEY ALSO RESULTED IN A WELL DEVELOPED AND COMMITTED BASE OF LEADERS WHO ARE WILLING TO FIGHT TO BE HEARD AND TAKE PART IN A PROCESS THAT UNTIL RECENTLY HAS NOT BEEN OPEN TO THEM." BLOCKS TOGETHER

STRATEGIES	DATA SOURCES	MEASURES

• Gaining funding for:
  - after school programs, i.e. recreational programs, homework clubs, academic learning centers
  - adult education programs, i.e. GED classes, ESL classes
  - community annexes and/or parent resource rooms
  - renovations and/or new facilities, e.g. playscapes, clean bathrooms
  - increased safety measures, i.e. new lighting, additional crossing guards, stop signs, rerouting traffic
  - parent participation in classrooms, i.e. paid mentor program
  - new schools, small schools, alternative schools, charter schools
	• school/district policies and budgets, e.g.,
	  - classroom assignments
	  - teaching assignments
	• grant budgets
	• interviews and/or survey of students, parents, administrators and teachers: numbers served, persistence in program, perceptions on effect on homework completion, on making school safe and secure; incidents of problems before and after school
	• survey # and nature of school improvements and/or safety measures
	• survey # of new schools
	• survey # and nature of partnerships
	• school district data on classroom size
	• survey of distribution of credentialed teachers
		• new $$s flowing into schools
		• #s of adults graduating from GED classes
		• increase in parent and teacher perception of homework completion
		• # and range of new and/or renovated facilities
		• reduced # of traffic accidents, gang incidents, fights in school area
		• increased perception of safety in the school area
		• equity in distribution of credentialed teachers
		• reduction and equity in class size
		• reduction and equity in overcrowding
		• equity in distribution of funds
		• equity in suspensions/expulsions across schools in a district
		• availability of courses, e.g., A.P. courses, 8th grade algebra, languages
		• equity efforts are sustained over time

(Continued)

- Forming partnerships to bring services and expertise into schools, e.g.,
  - post-secondary education institutions that provide adult education classes
  - legal aid groups that bring court action, e.g. to limit corporal punishment, to ensure bilingual education programs
  - university programs designed to attract minority teachers for urban schools
  - school reform groups to bring new ideas/pedagogy into schools, e.g. small schools, placed based curriculum

- Invoking new policies to
  - curtail the assignment to low-income schools of substitutes, uncredentialed teachers and teachers not teaching in their subject area/at their grade level
  - reduce class size
  - eliminate overcrowding
  - bring minority teachers into urban districts

Indicator Area 2: Accountability to Parents and Community

"BY PUSHING THOSE PRINCIPALS TO COME OUT TO THE COMMUNITY, THERE WAS A WHOLE DIFFERENT APPRECIATION FOR THE NEED TO BE IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS AND ALSO A SENSE OF ACCOUNTABILITY THAT HADN'T EXISTED BEFORE. EDUCATORS GOT THE MESSAGE. FOR THE COMMUNITY, THERE'S A SENSE OF EMPOWERMENT THAT WE'VE COME THIS FAR, WHAT'S NEXT?" SAN DIEGO ORGANIZING PROJECT

In the current era, accountability is enforced through top down means, from state and city officials through high stakes testing and school (and sometimes student) sanctions and rewards. Community organizing adds a critical dimension to accountability. By making schools responsive to students, parents, and community members -- the public they serve, community organizing both broadens the measures and strengthens support for change.

STRATEGIES	DATA SOURCES	MEASURES

• Parent and community participating in decision-making, e.g.,
   - participation in hiring and firing of principals or regional superintendents
   - oversight of school budgets
 	
 • Monitoring programs, policies and children's progress, e.g.,
   - citizen review boards, community oversight committees
   - parent notification programs, i.e. early warning notices
   - "honesty" sessions with teachers, principals and parents around grades and standardized test scores
	• school/district policies
	 • observations of meetings
	 • interviews with parents, community members, school personnel
	 • minutes and attendance records of meetings
		• institutionalized role of parents in key decision-making bodies in district
		 • expanded parent perception of roles in the school, i.e.,mentors, committee members
		 • parents included in professional development
		 • parents knowledgeable about student/school progress
		 • increased sense of ownership of local schools by parents and community
		 • teachers and administrators perceive parents as partners in children's education
		 • meetings focus on programs, policies, children's progress
		 • parent satisfaction with administrative staff and policies
		 • representation of community organizing group members on panels, oversight committees, etc.
		 • Parents see and act on school data
		 • Strong voter turnout for governing board (LSC) elections

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INDICATOR AREA 3:
POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

Many of the issues community members identify as important are concrete features of the school environment that affect students' and parents' sense of order and safety. These school climate factors determine how comfortable people feel in the school, that is, whether the school is welcoming and open. Facing them often challenges the school to rethink its role in a community.

STRATEGIES	DATA SOURCES	MEASURES
• Parents participating in 　- school discipline policy 　- classroom mentoring programs, etc. • Improving safety in and around the school 　- additional police and parent patrols 　- improved lighting 　- improved traffic routes, stop lights and stop signs 　- order on buses • Improving facilities • Establishing dress code	• survey: perceptions of increased safety measures • interviews • observation • school district budget and policies • neighborhood crime statistics • school/district discipline records • accident reports	• Increased parent, community, student pride in neighborhood schools • Youth participating in peer mediation • Reduced # of discipline problems • Increased parent perception that they are respected and welcome in the school • Decreased # of accidents • Decreased # of incidents & violence • Schools clean and orderly

INDICATOR AREA 4:
HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION AND CURRICULUM

"BI-LINGUAL EDUCATION IN THE LATE 80'S WAS A BIG ISSUE, AND IT LOOKED LIKE A RIPE PLACE TO ORGANIZE. [WE] FOUND THAT THERE WERE KEY PARENT LEADERS WHO WERE VERY UPSET AND THAT'S WHO WE WANTED TO WORK WITH. SO WE PICKED SCHOOLS IN THE TRACKS AND BUILT PARTNERSHIPS WITH PEOPLE WHO COULD MAKE DECISIONS." LOWELL ALLIANCE

Instructional change is one of the most difficult areas for community organizing to influence because of the prevailing assumption that only educators understand what goes on inside classrooms. The interview groups targeted instruction in a variety of ways, from making curriculum relevant to urging districts to adopt particular teaching approaches. While improving test scores is an important measure of the impact of improved instruction, these groups also looked for other tangible measures of impact – children's engagement and greater appreciation of one's community and culture.

STRATEGIES	SOURCES OF DATA	MEASURES

• Pushing schools to implement culturally relevant curriculum and teaching
  - place based curriculum
  - school to career
  - bilingual education
 	
• Bringing a focus on reading
  - direct instruction
  - Success for All
  - increase in time spent on reading in school
  - community and school reading/literacy campaigns
 	
• Facilitating the implementation of rigorous curriculum
  - E.g. Young Scientist program
 	
• Promoting teacher and administrator professional development
  - teacher "incubators" as part of small
	• new curriculum
	• surveys of students', parents', and teachers' perceptions of curriculum relevance and rigor; on improvement in reading; and on strong teacher-student connections.
	• standardized tests
	• records of teacher attendance and staff turnover
	• school/district policies and programs
		• increase in student perception that school is "relevant" and that their culture is respected
		• improved test scores
		• acceptance in magnet programs
		• improved teacher attendance
		• stability of professional staff (low turnover)
		• increase in teacher self-perception as respected professionals; sense of efficacy
		• schools use multiple measures to make high stakes decisions for students
		• availability of challenging courses
		• increased instructional resources, e.g., computers, books, libraries, etc.
		• implementation of small schools; class size reduction

schools campaign
- cross school collaboration among principals and teachers
- teacher ed. schools bring new minority teachers into urban district

- Promoting small intimate learning environments
  - end consolidation of rural schools into large regional schools
  - small schools

INDICATOR AREA 5: SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital refers to the networks of reciprocity and trust as well as practices of civic participation within a setting. Social capital is based on citizens having experience and engaging in practices of democratic participation, building what is often referred to as a strong "civil society." A growing body of research suggests that strong communities support children's school achievement.

"THE PARENT MENTOR PROGRAM HAS BEEN A HUGE SUCCESS. TEACHERS WILL TESTIFY THAT IT'S HELPED DISCIPLINE, HOMEWORK COMPLETEION, IT IS HELPING WITH READING AND MATH. BUT IT HAS REALLY HAD AN IMPACT ON THE PARENTS THEMSELVES. SO MANY LIFE CHANGES. SOME OF THEM ARE MOTIVATED TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL … THEY HAVE A PURPOSE, ARE NEEDED, SOME HAVE GOTTEN OUT OF ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS THEY HAVE A SUPPORT NETWORK." LOGAN SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

STRATEGIES	DATA SOURCES	MEASURES
• Promoting personal growth - parents gain new knowledge and perspectives - parents become leaders in schools and communities • Strengthening school and community networks - development of visible, vocal, knowledgeable parent groups - stories emerge of parent and community participation in school change • Building reciprocal and complementary parent/educator relations - parents and school staff join together for neighborhood walks, campaigns for health clinics in schools, increased safety measures - joint professional development - regular parent/teacher interaction around academic issues	• interviews and perception surveys about parents' sense of efficacy, that trust is developing between parents and school staff, that home/school interactions are focused on academics and achievement • observations • stories that record school, parents and community working together	• increase in parent sense of efficacy in multiple domains: family, school, neighborhood - # vying for LSC elections or other school organizational roles - Attendance at and leadership in neighborhood organizations • increase in perception of trust between professional educators and parents and community • $$ directed to joint professional development • higher voter turnout, higher civic participation (e.g., running for local office, membership in associations, running for local boards) • parents and community members informed about local issues

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INDICATOR AREA 6: TIGHT-KNIT COMMUNITY SCHOOL RELATIONS

In places where there are tight-knit relations, the school is open to community use and the schools use the community as a resource in both political and educational realms. These efforts build both stronger communities and foundations for children to make the most of school opportunities.

THE BIGGEST THING WE'VE DONE—WE'VE CHANGED HOW SCHOOLS RELATE TO EACH OTHER AND TO THE COMMUNITY. WE'VE CHANGED SCHOOL CULTURE SO THAT WHEN THE PRINCIPAL CHANGES, IT'S OKAY. [THERE IS] ACADEMIC IMPROVEMENT IN SOME PLACES—IT'S NOT STEADY OR ACROSS THE BOARD. BUT THERE IS SOME AND IT'S SIGNIFICANT. THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE SCHOOLS BY THE COMMUNITY ARE BETTER AS WELL. —POWERFUL SCHOOLS

STRATEGIES	DATA SOURCES	MEASURES

• Creating multi-use school buildings
  - school used for after-and before-school programs
  - community health center in the school
  - adult community learning centers in schools, i.e. ESL and GED classes
 	
• Positioning the community as a resource
  - Community groups work with schools to help gain resources, i.e. new facilities, needed renovations
  - Community groups sponsor LSC candidates
  - parents and community patrol to ensure safety of area surrounding the school
 	
• Building collaborative relations
  - principals, teachers and parents go on neighborhood walks together to identify parent concerns
  - parents and teachers participate in professional development together
	• observations
	• grant proposals
	• interviews with parents, community members, and school staff about perceptions of the relationship between schools and community
	• enrollment numbers
	• survey of perception about the community/ school relationship
		• variety and # of community oriented programs
		• level of participation in programs
		• shift in perception of schools as open to community and parents
		• discourse among school professionals and within the community that reflects perception of relations as collaborative, mutual and trusting
		• discourse reflects appreciation of community assets

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Indicator Area 7: Leadership and Power

ONE OF THE BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS IS THAT 10 YEARS AFTER WE STARTED, WE'RE HERE AND WE'RE A BIG POWER PLAYER IN THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS. EVERYBODY KNOWS OF OUR SUCCESS AND IMPACTS. IF WE'RE THERE SOMETHING IS GOING TO HAPPEN. WE'VE MADE A NAME FOR OURSELVES AND PEOPLE ARE INVOLVED WHO WOULD NOT BE BEFORE." ALL CONGREGATIONS TOGETHER (ACT)

Community organizing groups saw the goal of "building power" as basic to their missions. In practice, that means that politicians and school district officials acknowledge the role of parents and communities, especially low-income people and community members of color in decision-making about schools and children. They influence how resources are allocated or what programs are adopted.

STRATEGIES	DATA SOURCES	MEASURES
• Drawing political attention to under-resourced schools in low-income communities	• Interviews with politicians, district officials, foundations, business community	• Community group is acknowledged as a "power" player
	• Policy	• Resources are redirected to low-income schools
• Opening decision-making about resource allocation to parents and members of low-income communities	• Participation records of decision-making groups and meetings	• Politicians are responsive to the issues and exert their influence
	• Interviews with teachers, principals and other school staff	• School professionals perceive that they are accountable to parents and community
• Forming groups of parents and community representatives that monitor new initiatives	• Interviews with parents	• Parents feel respected in the school
	• Observations of school change teams, school improvement teams, neighborhood walks, etc.	
• Transforming school "culture" so that parents, teachers, and administrators are involved with each other in new ways		
• Forming partnerships to increase the scale of impact		

INDICATOR AREA 8:
HIGH CAPACITY ORGANIZATIONS

Usually working with limited budgets and small staffs, community organizing groups must use their resources well and work smart. They must also develop a solid reputation and track record. Strong community organizations are better able to hold public officials and institutions accountable and sustain initiatives.

"THE MAIN ACCOMPLISHMENT IS THAT WE HAVE DEVELOPED A COLLECTIVE OF LEADERS—PRINCIPALS, PARENTS, TEACHERS, AREA SUPERINTENDENTS, PASTORS—INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE DISTRICT—WHO ARE COLLECTIVELY COMMITTED TO FIGURING A SCHOOL REFORM STRATEGY AND THEY HAVE A WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE. SO THAT COLLECTIVE IS THE PRIZE ACCOMPLISHMENT. THAT IS THE ACCOMPLISHMENT THAT WILL PROPEL US INTO THE FUTURE."

AUSTIN INTERFAITH

STRATEGIES	DATA SOURCES	MEASURES

• Developing and maintaining a staff or organizers - treating them as professionals
• Identifying and developing talent in leaders
• Developing a strong membership base
• Forming partnerships with service providing organizations/etc. for legitimacy and expertise
• Cultivating media and political contacts
• Carrying out reflection and research
• Sustaining sufficient levels of funding to staff organizing efforts
• Gaining recognition and acknowledgement for the organization's work
• Generating enduring stories/histories that tell of the contribution the group/parents are making to changing schools
•
	• Community organizing group documents, e.g.,
	  - Budgets
	  - Minutes
	• Attendance records
	• Media coverage : press, radio, TV
	• Interviews with politicians, journalists, school, community and political leaders
	• Observations of meetings and events
	• Stories
		• Consulted or included in policy decision-making
		• Programs and accomplishments are sustained over time
		• Media coverage gives credit to the community organizing group for accomplishments
		• Perceptions that the group has strong capacity
		• #s of leaders
		• Membership turnout
		• Steady or growing funding levels

Part IV: Needs of Community Organizing Groups

The needs of the community organizing groups in our sample generally reflect the challenges of limited budgets and complicated policy contexts. As shown in Table IV above, funding levels for the majority of groups range between $150,000 and $400,000, with a few groups having significantly larger budgets. Those with larger budgets usually were running programs, although in one instance the larger budget was connected to a systemic reform effort where the community organizing was included in the reform plan.

<u>Staffing</u>

Most of the groups (11 of the 19) would use additional funding to hire more organizers as a way to work both at greater depth and at a larger scale. Some noted that they would like to be able to increase salary levels and benefits in order to be able to retain experienced organizers. One group noted,

> *The most precious resource that we have is organizing talent. A good organizer is going to develop hundreds of grassroots leaders who are going to participate in public life and in changing the systems such as school systems. Additional funding allows us to attract talent and it's a luxury to be able to go deeper into communities and give them the foundations so that they're much more long term and self-sufficient.*

A group in the mid-west saw the need to hire more organizers in order to be more effective in building leadership and increase their capacity and effectiveness as an organization,

> *Additional staff would enable us to do everything we're doing, but better. To get more involvement and sustain fifty leaders. Another organizer would enable us to train more leaders and increase our capacity to continue our work on these issues.*

A few of the groups noted that they would like to hire organizers dedicated solely to education work. The Head Organizer of a group with three other full time organizers hired one part-time organizer to work only in schools. He noted,

> *There is a huge unmet demand for more outreach at the schools. We want [organizers dedicated to education] in order to develop more parent leaders. We are reaching less than half of what is organizable if we could do more.*

Groups also talked about the need for staffing besides organizers. Among the roles mentioned was staff to assist in self-assessment--documenting and reflecting on the group's efforts--, support staff, and fundraising staff. A few groups also emphasized organizers' need for supervision, support and training to be able to carry out their work effectively and maintain momentum.

Funding and representing the work to funders

Most of the groups were funded through a mix of internal and external sources, although a minority was primarily or solely externally funded. Those with mixed funding, however, recognize that internal sources (mostly in the form of dues from members or member institutions augmented by raffles, barbecues and other types of fundraising) would never be sufficient to support them. Reliant on foundation and other external funding as they are, the groups noted the mis-match between typical funding practices and the requirements of their work.

For one thing, funding is usually targeted at starting up an initiative or for programs rather than for organizing. Respondents noted that while their groups could get funding to initiate a new campaign, it was difficult to get multi-year funding for the long-term, "follow-up work" that needs to be done. "It is easier to sell the initial work than the continual work to keep up new organizers." They believed foundations needed to have a greater appreciation of the necessary length of time to develop organizers and to the range of needs of organizing. One group, for example, explained their need for funds to help pay for the costs of transportation for its members.

While some groups were willing to obtain funding for and run programs, most were not. They saw their roles solely as pushing for new programs then holding educators accountable for their implementation, and they pointed to the challenge in framing their work for funders. "The challenge is finding funders who will fund organizing in particular." Community organizing groups have to sell a process with outcomes that other institutions achieve.

The tensions of time and scale

A number of the groups talked about the need to expand their work in a variety of ways. For some, expansion meant being able to continue an initiative over several years despite the turnover of school administration.

> *We're working on ten proposals; we're looking at three to four years at least to fully implement all ten. A new superintendent just came aboard in June, it has to take a while. We have to be realistic.*

Taking into consideration the time it takes to bring about change in schools and in student achievement, groups felt the need for multi-year funding that appreciates the need to build relationships and leadership over time among parents and community members.

Other groups were concerned about how to "position" themselves and their work in the school districts to make a wide impact. While proud of the depth of their work in several district schools, two community organizing group representatives talked about the need to work at the district level or higher in order to have an impact beyond individual schools. One executive director was hopeful about his invitation to sit on a district wide committee, saying it was important to go beyond "modeling this work" if they are to bring about school change "on a meaningful level district wide." An organizer from another group said, "we are ready now for a

concentrated effort. We have the relationships among the upper administrators and district and the depth of relations too, so this could really grow." Many of the groups saw the need to form partnerships with school officials or other groups in order to gain position, expertise, and/or legitimacy to expand their reach.

Issues of staffing, funding, scale, and depth are interrelated for these groups. Several noted that the more organizers, the more leaders who could be identified and trained to take on larger issues. "For every new staff member, we can bring in more congregations, we can train more leaders." With more leaders and talent developed in the communities, these groups believe that their work can go deeper and be sustained. Even one of the groups at a fairly high funding level pointed out that it would welcome additional money "to increase the depth – another fifty students could use mentors, forty could use a reading club program...to help us do the replication we need about another $150,000."

Part V: Summary and Implications for indicators research

The community organizing groups included in the telephone interview sample represent considerable variation along a number of dimensions – geographical location, context, affiliation, and strategy. We were struck by the generally small staff size of the groups, especially the number of organizers, given the size of the their territories and the scale of impact they aim for. All of the groups struggled with how to have wide impact, while achieving depth in their work with schools and parents, and they used different strategies to resolve this tension.

The eight indicator areas represent areas in which community organizing groups measure the success of their efforts as they work towards improving schools, student learning and strengthening communities. The task before them is ambitious, especially if taken together and considered in light of the groups' limited resources and the significant challenges they face. The education context presents particularly daunting challenges to initiating and sustaining change, such as rapid staff turnover, a rigid bureaucratic culture, a volatile political context, and the precariousness of school-community connections. This analysis points to the importance of considering the level of resources of these groups in proportion to their goals and accomplishments as we refine how to measure their success in influencing school reform and the results for students and communities.

The framework presented here is an attempt to make sense of the stories of community organizing we collected in the telephone survey in light of the particular focus of the Indicators Project. While the groups worked toward change in each of the eight indicator areas, the particulars of their school and community contexts led them to different emphases and approaches. We found that many of the areas in which these groups work supports school district efforts while adding important dimensions. We are beginning to tease out what are the unique contributions of community organizing to school reform. They make strategic decisions, work on many levels at once, and stimulate citizen education -- both political and in terms of skills and experience. All of the groups organize around some or all of indicator areas, but only a few have penetrated to the level of classroom instruction. Our analysis of the first round of case study research will also help us to refine indicator areas, strategies, data sources, and measures.

This framework also will contribute to planning for the fall visits to case study sites. We look forward to further refining our sense of what measures best exemplify each of the indicator areas and the availability and comparability of data across sites. In order to connect these indicator areas more directly with the outcomes of improved student learning and strengthened communities, we will continue to identify research that makes the case for each indicator area, especially as the area is uniquely associated with community organizing.

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