CROSS CITY CAMPAIGN
For Urban School Reform

Research for Action

Looking for Indicators of the Impact of Community Organizing for School Reform

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and

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This paper is a product of the *Indicators Project on Education Organizing*, a project of the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform. The goal of the *Indicators Project* is to document the contributions that community organizing makes to the improvement of public education in low-income communities.

WORKING PAPER

LOOKING FOR INDICATORS OF THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING FOR SCHOOL REFORM

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Because one of the things that has always disturbed me is how we integrate schools and communities and as if these two things are separate. They are not. And if there is any notion that I need to dispel, it is the mere fact that you are starting from a false premise when you believe that schools and communities are separate... We, as a membership based low-income organization that works in a low-income neighborhood, not for one single moment, had ever separated them. ...Members have been students. Do have kids. They continue in education. Schools are in their neighborhoods. There is no separation.

Quote from Director of the New York ACORN

INTRODUCTION

The challenge of education reform in the current era seems at least in part to derive from the entrenched and insular nature of the institution. The most popular reform approaches, despite careful research and thoughtful design, often fail to take hold or show results for reasons both internal to the organization of schools and external in the political, social, and economic environment. In cases where these entrenched systems have been shaken in fundamental ways and changes have taken place, the impetus and direction often come from outside the system -- from parents and members of local communities who are actively engaged in collective efforts to improve public schools.

In this paper, we examine at the role of community organizing in reforming public schools. There are a wide variety of forms of community involvement in education, but here we use a very specific definition. Community organizing groups, which may be independent or associated with a national network and/or university, share the following characteristics. They 1) are active in areas with a concentration of low-income, often racially, ethnically and linguistically minority families; 2) target schools and/or districts that are under-performing; 3) use social processes of relationship building among parents and community members to identify shared concerns about schooling and take collective action to address these concerns; 4) have organizational purposes that include the development of a powerful membership base and local leadership that can leverage change to improve children's school experience and; 5) build relationships both within

and across communities, schools and school districts that are geared toward transformation at individual, community and institutional levels.

The "indicators project" seeks to make the role of community organizing in reforming public schools visible to funders and educators, and to offer the community organizing groups a framework for documenting their work. Through its efforts to strengthen the public role in education reform, the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, a national network of urban school reform leaders, is convinced that community organizing complements school leadership by supporting, extending, and even stimulating reform. Concerned about the disconnect between the worlds of education and community building on foundation agendas, Cross City called for research to document what these groups were doing in order to further understanding of the nature of their impact both on schools and communities and to identify a set of indicators of their impact on school reform.

The Cross City Campaign invited Research for Action (RFA) to be its research partner in this project. Research for Action is a non-profit educational research organization that has a history of studying the connections between communities and schools. In its work on this project, RFA seeks to develop an indicators framework that captures the complexity of community organizing and provides a description of the process that leads to observable outcomes. This research seeks to further understanding of the forms and variation of community organizing for education reform, how local context affects organizing and outcomes, as well as how organizing spurs and shapes local education reform. The challenge of applying an "indicators" approach to this project, however, is that there is no ready stock of measures identified with the contribution of community organizing.

Use of indicators has enjoyed a recent resurgence of popularity in social science research and evaluation. Mostly we think of indicators as a set of quantitatively measured outcomes that stand for some status (usually well-being) within an area of concern -- community, children, environment, a locality. One definition of the term "social indicators" is "statistics, statistical series, and all other forms of evidence...that enable us to assess where we stand and are going with respect to our values and goals, and to evaluate specific programs and determine their impact."[1] Among the most well known indicators projects are the Urban Institute's National Neighborhood Indicators project and Annie E. Casey Foundation's "Kids Count." In addition to these national studies, there is a myriad of local indicators projects around the country.[2]

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[1] Sawicki, David S. and Patrice Flynn. "Neighborhood indicators: a review of the literature and an assessment of conceptual and methodological issues." In *Journal of the American Planning Association.* Spring 1996. V62 n2, p 165 (19)
[2] *Urban Quality Indicators,* a publication dedicated to reporting on urban indicators work, points out in the Spring 2000 issue that the number of indicators studies has mushroomed in the last five years. The editor listed 55 cities that have indicators studies published on the web.)

How researchers arrive at indicators varies. but indicators studies use three types of approaches. often in concert -- convening stakeholders. conducting empirical research. and drawing on existing studies in the literature. In some cases, the lead group convenes a set of stakeholders to identify elements they associate with a particular status as well as what constitutes satisfactory progress. For example. an indicators project aimed at measuring "quality of life" in Jacksonville. Florida used a committee of volunteers to articulate a vision for the city. then designed indicators to reflect the vision. They came up with 74 indicator areas -- public safety. health. social environment. etc. Then they identified potential data sources. Sources included existing data and data that would be collected through citizen surveys.

In other instances, indicators are empirically derived. These take the form of evaluation and documentation studies that aim to understand the processes and relationships between program strategies and outcomes. Still other indicator projects draw on existing empirical studies that have made the connection between particular indicators and desired goals. For example, the architects of Annie E. Casey's Kids Count ultimately are interested in children's health and well-being -- and identified research that associated these outcomes with a set of factors -- family structure, visits to the doctor, etc. The indicators are based on those associations.

We use a combination of these strategies to develop an indicators framework applicable to community organizing for school reform. Our research design includes three levels of investigation. First we did a broad search to identify community organizing groups nationwide. RFA and Cross City collaborated to select 19 groups for lengthy telephone interviews. Finally, we selected five groups for more intensive case studies. We will make three site visits to each of the five groups. We also set up a national advisory group consisting of funders, educators, academics, and community organizers.

Our first site visit was aimed at trying to understand the setting and the work of the community organizing group. We also wanted to look at the context and determine how others outside the organization viewed its work and its contribution. To do this, we used a stakeholder method -- asking each of the sites to identify an "advisory group" that would include not only organizational members but also key players in the community -- with the idea that it was important to aim for consensus locally on what counts as accomplishments. We designed the research to determine from a variety of perspectives what could be considered the accomplishments of community organizing for school reform and how these accomplishments could be credibly measured. This would serve as data for us to analyze in deriving our own ideas about indicators but also as a way of validating our findings.

In developing an indicators framework, we looked to research on school reform and community development to inform us as well. We were interested in empirical research on parent and community participation in school reform as a manifestation of democratic practice (citizen participation) and a challenge to power, economic, and social

imbalances at the societal level. In combining the literatures that seemed relevant, we sought to develop a framework that includes research outside the range of what education policy researchers usually consider relevant to school reform -- to discussions of social capital, community development, and community power and leadership outside of schools.

In reviewing past work on indicators, we learned that you do not get to indicator measures as a first step. As in other indicators projects, the starting point is a conceptual framework that specifies categories or "domains" of impact. For example, the Cleveland Community Building Initiative evaluators developed a framework for examining its progress and impact based on seven categories within which they grouped the indicators and measures. These categories included domains such as family, child, and youth development, safety and security, institutions and services, etc. Within "family, child, and youth development," two of seven indicators are "mobility of families with children" and "school performance." Finally, the framework identifies specific measures of the indicators. As a measure of "school performance," the researchers chose "percent of children entering kindergarten who are school ready" (data available from the Cleveland Public Schools.)[3] In the Annie E. Casey work on Kids Count, the authors concluded that the most important variable "in determining a child's life chances is the contribution parents make to his or her upbringing." Using the concept of "family capacity" -- because "research tells us that this correlates strongly with child outcomes" -- the Kids Count research identified six "indicators" of family capacity -- presence of parents, education level of parents, family income, parents' employment, welfare receipt, and whether or not the child has health insurance.[4]

Indicators studies vary significantly in a number of ways that are important to consider. In the case of measuring Cleveland's community building initiative, the unit of analysis is a geographic area and its *institutions*. For Kids Count, the researchers measure *individual* well being, but project it by geographic area. Sometimes "indicators" refer to the actual measure (as in Kids Count), but at other times it refers to the "domain." Ultimately, though, each of the studies develops a set of conceptual categories or a conceptual framework that identifies categories that can be measured and are associated, either through research, public perception, or both, with the desired outcomes.

Developing an indicators framework is new territory for ethnographic researchers, who tend to avoid "outcomes" and focus more on process. RFA staff often finds itself trying to refocus clients' questions away from causal explanations for outcomes to descriptive concerns -- understanding implementation or social relations. In taking on the indicators project, however, RFA took on a task that specifically required identifying outcomes as well as process and being able to connect outcomes with specific strategies. In reviewing the literature on social indicators projects, it is clear that an ethnographic

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[3] Kingsley. G. Thomas, "Neighborhood Indicators: Taking Advantage of the New Potential." National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership. The URBAN INSTITUTE. October, 1998.
[4] (www.aecf.org/kidscount/kc1999/over-print.htm)

approach adds value to developing an indicators framework.[5] First, ethnographers are sensitive to multiple perspectives. Thus, identifying indicators through panels and public stakeholders fits well with a holistic approach. Second, there is no real agreement as to whether indicators represent causal explanation or correlational associations. One criticism of indicators projects is that they do not explore the pathways of influence that connect the measure to the indicator to the ultimate goal -- community or child well-being, for example.[6] Qualitative methodology focuses on examining complex interrelations of phenomena, rather than black boxing the link between cause and effect.

Researchers have debated whether causal explanations are worthwhile or even possible using qualitative or ethnographic methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1988; Maxwell, 1996.) Applying an ethnographic temperament to the task of developing indicators means that we do not approach it along lines of eliminating complexity and isolating variables. Following Joe Maxwell's discussion of the possibility of qualitative research to provide causal explanations, we would call our approach a "process" theory of outcomes, one which "deals with events and the processes that connect them, based on an analysis of the causal processes by which some events influence others." (Maxwell, 1996: p. 2.)

We would identify an ethnographic approach to developing indicators as having three characteristics:
- A inclination to start with the question what <u>ought</u> to be measured
- An emphasis on determining what are the <u>meaningful</u> categories of impact from a variety of perspectives
- A bent to carry out this process <u>inductively</u>, based on an exploration of descriptive data and continual refinement of research perspectives in light of the perspectives of practitioners and other local stakeholders.

THE INDICATOR AREAS

The indicators framework that we developed for understanding the contribution of community organizing to school reform assumes that the efforts of these groups ultimately promote successful student learning and strong communities. We looked for the areas in which the groups were working associated with these goals. From our research thus far, we have identified eight such areas. They are:

equity,
mutual accountability,
positive school climate,
high quality instruction and curriculum,
social capital,

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[5] Rich, Michael J. "Community Building and Empowement: An Assessment of Neighborhood Transformation Initiatives in American Cities." Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Pubic Policy Analysis and Management. November, 1995. Sawicki & Flynn, 1996
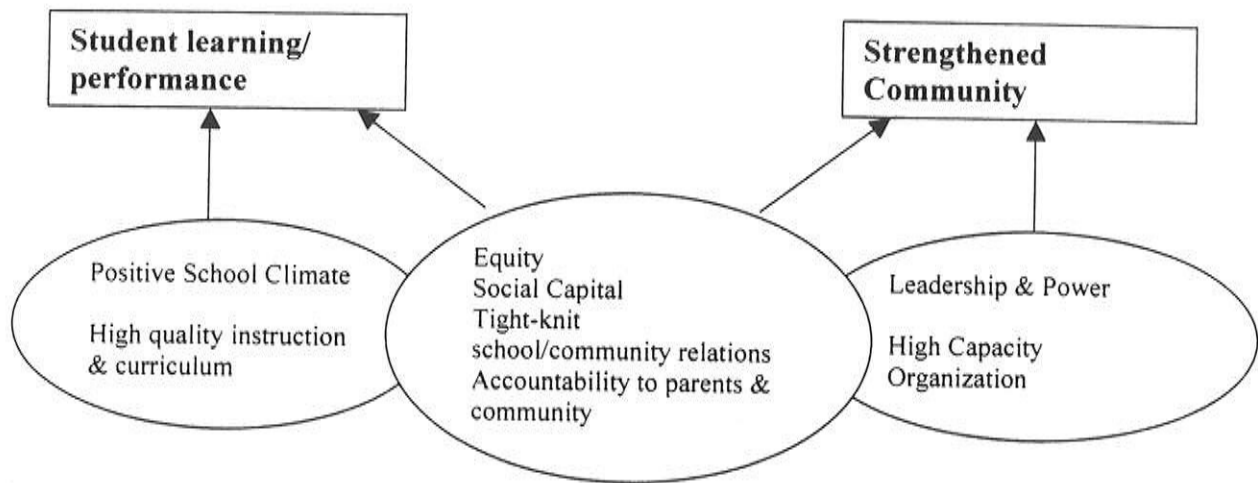[6] Sawicki & Flynn, 1996. p.

tight-knit community-school relationships,
community power and leadership, and
high capacity organization.

As noted earlier, we identified these areas through inductive analysis of interview and observation data, along with consideration of the school reform and community building literatures. Analysis of the telephone interviews and data from the case study sites helped us to identify the accomplishments and strategies of the groups. Familiarity with the literature aided us in grouping what we learned about the work of these groups into the eight "indicator" areas. Taken together the indicator areas provide a conceptual framework for understanding the strategies community organizing uses and measures of their contribution to successful student learning and strong communities. The purpose for developing a framework is to help community groups as well as educators and funders see how their education organizing is moving them toward their goals.

Before discussing the indicator areas in more depth, we return briefly to the two goals of education organizing: successful student learning and strong communities. When we talk about successful student learning, we recognize we are entering a complex and controversial debate, which involves serious challenges to the validity of standardized tests to assess a student's depth of content knowledge, ability to apply knowledge in a real context and ability to do higher order thinking tasks or to assess multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1985, Resnick, 1987). Critiques of standardized tests also call attention to the fact that these measures are likely to embody and exacerbate class, gender, race, and ethnic biases (Berlack, 2000). Nonetheless, almost all the groups believe that student achievement, as measured by standardized tests, is one important measure because their members recognize the gate-keeping function of test scores. Parents and community members involved·in these groups do not want poor test performance to inhibit childrens' opportunities, even when they question the validity of standardized tests in gauging a child's abilities. In this study, when we talk about education organizing aiming for successful student learning, the measures include the ability of youngsters to do well on standardized tests as well as other means that educators and parents have accepted locally as important determinants of student learning, including portfolios, performance tasks and the valuing of their culture.

Strong community is also a concept that needs elaboration. An increasing number of community-based groups dispute the "client" mentality often used in reference to low-income communities because it focuses exclusively on deficits and service needs. They seek out assets on which to build and strengthen communities. These assets can be at the individual, group or institutional levels (McKnight and Kretzman, 1996). In this study, when we talk about the aim of education organizing to strengthen community, we are looking for the ways in which the activities of these groups strengthen the ability of low-income parents and other community members individually and collectively to act on · behalf of the children in their local schools. We are also looking at the capacity of the group to draw political attention to and bring financial resources into neighborhoods that have been devalued and overlooked.

Not all of the indicator areas are associated with both successful student learning and strong communities. As reflected in the illustration below, positive school climate and high quality instruction and curriculum are strongly associated with improving student learning and performance. Developing community leadership and power and building high capacity organizations are strongly associated with strengthening neighborhoods and communities. The areas of equity, social capital, tight-knit school-community relations and mutual accountability are important to achieving both goals.

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┌────────────────────┐                          ┌────────────────────┐
│ Student learning/  │                          │ Strengthened       │
│ performance        │                          │ Community          │
└────────────────────┘                          └────────────────────┘
      ↑        ↑                                      ↑        ↑

   ⬭ Positive School Climate    ⬭ Equity              ⬭ Leadership & Power
                                  Social Capital
     High quality instruction     Tight-knit            High Capacity
     & curriculum                 school/community      Organization
                                  relations
                                  Accountability to parents &
                                  community
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Although presenting the eight indicator areas in charts as we do below represents each area as distinct from each other, we have found that, in fact, these areas often overlap. A strategy in one area, for example, might fall in two or more other indicator areas. Furthermore, what is a strategy in one area might be a measure in another. For example, funding for safety measures can be a strategy for equity and for improving school climate. Bringing more qualified teachers to low-income schools can be a strategy for ensuring high quality instruction and curriculum as well as a measure of equity. Furthermore, the indicator areas are dynamic, functioning in relationship to each other; activities in one area can reinforce activities in another or stimulate activities in yet another.

Not all the indicator areas are unique to the work of community organizing groups. Areas such as equity, school climate and curriculum and instruction, for example, are domains in which educators, legal advocates and policy-makers are also active. But as the discussion of each indicator area included in the chart will reveal, even when there is overlap with the efforts of others, community groups are often adding a new dimension.

The areas of mutual accountability, social capital, community power and leadership, and high capacity community organization are often weak or totally absent in

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the school reform literature (Anderson, 1998; Fullan, 1999; Lipman, 1998). The focus of much current school reform is on teacher professional development and the creation of professional community. Even though parent "involvement" has currency, it is often narrowly construed around the priorities of professionals. These "inside" foci, although very important, fail to address the larger political and socio-economic context for urban education (Anderson, 1998; Comer, 1988; Sarason, 1982). They also overlook teacher-student interactions in the classroom that have implications for educator's knowledge of home and community cultures (Au, 1980; Heath, 1983; Delgado-Gaitan, 1987; Philips, 1972.) The work of community organizing groups challenges school reform to be inclusive of areas that when left out can limit or doom efforts at reform.

Below, we have created a chart for each of the indicator areas. These charts are works in progress. The Indicators Advisory Group, which as mentioned previously is a national committee of academics, educators, organizers and funders, has reviewed these charts once. Representatives from each of the case study sites have also had an opportunity to comment on them. The feedback we have received has aided us especially in refining the goals of community organizing and the indicator areas.

Each chart begins with a narrative that explains our working definition of the indicator area. In table form, we then present the strategies, measures and data sources that fall into these areas. The examples of strategies and measures are not exhaustive, but are meant to be illustrative of the type of work going on in each area and how that work might be measured. As we proceed with the study, we will continue to refine these charts, with particular attention to the measures.

INDICATOR AREA 1: EQUITY

WORKING DEFINITION:

We have identified three meanings for the term equity. Equity is the broadest outcome organizing groups are striving to achieve. They aim to end inequitable patterns, such as students from poor or minority families predominating in the bottom quartiles of standardized tests and being nearly absent from the top quartiles; students from low-income families not being accepted in magnet or accelerated programs or at top colleges and universities or being unable to secure good employment after high school. In this study, this broad meaning of equity is reflective of the overall goal of community groups to improve the learning opportunities and performance of youngsters from low-income, often minority neighborhoods.

Equity can also mean achieving parity in the distribution of resources that contribute to the environment for student learning. We are using this meaning as an indicator area to examine the ways in which community organizing efforts bring new resources into low-income, under-performing schools including improved facilities, increased funding, adequate and qualified staffing and innovative programs. In

making the achievement of resource equity one of their goals, a number of groups strive for more than parity with counterpart middle class schools; they argue that schools in poor and low-income areas need more resources than these schools to right the balance for youngsters with deeper needs because they are living in poverty.

Yet a third meaning of equity focuses on issues of access. In many urban schools, students do not have access to rigorous academic programs. They are tracked into programs with low expectations and/or their schools do not offer high level courses. In the lower grades, there are frequently few pathways that lead to magnet schools. Too often, English language learners or youngsters from non-mainstream backgrounds are shunted into special education instead of academic programs appropriate to their needs and able to move them ahead. We are also using equity as an indicator area to examine the activities of community organizing groups to increase access to rigorous academic programs.

Community groups are uniquely situated to press for an increase in resources and access. Because their members are primarily low-income families and community members, these areas are not ones for compromise; they add persistence to the fight for equity, which others may lack. School district officials and policy-makers need to accommodate their respective constituencies. As a result, decision-makers may be disinclined to challenge funding levels or the distribution of resources because it would be perceived as "taking away" from middle class constituents. They may be disinclined to challenge access issues for the same reasons. Even if they are inclined to challenge resource and access issues, they may be able to do so only when they have the political "cover" of a strong community organizing group demanding a change; they can, then, appear to be forced into taking action.

Every community organizing group we have interviewed or visited is working on areas of resource distribution and access. Often, among the first issues that parent and community members address are facility issues -- including the need for new buildings, renovated bathrooms, refurbished playgrounds and improved lighting and traffic patterns nearby schools. With gains in these areas, and increased pride in their local schools, many groups turn to bringing new programs into schools that will enrich or extend children's learning time, such as after-school programs that include supervised homework. Many groups are bringing significant new financial resources into schools to implement these programs. As groups gain maturity and credibility, we are finding that they often start to direct their attention more directly toward teaching and learning issues. Examples of their activities are creating campaigns to ensure a pool of available minority teachers for urban schools and challenging policies that place a preponderance of uncredentialed or inexperienced teachers and/or substitutes in schools in low-income neighborhoods.

EQUITY:

STRATEGIES, MEASURES AND DATA SOURCES:

STRATEGIES	MEASURES	DATA SOURCES

• 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
 	
• 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
	• 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
		• 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

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: MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

WORKING DEFINITION:

Community organizing embodies a notion of mutual accountability. This is in contrast to the prevalent top-down system in place in most schools that relies almost exclusively on high stakes tests and sanctions and rewards from above to bring about student improvement. These means of accountability rest almost exclusively on the shoulders of teachers and students. In a mutually accountable relationship, responsibility for student learning and performance is shared among public school stakeholders. It is a major shift for parents and community to feel accountable for school reform and for educators to feel accountable to parents and community for the quality of public education.

The groups in this study approached their role in creating a mutually accountable relationship in a variety of ways. In some cases, parents and community members were incorporated into site-based management and had decision-making powers that drew them into a mutually accountable relationship for the conditions for learning at a particular school. In other cases, groups relied on what they called public accountability sessions, where elected, district or state officials would be asked to work with groups on specific initiatives to improve the conditions for public education in a neighborhood or group of neighborhoods. After bringing new programs or initiatives into schools, the groups would sometimes insert themselves into an accountability system by taking up a role in monitoring their implementation and holding educators accountable for their quality. Regardless of the particular mechanism for accountability or level at which the group was working on establishing accountability, they broadened the responsibility for the conditions for schooling and the publics with whom educators would need to be in an accountable relationship.

MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY:

STRATEGIES, MEASURES AND DATA SOURCES:

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
	• 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
		• school/district policies
		• observations of meetings
		• interviews with parents, community members, school personnel
		• minutes and attendance records of meetings

INDICATOR AREA 3: POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

WORKING DEFINITION:

Parents repeatedly cite their frustration with school environments that are unsafe, where children are undisciplined and where parents believe neither they nor their children are respected. Taken together, these characteristics create a negative school "climate," discouraging to learning. These climate factors are palpable aspects of a school's culture, which encompasses the deeper articulated and unarticulated beliefs of the professional community about the school's families and the community it serves; often these beliefs focus on presumed deficits, including the belief that the parents and community do not value education and do not provide children with the support necessary for learning.

Climate factors are often an early focus for community organizing work. Improving safety in the school area is a common initial activity, as is improving facilities or changing traffic routes. Parents and community members frequently request that administrators and educators work with them on making these improvements. Teachers and administrators who do so are expanding professional norms, connecting with parents and community outside of classrooms. Professionals who join with parents in these efforts often begin to see themselves as a resource and political ally to the community, altering the image of the school as an institution within a community but not a part of it. Concrete changes in school climate begin to create pride among professionals, students and parents in the local school.

For parents, teachers and administrators to examine a discipline policy together or for a school to become "welcoming" to parents and community means change at deeper levels in the professional-parent relationship. These kinds of changes demand rethinking the nature of and circumstances for professional/parent interactions and pushes professional norms even further.

POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE:

STRATEGIES, MEASURES AND DATA SOURCES:

STRATEGIES	MEASURES	DATA SOURCES

• 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
	• 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
		• survey: perceptions of increased safety measures
		• interviews
		• observation
		• school district budget and policies
		• neighborhood crime statistics
		• school/district discipline records
		• accident reports

INDICATOR AREA 4: HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION AND CURRICULUM

WORKING DEFINITION:

Improving instruction and curriculum is probably the most challenging area of work any reformer undertakes, and certainly it is an area most would consider beyond the scope of community organizing groups. Community organizing tends to focus on goals that are concrete and "winnable," rather than ones that are long-term efforts with indeterminate benchmarks. Bringing about change in instruction and curriculum is also difficult because of the prevailing assumption that only educators understand what goes on inside classrooms. Nonetheless, most low-income parents are primarily concerned that their children are not reading at grade level, are not getting accepted into magnet or accelerated programs and are not performing well on standardized tests. In order to address these concerns, organizing groups are beginning to work directly to improve instruction and curriculum.

The meaning of high quality instruction and curriculum varies with school level. For example, at the elementary level, reading is a common concern. At the middle and high school levels, the concern is that students perceive the curriculum as "relevant." At all levels, parents want accelerated programs to be offered in low-income schools so their children might gain entry to magnet schools and/or be ready for college. A number of organizing groups believe that children will engage with learning when instruction and curriculum value their language, community and culture. Their criteria for "high" quality included instruction and curriculum that shows appreciation for the local community and cultures.

The strategies for how to improve instruction and curriculum vary, with some groups relying on a single strategy and others combining strategies. Several groups rely on "research based" models, hoping these will prove successful in their communities since they already have been tested in others. Other groups partnered with groups that could bring in expertise about instruction and curriculum lacking within the community organizing group. Yet others have embarked on intensive self-education and/or promoted joint parent-teacher professional development. Promoting small learning environments where teachers and students come to know each other well is often considered a key, at any level, to high quality instruction and curriculum.

HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION AND CURRICULUM:

Strategies, Measures and Data Sources:

STRATEGIES	MEASURES	DATA SOURCES

• 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 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
	• 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
		• 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

INDICATOR AREA 5: SOCIAL CAPITAL

WORKING DEFINITION:

Social capital is a term with much currency. Although academics have forwarded several definitions of social capital (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 2000; Wallis, 1998), here we use it to mean the existence of relationships of mutual obligation and trust within and across communities formed through interaction around shared concerns. These relationships exist both within a community among members who participate actively in community organizations and collective activities ("bonding" social capital) as well as across communities and levels in the political and social hierarchy ("bridging" social capital) as collaborators seek to achieve solutions to community problems. Social capital theorists further believe that these strong cross cutting ties can complement and buoy public institutions and the political process. (Narayan, n.d.) One way of looking at the conditions for building social capital is the number of forums -- places and voluntary associations -- available to citizens to interact for collective action.

Some of the community organizing groups actually refer to their work as building social capital while others do not name what they do in these terms, but nevertheless claim to build relational networks within communities and across communities and social and political hierarchies. Community organizing groups create opportunities for parents to participate in school decision-making and work with them to be knowledgeable and effective in these settings. The community organizing process starts with building relationships among neighborhood residents through identification of shared concerns, then encouraging research and action. At one site, parents active at community centers at local schools conducted neighborhood needs assessments and in the process not only identified potential programs the community centers might run, but also widened their network. We saw the creation of bridging capital as well. Another site formed "core teams" in schools of parents, teachers and administrators. The core team is the site for decision making and oversight. In another site, parents built working relationships with the principal, leading the principal to listen and take up the recommendations and concerns of parents as her concerns. We also saw settings in which the parents and community members participate in civic life by running for positions on community boards and local school councils or committees.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Strategies, Measures and Data Sources:

STRATEGIES	MEASURES	DATA SOURCES

• 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
	• 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
	• parents and community members informed about local 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

INDICATOR 6: TIGHT-KNIT COMMUNITY SCHOOL RELATIONS

WORKING DEFINITION:

The separation between schools and community was not inevitable, but, as is well documented among scholars of the history of American education, this separation developed and widened with the bureaucratization and professionalization of public schools (Tyack, 1991; Katz, 1992). Research and experience has shown that there is much to be gained when the boundaries between schools and communities are made more flexible and porous. A number of initiatives have brought communities and schools closer together by re-imagining schools as community institutions that provide comprehensive services, including health and adult education services (Davies, et al., 1993; Dryfoos, 1994). An example is New York City's Beacon schools, which provide learning and recreational activities for adults and young people after school hours (Cahill, 1996). Bridging schools and communities can have impacts on instruction and curriculum as well, bringing parents and community members and their "funds of knowledge" closer to children's educational experiences (Gonzalez, et al., 1993) and making teachers more knowledgeable and sensitive to the multiple worlds of peer, family and school in which students live and learn (Phelan, et al., 1991). Curriculum that connects communities and schools can offer young people the opportunity to examine their own social experience and act upon it (Beane and Apple, 1995).

Among the community groups we are studying, many of the strategies include connecting schools and communities. In one case, teachers, parents and principal carry out neighborhood walks where they go door-to-door to talk to parents about their concerns and interests. Neighborhood walks are one step in a process of establishing a "collaborative culture" in the school and between the school and the community. In another setting, parents are mentors in classrooms. In this role, parents learn about the school, their children's teachers, and serve as role models for their own and other neighborhood children. At the same time, teachers get to know parents and their concerns and talents. Still other sites seek to develop curriculum that relates to community issues and establish ESL and computer classes in the schools during evening or weekend hours. Establishing new small schools with significant roles for parents and community members in their design and operation is another strategy these groups use.

TIGHT-KNIT SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

STRATEGIES, MEASURES AND DATA SOURCES:

STRATEGIES	MEASURES	DATA SOURCES

• 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
	• 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
		• 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

INDICATOR 7: COMMUNITY POWER AND LEADERSHIP

WORKING DEFINITION:

Each of the community organizing groups considers building power the key to their work. Resource inequities written into the landscapes of many cities reflect the lack of financial and political connections and clout that residents of more affluent neighborhoods can depend on to direct resources and attention. Community organizing seeks to leverage power through collective action -- bringing out numbers of citizens to public actions. The groups also establish "spaces" for bringing together individuals in different roles and positions to talk across their interests and concerns, thereby creating an opening at the policy "table" for their members and monitoring public institutions so that they deliver on obligations. Most importantly for the long run, community organizing groups seek to identify and nurture community leaders who themselves take the lead in making demands and negotiating with those in power.

COMMUNITY POWER AND LEADERSHIP

STRATEGIES, MEASURES AND DATA SOURCES:

STRATEGIES	DATA SOURCES	OUTCOME 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
• Opening decision making about resource allocation to parents and members of low-income communities	• Policy	• Resources are redirected to low-income schools
	• Participation records of decision-making groups and meetings	• Politicians are responsive to the issues and exert their influence
• Forming groups of parents and community representatives that monitor new initiatives	• Interviews with teachers, principals and other school staff	• School professionals perceive that they are accountable to parents and community
• Transforming school "culture" so that parents, teachers, and administrators are involved with each other in new ways	• Interviews with parents	• Parents feel respected in the school
	• Observations of school change teams, school improvement teams, neighborhood walks, etc.	
• Forming partnerships to increase the scale of impact		

INDICATOR 8: HIGH CAPACITY ORGANIZATIONS

WORKING DEFINITION:

Community strength can be measured in part by the denseness, collaboration and effectiveness of organizations working towards community development goals. Researchers have noted variation across cities, and even across neighborhoods within cities, in the local organizational infrastructure. One author of these studies notes that a "key question this research [on community building] should seek to answer is why are some communities able to successfully mobilize institutions and resources to tackle the problems of poverty and neighborhood decay, whereas other communities, with similar socioeconomic characteristics and mix of institutions, cannot overcome fragmentation and only mount a piecemeal attack on these problems?" (Rich, 1995; p. 18) The presence of strong organizations, then, is another indicator of the potential for continuous community improvement. Organizational capacity has many dimensions, including strong staff, sophisticated and broad-thinking community leaders, secure funding, the ability to form partnerships to expand power, to reflect on and learn from past efforts and recognition by political and media figures (See Glickman and Servon, 1998).

The groups in our case study sample exhibit the characteristics of high-capacity organizations in numerous dimensions. Each puts a premium on identifying and developing strong leaders to represent the organization publicly. In most instances, governance of the organization is by leaders and members. Most community organizing groups have collaborated with other organizations when it would add legitimacy on an education issue, help to leverage power, or bring needed expertise to the organization. For example, a group working to establish small schools teamed with the local organization of the Coalition for Essential Schools in order to bring in expertise in teaching and learning. Another group spearheaded a collaboration with multiple local parents and advocacy organizations in order to leverage equitable funding at the state level. All of the groups use research as an important step in the process of a campaign. One group partnered with a local university to carry out extensive research on racial differences in parents' access to information about educational opportunities. The group produced a report that they distributed widely, thereby garnering media attention that resulted in policy change at the school district level when the superintendent ordered schools across the system to examine and retool their protocols for communicating with parents.

HIGH CAPACITY ORGANIZATION

STRATEGIES, MEASURES AND DATA SOURCES:

Strategies	Measures	Data Sources

• Developing and maintaining staff
• Identifying and training leaders
• Expanding membership
• Forming partnerships for legitimacy and expertise
• Cultivating media and political contacts
• Carrying out reflection and research
• Sustaining sufficient levels of funding
• Gaining recognition and acknowledgement for its work
• Generating enduring stories/histories that tell of the contribution the group/parents are making to changing schools
	• 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
		• 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

CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

This paper presents a conceptualization of education organizing and the contribution the work in this field is making to school reform. In applying an "indicators" approach to this field, we have organized the accomplishments and strategies of community organizing for school reform into meaningful categories. As the framework shows, the contribution of this work is operationalized through both quantitative and qualitative measures that complement each other. One reason why specifying indicators is important is because the work of community organizing often is to push for programs and initiatives that become the responsibility of other institutions to carry out, and those institutions thereby end up getting the credit for the programs once they are in place.

Several factors strongly influence the efforts of community organizing groups. Overall, community organizing groups have limited budgets and small staffs working in the area of school reform. They realize their accomplishments by leveraging their impact through partnerships with other groups and more powerful entities. It should be noted that the organizing efforts are small for the size of the effort needed to change schools and school systems. The groups themselves have found that the deep entrenchment of bureaucratic practices and relations in schools resists the organizing effort. Bureaucratic organization, in combination with the professionalization of education, makes it particularly difficult to penetrate schools. The groups use a variety of approaches to build relationships with teachers and administrators which interrupt a school culture that casts parents and community as "outsiders" rather than as collaborators in children's educational experience. They have found that school leadership can be critical in the formation of trusting and reciprocal parent-professional relations. The context in which these groups work also varies and can facilitate or present barriers to the organizing. For example, the existence or absence of a reform plan in a district creates different opportunities for organizing; the presence of a strong philanthropic community concerned with education reform, or an indifferent one, can also be an important contextual factor for the organizing, as can the overall economic trajectory of the city in which the organizing is happening.

Although most of the groups are working in each of the indicator areas we have identified, the particulars of their school and community contexts, their organizational maturity and the phase of development of their education organizing lead them to different emphases and approaches. We are currently in the midst of a second round of site visits to the case study sites. We are returning to work with organizers and parent leaders to re-examine the framework together. We are coming to these visits with a number of questions: Are the indicator areas authentic, that is do they resonate with local organizers, group leaders and members and others in the local context? Are there other categories that have been missed that should be added? Can the framework be operationalized, that is, can local groups use this framework to measure and present their work? Does the framework assist groups in reflecting on their own work and recognizing both their own accomplishments and where they might need to pay more attention? We are also in dialogue with our national advisory committee. A number of them,

representatives of foundations that support this work, are utilizing the framework as they think about the work in this area. In what ways is it proving useful to them? Where are they seeing limitations? What is missing that might make it more helpful?