



The Impacts of Community Organizing on Education Reform

Community Involvement Program
Annenberg Institute
for School Reform
at Brown University

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Presentation Overview

- Background and impetus for the study
- Conceptual framework
- Sample and methods
- Major findings to date
 - ❑ Reported school level impacts
 - ❑ Predicted school level impacts
- Small group sessions

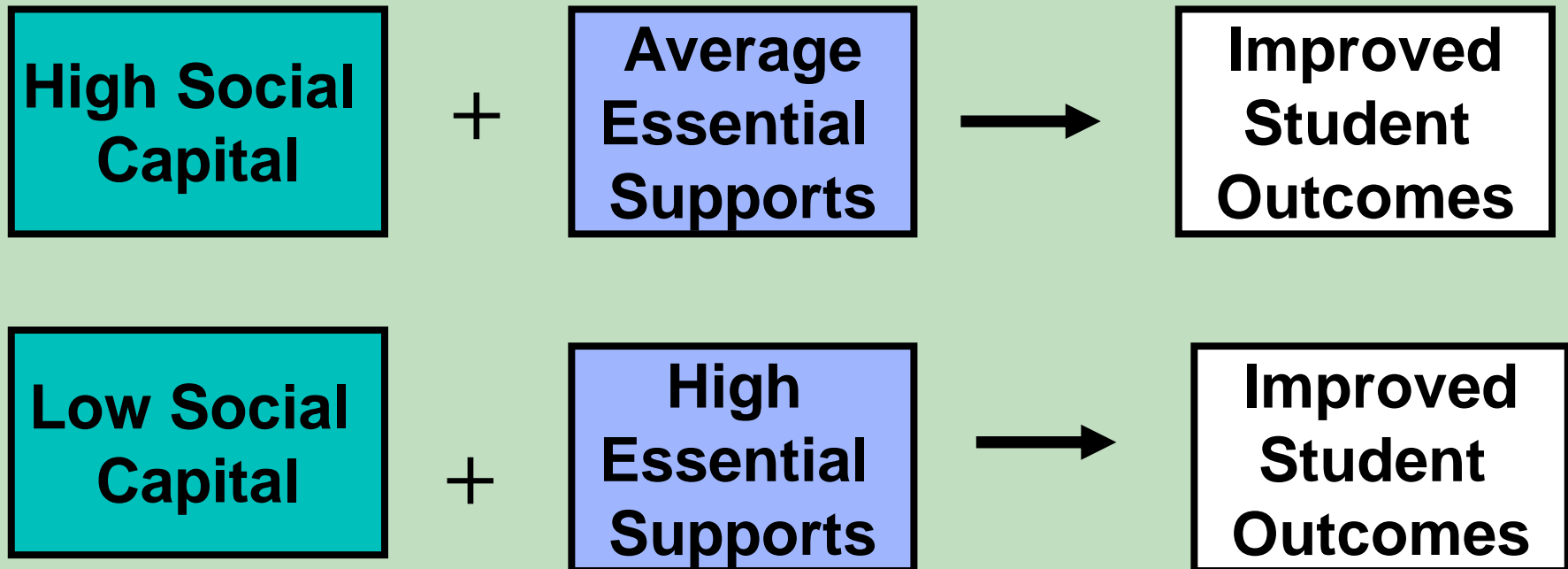


Organizing for School Reform: The Research

- Several full-length books:
 - ❑ *Dry Bones Rattling* (Warren)
 - ❑ *Community Organizing for Urban School Reform* (Shirley)
- Case studies (Research for Action; Zachary & olatoye)
- Indicators framework and documentation of school improvements by organizing groups (Research for Action)
- National scan (Mediratta & Fruchter)
- Organizing issues and challenges (Beam et al)



Consortium for Chicago School Research Study



Social Capital = low crime rates, collective efficacy, connections to outside neighborhoods, religious participation, etc.

Essential Supports = instructional leadership, professional capacity, student-centered learning climate, ambitious instruction, parent-community ties.



An opportunity for research

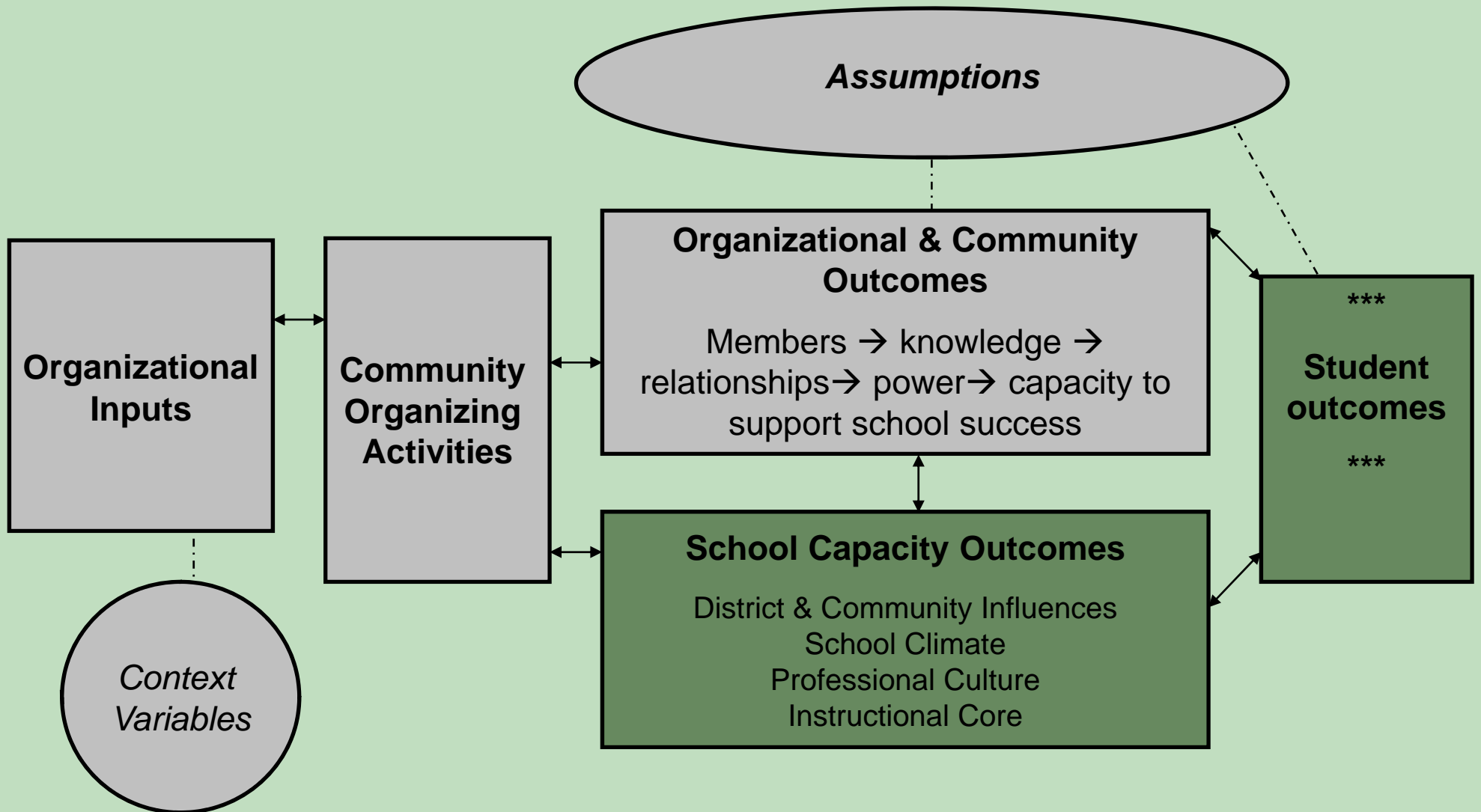
- Literature does not systematically examine the links between organizing and increased school and district capacity for improvement
- Charles Stewart Mott Foundation funds a six-year mixed methods study to examine the impact of 8 community organizing groups



The Groups: An Overview

| Organization | Location | National Network | Youth Organizing |
|--|------------------|------------------|---|
| Austin Interfaith | Austin, TX | IAF | |
| Chicago ACORN | Chicago, IL | ACORN | |
| Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment | Los Angeles, CA | | South Central Youth Empowered Thru Action |
| Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project | Philadelphia, PA | PICO | Youth United for Change |
| Milwaukee Inner City Congregations Allied for Hope | Milwaukee, WI | Gamaliel | |
| NW Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition | Bronx, NY | | Sistas & Brothas United |
| Oakland Community Organizations | Oakland, CA | PICO | |
| People Acting for Community Together | Miami, FL | DART | |

Conceptual framework





School capacity domains

| School Capacity Domain | Sub-domains |
|---------------------------------|---|
| District & Community Influences | Equity-oriented resource distribution District policies and support Community support and accountability Student readiness |
| School Climate | Facility conditions School environment Student and parent involvement in school School-community relationships |
| Professional Culture | Teacher collaboration and collegiality Teacher morale and retention Instructional leadership Professional development |
| Instructional Core | Teacher characteristics and credentials Classroom dynamics Support for post-secondary goals and other services |

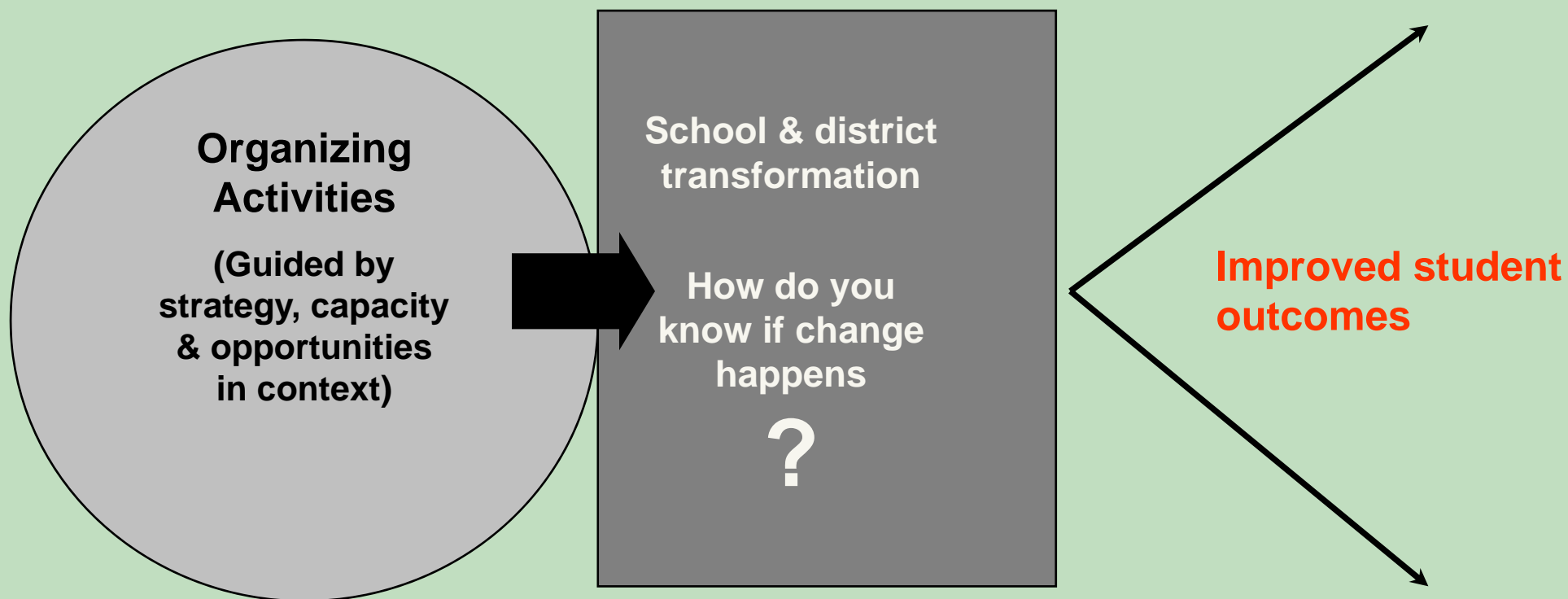


2004 report identified three main strategic approaches to schooling change

1. Resource and policy advocacy that leads to a specific intervention in a set of schools (All Groups)
2. School-by-school organizing to build a relational culture that can spread outwards to catalyze district-wide changes (Austin Interfaith, OCO)
3. Programmatic innovation that a group constructs and scales up across a set of schools, district, or state (Austin Interfaith, ACORN, OCO, YUC)



Research challenge



Look for trends on variables of school capacity that are linked to improved student outcomes



Inferring a link between community organizing and school outcomes:

- Educators say there's a link between your actions and their actions
- Indicators related to organizing campaigns show positive trends
- Indicators of broad school capacity show positive trends
- Indicators of student outcomes show positive trends



Examining impact

- 1) Do educators attribute key school reform decisions to the organizing activities of the groups in our study?
- 2) Are schools showing improvement in the specific school capacity domains targeted by each of the groups?
- 3) Is there evidence of improved student outcomes in schools that have increased capacity?

Sample and Methods



Qualitative data

- Multiple site visits to each group from 2003-2006
- 321 interviews with key stakeholders
 - ✓ 160 organizer interviews (interviewed more than once)
 - ✓ 77 leaders, 56 educators, 28 allies
- 75 observations
 - ✓ Strategy sessions, campaign activities and actions
- Document analysis
 - ✓ Grant reports, research reports, newsletters

Considerations

- Lack of access to some interviewees; harder to access more
- Critical respondents
- Difficult to “read between the lines”—what’s not said; how it’s said



Teacher surveys

- ❑ 570 surveys administered in 3 sites with intensive school-based organizing (Austin, Miami, Oakland)
- ❑ Comparison-group design
- ❑ Survey included two parts:
 - ✓ teachers' perceptions of the four school capacity domains
 - ✓ teachers' assessment of the organizing groups' influence on the four school capacity domains

Considerations

- ❑ Sampling bias—are schools, or teachers, that declined to participate different in some way?
- ❑ Contaminated responses



Administrative data analysis

- ❑ Downloaded publicly available district data
- ❑ Identified campaign-relevant indicators and examined trends over time at the schools (or set of schools) where the organizing was happening

Considerations

- ❑ Obtaining data in a research-friendly format
- ❑ Variable data quality
- ❑ Difficulty interpreting data from year-to-year (due to test changes, changes in the methodology)
- ❑ Challenges of identifying a comparison group
- ❑ Crude measures of indicators



Context analysis

- ❑ Tracking media coverage of local education developments, reforms, policies, etc.
- ❑ Over 1700 articles collected

Considerations

- ❑ What happens “behind the scenes”?
- ❑ Difficult to access independent press and neighborhood papers



Member survey

- ❑ Survey asked leaders how they were impacted by their involvement in organizing
- ❑ 241 adults and 124 youth took the survey
- ❑ Not a part of today's discussion, but both youth and adults report increased leadership skills and greater knowledge of education issues



Research challenges

- Constantly changing context creates potentially confounding effects
 - ❑ Schools, policies, people, organizations
- Presence of other programs/organizations in the school that might explain effects (alternative hypotheses)
- Variability in organizing activities, both across groups and across time

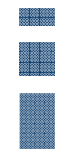
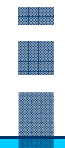
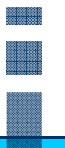
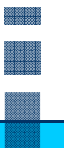




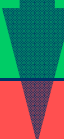
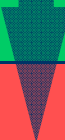
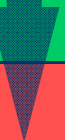
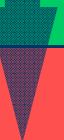






Analytic strategy to link action to impact:

- Triangulation -- looking for convergence among different data sources (interviews, surveys, administrative data)
- Digging deeper into indicators where data sources suggest divergence
- Checking in with key stakeholders about our interpretations of the data



How this works

| Data Sources | School Capacity Domains | | | |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| | District & Community Influences | School Climate | Professional Culture | Instructional Core |
| Group Attributions |  |  |  |  |
| Educator Attributions |  |  |  |  |
| Teacher Surveys |  |  |  |  |
| Administrative Data Analyses |  |  |  |  |

Major findings to-date



The Big Picture

- In every site, educational decision-makers attribute key educational policy decisions and/or innovations to youth and community organizing groups
- Impact is most intense on district resources and policies, and school climate, with some penetration of the professional culture and instructional core of schools
- Preliminary evidence of student achievement gains in some schools in Austin, Oakland and Miami, predicted gains in school capacity in Chicago, LA, NYC, and Philadelphia

| | Attributed resource & policy advocacy campaigns | Attributed school-level results |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Austin Interfaith | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Project ACCESS (new bilingual & special education teacher pipeline) ❖ Alliance School model with accompanying resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Predicted increase in number of bilingual and special education teachers in district schools ❖ Parent involvement and relational culture in schools |
| Chicago ACORN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Grow Your Own (new teacher pipeline) and statewide resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Predicted increase in teacher diversity ❖ Predicted increase in teacher retention rates |
| CC/SCYEA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Facilities and resources ❖ College preparation policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Facilities resources to South Central schools ❖ Expanded college prep coursework |
| EPOP/YUC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Distribution of Title I funds ❖ Parent involvement supports ❖ Small schools strategy/ 2 campuses ❖ Testing policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Preserved funds for high-need schools ❖ Increased parent access to information ❖ Creation of 6 new small high schools ❖ Improved test-prep & testing practices |
| MICAH | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Student mobility ❖ Statewide school funding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Created school-level mobility coordinators |
| NWBCCC/SBU | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ School facilities resources ❖ School safety & college prep ❖ Student leadership in HS design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Reduced school overcrowding ❖ Improved training for school safety agents ❖ New small high school w/ youth leadership |
| OCO | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Small schools policy ❖ District supports for small schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Creation of 40 new small autonomous schools |
| PACT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Direct Instruction (reading instructional program) ❖ District-wide supports for DI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Brought DI to 26 elementary schools ❖ Supported effective DI implementation |

Interview data (educator attributions)

| District & Community Influences | School Climate | Professional Culture | Instructional Core |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p><u>Resources:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ New funding allocations in every site ❖ Redistribution of resources to highest-need schools <p><u>District policy & supports:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Grow Your Own legislation (state) ❖ Small schools & district infrastructure ❖ Direct Instruction & district infrastructure ❖ District support for Alliance School model ❖ Passage of college prep curricula ❖ Testing/test prep policy ❖ Leadership relationship with parents, students ❖ New roles and practices to support parent/community involvement, greater awareness of student voice ❖ District-wide school facilities creation ❖ Lead teacher pilot <p><u>Accountability:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Greater community involvement and awareness through coalition work and congregation engagement ❖ Community partnerships | <p><u>Facilities conditions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Facilities improvements <p><u>School environment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Safety improvements ❖ Focus on learning ❖ Collaboration, trust and norms of problem-solving ❖ Improved student attendance and behavior <p><u>Student/parent involvement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Parent involvement ❖ Training to support parent involvement ❖ Increased student voice ❖ Norms of student leadership in school <p><u>School-community relationships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ School involvement in organizing ❖ Community partnerships and involvement in school ❖ Increased teacher awareness of students' community ❖ Additional services provided (e.g. health clinic) | <p><u>Teacher collegiality</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Trust and collaboration <p><u>Professional development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Teacher professional development opportunities (neighborhood walks, door-knocking, training in organizing methods) <p><u>Teacher morale and retention</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Reduced teacher vacancies & turnover <p><u>Instructional leadership</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Principal professional development ❖ Principal focus on school quality ❖ Shared leadership with teachers | <p><u>Teacher characteristics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ credentialed teachers ❖ arts/music teachers <p><u>Classroom dynamics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ New college prep curriculum ❖ New testing and test preparation practices ❖ Themes of social justice and leadership embedded in curriculum |



Teachers surveyed attributed HIGH group influence on

District/community influences

- Attraction of community and financial resources to school

School climate

- Sense of community and trust in the school
- School's relations with parents
- Shared decision-making between students, parents, teachers & administrators
- School's relations with the community

Teacher perceptions of school capacity

| Domains | Teacher Survey Measures | Miami (n=232, comparison n=64) | Austin (n= 95, comparison n=49) | Oakland (n= 29, comparison n=101) |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| District & Com. | Creating local accountability | | | |
| School Climate | Teacher parent trust | | | |
| | Sense of community & safety | | | |
| | Knowledge of student cultures | | | |
| | Achievement-oriented culture | | | |
| | Parent influence in student learning | | | |
| | Parent involvement in school** | | | |
| | Teacher outreach to parents | | | |
| | Parent influence in shared decision-making (e/m) | | | |
| | Student influence In shared decision-making (hs) | | | |
| Professional Culture | Peer collaboration | | | |
| | Teacher influence in SDM | | | |
| | Collective responsibility | | | |
| | Teacher-teacher trust | | | |
| | School commitment | | | |
| | Joint problem-solving | | | |
| | Teacher-principal trust | | | |
| Instructional Core | Coherent curriculum & instruction | | | |
| | Teacher influence in classroom | | | |
| | Educational practices/beliefs | | | |
| | Instructional focus | | | |



Types of school administrative data examined:

District & community influences

- ❖ % district utilization
- ❖ % free/reduced lunch
- ❖ Student mobility

School climate

- ❖ % school utilization
- ❖ % student suspensions
- ❖ Student attendance

Professional culture

- ❖ Teacher attendance
- ❖ %Teacher turnover

Instructional core

- ❖ % fully credentialed teachers
- ❖ % provisionally licensed teachers
- ❖ Average teacher salary
- ❖ Class size
- ❖ Teacher/student ratio

Student outcomes

- ❖ % students meeting proficiency on standardized test scores by grade, by year
- ❖ 12th graders completing required college coursework
- ❖ Graduation and dropout rates

Reported school-level impacts



Austin Interfaith

Interviews:

- Strong impacts on the climate and professional culture of schools
- Alliance School practices are spreading beyond AI schools through principal mobility and the district's adoption of community engagement practices

Survey Data:

- Substantial (medium & large) effect sizes on parent involvement, academic expectations, and relational culture variables

Administrative data:

- Gains in teacher salaries across AI schools, compared to the district overall
- Three high-involvement AI schools show higher scores on TAAS and TAKS tests than comparable schools, but only one school maintained this gain across the change in tests



Oakland Community Organizations

Interviews:

- On-going political support for district-wide strategy of small school creation, which has resulted in 40 NSAS to date
- District infrastructure to support small schools implementation
- District capacity for community engagement through new practices and grant funding

Surveys:

- Small to medium effect sizes on parent involvement, shared decision-making and relational culture variables

Administrative data:

- First cohort of OCO small schools shows slightly higher rate of improvement in % students scoring proficient or advanced on CST math and ELA, compared to district overall



People Acting for Community Together

Interviews:

- Identified and secured funding for Direct Instruction (26 schools)
- District-wide supports for DI implementation
- Teachers credit PACT with high levels of impact across all four domains of school capacity
- Some schools report dramatic improvements in reading scores

Surveys:

- Small effect sizes on climate, culture and instructional core variables

Administrative data:

- Steady improvements in reading scores on FCAT. Although these gains are consistent with the district pattern overall, DI schools began with much lower scores, compared with the district



Planned analyses

1. Fine-grained analyses of school capacity
 - School-by-school analyses to identify patterns of improvement or performance
 - Analyses of student performance in the lowest quartile on standardized tests
2. Deeper linkages between different types of data
 - Connecting school-by-school analyses, teacher surveys, qualitative data
3. Deeper linkages between organizing processes and schooling impacts
 - Connecting school-by-school variation to differences in organizational engagement (high-medium-low involvement)
 - Integrating member surveys and observed leadership development work

**Predicted school-level
impacts
(over time)**



Chicago ACORN

Interviews:

- Drafting and building political support for Grow Your Own legislation and subsequent funding appropriations (\$4.5M to date)
- Directing district resources to high-needs schools (teacher recruitment & facilities repairs)
- Transparency in Renaissance 2010

Administrative data:

- Though gains in teacher retention and diversity are predicted, GYO program has not been in place long enough to impact on schools. (The first cohort of GYO will graduate in 2011.)
- North Lawndale schools show a decline in % classes lacking highly qualified teachers, compared to an overall increase district-wide



Community Coalition/South Central Youth Empowered Thru Action

Interviews:

- Identifying access to A-G coursework as a core problem in LA Unified School District, and building a campaign that ultimately won the passage of a district-wide A-G policy
- Facilities funding for neglected South LA high schools
- Predicted gains in graduation and college-going rates in LAUSD high schools, as a result of the mandatory college-prep curricula and ancillary supports (e.g.: professional development for teachers and changes to the middle grades curricula)

Administrative data:

- A-G policy has not been in place long enough to assess impact
- Improvement in the percent of A-G graduates meeting the standards for admission to the UC or CSU may be influenced by 5 years of organizing to call attention to low college-going rates



Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project/Youth United for Change

Interviews:

- Advocating for resource equity: Title I (E), teacher quality (Y)
- Expanding district parent involvement infrastructure (E)
- Local school capacity for parent involvement (new principal training, parent leadership development) (E)
- Identifying and building district support for small high school reform, restructuring 2 large campuses into 6 new schools (Y)
- District-wide policy on testing and test preparation practices (Y)
- Discipline and safety improvements (Y)
- Vehicle for students who are not typically represented in school reform discussions to influence school and district decisions (Y)

Administrative data:

- Though gains are predicted in student attendance on the Kensington campus, these data are not yet available



NW Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition/Sistas and Brothas United

Interviews:

- Drew city and state attention and resources to address local school overcrowding, resulting in a gain of 6,000 additional classroom seats in the district over a ten year period (N)
- Lead teacher program & family school partnership in collaboration with Community Collaborative for Bronx Schools (N)
- Focused educators on the value of student voice (S)
- Opened high school - youth leadership, social justice focus (S)
- Improved training for school safety agents (S)

Administrative data:

- Elementary and middle school overcrowding in the area shows a decrease from 114% utilization rates in 1996-97 to 96% utilization rates in 2005-06; utilization for high schools in the same geographic area decreased from 135% to 110% during this period



Planned analyses

1. Deeper analysis of qualitative data to illuminate the full extent of group influence on policy & resource decisions
2. Identification of additional variables through which to investigate early impacts of your work
3. Descriptive analyses of targeted schools – are there indirect effects that can be captured now?
4. Assessing linkages between organizing processes and schooling impacts
 - ❑ Connecting school-by-school variation to differences in organizational engagement
 - ❑ Contribution of member surveys and observed leadership development work to capacity for effectiveness

Small Group Sessions



Key discussion questions

- **School capacity matrix**: Impressions? Additions and points of divergence from what you know?
- **Administrative data analyses**: What are they showing? Additional variables to consider?
- **Context summary**: Key issues that affected your work & other school-specific context factors?
- **Overall reactions and questions** about the impact analyses?



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