

# Organized Communities, Stronger Schools

A Preview of  
Research Findings

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## About the Authors

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# Executive Summary

## Background

For the past six years, the Community Involvement Program, now part of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, has been studying the impact of community organizing for school reform on student outcomes, with funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. In this research brief, *Organized Communities, Stronger Schools*, we present a preview of the findings from this study.

Because community organizing for school reform operates in a complex and fluid context of schools and communities, a multifaceted, robust research approach is necessary to assess the processes and impacts of this work. Our study draws on multiple research traditions, using a multi-site case study design, theory of change methodology, and quantitative and qualitative methods.

*Constituents of Change*, our initial study report issued in 2004, described the study sites; analyzed each group's school reform goals, strategies, and methods; and provided descriptive data on the urban schools and districts the study sites are organizing to improve (Mediratta 2004). The study sites are:

- Austin Interfaith (Austin, Texas)
- Chicago ACORN (Chicago, Illinois)
- Community Coalition and its youth organizing arm, South Central Youth Empowered Thru Action (Los Angeles, California)
- Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project and its youth organizing affiliate, Youth United for Change (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)
- Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition and its youth organizing arm, Sistas and Brothas United (Bronx, New York)
- Oakland Community Organizations (Oakland, California)
- People Acting for Community Together (Miami, Florida)

Education organizers, researchers, and funders have long debated the impact of community organizing on student educational outcomes. Across multiple data sources, our six-year study found strong and consistent relationships between community organizing and policy and resource decisions, school-level improvements, and student outcomes. Interviews, surveys, and school-level administrative data analyses suggest that organizing helps expand the capacity of urban public schools to support student success by building support for reform alternatives, increasing equity in the distribution of resources, and generating meaningful parent, youth, and community engagement focused on improved student learning.

## Key Findings

Data suggest that organizing is contributing to school-level improvements, particularly in the areas of school–community relationships, parent involvement and engagement, sense of school community and trust, teacher collegiality, and teacher morale.

Successful organizing strategies contributed to increased student attendance, improved standardized-test-score performance, and higher graduation rates and college-going aspirations in several sites.

Our findings suggest that organizing efforts are influencing policy and resource distribution at the system level. Officials, school administrators, and teachers in every site reported that community organizing influenced policy and resource decisions to increase equity and build capacity, particularly in historically low-performing schools.

Data indicate that participation in organizing efforts is increasing civic engagement, as well as knowledge and investment in education issues, among adult and youth community members. Young people reported that their involvement in organizing increased their motivation to succeed in school.

Our research suggests that organizing groups achieve these schooling and community impacts through a combination of system-level advocacy, school- or community-based activity, and strategic use of research and data. Continuous and consistent parent, youth, and community engagement produced through community organizing both generates and sustains these improvements.

# Organized Communities, Stronger Schools

The growth of community organizing for education reform has spurred a national dialogue about the relationship between organizing efforts and improvements in student educational outcomes. This research brief presents findings from a six-year study of the education organizing efforts of seven community organizing groups. The full report from this study will be available in summer 2008.

## About the Study

### The Call for Research

Over the past decade, although the number of school reform organizing groups has steadily increased, community organizing for school reform remains an under-researched phenomenon. While organizing groups have forced well-publicized changes in district- and school-level policies and practices, to what extent have these victories influenced changes in school capacity and student outcomes? Our study addresses this critical question.

### Our Study

For the past six years, the Community Involvement Program, now at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University,<sup>1</sup> has been studying the impact of community organizing for school reform on student educational outcomes, with funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

Because community organizing for school reform operates in a complex and fluid context of schools and communities, a multifaceted, robust research approach is necessary to assess the processes and impacts of this work. Our study draws on multiple research traditions, using a multi-site case study design, theory of change methodology, and quantitative and qualitative methods. We collected 321 stakeholder

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<sup>1</sup> In September 2006, the Community Involvement Program merged with the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. Previously, it was affiliated with the Institute for Education and Social Policy at New York University's Steinhardt School of Education.

#### WHAT IS COMMUNITY ORGANIZING FOR SCHOOL REFORM?

- involves youth, public school parents, and community residents and/or institutions
- builds power by mobilizing large numbers of people
- focuses on accountability, equity, and quality
- recruits and develops leadership as a core activity
- uses direct action tactics to apply pressure on decision-makers
- aims to transform power relations that produce failing schools in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods and communities of color

interviews; 75 observations of organizing strategy sessions, campaign activities, and actions; 509 teacher surveys; 241 adult member surveys; 124 youth member surveys; and school demographic and outcome data for each of the seven school districts.

We used interviews, surveys, and observational data with community organizers and adult and youth members to clarify the theories of action and resultant educational change strategies guiding organizing groups' work, as well as members' knowledge about education policy and their sense of efficacy in generating change within their schools and communities. Publicly available school-level administrative data, interviews with district and school leaders, and teacher surveys were used to analyze district-, school-, and student-level outcomes.

We assessed the impact of community organizing in four ways:

- **District and school leaders' attributions:** We examined district and school leaders' perceptions of the impact of organizing groups on district and school decision making, capacities, and relationships with parent, youth, and community constituencies.
- **Teachers' attributions:** We assessed teachers' perceptions of a variety of school context indicators and whether they believed that changes in school climate, professional culture, and instructional indicators had been influenced by the groups' actions.
- **Student outcomes:** We reviewed administrative data on student attendance, standardized-test performance, graduation and dropout rates, and college aspirations in the schools targeted by groups in our study.
- **Member perceptions:** We studied adult and youth members' perceptions of how their involvement in organizing influenced their knowledge about education policy, their intentions to engage in school and community change efforts, and their educational aspirations for themselves and their families.

We also analyzed our data to understand how groups achieve their impact – that is, we identified the critical organizing processes and strategic choices that enabled organizing groups to effectively challenge the status quo and help improve schooling conditions and educational outcomes in their communities.

A more detailed description of the study design and methodology is provided in Appendix A.

## Study Sites

*Constituents of Change*, our initial study report issued in 2004, described the study sites and analyzed each group's school reform goals, strategies, and methods. The seven study sites are:<sup>2</sup>

- Austin Interfaith (Austin, Texas), affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF)

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<sup>2</sup> An eighth group, Milwaukee Inner-City Congregations Allied for Hope, was included in our initial report. Because they did not participate in the study across the full six years, we have not included them in this report.

- Chicago ACORN (Chicago, Illinois), affiliated with the national network Association of Communities Organized for Reform Now. *Note:* The work described in this research brief was carried out by Chicago ACORN until January 2008, when the director, staff, and board left ACORN to start a new group called Action Now, which is continuing the education and other organizing campaigns it initiated while affiliated with ACORN.
- Community Coalition and its youth organizing arm, South Central Youth Empowered Thru Action (Los Angeles, California)
- Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project (EPOP) and its youth organizing affiliate, Youth United for Change (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania); EPOP is affiliated with PICO
- Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition and its youth organizing arm, Sistas and Brothas United (Bronx, New York)
- Oakland Community Organizations (Oakland, California), affiliated with PICO
- People Acting for Community Together (Miami, Florida), affiliated with Direct Action and Research Training Center (DART)

For study site contact information, please see Appendix B.

# The Context for Reform

All of the groups in our study work primarily with low-income communities of color and focus their organizing efforts on improving the lowest-performing schools in their districts. Though all of the districts serve predominantly African American and Latino students from low- to moderate-income families, the percentages of African American, Latino, and low-income students in the schools targeted by the study sites are much higher than the percentages for their districts as a whole. Census data show that neighborhoods surrounding the schools targeted by the groups in our study have substantially higher percentages of children in poverty and adults

FIGURE 1

Neighborhood characteristics of the schools targeted by study sites' organizing groups

| Schools targeted by study sites' organizing groups          | Demographics      |                   |                   |                   | Socio-economic indicators |                              |                           |   |                   |                   |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|---|-------------------|-------------------|
|   | White             | Black             | Asian             | Hispanic          | Poverty                   | Children age 5–17 in poverty | Adults in the labor force | Adults age 25 and over with less than a high school diploma | Born outside US   | ESL               |
| <b>Austin schools</b><br><i>Remaining AISD tracts</i>       | <b>55%</b><br>73% | <b>16%</b><br>7%  | <b>3%</b><br>5%   | <b>40%</b><br>23% | <b>19%</b><br>11%         | <b>23%</b><br>11%            | <b>70%</b><br>72%         | <b>27%</b><br>13%   | <b>20%</b><br>13% | <b>37%</b><br>28% |
| <b>Bronx schools</b><br><i>Remaining NYC tracts</i>         | <b>27%</b><br>46% | <b>33%</b><br>27% | <b>2%</b><br>10%  | <b>56%</b><br>22% | <b>38%</b><br>19%         | <b>45%</b><br>23%            | <b>49%</b><br>58%         | <b>44%</b><br>28%   | <b>31%</b><br>35% | <b>63%</b><br>47% |
| <b>Chicago schools</b><br><i>Remaining CPS tracts</i>       | <b>11%</b><br>47% | <b>73%</b><br>34% | <b>0%</b><br>5%   | <b>22%</b><br>22% | <b>33%</b><br>19%         | <b>41%</b><br>23%            | <b>50%</b><br>62%         | <b>43%</b><br>28%   | <b>12%</b><br>19% | <b>26%</b><br>33% |
| <b>Los Angeles schools</b><br><i>Remaining LAUSD tracts</i> | <b>18%</b><br>50% | <b>41%</b><br>9%  | <b>1%</b><br>10%  | <b>56%</b><br>44% | <b>35%</b><br>20%         | <b>43%</b><br>25%            | <b>51%</b><br>60%         | <b>56%</b><br>34%   | <b>36%</b><br>40% | <b>49%</b><br>56% |
| <b>Miami schools</b><br><i>Remaining M-DCPS tracts</i>      | <b>51%</b><br>72% | <b>39%</b><br>19% | <b>1%</b><br>2%   | <b>46%</b><br>36% | <b>27%</b><br>14%         | <b>34%</b><br>17%            | <b>53%</b><br>61%         | <b>43%</b><br>24%   | <b>45%</b><br>37% | <b>58%</b><br>49% |
| <b>Oakland schools</b><br><i>Remaining OUSD tracts</i>      | <b>19%</b><br>49% | <b>41%</b><br>26% | <b>17%</b><br>14% | <b>29%</b><br>11% | <b>25%</b><br>14%         | <b>31%</b><br>16%            | <b>55%</b><br>66%         | <b>38%</b><br>13%   | <b>32%</b><br>18% | <b>42%</b><br>26% |
| <b>Philadelphia schools</b><br><i>Remaining PSD tracts</i>  | <b>19%</b><br>63% | <b>54%</b><br>29% | <b>4%</b><br>4%   | <b>29%</b><br>4%  | <b>36%</b><br>15%         | <b>44%</b><br>18%            | <b>49%</b><br>61%         | <b>43%</b><br>22%   | <b>9%</b><br>8%   | <b>37%</b><br>15% |

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000.

NOTE: Target schools were defined as census tracts within or intersecting a .5-mile radius of each school identified by the study site as the focus of its organizing; comparison is to the remaining census tracts in the city in which the site is located (with the exception of Miami – as the schools are in different localities, the comparison is to the remaining Dade County tracts).

without a high school diploma, relative to their districts (see Figure 1). Percentages of students meeting reading and math standards are generally lower in the schools targeted by study sites than for the districts overall.

The seven school districts in which study groups work vary considerably in structural complexity and size, from Oakland, with a student population of 48,135 in the 2005-2006 school year, to New York City, with a student population of over one million. The districts experienced considerable change during the time frame of our study. Five of the seven districts where groups in our study worked experienced changes in district leadership; three experienced radical changes in the administrative organization and management of the districts' schools; and two experienced state-level takeovers of their districts. Many schools involved with the groups experienced multiple transitions in principal leadership and teaching staff.

**HOW DOES ORGANIZING WORK TO TRANSFORM SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES?**

Our 2004 report, *Constituents of Change*, presented this conceptual framework for understanding how organizing groups work to reach their school reform goals (Mediratta 2004). The framework assumes that organizing and schooling change processes are not linear and that community impacts interact dynamically with schooling outcomes.



# Findings

Organizing groups have stimulated important changes in educational policy and practices. Major reform initiatives introduced by groups in our study include: mandatory college-preparatory curriculum in Los Angeles; small schools in Oakland and Philadelphia; the Grow Your Own Teacher pipeline program to recruit and train teachers of color for hard-to-staff Illinois public schools; districtwide parent involvement and testing policies in Philadelphia; parent and community engagement practices in Austin; and new literacy curricula in Miami. Districts and states invested substantial funds in implementing these initiatives.

Our analyses found evidence that community organizing is helping to expand school-level capacity. Educators cited improvements in the areas of school-community relationships, parent involvement and engagement, sense of school community and trust, teacher collegiality, and teacher morale as a result of organizing groups' efforts. In several sites, successful reform initiatives contributed to increased student attendance, improved standardized-test-score performance, and higher graduation rates and college-going aspirations.

Our data suggest that organizing efforts are influencing policy and resource distribution at the system level. Officials, school administrators, and teachers in every site reported that community organizing influenced policy and resource decisions to increase equity and build capacity, particularly in historically low-performing schools serving low-income communities of color.

Participation in organizing efforts is increasing civic engagement, as well as knowledge and investment in education issues, among adult and youth community members. Young people, in particular, reported that their involvement in organizing increased their motivation to succeed in school.

Our findings indicate that organizing groups achieve these education and community impacts through a combination of system-level advocacy and school- or community-level activity. Continuous and consistent parent, youth, and community engagement produced through community organizing both generates and sustains these improvements.

The following findings comprise the core of our research results.

## Impacts on Schools and Student Educational Outcomes

### 1. Organizing is helping to expand the capacity of urban public schools to provide a successful learning environment.

Community-led policy and resource advocacy can create the opportunity for school-level improvement by building support and pressure for school restructuring, reduced overcrowding, new teaching expertise, new curriculum mandates, and additional supports for parent and community engagement. School-level improvements varied across the sites according to the focus of the organizing efforts.

- ✦ In New York City, the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition’s (NWBCCC) organizing for school facilities and repairs helped to produce a total of more than 14,000 new seats to relieve overcrowding in northwest Bronx elementary and middle schools.<sup>3</sup>

In Austin, Miami, and Oakland, where school-level organizing was sustained over a substantial period of time, we found evidence of broad improvement across three core domains of school capacity – school climate, professional culture, and instructional core. Teacher survey findings showed organizing impact was most intense in the school climate domain, particularly on parent and community involvement, sense of community and trust in schools, and communication among school faculty and parents. Strong to moderate effects were also evident on teacher collegiality and teacher morale, particularly in the areas of peer collaboration, teacher–teacher trust, and sense of school commitment, all of which have been identified by the Chicago Consortium for School Research as critical to the development of successful learning environments for students (Bryk & Schneider 2002; Sebring et al. 2006).

Principals and teachers credited organizing groups with a high degree of influence on generating school climate and culture improvements. In Austin, teachers at schools in which Austin Interfaith invested high levels of organizing activity rated fourteen of twenty-four dimensions of school capacity significantly higher than their counterparts in demographically similar schools with comparatively lower levels of involvement from Austin Interfaith. Teachers and administrators credited Austin Interfaith’s efforts to build participative and collaborative school cultures with producing an overall sense of self-efficacy and shared purpose within school communities (see Appendix C).

In other sites, district administrators anticipated positive impacts on schooling capacity as a result of reforms that groups had helped to introduce, although these reforms have not been in place long enough to assess through available administrative data.

- ✦ In Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Chicago, district officials predicted long-term gains in student engagement and teacher quality resulting from the efforts of Youth United for Change, the Community Coalition, and Chicago ACORN.

## 2. Organizing is contributing to higher student educational outcomes.

Improved student outcomes in the form of higher student attendance, improved test scores, increased graduation rates, and higher college-going aspirations were evident in four sites with sustained implementation of reform initiatives at the school level.

- ✦ In Oakland, new small schools developed with support from Oakland Community Organizations scored significantly higher on the California Academic Performance Index (API)<sup>4</sup> than the large schools from which they emerged, at all three levels – elementary ( $p=.000$ ), middle ( $p=.001$ ) and high school ( $p=.049$ ).<sup>5</sup> New small

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<sup>3</sup> A local community school district official credited NWBCCC with helping the district to obtain ten new buildings and lease twelve new spaces, totaling 14,400 new seats.

<sup>4</sup> The API, created by California’s Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999, measures the academic performance of schools. API scores are calculated using statewide test-score results from the state’s Standardized Testing and Reporting Program and its California High School Exit Examination. For more information, see <[www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ap/apidescription.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ap/apidescription.asp)>.

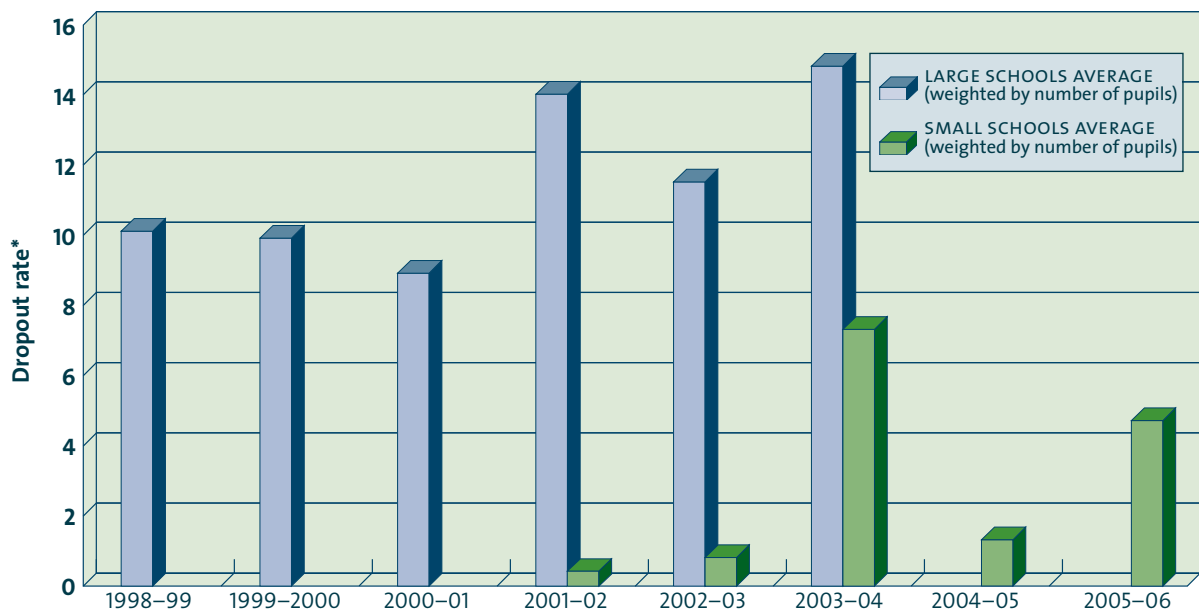
<sup>5</sup> *P-values* refer to the probability that any given statistical finding is due to chance. Generally, *p-values* less than .05 are considered statistically significant, which means there is less than 5 percent probability that this finding is due to chance.

high schools show decreased dropout rates (see Figure 2) and higher percentages of graduates who have completed the college-preparatory curriculum required for entry into the state college and university system than the large schools from which they emerged. These findings are consistent with the results of a 2007 analysis of student-level data conducted by Strategic Management and Evaluation for the Oakland Unified School District (SME 2007).

- ↔ In Philadelphia, new small high schools on the Kensington educational campus developed with support from Youth United for Change (YUC) show a 10 percent gain in student attendance and a 25 percent gain in the percentage of graduates planning to attend college between 2003-2004 and 2005-2006. District administrators credited YUC’s efforts to advocate for and partic-

FIGURE 2

Dropout rates for high school students in Oakland Unified School District, 1998–2006, showing substantially lower rates in small schools compared with the large, low-performing high schools they replaced



Source: California Department of Education, Ed-Data, <[www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/welcome.asp](http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/welcome.asp)>

NOTES: \*High school dropout rate: One-year rate formula: (Grade 9–12 dropouts/Grade 9–12 enrollment x 100)

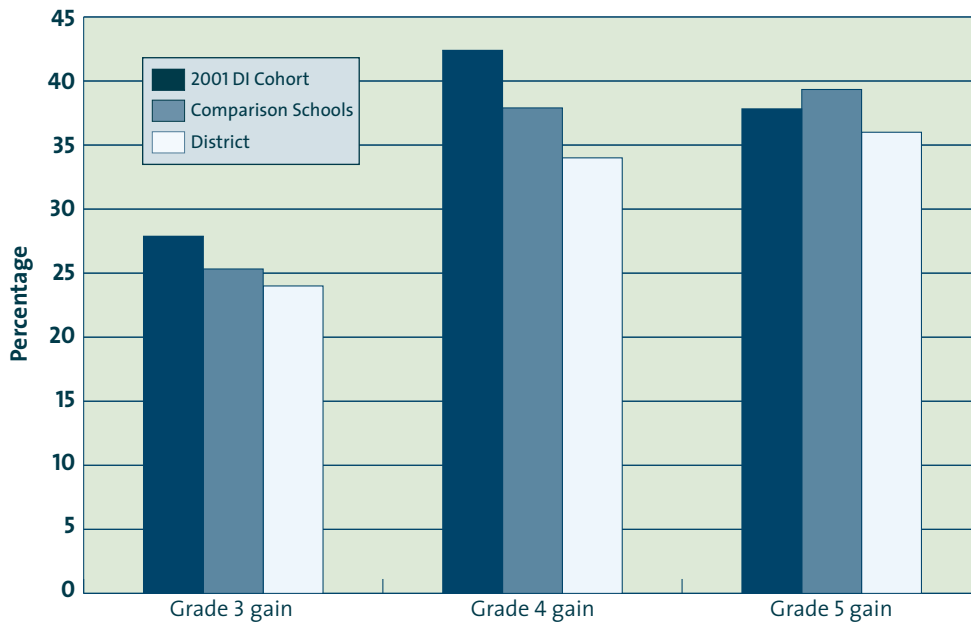
By 2004-2005, large schools had been largely replaced by new small schools and, therefore, were not reporting data.

ipate in the development of the new small schools with helping to create the opportunity for these school-level gains.

- ✦ In Miami, elementary schools implementing the Direct Instruction (DI) literacy program, combined with intensive community engagement support from People Acting for Community Together (PACT), increased the percentage of students meeting standards in reading on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) from 27 percent to 49 percent between 2001 and 2005. Figure 3 shows that schools targeted by PACT’s organizing made larger gains than the district and outpaced a demographically similar comparison group of schools in grades 3 and 4.

FIGURE 3

Percent gain in mean scale scores on the FCAT for all students, 2001–2005, in schools implementing DI, compared with demographically similar schools without DI and with the district average



NOTES: Comparison schools were matched on the percent of free or reduced-price lunch eligible students, the percent of limited English proficient students, and student mobility. On average, DI schools served a 20 percent higher percentage of low-income students compared with the district. In DI schools, 90 percent of students were eligible to receive free or reduced-priced lunch, compared with 70 percent for the district overall.

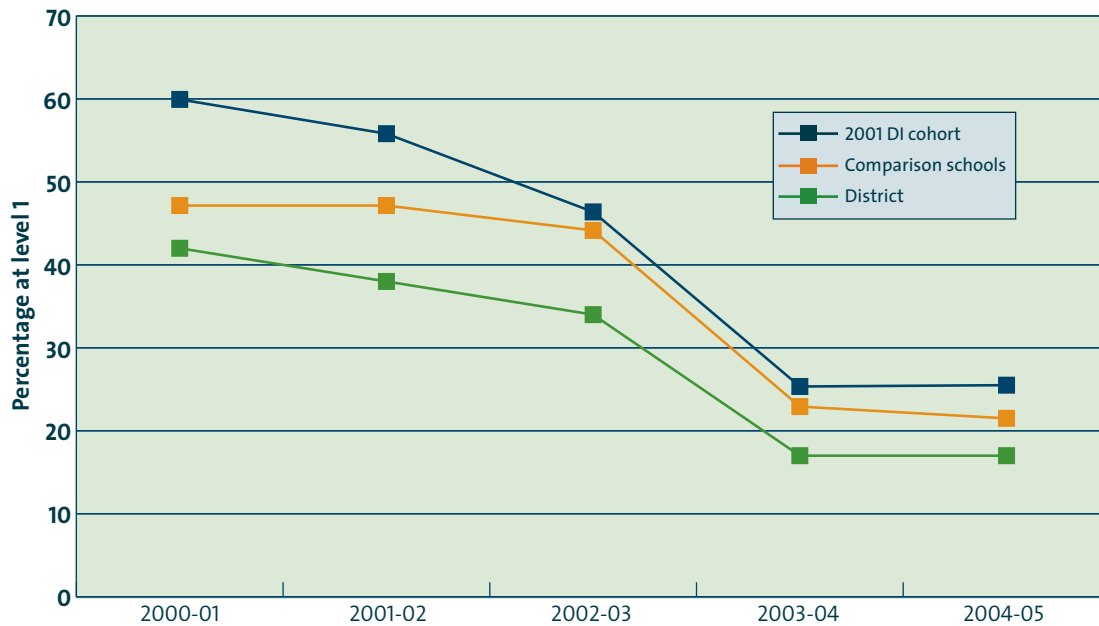
Data are reported for the 2001 cohort of fifteen schools implementing DI; baseline data for two prior DI cohorts were not reported on the state and district Web sites.

During the same time period, DI schools reduced the percentage of students scoring at the lowest achievement level on FCAT from 58 percent to 32 percent. Figure 4 shows that the 2001 cohort of schools implementing DI began with larger percentages of fourth-grade students scoring at the lowest level on the FCAT and outpaced the district and comparison group schools in moving students out of level 1.

- ➔ In Austin, the intensity of Austin Interfaith’s involvement in schools predicted higher rates of students meeting minimum standards on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), after controlling for the effect of baseline test scores, student socio-economic status, and limited English proficiency (see Figure 5; see Appendix D for a description of how intensity of involvement was measured). This finding suggests that the greater the intensity of Austin Interfaith’s organizing in schools, the more likely the school was to experience gains in student-achievement scores.

FIGURE 4

Percent of fourth-grade students scoring at level 1 on the FCAT, 2001–2005, in DI schools, compared with demographically similar schools without DI and with the district average.



NOTE: Comparison schools were matched on the percent of free or reduced-price lunch eligible students, the percent of limited English proficient students, and student mobility.

The high degree of convergence across teacher surveys, district and school administrator interviews, and school-level administrative data strengthens our confidence in the relationship of organizing to improved student outcomes in target schools. Our data suggest that the increased resources, focus on achievement, attention to student needs, and involvement of parents, youth, and community members generated through organizing is helping expand the capacity of urban public schools and districts to support student success.

**A SUPERINTENDENT:**

They've been influential in the district because they've been advocating ... for school equity, making sure that all schools have the same resources and that those schools that are struggling, those schools that are more racially and economically isolated ... have access to the additional resources they need.

FIGURE 5

Summary of hierarchical regression analysis for intensity of Austin Interfaith organizing predicting the percent of all students (grade 3, 4, and 5) meeting minimum expectations in all subjects on the TAAS, 2001-2002 (N=14)

|        | Variable  | B     | SE B | Beta   |
|--------|---|-------|------|--------|
| STEP 1 | Percent of all students that met minimum expectations at baseline (1992-1993) | 0.48  | 0.20 | 0.58** |
|        | Percent of LEP students, 2001-2002  | 0.33  | 0.16 | 0.48*  |
|        | Percent of economically disadvantaged students, 2001-2002                     | -0.02 | 0.20 | -0.02  |
| STEP 2 | Percent of all students that met minimum expectations at baseline (1992-1993) | 0.43  | 0.16 | 0.52** |
|        | Percent of LEP students, 2001-2002  | 0.16  | 0.15 | 0.24   |
|        | Percent of economically disadvantaged students, 2001-2002                     | 0.11  | 0.17 | 0.14   |
|        | Average intensity of AI organizing (until 2002)                               | 3.82  | 1.58 | 0.50** |

NOTES: R Square = .518 for Step 1

R Square Change = .190 for Step 2 (p=.039\*\*)

\*p < .10, \*\*p < 0.05 (Due to the small sample size, we use a p-value of .10 to test for statistical significance.)

This analysis shows that for every unit of increase on a 5-point scale of intensity of Austin Interfaith's organizing, schools show an average gain of 3.82 percent of students meeting the minimum standard. Schools that are the most highly engaged with Austin Interfaith would be expected to see increases in the range of 15 to 19 percentage points. Analyses by subject show particularly strong gains for math.

### 3. Organizing is helping to expand equity and school capacity in historically underserved communities through targeted district- and state-level policy and resource interventions.

Our data suggest that organizing efforts are influencing resources and policy at the system level. Officials, school administrators, and teachers in every site reported that community organizing influenced policy and resource decisions to increase equity and build capacity in low-performing schools. District administrators report that their relationship with organizing groups enhanced their capacity to respond effectively to the needs of constituencies – particularly low-income African American and Latino communities – that historically were less well served by district policies and practices.

Moreover, new reform initiatives introduced by groups are bringing additional resources to districts through new state funding and philanthropic investments.

- ↔ The Illinois State Legislature appropriated \$7 million to support the Grow Your Own Teacher pipeline program advocated by Chicago ACORN.
- ↔ In Texas, Austin Interfaith’s statewide network worked with the Texas State Legislature and the Commissioner of Education to create the Investment Capital Fund grant program, which has directed more than \$50 million to schools since 1995 for teacher professional development, parent involvement activities, and after-school programs.
- ↔ In Los Angeles, the Community Coalition’s organizing led the school district to redirect \$153 million in bond monies for school repairs targeted specifically for high schools in South Los Angeles and other high-needs communities.

## Impacts on Parent Involvement, Civic Engagement, and Educational Aspirations

### 1. Adults involved in community organizing report greater parent involvement in schools, civic engagement, and knowledge and investment in education issues.

Involvement in organizing develops new knowledge about education issues and greater involvement in schools among parents and community members in our study sites. In a survey of 241 adult members of our study’s groups, we found that organizational participation predicted greater knowledge about local schools and the school system ( $p=.000$ ), controlling for level of education, income, immigration status, and age.<sup>6</sup>

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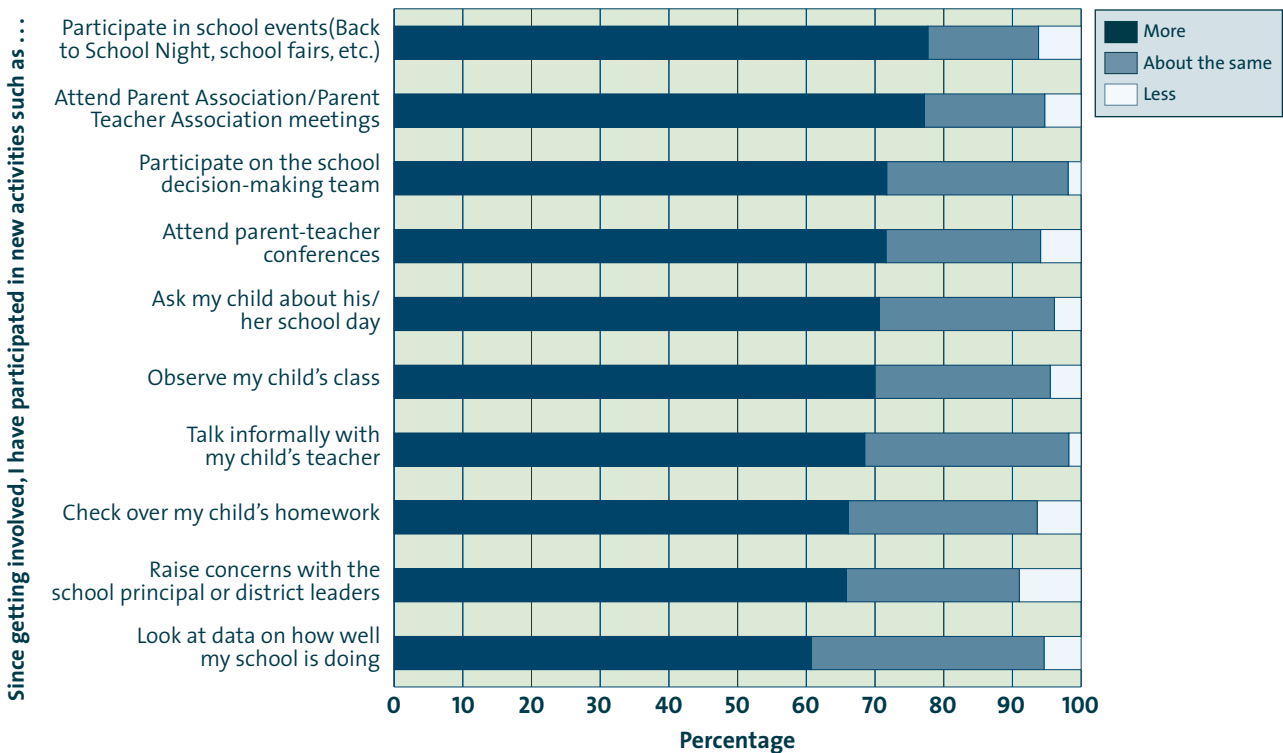
<sup>6</sup> Organizational participation also predicted higher levels of community engagement ( $p=.000$ ), above and beyond the effects of level of education, income, immigration status, and age. The community engagement scale includes items such as “more active on community issues,” “stronger relationships with people in community,” and “know more how to resolve problems in community.” Survey results include data collected from the Milwaukee Inner-City Congregations Allied for Hope.

In addition:

- Approximately two-thirds of adult respondents reported that because of their involvement in organizing, they were more likely to engage in school-related parent involvement behaviors such as observing their child’s class, talking informally with their child’s teacher, looking at data to assess their school’s performance, and raising concerns with the school principal or district leaders (see Figure 6).
- Sixty percent of adult respondents reported higher goals and expectations for themselves and their families as a result of their participation in organizing.

Research on parent involvement suggests that the type of school-related parent involvement behaviors fostered by community organizing increase the likelihood of children’s academic success by expanding the capacity of families to help their children perform better in schools and help their schools better identify and meet student needs (Comer 1988; Epstein 1987; Henderson & Mapp 2002).

**FIGURE 6**  
Survey of parent engagement in school, showing increased participation in school-based parent engagement activities attributed to involvement in organizing activities



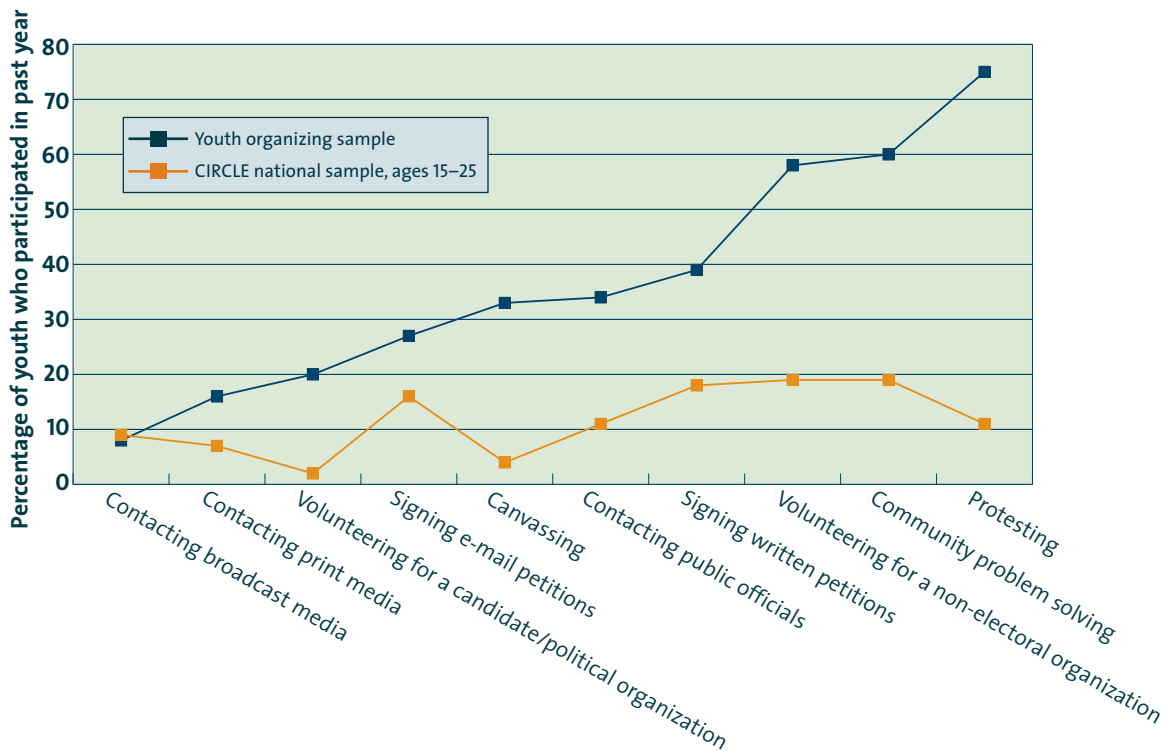
2. Young people involved in organizing report increased knowledge of education issues facing their schools and school systems and intend to sustain their political and civic engagement over the long term.

In a survey of 124 youth members across the study sites, we found that organizing provided a platform for engaging students in political and civic activity, and this engagement encouraged long-term plans among youth for sustained political and civic involvement.

Students' level of participation in organizing correlated positively with higher rates of political and civic engagement and greater knowledge of the school and school system. That is, the more actively involved youth were in the organization, the more likely they were to report feeling knowledgeable about education issues affecting their schools, districts, and communities. Consistent with the mission of organizing groups, youth from our sample reported higher levels of political engagement than a demographically similar national sample of 1,674 young people ages 15 to 25 (see Figure 7).<sup>7</sup> For example, 60 percent of youth involved in organizing stated that they had participated in community problem solving within the past year, while only 19 percent of the national sample had done so.

FIGURE 7

Political and civic engagement, showing that young people involved in organizing demonstrate higher rates of civic and political engagement



<sup>7</sup> The 2006 iteration of the CIRCLE National Civic and Political Health Survey (Lopez et al. 2006) sampled, 1,674 young people ages fifteen to twenty-five. CIRCLE's survey over-sampled youth of color and thus provides a reasonable comparison for assessing the level of engagement in our sample.

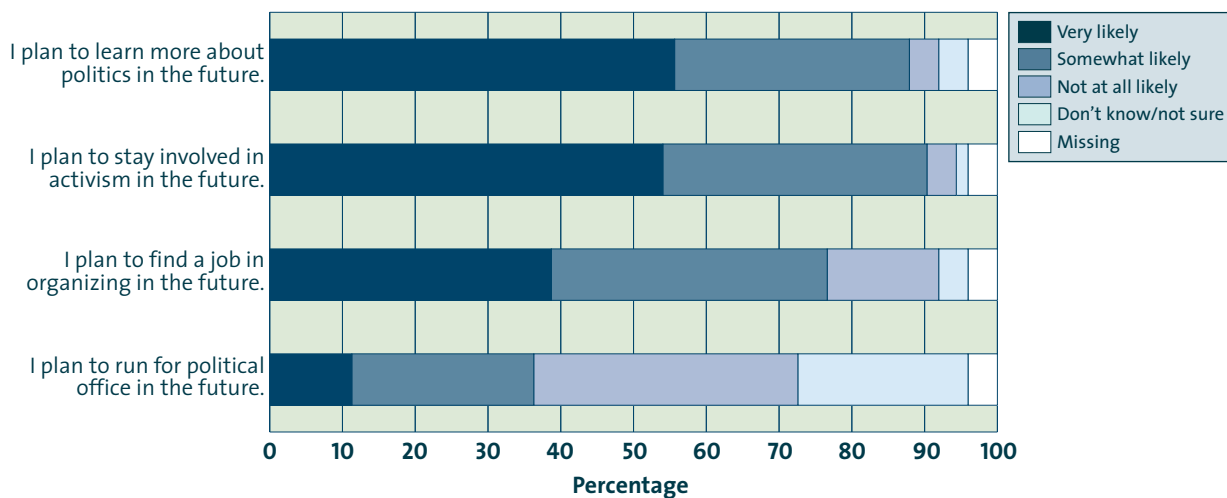
Recent research on the impact of political engagement on adolescent development among youth of color suggests that the high rate of civic and political engagement among our survey participants has potentially far-reaching effects (Ginwright & James 2002; Watts, Williams & Jagers 2003). Young people who are invested in community–school problem solving, who see themselves as active agents of change, are more likely to become key actors not only in pushing districts and schools toward more effective practices and policies, but also in expanding the capacities of their communities (Mediratta, Cohen & Shah 2007). Indeed, among our sample, more than 50 percent of youth respondents reported planning to learn more about politics and stay involved in activism in the future, and close to 40 percent reported planning to pursue a job in organizing (see Figure 8).

**A HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH LEADER:**

We’re all future elected officials, teachers, lawyers, doctors. Many of us are going to become staff at [name of group] and make it bigger – have it be all around the country. . . . I can’t say now that I’m always going to keep up this work in this way. But whatever I do in the future, I’m going to change the world. I’m going to affect it. With my history and background, I don’t want to see today’s youth grow up in the way I did. I take everything in this organization personally because of that.

FIGURE 8

Future plans: young people’s intentions to remain involved in politics and activism



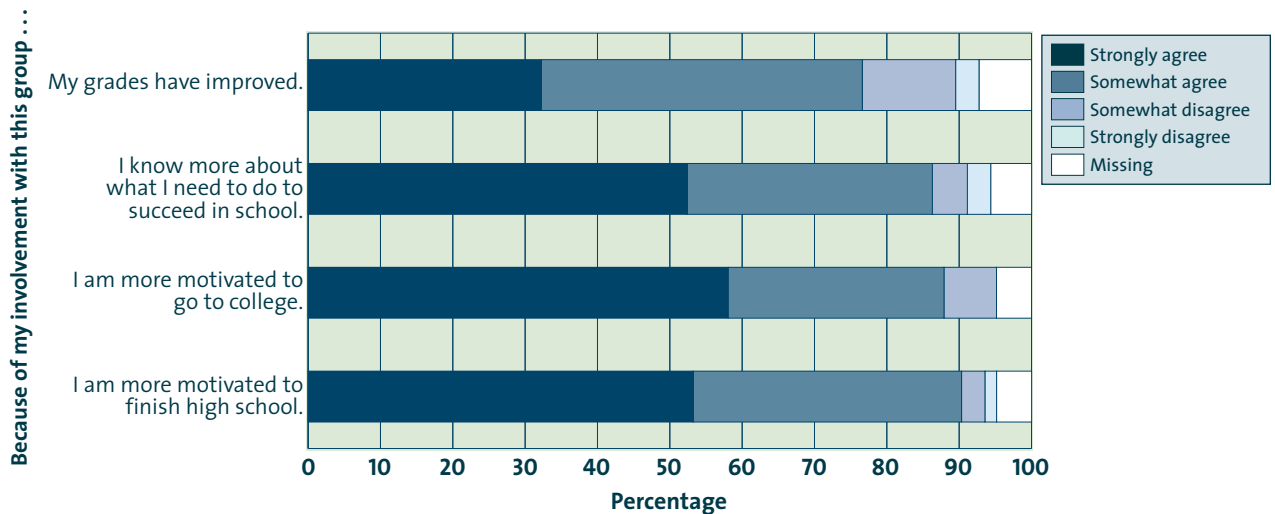
### 3. Young people involved in organizing report increased motivation to succeed in high school and enter college.

Young people reported that because of their involvement in organizing, they knew more about what they needed to do to succeed in school and felt greater motivation to finish high school and go to college. Regression analyses of our youth survey indicate that organizational participation is a statistically significant predictor of school motivation ( $p=.004$ ) among youth involved in the organizing groups in our study, above and beyond the effects of gender, age, and grades.<sup>8</sup> Eighty percent of youth respondents reported plans to pursue a college education, and almost half our sample said they expected to obtain a graduate or professional degree beyond college.

Our data suggest that organizing is producing substantially higher levels of college-going aspirations among African American and Latino youth than aspirations reported in national samples (see figures 9 and 10). In the 2004 National Center for Education Statistics survey (Ingels et al. 2005), for example, 35.3 percent of African American youth and 28.8 percent of Latino youth indicated that they expected to obtain a graduate or professional degree, compared with 49 percent of the youth survey respondents in our sample.

FIGURE 9

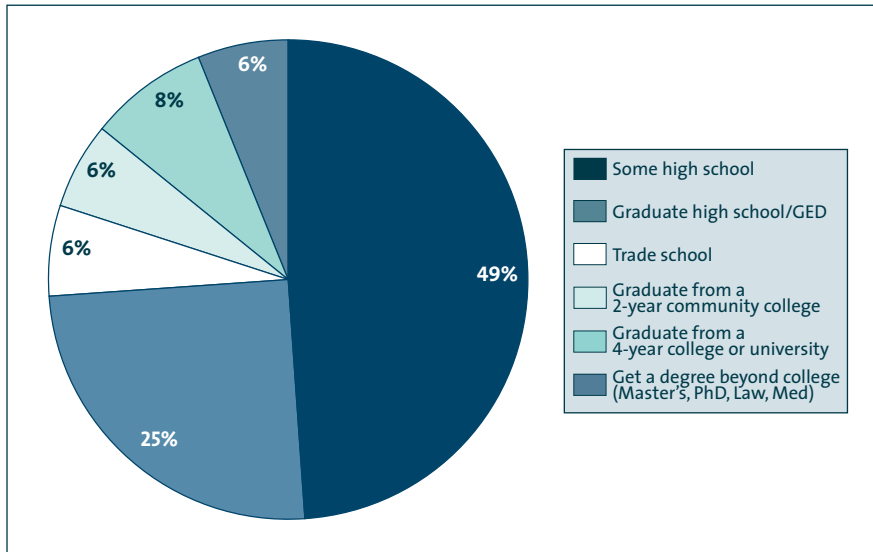
Survey responses showing the impact of involvement on motivation and engagement in school and on long-term educational aspirations



<sup>8</sup> Regression analyses show that grades were also a statistically significant predictor of school motivation.

FIGURE 10

Student surveys: What is the highest level of education you expect to complete?



### What Makes Organizing Effective?

1. Effective organizing strategies combine policy and resource advocacy with intensive school-level support.

The organizing groups in our study achieved district and schooling impacts through four main strategies:

- Some groups focused exclusively on policy and resource improvements at the district or system level, fighting for greater resources to relieve school overcrowding, for example, or for an expansion in the number of pre-kindergarten seats.
- Most groups coupled systemic policy advocacy with some form of school-level monitoring and support to ensure effective implementation of new instructional or school-restructuring interventions they had won. The intensity and consistency of school-level involvement varied considerably across sites, depending on the reform strategy, school-level dynamics, and the capacity of the organizing group.
- A majority of the study sites used local school-improvement campaigns as a mechanism for engaging public school parents or students in campaigns for larger systemic policy change. Sites varied in whether they developed school-based organizing teams or recruited parents and/or youth into neighborhood-based or organization-wide organizing committees.
- Two organizations – Austin Interfaith and Oakland Community Organizations – complemented system-level work with intensive school-based organizing efforts targeted specifically at developing achievement-oriented participative and collaborative school-level cultures.

Our data suggest that strategies targeted exclusively at systemic reform or school-level improvements are insufficient to generate schooling impact, given the ongoing and widespread turnover in staff and leadership characterizing most urban schools and districts. When complemented by district-level advocacy, a sustained and high level of school-based organizing was a key factor in helping stimulate gains in student test-score performance.

- In Miami, PACT’s consistent efforts to acknowledge educators’ efforts and advocate for their concerns, in the form of frequent school visits by PACT members, helped to build school-community trust and relationships that enhanced the implementation of Direct Instruction.
- Ongoing support from Austin Interfaith organizers in the form of parent leadership development; training for core organizing teams of educators, parents, and community members; and assistance in helping these core teams to define and carry out school improvement campaigns supported the development of schools with significantly greater levels of trust, collegiality, and shared focus on achievement among parents, community members, and teachers than schools with lower involvement from Austin Interfaith.

## 2. Effective organizing groups combine community knowledge and expertise with research evidence to define reform initiatives aimed at improving the core capacities of local schools.

Policy and practice innovations introduced by study sites blend community members’ knowledge of local schooling conditions and their insights about the needs of local schools with analyses of administrative data and best practices identified by education research. The combination of data and local knowledge enabled groups to develop reform initiatives uniquely suited to local school conditions and needs.

- In Chicago, community organizers and parents affiliated with Chicago ACORN (now affiliated with Action Now) discovered a shortage of qualified teachers in neighborhood schools before the district had systematically examined teacher qualifications. Through a combination of administrative data analyses of teacher retention and members’ own experiences in schools, the organization discovered that ending the problem of teacher turnover required a new strategy for identifying and preparing teacher candidates from the local community.

The Grow Your Own teacher pipeline that Chicago ACORN helped to create in Illinois is preparing community members – parents, paraprofessionals, and local residents – to become teachers in hard-to-staff schools.

A number of study sites organized to build culturally responsive relationships linking schools, families, and local communities.

### ▶ A PRINCIPAL:

What they actually do is organize the frustrations and the things these parents would like to see changed here. So they can present it to me – not screaming, not with outrage, not poking fun of me and say[ing] . . . “I don’t like this, I don’t like that,” but focusing it in a more realistic way and negotiating. . . . “We have seen this and we think that something like this should [happen]; what is it that you’re able to do?” . . . For me, it makes my job a little easier because, well, in actuality, what the parents want is what I want.

- Oakland Community Organization’s advocacy produced a district mandate that new small-school design teams include representation from parent and community members and that the new small schools that result develop active parent-participation mechanisms.
- In New York, high school student leaders in Sistas and Brothas United (SBU) collaborated with educators to open a new small high school organized on SBU’s model of youth leadership and community action.

### 3. Organizing groups are viewed as legitimate, credible, and tactically effective by local education officials.

Superintendents, school board members, and municipal leaders identified the groups in our study as crucial voices that applied essential pressure to ensure that districts fulfilled their obligation to educate all students. Though organizing groups trace their power to the number and sophistication of the constituents they mobilize, superintendents and other education officials attribute groups’ influence to organizing leaders’ authentic roots within African American and Latino constituencies that historically have been less well served by district policies and practices.

Convergence between districts’ and groups’ school reform agendas and underlying theories of schooling change enhanced the credibility of organizing efforts and increased the likelihood of the district adopting organizing demands. Groups that achieved their organizing goals demonstrated considerable skill in linking proposed reform strategies with district priorities and in utilizing political pressures and funding opportunities to convince districts that these strategies furthered the districts’ interests.

- Alignment of district leadership priorities and organizing interests in Chicago and Los Angeles, within the broader context of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), facilitated broad coalition efforts by Chicago ACORN and the Community Coalition to improve teacher preparation and create a new college-preparatory curriculum.
- In Philadelphia, the Eastern Philadelphia Organizing Project used NCLB’s provisions for increased reporting to parents to negotiate new parent involvement supports at the district level.

### 4. Organizational capacity influences the likelihood of organizing success.

Groups that succeeded in winning and sustaining significant educational improvements were characterized by stable and experienced staff and a well-developed core of grassroots leaders. Staff stability and experience increased the capacity of organizations to assert their legitimacy and credibility with multiple constituencies across differences of race, class, and educational background and to develop trust-based relationships with other influential organizations, including the teachers union and research organizations.

#### ▶ A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER:

I make better decisions on behalf of the entire district because I know a little more about communities of color, about low-income communities that are not immigrant communities. They’ve helped me understand something I was oriented to wanting to understand but I didn’t necessarily have a lot of practical hands-on experience.

A majority of study sites are – or were – affiliated with national community organizing networks (ACORN, Direct Action and Research Training Center, the Industrial Areas Foundation, and PICO), through which they gain considerable support in the form of leadership training, organizer development training, and guidance on education organizing strategies. These networks also enabled groups to mount statewide efforts to advocate for new policy and resources and to protect hard-won reforms.

While the network affiliations appear to add considerable capacity, the success of local organizing efforts also depends on groups' capacity to conceptualize and build support for district-specific reform initiatives that target multiple levels of change and balance collaborative and advocacy roles vis-à-vis the educational establishment. Foundation initiatives that encouraged sharing among groups from different networks and regions of the country were identified by organizing groups as providing crucial knowledge-building support.

## Implications and Conclusions

Our data suggest that organizing efforts are helping to develop new capacity in schools – particularly in the areas of school-community relationships, parent involvement and engagement, sense of school community and trust, teacher collegiality, and teacher morale. These indicators have been identified by research as critical to the creation of successful learning environments (see Sebring et al. 2006).

Our research also found evidence of improved student outcomes through higher student attendance, higher test scores, and increased graduation rates and college-going aspirations in four sites where a combination of policy/resource advocacy and school-based support helped to sustain implementation of reform.

In addition to schooling change, the groups in our study are contributing to the development of new civic capacity to work for community improvement. Adult and youth members reported new knowledge about school and community issues, new engagement behaviors in schools and communities, and higher goals and expectations for themselves and their families as a result of their participation in organizing.

Our research sheds light on a range of strategic choices and organizational characteristics that support organizing success. Future research and knowledge-building efforts need to focus on understanding what factors help groups to develop the capacities necessary to transform schools and communities. The impact of involvement in organizing on young people’s development and future academic success – and the broader impacts on community capacity produced through school reform organizing – also warrant further examination.

# Appendix A:

## Research Design and Methods

This six-year study, which began in September 2002, uses a multi-site case study design, theory of change methodology, and mixed quantitative and qualitative methods. Our research study consisted of two major phases. In the first, we aimed to delineate a conceptual framework linking organizing processes to school and community change. In the second phase, we used the conceptual framework as a guide in assessing the impact of organizing processes on school and district capacity. In both phases of the research, we used a collaborative research process, sharing analytic tools and preliminary findings with sites so that their intimate knowledge of their work and of the school, district, and community contexts informed our interpretation and understanding of the data.

### Methodology

#### Phase 1:

##### Creating a conceptual framework (2002–2004)

Drawing primarily on qualitative data, we used a participatory theory of change methodology to define the organizing processes and school reform goals and strategies in each site and to illuminate how these strategies were shaped by the context (community, school, district, municipal, and state).

- Researchers interviewed staff and leaders in each group regarding their organization’s theory and working assumptions about how to stimulate change and how specific organizing activities linked to organizational goals.

- Using each group’s theory of change as a starting point, we conducted observations and interviews with community stakeholders to document implementation of organizing strategies.

- Based on these data, we developed an overarching conceptual framework, or logic model, of how community organizing groups aim to simulate changes in:

- + community capacity, including the ways in which being involved in organizing has impacted individual parent, youth, and community members in the group;
- + school and district capacity to educate students successfully.

#### Phase 2:

##### Assessing impacts of community organizing (2004–2008)

The second phase of our study drew on a mixed-methods strategy to assess the impacts of community organizing. We combined a thematic analysis of our qualitative data with descriptive and inferential statistical analyses on a range of quantitative data. Triangulating qualitative fieldwork and quantitative data collection from multiple data sources enabled us to identify both points of convergence and areas of divergence for further investigation.

Our analysis of community capacity drew on interviews, observations of group activities, and surveys of youth and adult members of each organization. Our primary focus in this study, however, was to understand how organizing campaigns influence school and district capacity. Therefore, we began by identifying the crit-

ical capacities schools need to have to deliver a high-quality learning experience. This analysis drew on a review of school-reform literature, as well as our conversations with our advisory group members (Sporte, Luppescu & Nanjiani 2004; Lusi, Abelman & MacMullen, n.d.; Mayer et al. 2000; Newman & Wehlage 1995; Newman, King & Rigdon 1997; O'Day & Bitter 2003; Elmore 1996; Gold, Simon & Brown 2002).

Using this analysis of school capacity, we generated a list of the school-improvement campaigns of each group and defined a corresponding list of indicators to serve as key benchmarks in analyzing changes in the capacity of schools targeted by each group's campaigns. We measured changes on each indicator using survey data from teachers; school demographic, resource, and outcome data from publicly available state and district data sets; and interviews with critical stakeholders, including educators, policy-makers, ally organizations, organizers, parents, community members, and youth.

## Qualitative Data Sources

### Interviews

We conducted 321 open-ended, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders across the sites. Interviews were conducted between January 2003 and September 2006, with a total of 160 interviews with organizing staff, 77 interviews with parent and youth leaders, 56 interviews with educators, 28 interviews with allies, and 15 interviews with national network staff.

Interviews in the first year of the study were conducted primarily with organizing staff and leaders and focused on organizational characteristics, including mission, theory of change, strategy, capacity, and leadership development. Early

interviews also focused on understanding the impetus for and strategies underlying groups' campaigns for school improvement.

To understand the evolution of campaign strategies, we interviewed organizing staff multiple times over the course of the study. Interviewees in subsequent years also included allies, teachers, district administrators, superintendents, and other key stakeholders. These interviews explored the extent to which groups were perceived to be effective and powerful and the ways in which their organizing efforts may have impacted school and district capacity.

### Observations

We observed meetings, training sessions, negotiation sessions, and public actions, again from January 2003 through September 2006. Research team members also observed leader development and organizer development trainings led by the national organizing networks to which some of the sites belong. We have more than 75 field notes written by research team members documenting their observations.

### Document review

We reviewed documentation and archival materials produced by the groups, including newsletters, organizational charts, and training materials collected between January 2003 and September 2006.

### Context review

In addition to conducting extensive background research on the local and state context for each group (e.g., defining the critical policy reforms, state-level issues, governance structure for each school system, political landscape), we followed the local media coverage of education issues in all of our sites (January 2003 to May 2007). We

have compiled a database of more than 1,700 articles. These articles, combined with the interview data, provided a picture of the shifting context for reform in each site.

## Quantitative Data Sources

### Adult member surveys

We conducted a survey of 241 adult members across the eight organizing groups. The paper survey was distributed across a one-month period in October 2003. Survey questions probed member participation in organizing activities, as well as member perceptions of how participation in the group has influenced their engagement with schools and their involvement in their community.

### Youth member surveys

From June through August 2006, we collected 124 surveys from the three youth organizing groups in our study: Sistas and Brothas United, in New York; South Central Youth Empowered Thru Action, in Los Angeles; and Youth United for Change, in Philadelphia. Surveys asked young people about their involvement in organizing and the impact of their involvement on their worldview, sense of agency, political engagement, academic motivation, and knowledge of the school and school system.

### Teacher surveys

We administered a total of 509 online teacher surveys in three sites – Austin, Miami-Dade County, and Oakland – where organizing groups have used a school-based strategy and have mounted highly visible campaigns for several years. We surveyed teachers in Miami-Dade County Public Schools in spring 2005 and teachers in the Oakland Unified School District and Austin Independent School District in fall 2005. The survey probed teacher perceptions of district and community support

and involvement in their school, as well as of their school's climate, professional culture, and instructional core. Survey questions were drawn from a variety of established measures, but primarily from scales developed by the Consortium on Chicago School Research. The surveys were conducted through Survey Monkey.

In each of the three sites, we conducted surveys of teachers in a sample of schools associated with the group, as well as with a group of demographically similar comparison schools. Schools participating in the survey received a \$100 gift certificate in appreciation. In addition, teachers completing the survey received an individual \$10 gift certificate.

### Public data sets

Baseline statistical data on a variety of community variables were collected for each site. Using the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census Bureau database, we mapped the census tracts that are within or intersect a one-half- to one-and-a-half-mile radius of each school that groups were working in. For each school zone, we collected data on a variety of neighborhood indicators, such as percentage of school-aged children in poverty, median household income, educational attainment, and percentage of homeowners. These data were used to analyze the contexts in which the organizing was taking place.

We also downloaded a range of publicly available teacher and student data from all eight districts, covering school years from 2000 through 2006. In districts where data prior to 2000 were available, we examined those data, as well. Data vary from district to district but include measures of teacher and student race/ethnicity, years of teaching experience, dropout rates, graduation rates, student performance on standardized tests, and a range of other variables.

# Appendix B:

## Study Sites

### **Action Now**

209 W. Jackson Blvd. 2nd Floor  
Chicago, IL 60606  
Contact: Madeline Talbott  
312.676.4280

### **Austin Interfaith**

1301 South IH 35, Suite 313  
Austin, Texas 78741  
Contact: Doug Greco  
512.916.0100

### **Community Coalition**

8108 S. Vermont Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90044  
Contact: Marqueece Harris-Dawson  
323.750.9087

### **Eastern Philadelphia Organizing Project**

2625 B Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19125  
Contact: Alan Stevens  
215.634.8922

### **Youth United for Change**

1910 North Front Street, Room 111  
Philadelphia, PA 19122  
Contact: Andi Perez  
215.423.9588

### **Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition; Sistas and Brothas United**

103 East 196th Street  
Bronx, NY 10468  
Contact: James Mumm  
718.584.0515

### **Oakland Community Organizations**

7200 Bancroft Avenue  
#2 Eastmont Mall  
Oakland, CA 94605-2410  
Contact: Ron Snyder  
510.639.1444

### **People Acting for Community Together**

250 NE 17th Terrace  
Miami, FL 33132  
Contact: Wilfredo Bolivar  
305.643.1526

## Appendix C:

# Austin Teacher Survey Tables

To assess school-level perceptions of the climate, culture, and instructional core of schools involved with Austin Interfaith, we conducted a survey of 144 teachers in six Austin Independent School District schools during the 2005-2006 school year. Surveys were implemented in four schools with high involvement of Austin Interfaith and two low-involvement schools. High involvement indicates an active core team, with consistent participation of parents, teachers, and administrators from the school in Austin Interfaith training activities and events related to organization-wide campaigns. Low involvement denotes schools where core teams met infrequently or where few or no leaders participated in organization-wide events.

The survey response rate was approximately 63 percent, with 95 teachers (out of approximately 140) in high-involvement Alliance Schools and 49 teachers (out of approximately 88) in low-involvement schools responding. There were no significant differences in teaching experience or demographics between the two sets of schools.

We conducted t-tests to assess whether the difference between the average ratings of the two sets of schools was statistically significant. To elucidate the magnitude of differences between the two sets of schools on each measure, we also calculated effect sizes. High-involvement schools showed statistically significant differences on fourteen out of twenty-four measures of school capacity from low-involvement schools (see Figure 11 on next page).

Our survey included a series of attribution questions to understand whether school staff saw a relationship between their school's internal capacity and the actions of Austin Interfaith. Teacher survey respondents were asked if they were familiar with Austin Interfaith and, if so, to rate whether the organization had influenced twenty-two dimensions of school capacity on a three-point scale. Fifty-two percent of respondents (forty-nine teachers) in high-involvement schools were familiar with Austin Interfaith's work in their school, while 33 percent (sixteen teachers) of respondents in low-involvement schools were familiar with Austin Interfaith's past work in their school.

Survey results show high rates of attribution to Austin Interfaith's work across the domains of school capacity (see Figure 12). Teachers in high-involvement schools credited Austin Interfaith's work with "some" to "very much" influence on six of ten measures of school climate related to parent involvement, trust and collaboration, and school-community relations. Even in low-involvement schools – where Austin Interfaith does not have an active presence – teachers perceived the group as having influenced parent and community relationships. We found statistically significant differences between high- and low-involvement schools for eight of twenty-two attribution measures.

FIGURE 11

Austin teacher surveys: high-involvement schools vs. low-involvement schools

| Domains                           | Measures   | High-Involvement Schools Mean | Low-Involvement Schools Mean | P-value      | Effect Size |
|-----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| District and community influences | <b>District support</b><br>Creating local accountability*                                  | 3.65                          | 3.27                         | <b>0.023</b> | small       |
|                                   | <b>Community support and accountability</b><br>Partnering with non-system actors*          | 3.46                          | 3.25                         | 0.307        | negligible  |
| School climate                    | <b>School environment</b><br>Teacher-parent trust  | 3.12                          | 2.66                         | <b>0.000</b> | large       |
|                                   | Sense of school community and safety*  | 3.47                          | 2.71                         | <b>0.000</b> | large       |
|                                   | Knowledge of students' culture*  | 3.47                          | 3.36                         | 0.193        | small       |
|                                   | Achievement-oriented culture*  | 4.08                          | 3.56                         | <b>0.000</b> | large       |
|                                   | <b>Parent involvement in the school</b><br>Parental influence in student learning*         | 2.52                          | 2.26                         | 0.076        | small       |
|                                   | Parental involvement in school   | 2.64                          | 2.22                         | <b>0.001</b> | medium      |
|                                   | Teacher outreach to parents  | 3.47                          | 3.06                         | <b>0.000</b> | large       |
|                                   | Parent influence in school decision making   | 1.87                          | 1.51                         | <b>0.001</b> | medium      |
| Professional culture              | <b>Teacher collegiality and engagement</b><br>Peer collaboration                           | 3.15                          | 2.79                         | <b>0.000</b> | medium      |
|                                   | Teacher influence in school decision making  | 2.34                          | 2.08                         | <b>0.021</b> | small       |
|                                   | Collective responsibility*   | 3.87                          | 3.29                         | <b>0.000</b> | medium      |
|                                   | Teacher-teacher trust  | 3.14                          | 2.68                         | <b>0.000</b> | medium      |
|                                   | <b>Teacher morale and retention</b><br>School commitment                                   | 3.10                          | 2.60                         | <b>0.000</b> | medium      |
|                                   | <b>Professional development</b><br>Quality professional development                        | 2.83                          | 2.74                         | 0.411        | negligible  |
|                                   | <b>Instructional leadership</b><br>Joint problem solving                                   | 2.81                          | 2.46                         | <b>0.002</b> | medium      |
|                                   | Principal instructional leadership   | 3.34                          | 3.32                         | 0.837        | negligible  |
| Teacher-principal trust           | 3.23   | 3.06                          | 0.122                        | small        |             |
| Instructional core                | <b>Classroom characteristics and effectiveness</b><br>Coherent curriculum and instruction* | 3.87                          | 3.65                         | 0.061        | small       |
|                                   | Teacher influence in classroom decision making   | 2.79                          | 2.45                         | <b>0.011</b> | small       |
|                                   | Classroom resources  | 3.14                          | 3.00                         | 0.069        | small       |
|                                   | Educational practices and beliefs  | 2.95                          | 2.91                         | 0.747        | negligible  |
|                                   | Instructional focus*   | 3.58                          | 3.49                         | 0.575        | negligible  |

\* denotes measures that were scored on a five-point scale

NOTES: The majority of measures were scored using a four-point scale, with a higher score indicating a more positive response.

High-involvement school teachers N=95, Low-involvement school teachers N=49

High-involvement schools: Travis Heights (N=32), Ridgetop (N=17), Govalle (N=13), Norman (N=33)

P-values of .05 or less (in bold) are statistically significant.

FIGURE 12

Teacher perceptions of Austin Interfaith’s influence on their school, by domain

|  | High-Involvement Schools Mean | Low-Involvement Schools Mean | P-value      | Effect Size   |
|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| <b>Community/district context</b>  |                               |                              |              |               |
| Attraction of community and financial resources to school                      | 2.13                          | 1.79                         | <b>0.043</b> | <b>medium</b> |
| School organization (e.g., small schools/smaller learning environments)        | 1.69                          | 1.60                         | 0.641        | <b>small</b>  |
| Student readiness to learn (e.g., access to pre-K programs)                    | 1.59                          | 1.50                         | 0.669        | <b>small</b>  |
| <b>School climate</b>  |                               |                              |              |               |
| School’s relations with the community  | 2.41                          | 2.06                         | <b>0.015</b> | <b>medium</b> |
| School’s relations with parents  | 2.29                          | 2.00                         | 0.074        | <b>medium</b> |
| Parent involvement in the school   | 2.31                          | 1.80                         | <b>0.006</b> | <b>large</b>  |
| Sense of community and trust in the school                                     | 2.26                          | 1.75                         | <b>0.012</b> | <b>medium</b> |
| Shared decision making between students, parents, teachers, and administration | 2.12                          | 1.94                         | 0.244        | <b>small</b>  |
| How teachers get along with parents  | 2.07                          | 1.64                         | <b>0.050</b> | <b>medium</b> |
| Safety and discipline in the school  | 1.87                          | 1.60                         | 0.177        | <b>small</b>  |
| How students get along with other students                                     | 1.70                          | 1.43                         | 0.197        | <b>small</b>  |
| Physical condition of the school building                                      | 1.56                          | 1.27                         | 0.125        | <b>small</b>  |
| Changes in school overcrowding   | 1.59                          | 1.60                         | 0.954        | negligible    |
| <b>Professional culture</b>  |                               |                              |              |               |
| Quality of principal leadership  | 2.10                          | 1.57                         | <b>0.026</b> | <b>medium</b> |
| How teachers get along with other teachers                                     | 1.81                          | 1.40                         | <b>0.053</b> | <b>medium</b> |
| Commitment to the school   | 1.76                          | 1.33                         | <b>0.016</b> | <b>medium</b> |
| Professional development opportunities   | 1.58                          | 1.60                         | 0.910        | negligible    |
| <b>Instructional core</b>  |                               |                              |              |               |
| Quality of curriculum and instruction  | 1.65                          | 1.40                         | 0.266        | <b>small</b>  |
| Teacher expectations for student achievement                                   | 1.66                          | 1.40                         | 0.156        | <b>small</b>  |
| Teaching effectiveness   | 1.56                          | 1.53                         | 0.910        | negligible    |
| Classroom resources (e.g., textbooks and other supplies)                       | 1.58                          | 1.43                         | 0.429        | <b>small</b>  |
| <b>Student learning</b>  |                               |                              |              |               |
| Student academic performance   | 1.68                          | 1.46                         | 0.334        | <b>small</b>  |

NOTES: This survey was constructed for implementation in three districts and includes questions (such as changes in overcrowding) that were not directly relevant to Austin Interfaith’s work.

“Not at All”=1, “Some”=2, “Very Much”=3

High-Involvement N=46, Low-Involvement N=16

## Appendix D:

# Regression Analyses

Hierarchical regression analyses were used to analyze the relationship between the intensity of Austin Interfaith’s involvement and changes in the percentage of students meeting minimum expectations on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills during the eight-year period of Austin Interfaith’s most concentrated Alliance School activity. (Intensifying pressures from No Child Left Behind in subsequent years led to an overall reduction in the number of participating schools and in the level of intensity of involvement among participating schools.)

The Alliance School intervention occurred over an extended time frame, and schools varied in both the length of time and the intensity of their involvement with the organization. We created an index of involvement based on an implementation rubric of core elements of the Alliance School model. Using the rubric, we assigned a value on a five-point scale to each participating school for each year, based on the qualitative data we collected regarding Austin Interfaith’s school-level activities. We calculated the sum of the involvement for each school, divided by the number of years of the intervention, to determine the average intensity of involvement over time.

This method allowed us to account for variation in implementation of the model across participating Austin Independent School District (AISD) schools over time. Our analysis was limited to the sixteen schools involved with Austin Interfaith; treatment diffusion ruled out the possibility of a comparative analysis with similar schools in the AISD.

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