

Constituents of Change

Community organizations
and public education reform

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This report was produced by the Institute's Community Involvement Program (CIP), initiated in 1996 to support community organizing for school reform. CIP provides policy research, data analysis, organizing strategy and training support to community groups organizing parents and young people to improve their schools. It also works with groups collaborating to shape more effective and equitable education policies in New York City and in major cities in the northeast. CIP also conducts research on school reform organizing across the country.

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Over two thousand people came out on a Saturday morning in March, 2003, to hold the leadership of the Miami Dade County school system accountable for producing more effective schools. They came by foot, by car, and in 44 buses to the direct action meeting of People Acting for Community Together, a local community group known as PACT. Congregation members, clergy, parents, children, and school staff, speaking English, Haitian Creole, and Spanish, streamed into a convention center in Miami. Their strength became clear when PACT leaders presented their concerns to the Chief Education Officer of the Miami-Dade Public Schools, and in response, she agreed to resolve each of them. She pledged the school system's support for the 26 schools currently using Direct Instruction, a phonics-based reading program.¹ She agreed that portfolio alternatives to high stakes testing in the fourth grade would be implemented, after-school programs would be evaluated, and schools would be permitted to join PACT as institutional members.

This was Miami PACT's annual convention and their largest turnout to date. In addition to education, PACT leaders presented proposals on health care and immigration, and celebrated a recent victory that doubled the fleet of public busses in the City of Miami. Without PACT's organizing, a city official said, "This campaign would never have happened."

Community organizing is driven by demands for improving schools rather than supporting their existing dysfunctions.

I. Introduction

In urban communities across America, organizations like PACT are increasingly intervening in public school reform. These community organizations help residents define common schooling concerns, project new educational possibilities, research reform strategies, and work together for school improvement. They strive to increase student achievement, to transform the relationship between schools and communities, and to further social justice and increase civic participation in the democratic governance of public education.

Community organizing for school reform differs radically from traditional forms of parent and community involvement in schooling.² Organizing is driven by demands for schooling accountability, access and quality—for improving schools rather than supporting their existing dysfunctions. Organizing occurs through cyclical processes engaging community members, parents, youth and, increasingly, educators in leadership development and direct action to build the power necessary to achieve both systemic policy change and school-specific improvements.

¹ In 1995, PACT identified Direct Instruction (DI) as a critical strategy for improving low reading scores in Miami Dade schools. Under intense pressure from PACT, the Miami Dade Unified School District authorized money to pilot Direct Instruction in five schools in December 1996. After reading scores improved in these five schools, 22 additional schools applied to participate in the initiative, and PACT won a commitment from the District to hire a full time DI coordinator and three DI coaches to support DI implementation. Through its network of DART organizations of Florida, PACT also fought for and won \$7.25 million for DI, of which \$2.3 million went to Miami Dade County schools.

² For an example of how parent organizing differs from traditional models of parent involvement in schools, see Madeline Talbott, "Parents as School Reformers" in *School Reform in Chicago*, edited by Alexander Russo (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

As the results of organizing become more visible, the work is gaining support among education reform advocates, policymakers and funders as a critical strategy for building the political will and constituency involvement necessary to sustain reform.

In the late 1990s, school reform organizing increased exponentially; four times as many groups entered the field in 1996 than in 1990.³ As the number and intensity of organizing efforts increased, community groups began to transform education in local schools and districts in increasingly visible ways. In California, for example, Oakland Community Organizations helped conceptualize and win broad political support for a new district-wide small schools policy. In Texas, the number of schools participating in the Industrial Areas Foundation-initiated Alliance Schools program increased from 17 schools in 1992 to 130 schools in 2000. In Chicago, the Association of Communities Organized for Reform Now (ACORN) helped the school district develop and implement a new teacher recruitment process in local schools.

As the results of organizing become more visible, the work is gaining support among education reform advocates, policymakers and funders as a critical strategy for building the political will and constituency involvement necessary to sustain reform.⁴ Citing decades of research on the failures of educational reform to bring about deep and lasting school improvement, a growing number of education researchers have focused on the power of community organizing to alter the underlying power dynamics that determine schooling outcomes for urban students in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. Jeanne Oakes and Martin Lipton, for example, attribute the “sorry and familiar story of school reform gone awry” to educators’ singular focus on changing the internal “technical aspects” of schooling. They conclude,

The logic and strategies employed in social and political movements—in contrast to those found in organizational change models—are more likely to expose, challenge, and if successful, disrupt the prevailing norms and politics of schooling inequality that frustrate equity-focused reforms. Without attention to these dynamics, such reforms are abandoned entirely or implemented in ways that actually replicate (perhaps in a different guise) the stratified status quo.⁵

Yet community organizing for school reform remains a relatively under-researched and undocumented phenomenon. Thus, in 2002, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation asked the New York University Institute for Education and Social Policy to initiate a study examining the effect of community-based school reform organizing on schooling outcomes. Drawing on its extensive history of funding community organizing, the

³ Research by the Institute and others active in urban school reform suggests that there are at least 200 community groups across the country currently engaged in struggling for better local public schools. The number of groups initiating school organizing increased dramatically in the latter half of the 1990s.

Kavitha Mediratta and Norm Fruchter et al., *Mapping the Field of Organizing for School Improvement, A report on education organizing in Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, Mississippi Delta, New York City, Philadelphia, San Francisco Bay Area and Washington DC* (New York: Institute for Education and Social Policy, 2001), based on research conducted by the Institute, California Tomorrow, Designs for Change and Southern Echo.

Eva Gold, Elaine Simon and Chris Brown, *Successful Community Organizing for School Reform* (Chicago: Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, 2002).

⁴ Charles Payne, “So much reform, so little change: Building level obstacles to urban school reform,” *Journal of Negro Education*.

Janice M. Hirota, Robin Jacobowitz and Prudence Brown, *Pathways to School Reform: Integrating Constituency Building and Policy Work* (Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, 2004).

⁵ Jeanne Oakes and Martin Lipton “Struggling for Educational Equity in Diverse Communities: School Reform as Social Movement,” in *Journal of Educational Change* 3 (2002):383-406.

Foundation selected the following organizing groups as the focus of the study.⁶

- Austin Interfaith (AI)
- Chicago ACORN
- Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (CC), Los Angeles
- Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project (EPOP)
- Milwaukee Inner-city Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH)
- Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC)
- Oakland Community Organizations (OCO)
- People Acting for Community Together (PACT), Miami

These groups work in eight urban districts in seven states; six of the eight are affiliated with long-standing national community organizing networks.

Our study, initiated in January 2003, is designed to elucidate the relationships between the processes of building and wielding community-based organizational power, and increasing school and district capacity for improved schooling outcomes. Our core research questions are:

1. Do organizing efforts to reduce the inequities of urban public education's resources and outcomes by equalizing power dynamics—the core of the community organizing approach—change the nature of accountability and the quality of engagement across schools, districts and communities?
2. Do the new relationships generated by community efforts to equalize power dynamics lead to new school and community priorities and capacities that result in improving learning outcomes for all children?

Our research uses a case study methodology to illuminate the processes of organizing, the participants involved in these processes, and whether and how the environment for improving student achievement is changed in each of the eight selected sites. Through interviews with key study group participants and education policymakers, observations of organizing activities and an analysis of school and district-level statistical data, we will develop new theory about the intersections between school reform organizing and school improvement. Our research process involves five years of fieldwork and a final year of synthesis, writing and dissemination. (A detailed discussion of our research process is provided in *Appendix 1: Research methodology*).

Based on fieldwork conducted between January 2003 and January 2004, this initial paper describes the study groups, situates them in their urban contexts, and presents a conceptual basis for our study's future analyses. Because this is the initial product of

Our study is designed to elucidate the relationships between the processes of building and wielding community-based organizational power, and increasing school and district capacity for improved schooling outcomes.

⁶ The Foundation initially selected seven groups; an eighth group was added later to increase the geographic and methodological diversity of the study groups.

In the final year of our study, we will produce a report synthesizing our findings about the relationships between community organizing and the development of districts' and schools' capacity to improve student achievement outcomes in the eight study sites.

a five-year research effort, the critical first step involves conceptualizing how the study groups define their work. This paper provides a textured examination of the historical foundations, ideological bases, theoretical models, and contextual factors shaping each group's school reform goals, values, strategies, and methods. With this descriptive analysis as a platform, we examine the conceptual difficulties involved in assessing the impact of school reform organizing on student achievement and school outcomes, and discuss our method for specifying the relationships that link organizing efforts to schooling change.

Over the course of our research, we will produce a series of papers that analyze the role of organizing in school reform from the perspectives of the organizing groups, as well as from the perceptions of the educators they ally with or seek to influence. These papers will examine the organizational factors contributing to organizing effectiveness, such as internal decision-making structures and norms, staff development and continuity, and member-based leadership development. They will also document the growth of high school youth organizing. Because the process of community organizing for school reform is both varied and complex, critical variations across the study groups, as well as key challenges to the work, will also be explored. In the final year of our study, we will produce a report synthesizing our findings about the relationships between community organizing and the development of districts' and schools' capacity to improve student achievement outcomes in the eight study sites. We hope the publications that flow from our research will inform the efforts of education organizers, policy makers, practitioners, funders and others engaged in the difficult but vital task of improving our public schools.

Recent research on school reform organizing

Though the field of school reform organizing is relatively new, our work builds upon several recent studies that document community groups' organizing efforts, define the challenges for organizing, and explore the impact of organizing on schools and districts.⁷ Recent research on civic capacity and urban school reform, as well as the extensive literature on parent involvement in public education, also inform our study.

The Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) in Texas is perhaps the mostly intensively studied school reform organizing effort.⁸ In *Community Organizing for Urban School Reform* and subsequent research, Dennis Shirley has documented the efforts of local affiliates of the Texas IAF to win greater resources for schools participating in the statewide Alliance Schools network, and to make these schools more democratic and participatory.⁹ Shirley attributes IAF's success to its emphasis on developing human capital and social capital within communities, as well as within and across schools.

⁷ The majority of groups in the 2001 IESP mapping study had only four years of education organizing experience.

⁸ Dennis Shirley, *Community Organizing for Urban School Reform* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997); and *Valley Interfaith and School Reform: Organizing for Power in South Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002). Mark Warren, *Dry Bones Rattling* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), Giles, Hirota and others have also written about the IAF's work.

⁹ Shirley, 1997.

Leaders in the organization receive training, attend seminars with nationally recognized school reform leaders, and read texts on political theory. Organizers work in schools to develop leaders and change the schooling culture through a variety of strategies, including community “walks for success,” that build trust across staff, parents and residents. Shirley’s research asserts that such strategies have helped Alliance schools to match the overall success of Texas schools in improving test scores and raising teacher retention rates.¹⁰

In New York City, Eric Zachary and shola olatoye of the IESP produced a case study of a local housing development corporation’s school improvement efforts. *Organizing for School Improvement in the South Bronx* describes New Settlement Apartments’ campaign to oust an ineffective and unresponsive school principal, and explores the role of community organizing groups in creating external pressure for schooling change.¹¹ Zachary and olatoye frame the task of school improvement in the broader context of community change, and discuss the role of school reform organizing groups in building the neighborhood political capital necessary to pursue critical performance and resource issues effectively.

Researchers from Research for Action and the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform provide an indicators framework for assessing the relationship between school reform organizing and public education reform.¹² Drawing on a variety of qualitative data, their report defines eight key areas in which school reform organizing impacts schools and communities, including: leadership development, community power, social capital, public accountability, equity, school/community connection, positive school climate, and high quality instruction and curriculum. The study shows how these eight areas work together in a change process that links the building of community capacity to improve schools and student learning. Among the school improvements won by the groups Research for Action studied are new resources for facilities, after school programs and parent involvement activities; new teacher professional development programs and class size reduction; and the creation of new small schools.

Research studies by the IESP and the National Center for Schools and Communities (NCSC) at Fordham University review the work of community organizing groups across the country. *Mapping the Field of Organizing for School Improvement, A report on education organizing in Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, Mississippi Delta, New York City, Philadelphia, San Francisco Bay Area and Washington DC* reports on the strategies that 66 community groups are developing, the issues they are working on, the victories they have achieved, as well as the obstacles to the success and expansion of this work. NCSC’s two-part series, *Unlocking the Schoolhouse Door: The Community Struggle for a Say in Our Children’s Education* and *Schoolhouse to Statehouse: Community Organizing for Public School Reform*, describes the organizing issues, strategies and challenges

Our work builds upon several recent studies that document community groups’ organizing efforts, define the challenges for organizing, and explore the impact of organizing on schools and districts.

¹⁰ Shirley further notes that some Alliance schools have shown gains on a range of “deeper indices” of cultural change, including student health, parental engagement, language usage, tutoring programs and school spirit.

¹¹ Eric Zachary and shola olatoye, *A Case Study: Community Organizing for School Improvement in the South Bronx* (New York: Institute for Education and Social Policy, New York University, 2001).

¹² Eva Gold et al. (2002).

Recent research on civic capacity and urban school reform, as well as the extensive literature on parent involvement in public education, also inform our study.

facing fifty one organizing groups across the country.¹³ All three reports note the critical influence of state, municipal and district contexts in shaping the organizing approaches groups are evolving, and identify critical investments necessary to strengthen the field of school reform organizing.

A subsequent NCSC study, *ACORN Education Reform Organizing: Evolution of a Model*, by John Beam and Sharmeen Irani, analyzes ACORN's education work in Boston, Chicago, New York City and Oakland. Drawing on interviews, focus groups, observations and archival research, the authors document ACORN's transition from school-based organizing to district-wide policy campaigns integrating neighborhood-based recruitment and sophisticated policy research and analysis.¹⁴ In a separate volume, *School Reform in Chicago*, Madeline Talbott, head organizer of Illinois ACORN, traces the evolution of parent organizing in Chicago since the passage of the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act, which created parent majority local school councils. Talbott's essay, "Parents as School Reformers," discusses the critical role of parents and community organizations in conceptualizing schooling problems and reform strategies in Chicago.¹⁵

A recent IESP study, *Parent Power and Urban School Reform*, documents the organizing efforts of Mothers On the Move (MOM) in New York City's South Bronx neighborhoods. Using a case study methodology, the authors interviewed key MOM participants and school system administrators, reviewed news media coverage and internal documents produced over the course of MOM's work, and analyzed statistical data obtained from the New York City Department of Education regarding school and district changes. The study finds that while MOM initially succeeded in removing an ineffective superintendent, clear and positive gains in schooling outcomes only began to appear after a decade of organizing.

Research on civic capacity and parent involvement also provides a foundation for our study. New theoretical work on the relationship between school reform and civic capacity sheds light on the potential role of community organizations in bringing about large-scale urban school change. Researchers in the Civic Capacity and Urban Education project examined education politics in eleven large US cities and found that while the mobilization of broad-based coalitions is critical to reform, community constituencies, particularly parents, are rarely involved in those coalitions.¹⁶ Their research suggests that community organizing groups' efforts to engage and insert parent, youth and other community constituencies into the public arena can increase the broad civic capacity necessary for significant and sustained district-wide improvement.

¹³ John Beam, Mike Eskenazi and Tom Kamber, *Unlocking the Schoolhouse Door: The Community Struggle for a Say in Our Children's Education* (New York: National Center for Schools and Communities at Fordham University, 2002).
Tom Kamber, *Schoolhouse to Statehouse: Community Organizing for Public School Reform* (New York: National Center for Schools and Communities at Fordham University, 2002).

¹⁴ John Beam and Sharmeen Irani, *ACORN Education Reform Organizing: Evolution of a Model* ((New York: National Center for Schools and Communities at Fordham University, 2003).

¹⁵ Talbott, in Russo.

¹⁶ Clarence Stone, Jeffrey Henig, Bryan Jones and Carol Pierannunzi, *Building Civic Capacity: The Politics of Reforming Urban Schools* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2001).

Lastly, parent involvement in schooling is traditionally understood as parent or family participation in school and home-based activities that support student learning. Much research indicates that parents who are thus involved help children perform better in schools, and help schools better identify and meet student needs.¹⁷ This research suggests that positive gains in student achievement would be expected whenever organizing yields greater parent involvement in their children's schools.

This literature suggests that community organizing for school reform is changing public schools and districts in important ways. Yet, the paucity of evidence showing clear statistical gains in schooling outcomes supports the need for research that specifies the linkages between school reform organizing and increased school and district capacity for improvement.

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¹⁷ James Comer, "Educating Poor and Minority Children," *Scientific American* 259(1998): 42-48.
Joyce Epstein, "Parent Involvement: What research says to administrators," *Education and Urban Society*, 19(1987): 119-36.
Anne E. Henderson and Nancy Berla, *The Family is Critical to Student Achievement: A New Generation of Evidence*. (Cambridge and Washington DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1994).
Henderson and Karen L. Mapp, *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement* (Austin: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002).

II. The study groups: Characteristics, origins and contexts

The groups in our study were selected by the Mott Foundation, with input from our research team, because of their long-term commitment to education organizing, their consistent activity across the past decade, the visibility and legitimacy their education organizing has achieved, and their geographic diversity. Each group listed below in *Table 1: Study groups*, has led significant community-based public education struggles, and has developed the infrastructure and fiscal support necessary for survival and growth. Three have initiated youth organizing as well as adult organizing. Six of eight study sites are affiliated with major national organizing networks: the Association of Communities Organized for Reform Now (ACORN), the Direct Action Research and Training Center (DART), the Gamaliel Foundation, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), and the Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO). A detailed description of organizational characteristics is provided in *Appendix 2: Organizational characteristics*.

TABLE 1
Study groups¹⁸

| Study group | Geographic location | Youth organizing component | National network affiliation |
|--|---------------------|--|---|
| Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC) | Bronx, NY | Sistas and Brothas United, began 1999 | |
| Oakland Community Organizations (OCO) | Oakland, CA | | Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO) |
| Chicago ACORN | Chicago, IL | | Association of Communities Organized for Reform Now (ACORN) |
| Austin Interfaith (AI) | Austin, TX | | Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) |
| Milwaukee Inner-city Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH) | Milwaukee, WI | MICAH Youth Council, began 1998. Currently not working on education reform issues. | Gamaliel Foundation |
| People Acting for Community Together (PACT) | Miami, FLA | | Direct Action and Research Training Center (DART) |
| Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (CC) | Los Angeles, CA | South Central Youth Empowered through Action, began 1993 | |
| Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project (EPOP) | Philadelphia, PA | Youth United for Change, began 1993. Separate 501 C3. | Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO) |

¹⁸ Our sample over-represents both institutionally based organizing approaches and network-affiliated groups. In a national study conducted by the IESP in 2001, we found only one fifth of education organizing groups employed a faith-based, institutional organizing approach, and less than a third of education organizing groups were affiliated with a national support network. National networks have continued to develop, however, and this expansion may be significantly changing the ratio of affiliated to non-affiliated groups. ACORN, for example, has opened more than thirty new offices since 2001.

Organizational histories

Local neighborhood or institutional leaders initiated four network-affiliated groups—AI, ACORN, MICAHA and PACT—with the assistance of a trained organizer from the national network. MICAHA, for example, evolved from a two-year process of organizing individual and group meetings among inner city clergy to develop leadership, build relationships, and define an organizational vision. The organization became the third organization in the Gamaliel network, and the first affiliate located outside Chicago.

Four groups began independently of national networks. Organizers originally trained by the Chicago-based National Training and Information Center (NTIC) helped to create EPOP and NWBCCC. OCO was created by organizers who later founded the PICO network. The Los Angeles-based Community Coalition (CC), founded by Karen Bass, was catalyzed by a community-wide summit to address police harassment of youth during the crack cocaine epidemic of the late 1980s.

TABLE 2

How study groups were initiated

| Study group | Year founded | Origins |
|----------------------|--------------|--|
| NWBCCC | 1974 | Arose to fight against arson, disinvestment and planned shrinkage. Founding organizers included Roger Hays, trained by Shel Trapp (National Training and Assistance Center) and Pat Dillon, trained by Stan Holt (People Acting through Community Effort), both from an Alinsky tradition. Tenant and neighborhood organizing produced an early emphasis on housing rehabilitation and community reinvestment. Organization assisted in the creation of separate community development corporations (CDCs) in the late 1970s. Formerly associated with National People's Action. |
| OCO | 1977 | Founding organizers John Baumann S.J. and Jerry Helfrich S.J. created the organizing project, using neighborhood-based, direct membership recruitment strategies. OCO was formally established in 1977, and later evolved into the first PICO project. PICO later helped OCO transition from direct membership organizing to a faith-based organizing model. |
| Chicago ACORN | 1983 | Founding organizer Madeline Talbott initiated the organization, as part of the National Network of ACORN organizations, to organize low and moderate-income families for economic justice. Talbott had worked previously for ACORN organizations in Arkansas and Detroit. |
| AI | 1986 | Initiated by the Catholic Bishop in Austin, and a group of local African American ministers familiar with IAF's work in Houston. |
| MICAHA | 1988 | Founding organizer Sheryl Spivey Perry, a Gamaliel Foundation organizer, led a two-year process of individual and group meetings with inner city Milwaukee clergy to form MICAHA, as a a multiracial, interfaith organization committed to addressing injustice. MICAHA became the third organization in the Gamaliel Foundation network and the first Gamaliel Foundation affiliate outside of Chicago. |
| PACT | 1988 | Founding organizer Holly Holcombe worked with local institutional leaders to create PACT to build community power and overcome systemic injustices that affect low- to moderate-income communities in Miami. Monsignor Gerard LaCerra of the Archdiocese of Miami was a driving force in initiating the organization. |
| CC | 1990 | Community Coalition formed in response to the crack epidemic that hit South LA in the late 1980's, and the resulting police harassment of youth. The organization was founded by Karen Bass, who had worked with addicts in the emergency room at LA County-USC Hospital, to address the conditions that supported crime, poverty and addiction in South LA. |
| EPOP | 1993 | Arose to address abandonment and blight in east Philadelphia neighborhoods. Founding organizer Steve Honeyman had worked previously for the National Training and Assistance Center and had created community organizations in Rochester, Camden, and Wilmington. Initially named Eastern Philadelphia Organizing Project, the organization changed its name to Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project in 2001. Joined PICO in 1997. |

All the groups in this study are multi-issue organizations. Over time, they have addressed a variety of urban issues such as housing, homelessness, health care, crime and safety, immigration, transportation and environmental concerns, at the neighborhood and, in some instances, the municipal, state and federal level as well. Most groups operated for several years before becoming involved in education organizing, as shown in *Table 3: Evolution of study groups' education organizing*. Groups were drawn into education organizing through other neighborhood struggles; OCO's first education campaign, for example, focused on drug-free school zones. Some groups perceived education organizing as an arena for expanding local residents' voice and power. ACORN, for example, started education organizing after the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act created parent majority councils with principal hiring authority. Other groups defined local school organizing as a means to reach local residents; EPOP began organizing in schools to recruit local residents in neighborhoods lacking many civic or communal institutions.

Most groups operated for several years before becoming involved in education organizing.

Youth organizing developed in a variety of ways across the study groups. NWBCCC's youth organizing component, Sistas and Brothas United, began as a youth committee based in one of the NWBCCC affiliate organizations in 1999, and was formally established as an NWBCCC affiliate in 2000. Two organizations—CC and EPOP—developed or supported youth organizing from their inception. CC began with a belief in the importance of “organizing the actual constituents of public education—the students—as well as a desire to build on a tradition of student activism.” CC's youth component, South Central Youth Empowered through Action, formally developed in 1997 when the organization expanded its youth work to build local campaigns to improve neighborhood high schools. YUC began as a youth leadership project that recruited young people to conduct research on community issues, and later evolved an organizing approach.

We talked a lot about power and sources of power. Together, we became interested in the whole concept of community organizing. And then it all came to a head when we planned for months to address the school board and demand that they have a young person on the school board.... Our students were lined up to speak, and the school board president gets up and leaves. So rather than say her speech, this one girl says, ‘What I want to know is when the students of this district get up here, why does the [school board president] get up and walk away?’...[And when the school board president came back, he said], ‘I heard that I was reprimanded for getting up and leaving. Well, if I have to get up, I have been here since six o'clock in the morning. I don't get paid to do this, and if I have to get up for a minute...that's none of your business. And as for your little request, I've got 215,000 students in my district, why the hell should I listen to a handful of you?’

[Afterwards, when we evaluated what happened], one of the proposals EPOP presented to us was an idea of organizing students where you find large concentrations of young people with the most potential to come together on common goals and values and visions, and everyone agreed it was in the high schools. So we agreed to

create this model of organizing young people within chapters in different high schools. And since most of my students were from Kensington, and that's where I had most of my relationships with teachers and with the principal, we decided to start there. (YUC)

TABLE 3

Evolution of study groups' education organizing

| Study group | Year began education organizing | Impetus for education organizing, major education organizing campaigns |
|---|---------------------------------|---|
| AI 1986 | 1990 | Became involved in education issues through its support of a local bond package. First school level campaign focused on creating health clinics in two schools. Other major campaigns include: state funding, expanding the Alliance Schools network, and specific school level improvements. |
| Chicago ACORN 1983 | 1988 | Began organizing following the passage of the 1988 Chicago School Governance Reform Act, which created new parent majority councils and leveraged private foundation funding for parent leadership training. Helped parents get elected on local school councils. Early campaigns focused on winning facilities improvements, opposing school closings and training parents. Other major campaigns include: supporting new small schools, creating new teacher support programs, classroom mentoring and a citywide policy to Grow Your Own teachers. |
| OCO 1977 | 1989 | Began organizing to address school safety concerns raised in church-based local organizing committees. Early campaigns focused on school level issues, such as drug-free school zones, as well as district-wide policy to expand school-to-work and class size reduction programs. Other major campaigns include: opening charter schools and the creation of a district-wide small schools policy, and new small autonomous schools. |
| MICAH 1988 | 1992 | Began organizing in response to congregational members' concerns. First campaign focused on improving district-level recruitment of minority teachers. Other major campaigns include: SAGE funding for early grade class size reduction, school finance equity, reducing student mobility improving student access to school nurses and the Milwaukee Education Alliance. |
| EPOP 1993 | 1993 | Initially viewed schools as a place to reach neighborhood residents. Early campaigns focused on school level improvements in safety, facilities, access to full-day kindergarten, and improved reading instruction. Other major campaigns include: anti-privatization, Right to Know (parental access to school information, data and staff), distribution of Title I funding. |
| Youth United for Change (YUC) 1993 | | YUC began as a youth leadership project in which young people were helped to conduct research on issues in their community. YUC began school-based organizing in 1993. Major campaigns include: college access curricula, school facilities improvements, restructuring high schools to create new small schools. |
| NWBCCC 1974 Sistas & Brothas United, (SBU) 1999 | 1995 | Occasional involvement in response to education crises. Formally initiated an education committee in 1995 in response to district overcrowding. Initial campaigns combined school and district-level organizing to alleviate school overcrowding through facilities improvements and the creation of new schools. NWBCCC's youth organizing component was initially based in one of the NWBCCC affiliate organizations. Sistas and Brothas United began as a youth committee in 1999, and became an NWBCCC affiliate in 2000. Major adult and youth campaigns include: school facilities and safety improvements, expanding access to guidance counseling, increasing school funding, and improving teacher professional development. |
| PACT 1988 | 1995 | Education was identified as a priority issue for organizing through intensive individual meetings and an issue assembly. Initial campaign focused on improving reading instruction, which led to Direct Instruction campaign. Other major campaigns include: evaluating and expanding after-school programs, improving testing and promotion policy, and expanding universal pre-kindergarten. |
| CC 1990 South Central Youth Empowered through Action, (SCYEA) 1993 | 1997 | Initial education organizing focused on mobilizing local support for a statewide school facilities bond referendum. In 1997, began organizing high school youth into school-based campaigns to improve neighborhood high schools. Initial campaigns focused on facilities improvements, and college access tracking. In 2002, began organizing parents of high school youth. Major campaigns include: winning passage of a bond act to bring more facilities resources to South LA schools, expanding access to guidance counselors. |

Organizing in its current form is often traced to the 1930s, when Saul Alinsky applied labor union organizing methods to a neighborhood context.

Though each group’s work evolved in response to local conditions as well as to the particular experiences and histories of neighborhood leaders and organizers, groups’ organizing strategies are rooted in a common historical tradition. Organizing in its current form is often traced to the 1930s, when Saul Alinsky applied labor union organizing methods to a neighborhood context. Alinsky united local institutions in an “organization of organizations” to build neighborhood power, and developed a rationale for organizing as not simply about winning more neighborhood services, but about “building organizations of poor people that could challenge the existing balance of power.”¹⁹ Alinsky’s model developed several foundational principles for community organizing:

- The power to successfully challenge decision-makers lies in mobilizing large numbers of new constituents;
- Those new constituents must be local residents articulating their community’s interests;
- The organizational power of those new constituents must be built through issue campaigns utilizing direct action; and
- The issues should be determined by constituent need rather than by ideology.

While Alinsky’s initial thinking was a dominant force in community organizing, the model has evolved significantly over time.²⁰ Moreover, other influences have shaped the work of our study groups in critical ways. ACORN’s model, for example, draws on the methods, tactics and ideology developed in the Farmer’s Alliance in the 1880s, early labor movements, Fred Ross and Cesar Chavez’s organizing in the Community Service Organization, and civil rights era-activism of the Student Non Violent Coordinating Committee. Other historical influences on the organizing methods of our groups include:

- The mobilizations of African-American communities during the Civil Rights and Black Power movements that defined issues of equity and social justice as core overarching demands, and demonstrated the power of the spiritual and symbolic dimensions of organizing, and of churches as key institutional bases for moving people to collective action;²¹

¹⁹ Saul D. Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

Gary Delgado, *Beyond the Politics of Place: New Directions in Community Organizing in the 1990’s* (Oakland: Applied Research Center, 1994).

²⁰ Organizers in Alinsky’s Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), for example, later adapted Alinsky’s model to create individual direct membership and faith-based approaches to organizing. Working in predominantly Latino neighborhoods in California in the 1940s, Fred Ross, IAF West Coast director, created service clubs to build social cohesion within communities that lacked strong pre-existing institutionalized networks. Ross also developed house meetings as a way for neighbors and relatives “to get together to discuss their problems and their common interest and to join the organization in a small, non-threatening gathering” (Delgado, 1994).

²¹ In the 1970s, in Texas and later Los Angeles, IAF organizer Ernesto Cortes further refined Alinsky’s model to incorporate lessons from the church-based mobilizations of the Southern Civil Rights movement. He developed a faith-based, relational organizing model through which a small professional staff could work systematically to deepen relationships within church congregations and use these relationships to build large organizations of indigenous leaders (Delgado, 1994). Rather than defining issues as the basis for group development and mobilization, Cortes used individual meetings to identify potential leaders, and helped them to “talk among themselves to identify their concerns and find a basis for cooperative action” (Warren, 2001). These ideas influenced the faith-based institutional organizing approaches developed by the DART, Gamaliel Foundation and PICO networks.

- The efforts to build neighborhood-based citizens' organizations, initiated by War on Poverty programs, and the formation of poor people's organizations such as the Welfare Rights Organization (which evolved into ACORN) that demonstrated the utility of door-knocking, intensive neighborhood-based organizing, and a reliance on membership dues as the bases of local membership recruitment;
- The development of consensus-based, non-hierarchical norms of decision-making within the women's movement that reshaped organizational power dynamics and developed new structures for nurturing staff and member leadership;
- The organization of community development corporations and other housing and community improvement groups that demonstrated the capacity of neighborhoods to generate their own improvement; and
- The workplace and community-based mobilizations of immigrants, youth and people of color against racial and other forms of discrimination in recent decades that have demonstrated the power and importance of developing a critical societal analysis and a shared vision of reform through local organizing.

These traditions inform the methodology and beliefs of the groups in our study. Yet as this paper will show, the diversity of approaches used by our study groups suggests that, as a field, community organizing is continuing to evolve in dynamic ways.

We looked at different models of organizing, including Alinsky, labor organizing, the Civil Rights movement and modern community organizing. A lot of the work we saw lacked politics, ideology and leadership of color. It stemmed from a model in which you bring people together, you get them to identify common problems, and then you move forward. Race dynamics were generally not something you learned about, not something you talked about. When we talked about the method and model we wanted to create, we wanted it to be rooted in our cultures and in our shared history of oppression. Whatever conversation we have about skills, whatever conversation we have about building power, we want anti-racist thinking to be at the center. (CC)

Urban contexts

Each of the study groups works in a large urban school district, or a neighborhood component of a larger urban school district. These districts vary considerably in their structural complexity and size, from Oakland, with a student population of 52,501, to New York City, with a student population of over one million, as shown in *Table 4: Study Groups' School Districts*. The eight school districts serve predominantly African-American and Latino students from low to moderate-income families. Moreover, the percentages of African-American, Latino and Limited English proficient (LEP) students in the schools targeted by our study groups are much higher than the percentages for their districts as a whole. The same pattern holds for students from low-income families; the percentages of those families in the schools targeted by our study groups are much higher than for their districts as a whole. Percentages of students meeting

The diversity of approaches used by our study groups suggests that, as a field, community organizing is continuing to evolve in dynamic ways.

reading and math standards are generally lower in the schools targeted by our study groups than for the district as a whole. *Appendix 4: Study group statistical profiles* and *Appendix 5: Study group neighborhood characteristics*, present a variety of school and neighborhood characteristics for each study group.

TABLE 4

Study groups' school districts

| School district | District governance & organization | Total schools | Total students | Total teachers |
|--|--|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Austin Independent School District* | Elected Board of Trustees appoints the superintendent. | 103 | 78,689 | 5,388 |
| Chicago Public Schools*• | Mayor appoints CEO and Board of Education. District is subdivided into 24 regions. | 602 | 438,539 | 26,548 |
| Los Angeles Unified School District** | Elected school board appoints superintendent. District is subdivided into 11 semi-autonomous districts. | 677 | 746,852 | 36,185 |
| Miami Dade County Public Schools** | Elected school board appoints superintendent. District is subdivided into 6 regions. | 340 | 338,417 | 19,486 |
| Milwaukee Public Schools**** | Elected school board appoints superintendent. | 201 | 97,994 | 6,700 |
| New York City Public Schools** | Mayor appoints Chancellor and Panel for Educational Policy. District is subdivided into 10 regions. | 1162*** | 1,091,717 | 49,169*** |
| Oakland Unified School District** | State Administrator oversees district. | 110 | 52,501 | 2,926 |
| Philadelphia Public Schools• | School Reform Commission appointed by mayor and governor appoints CEO. District subdivided into 9 regions. | 276 | 214,350 | 11,141 |

Data sources are listed below.

*2003-2004 **2002-2003 ***2001-2002 ****2000-2001

Austin Independent School District:

<http://www.austin.isd.tenet.edu/>

Chicago Public Schools: <http://www.cps.k12.il.us/>

Los Angeles Unified School District:

<http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/>

Miami Dade Public Schools: <http://dadeschools.net> and Profiles of Florida School Districts 2001-2002, Student and Staff Data.

Milwaukee Public Schools: MPS 2001 Report to the Community.

New York City Public Schools: <http://www.nycenet.edu> and the 2001-2002 Annual School Report published by the New York City Department of Education.

Oakland Unified District: <http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/>

Philadelphia Public Schools: <http://www.philsch.k12.pa.us/>

Context issues

Particular issues dominate the context for school organizing in each site. For example, a contentious and protracted struggle for control of the Milwaukee school board between pro- and anti-voucher proponents has polarized the climate for reform in Milwaukee. In Los Angeles, Oakland and New York City, the combination of inadequate fiscal resources and a burgeoning immigrant population has led to severe school overcrowding. The resulting large class sizes, multi-track year-round scheduling and stopgap facilities measures constrain the possibilities for instructional reform.

The schools and districts in which our study groups are working also face common contextual pressures and constraints. The majority of school districts, as well as the states in which they are located, are facing severe fiscal difficulties generated by the reduction of revenues brought on by a national recession. The resulting fiscal shortfalls have forced states to reduce their contributions to school district budgets, and forced districts to reduce their own support as well. Thus, many districts in our study have imposed budget cuts on already constrained educational allocations. State funding formulas that inequitably distribute resources across urban, rural and suburban districts further exacerbate the fiscal crises in our study sites.

Several study districts have experienced dramatic shifts in governance. The Oakland school system was taken over by the state of California in 2003, and is now governed by a state-appointed superintendent who superseded the local elected school board and its designated superintendent. The Philadelphia Public School District was taken over by the state in December 2001, and placed under a 5-member School Reform Commission appointed by the Governor and Mayor. The Chicago and New York City school systems were subsumed by mayoral control through legislative change in 1995 (Chicago) and 2002 (New York City). Elected boards govern the Austin, Los Angeles, Miami Dade and Milwaukee school systems, although mayoral control of the school system emerged as a campaign issue in the recent Milwaukee mayoral election.

Similar forms of curricular and organizational reform have been instituted in many of our study districts. Uniform reading and math curricula have been implemented system-wide in Los Angeles, New York and Philadelphia. Class size reduction, small schools and other efforts to reduce overcrowding and increase the instructional focus on individual students have been implemented in all eight school districts. Efforts to transform large failing high schools into small schools have been implemented in New York City and Oakland; Chicago, Los Angeles, and Milwaukee will begin implementation of similar high school reforms in the coming year. Moreover, in response to a rise in the number of school safety incidents, new zero-tolerance discipline policies that increase the number of police officers in schools and create separate schooling for discipline-code offenders have been implemented in New York City and Philadelphia.

Finally, as a result of the implementation of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, each of our study districts imposes an extensive standardized testing program, and faces intense pressure to improve its test score results to reduce the costs of tutoring, student transfers and school closings that result from the application of NCLB sanctions for continuous poor schooling performance.

Particular issues dominate the context for school organizing in each site. The majority of school districts, as well as the states in which they are located, are facing severe fiscal difficulties generated by the reduction of revenues brought on by a national recession.

III. Community organizing theory and approaches

Our research begins with the proposition that organizing helps to generate the pressures and build the relationships necessary to improve both the technical core of instruction, and the professional culture of educators, in schools and districts.

Our study groups' organizing aims to generate the external pressure necessary for school improvement, as well as the internal cultural shifts at both the local school and district levels necessary for that improvement to occur. Consistent demands generated by organizing can create the pressure necessary to induce school, district, municipal or state leadership to focus on transforming the internal capacity of schools—what Richard Elmore calls the technical core of instruction.²² That technical core involves setting appropriate educational standards, developing an appropriate curriculum, implementing assessments aligned to the curriculum, changing instructional organization, improving teaching practice through professional development, and enhancing instructional leadership. Organizing can also contribute to developing new relationships among school staff, parents, and the wider community, based on new knowledge and understandings among school staff about their work as educators. These new relationships can build the trust and engagement necessary to transform what Elmore calls the school's professional culture—the way adults in the school work with, learn from, and help each other grow.²³

Our research seeks to define and specify how, and in what ways, organizing leads to schooling change. We begin with the proposition that organizing helps to generate the pressures and build the relationships necessary to improve both the technical core of instruction, and the professional culture of educators, in the schools and districts targeted by our study groups. Our analysis builds on earlier research by the IESP and others to elucidate how community organizing leads to change. Dennis Shirley, for example, argued that organizing produces change through the development of social and human capital within communities and among schools. Ernesto Cortes extended Shirley's analysis to reconceptualize traditional power relationships from "power over" to "power to." Cortes argued that organizing leads to change through the development of new coercive and relational power that can engage organizing constituencies and targets in working collectively for reform. Drawing on the history of organizing in New York City, Zachary and olatoye theorized that, in low performing schools, community organizing can induce the necessary political will, on the part of district leadership and local politicians, to make critical capacity improvements in school leadership, organization and instruction at the neighborhood level. Research for Action and the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform further refined these theories by defining the creation of reciprocal and public accountability between school and community, through organizing, as the critical lever for schooling change.

²² Richard Elmore, *Bridging the Gap Between Standards and Achievement: Report on the Imperative for Professional Development in Education* (Albert Shanker Institute, 2002.) On-line. 31 March 2004. <http://www.shankerinstitute.org/education.html>

²³ *Ibid.*

In this section, we explore community organizing theory of change through the perspective of our study groups. Drawing on interviews with key staff and members, we discuss how the study groups are working for change. We then analyze key areas of variation in organizing practices across the groups.

Community organizing theory of change

Organizing defines power as the ability to act. A key source of power is the ability to mobilize large numbers of people in strategic activity designed to counter the imbalances in political power that impose inequities on schools and neighborhoods. This ability to mobilize is based on the strength of the relationships that connect people to each other and to the organization, the capacity of members to articulate their own self-interest, and the structure through which organizations can consistently mobilize their constituents.²⁴

In *Figure 1: Community organizing theory of change*, we present our beginning analysis of the overarching theory of change shared by groups. Our model emphasizes the cyclical nature of community organizing to build powerful, democratically run organizations. We attempt to show, albeit in simplified and idealized form, how groups believe their actions will, over time, create broad and lasting societal change. Over the course of our research, we will examine the variation and critical dilemmas in how study groups live this out theory of change.

All the study groups work through a cyclical process of building organization and alliances, and mobilizing their power (through large public meetings, for example) to engage decision-makers in negotiating the group's demands for change. Successful mobilization, and accession to the group's demands by decision-makers, initiates a new accountability relationship between the group and the particular authorities the group has targeted. The effectiveness of this new accountability relationship is based on the group's capacity to monitor the implementation of the group's demands, as well as the group's continued ability to mobilize large numbers of people who can embarrass and publicly challenge decision-makers whenever they fail to deliver. Each group's success increases its visibility and influence, which it leverages to gain further change as well as to reach and involve more members.

Organizing thus begins with the strategic development of relationships within and among groups' core constituencies. All our study groups are structured to spiral new members from periphery to core—by encouraging them to become involved in neighborhood groups or congregation core teams, organization-wide issue committees, and finally, as representatives on the organization's governing structure. As MICAH explains, "To build and maintain an organization, we have to have a steady stream

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²⁴ In his analysis of IAF's work in Texas, Mark Warren notes that, through IAF's congregation-based organizing, "IAF organizers began to talk about two kinds of power, unilateral and relational, a distinction it took from Bernard Loomer. Unilateral power represents "power over" others, the kind of power Alinsky generated in his projects. But the new IAF sought to create relational power as well, that is, the "power to" act collectively together. The Texas IAF organizations were not the simple interest groups Alinsky formed to mobilize resources to win an issue. Instead, they build social capital, that is, cooperative relationships, to create a more expansive form of democratic participation" (Warren, 2001).

of new people who are stepping up, being empowered and everything else. If we completely centralize everything, twelve people will run the organization. But if we keep decentralizing and keep creating new pockets here and there, people will step up to lead the work.”

The process of constituent engagement builds greater organizational power through consistent leadership development. Newly recruited members develop a variety of skills that enable them to identify and articulate the self-interest of their constituency, and to mobilize their constituency to act on its own self-interest. That consistent leadership development helps expand democratic participation, at the neighborhood (or community) level, in key decisions that shape urban life.

We’re trying to build an organization that is diverse in terms of race, culture, denomination, age and socio-economic status—a mix of all people. This is the way many of our congregations are, and the way we believe we need to be in order for the work to succeed. We’re more powerful this way - no one can write us off as just poor, or just liberal, just out for a narrow self-interest. We’re trying to offer a model of how society should look. We’re building power to address the issues of schools, jobs—but the end goal is to create a just democracy that works for all people, not just for the upper and middle class. (MICAH)

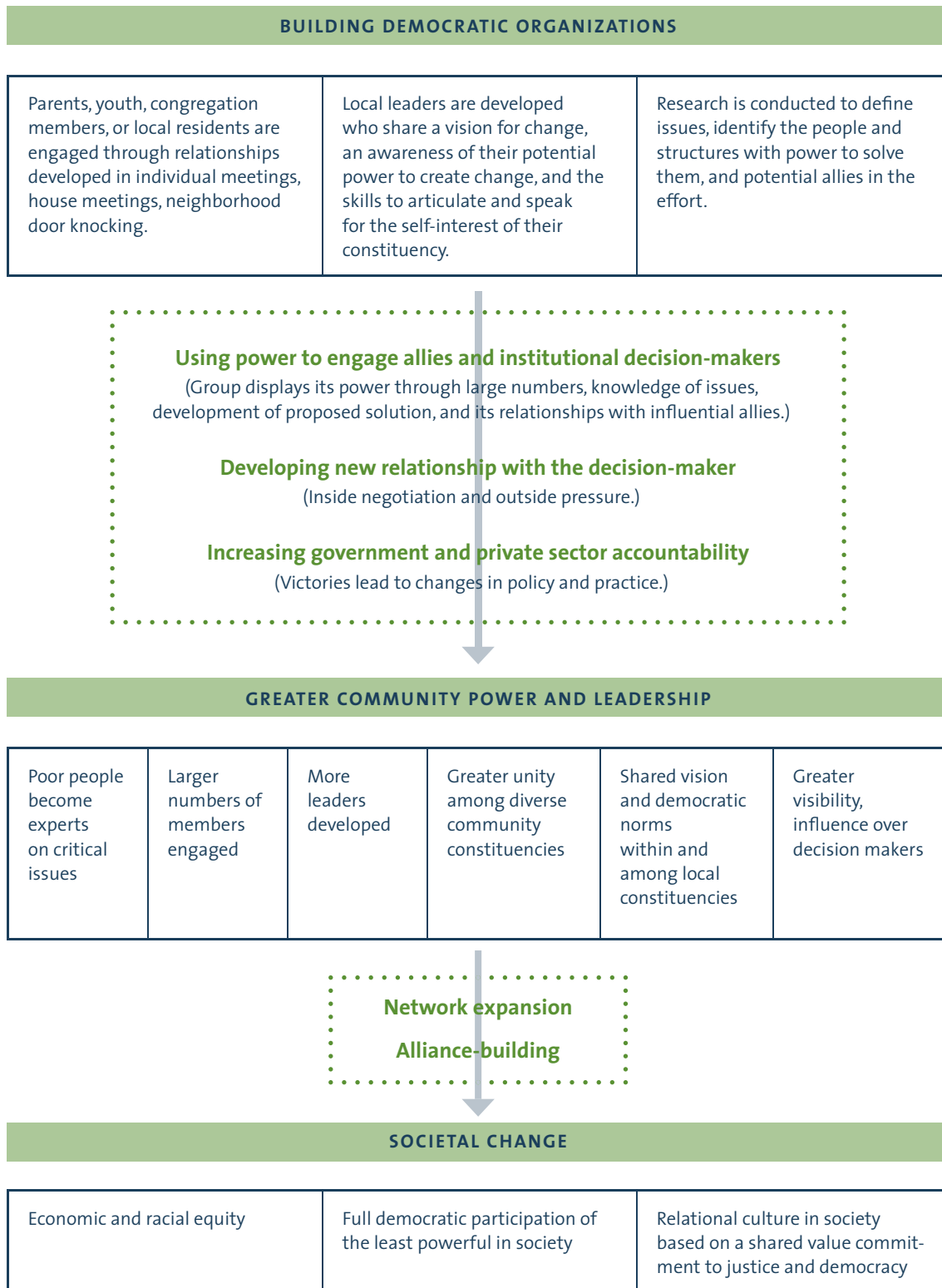
We’re building power to address the issues of schools, jobs—but the end goal is to create a just democracy that works for all people, not just for the upper and middle class. (MICAH)

All the study groups work to develop the community power and leadership necessary to achieve the societal transformations they seek. Specific visions, goals, strategies and demands flow from each group’s particular histories and experiences. While ACORN, for example, seeks redistributive economic justice for low/moderate income people, the Community Coalition seeks a transformation in the social and economic conditions that foster addiction, crime, violence, and poverty for African-American and Latino constituencies. As part of the DART network, Miami PACT seeks a transformation in “[political and economic] systems and their institutions into the corporate entities that God created them to be.”²⁵

²⁵ DART, *Why ‘congregation-based’ community organizing? What is Community Organizing?* On-line. 31 March 2004. <http://www.thedartcenter.org>

FIGURE 1

Community organizing theory of change



Direct and institutional membership approaches to community organizing

Within community organizing, groups are often categorized by how they initiate and develop relationships with their constituency. The groups in our study tend to use two differing base-building strategies—direct membership and institutional membership. By direct membership, we mean an organization that recruits individuals to become members. Institutional membership refers to organizations that recruit local institutions as members. We use the categories of direct and institutional membership to distinguish broad differences in approach across the study groups. However, as will become clear in the following discussion, the specific organizing approaches evolved by the study groups are more dynamic, complex and inter-related. Areas of difference will be explored more fully in subsequent papers.

TABLE 5
Base-building strategies

| Direct membership organizations | Institutional membership organizations |
|---|--|
| Chicago ACORN: Low/moderate income residents in 3 Chicago neighborhoods | Austin Interfaith: Congregations, unions, schools |
| Community Coalition: Black and Brown residents of South Central Los Angeles | EPOP: Congregations, neighborhood organizations, and school-based parent teams |
| NWBCCC: Low/moderate income residents in 9 Northwest Bronx neighborhoods* | MICAH: Congregations |
| | NWBCCC: Congregations |
| | OCO: Congregations, community groups, schools |
| | PACT: Congregations, neighborhood organizations, schools |

*The NWBCCC is both a direct and institutional membership organization.

As shown in Table 6: *Base-building strategies*, three of the eight study groups recruit individuals, primarily community residents, parents or youth, as members. Five groups are composed of existing neighborhood institutions, primarily religious congregations. Four of these five institutional membership groups also include neighborhood organizations, unions or school-based parent groups. Three institutional membership organizations (Austin Interfaith, OCO and PACT) invite schools to become members. The NWBCCC is a mixed model, a membership organization of both local residents and local institutions.

Direct membership groups emphasize ongoing recruitment of local residents into tenant, block, neighborhood or issue-focused groups that take action to resolve shared concerns. Organizers or leaders may meet community members through canvassing the neighborhood and knocking on doors, distributing flyers outside schools, or through house meetings. The organizer’s goal is to build, maintain and continually enlarge the group by bringing in new people, and helping to develop their leadership capacities.

Direct membership groups view issue campaigns, direct action and leadership development as the basis of organization building. “This has to be about building power on issues. If there’s an issue, we have to get to members and move on that issue.”(ACORN)

The job of the organizer and of the core leadership is to go out into that neighborhood and organize tenant associations, block associations, and neighborhood campaigns. To go out and knock on people's doors and say, 'What are your concerns? Do other people have the same problems? Are you interested in starting a tenants' association to build some power to fix the problem?' We help people understand that as individuals they don't have power. There's not much that they can do, the landlord won't listen to them, and the city probably won't listen to them. But as a group, they do. The group can pressure the landlord or the city, or the bank to fix their building. We teaching them the power of collective action through tenant organizing. (NWBCCC)

Because they recruit local residents who may have no pre-existing relationship with each other, and no previous history of participation within a local institution, direct membership groups generally work to develop a sense of common purpose and vision among members through their participation in the neighborhood group, as well as through ongoing, structured training. Members are helped to take active roles in the organization, by serving as spokespersons, chairing meetings, leading actions and recruiting new members.

ACORN and the NWBCCC believe that practical self-interest initially draws people into the local group and motivates them to action. Actions that produce victories create a sense of group power and increased investment in the organization's long-term struggle for justice. ACORN members, for example, participate in local actions and events, regardless of whether the particular issue motivates them, because they identify with ACORN as a poor people's organization fighting for justice, and because they believe their presence in large numbers will leverage change and build the legitimacy and power of the organization.

We're a people's organization. I am my brother's keeper. It's a saying but it's true. ACORN members are homeowners and working people. I'm not either one but I'm out there because I appreciate what ACORN is doing. I support doing this if it keeps a child warm this winter or helps a family put more bread on the table because of a living wage increase. (ACORN leader)

Rather than using issues to build and mobilize its membership base, the Community Coalition's process emphasizes the role of political education, training and analysis in bringing local residents to the group and developing their capacity to become community leaders. New members are recruited into an eight-week political education course through which they develop a shared analysis of the core problems facing their community, and a shared commitment to build the African-American and Latino unity and power necessary to transform underlying political and economic inequities. "We strongly believe in political education and analysis. Everyone needs to go through a critical thinking process. If you don't go through a critical thinking process, then you're not going to arrive at the root causes of lots of problems, and you're not going to develop the type of analysis that can lead us to make the types of changes that we need to make." (CC)

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Institutional membership groups view the development of a relational culture within existing institutions as the basis of effective organizing.

In contrast, institutional membership groups emphasize the development of relationships through an iterative process of identifying, recruiting and training leaders. That process begins as a “one-on-one” meeting between an organizer and a leader, or an existing leader and a potential leader. In all institutional membership groups, the organizer’s goal is to develop leadership within congregations (or other member institutions) that understands power, and is willing to work for social justice because of a commitment to act on faith traditions, in addition to their practical self-interest. Leaders are helped to identify and develop other potential leaders from their institutions who can be mobilized for actions or other organizational events.

My role is to recruit leaders, to challenge them to become active in the organization and to support their development. I lean a lot to the scripture and how Christ organized to change the world. And he focused on developing people. He took a handful of twelve and focused on developing them and taught them how to stand alone and then left them alone so that they could develop and grow others. (MICAH)

Institutional membership groups view the development of a relational culture within existing institutions as the basis of effective organizing. “Until you ask people and get to people’s experiences about their families, their lives, [you don’t know] their self interest. Self interest and relationship organizing is based on a sharing of life experiences.”(EPOP) This relational culture facilitates both internal and external accountability. For example, leaders, organizers, and decision-makers understand that once in a relationship with Austin Interfaith, they will be held accountable for promises made—whether these promises concern how many individual meetings a leader or organizer has held in a given time period, or a piece of legislation a decision-maker has pledged to support.

A shared faith commitment to social justice provides an important ideological foundation for the work of the institutional membership groups in our study. Organizers challenge leaders to examine the traditions and values of their faith, and to act on their commitment to justice through the organization. A PACT leader explains, “I wasn’t aware of the hands of God [before] but now I see this [organizing] as God’s work. This was heaven-sent.” Institutional leaders play a particularly important role in this organizing approach. Congregational bases are more likely to be engaged, for example, when the pastor declares that “your spiritual evolution depends on this [participation], not just coming to church.” (PACT) Several institutional membership groups have a pastor or clergy caucus to keep clergy invested in mobilizing congregation members for organizational activities.

Institutional organizing groups differ in the variety of institutions involved. Except for MICAH, all the institutional membership groups in this study permit a wide variety of institutions to join, as shown in *Table 6: Base-building strategies*. EPOP’s lead organizer explains the organization’s rationale for broad-based institutional membership: “When you look at a population in a city, only as much as about 40%

belong to faith institutions. So if you are serious about building power you have to figure out other kinds of institutions [to work with that are] open to people who are not part of faith-based institutions.”

Variations in practice blur the distinctions between direct and institutional membership groups. The intensity of the value commitment to social justice and equity in ACORN groups, for example, may be quite comparable to the intensity and depth of faith commitments within the faith-based institutional membership groups. Indeed, as an ACORN member explains, faith commitments may be equally strong among direct membership groups.

I’m a follower of Jesus—I look at the things he did, that’s our lot in life. We’re blessed to help someone else. This is what it’s all about. How can you say that everything is fine if someone is cold?
(ACORN member)

As a mixed model, the NWBCCC combines both practical self-interest and faith-based values through its blend of direct membership and institutional membership approaches. The NWBCCC’s complex organizational structure weaves together nine neighborhood-based associations—composed of residents who participate in tenant associations, block associations, church-based social action committees or school-level parent committees—with organization-wide youth and clergy organizing committees. This structure ensures that the organization’s actions are accountable to the needs, concerns and values of neighborhood constituents as well as institutional members, and are driven by broad-based participation at the most local level.

Our structure provides places and circumstances for people to develop—it’s integral to the development of poor people’s ability to lead. Through local campaigns, people begin to develop leadership skills and become comfortable with themselves and each other. Without these experiences, it’s more difficult to develop people whose life or professional experiences haven’t prepared them to demonstrate leadership. (NWBCCC)

The NWBCCC’s mixed model is rooted in the training of its initial organizers, both seminarians trained by Alinsky organizers. But its work is also shaped by the organization’s assessment of how to build power effectively. As several study groups point out, successful organizing is “not about following a formula, but about figuring out what works” in a particular time and place.

Ultimately, the best organizing of any type looks like the best organizing anywhere. In Chicago, direct organizing works in low-income African American neighborhoods where the churches tend not to be neighborhood-based. In Latino neighborhoods, we work with churches—it would be silly not to—because of how the churches are organized. (Chicago ACORN)

Successful organizing is “not about following a formula, but about figuring out what works” in a particular time and place.

The distinction between direct membership and institution-based organizing offers a broad conceptual framework for understanding the differences in organizing approaches across the study groups.

One clear difference is that the two base-building strategies require different levels of staffing. Though the organizational structures vary significantly, the direct membership groups in our study have much larger staffs. One reason may be that direct membership groups rely on extensive turnout efforts in which organizers and leaders canvas neighborhoods to recruit residents into the effort. Moreover, organizers are responsible for directly supporting the work of tenant, block or neighborhood groups, backed by organization-wide issue committees and a central governing board.

The institutional membership groups in our study seem to have less complex structures and fewer staff. Most have a board of directors (comprised of elected representatives of member institutions), a larger group of lay and clergy leaders, and core teams within member institutions. Again, the organizer's role may help to explain these structural and staffing differences from direct membership groups. Though organizers in institutional membership groups are responsible for developing a core of leaders within congregations or other institutions, they generally do not staff the ongoing work of this core group, and they are not directly responsible for mobilizing turnout for organizational events.

The board is the driving force...[they] make commitments about turnout to each other, then they use their leadership teams to sign up the people... Everybody does it differently, but the most effective way is to ask people, one by one, "Will you come to this PACT convention? We are fighting for this and this." (PACT)

The distinction between direct membership and institution-based organizing offers a broad conceptual framework for understanding the differences in organizing approaches across the study groups. Our interviews suggest that study groups use this distinction to define themselves in relation to the field. Subsequent papers will explore whether these underlying differences result in variations in who participates in the organizing, and how the work is sustained over time.

TABLE 6

Direct and institutional membership approaches to recruitment and mobilization

| | Direct membership organizing | Institutional membership organizing |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Method | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Door-knocking to recruit members and identify potential leaders • Individual meetings with potential leaders • Leaders may hold house meetings to involve more community residents • Follow up meetings with newly identified potential leaders • Neighborhood group → organizational issue committee or board • Leadership development training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual meetings with pastor to identify potential lay or clergy leaders • Individual meetings with potential leaders • Leaders may hold house meetings to involve more congregants • Individual meetings with a larger group of potential leaders • Leadership development training • Core team → organizational issue committee or board |
| Unit of recruitment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood residents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congregations, institutional members (e.g. non-profit organizations, schools, service organizations, ethnic societies, trade associations). |
| Mobilization strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizer and leaders phone bank to reach members, and door knock to reach and engage more local residents in the group. • Emphasis on frequent mobilizations and constant turnout, in addition to large public accountability sessions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizer works to identify leaders in church, and help them identify and recruit potential leaders. • Pastor and lay leaders are responsible for turnout. • Emphasis on displaying power through annual or biannual large public accountability sessions. |
| Primary staff role | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To recruit more members into the organization, develop leadership, and foster and support action around issues • Staff directly responsible for turnout. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify and develop leaders. Organizer supports congregational or school leaders in developing and mobilizing followers. |
| Primary leader role | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively participate in the organization. • No direct responsibility for turnout. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate base of followers and mobilize them for organization events. |
| Organizational structure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large staffs. Organizers staff tenant, block or neighborhood groups, issue committees and central board. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small staffs. Organizers staff issue committees and central board. Though they develop leaders within congregations, they generally do not staff the ongoing work of congregation-based teams. |
| Board membership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents, youth, residents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clergy, lay leaders, educators, parents |
| Leadership base | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local residents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often already active in institutions |

IV. Mapping theory to practice: The study groups' education work

Most groups began education organizing by applying their model of community organizing, developed through their work on other issues, to the school arena. Using external pressure to increase school accountability seems an obvious application of community organizing. Yet for some groups, the education arena has challenged traditional organizing methods and tactics, in part because there are few pre-existing relationships between parents. Liz Sullivan, from OCO, explains:

While direct membership and institutional membership groups differ in how they initiate and carry out their organizing, there is a much greater blending of school reform organizing strategies across the groups.

One of our organizing principles is control the environment, control the outcome. In churches there's a shared value base, shared language, there's also the authority of the pastor so you can really set a tone for a public meeting, where you're able to maximize your power. In the schools, it feels to me almost like the old West, it's sort of like everybody has their guns drawn. There are all kinds of groups that are out there in the schools, so when you start doing something you unintentionally step on somebody's toes because they've been fighting this forever and they've dug in their heels, they've identified all their enemies...

In this environment, Ron Snyder explains, "It's a lot harder to create the discipline that you have in a church to have [a real exchange of power] happen, to not have a bunch of different agendas brought in." (OCO).

While the direct membership and institutional membership groups in our study differ in how they initiate and carry out their organizing, there is a much greater blending of school reform organizing strategies across the groups. The structural complexity and insular, highly professionalized culture of the education arena may account, in part, for this dynamic. Other changes in the field of organizing, such as younger leadership that is more open to collaboration and innovation, as well as advances in electronic technology and the availability of funding, may also account for the increased sharing of strategies among the groups.

The groups in our study generally initiated education organizing in response to the concerns of individual members. For most groups, these concerns led to school-based campaigns that, over time, branched into district or state level campaigns and evolved a set of beliefs within the organization about how to organize effectively. OCO's small schools initiative, for example,

...got started through work that was being done by the St. Elizabeth's local organizing committee (LOC). That church is in the neighborhood where the most overcrowded schools were located, and there were a lot of complaints about the schools that kept coming up in the LOC meeting. So [the organizer] started to look

into what was going on in the schools. He met with the parents while their kids were in CCD, like Sunday school catechism, and... they brought up issues about fights on the playground and dirty bathrooms and low achievement of the kids. So they went through this whole process where they dealt with the issues that were being brought up... They did Sunday cleanup days, and they came up with this whole plan [that] they took to the principal... (OCO)

Two study groups, MICAH and PACT, recently initiated school-based organizing for the first time, after several years of organizing at the district level for policy change.

TABLE 7
Locus of study group education organizing activity

| Study group | School | Neighborhood or cluster of schools | District | State |
|---------------|--------|------------------------------------|----------|--|
| AI | X | X | X | Interfaith Education Fund (IEF) |
| Chicago ACORN | X | X | X | IL ACORN |
| CC/SCYEA | X | X | X | |
| EPOP/YUC | X | | X | |
| MICAH | X | | X | WISDOM (GF) |
| NWBCCC/SBU* | X | X | X | Alliance for Quality Education (Coalition) |
| OCO | X | | X | PICO CA |
| PACT | X | X | X | Federation of Dart Organizations of Florida (FDOF) |

*Until recently, the NWBCCC worked at a city level through the Parent Organizing Consortium, a citywide coalition of parent organizing groups.

Almost all the study groups combine school-level improvement campaigns with district-level and statewide policy change strategies.

Table 8: Locus of study groups’ education organizing activity, shows the levels of the system on which each group has focused its organizing. Almost all our study groups combine school-level improvement campaigns with district-level and statewide policy change strategies. In contrast, ACORN, which began by organizing parent committees in schools for several years, now uses its multi-issue neighborhood base to force district-level policy reform:

We tried different things over a period of time to try to figure out how does a community organization engage with classroom education... When we got to teacher quality, we [went back to] using all the tools that organizers use. We used our existing base. We got off the notion that we’ve got to organize around a school or that we’ve got to train parents. We started to see this as part of a campaign, as integral, working with our existing base and using their interests in the issue to build the organization... Now we draw the base from the whole community and we get less hung

up about whether it's a very small meeting at this school and more interested in whether we're all going to benefit from this campaign. (ACORN)

Like ACORN, the NWBCCC also organizes from a neighborhood base, though this work builds on school-level organizing. NWBCCC neighborhood organizers and leaders work on school-based campaigns that arise from local concerns. The NWBCCC has an organization-wide education organizer who works across the neighborhood associations, as well as an organization-wide education committee.

TABLE 8
Current education campaigns

| Study group | School-level improvements | District-level policy change | State-level policy change |
|----------------------|--|---|---|
| AI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliance Schools • Professional development for Alliance Schools administrators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher quality (assisting teaching assistants to become teachers, especially in shortage areas such as bilingual education). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School funding |
| Chicago ACORN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital improvements • Safety • Highly qualified teachers • New teacher support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher quality (retention, recruitment and preparation through paraprofessional-to-teacher programs). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher quality |
| CC/SCYEA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local college access campaigns • School safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College access (access to guidance counselors, college preparatory curricula, and books). • Teacher quality (developing student surveys of teacher effectiveness). • Safety | |
| EPOP/YUC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to Know • Title I distribution • Teacher quality | |
| MICAH | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milwaukee Education Alliance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student mobility • School nurses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School funding |
| NWBCCC/SBU | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College access • New small high school • School safety and repairs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armory campaign (school facilities) • Teacher quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School facilities funding |
| OCO | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incubating new small schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School facilities • District support for small schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building state support for small schools • School construction • Enrichment and after school programs • Teacher professional development |
| PACT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School safety and repairs • Monitoring of Direct Instruction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality implementation of Direct Instruction • Remediation in schools with high failure rates • Evaluation of after-school programs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality pre-kindergarten |

Specific campaigns that groups develop, as listed in *Table 9: Current education campaigns*, are also influenced by strategic opportunities emerging from local, state or national contexts. For example, EPOP’s Right to Know campaign developed out of discussions among education leaders during the period leading up to and following the state takeover of the Philadelphia Public Schools. “There was lots of confusion and upheaval. People were asking what is going on, what does this mean for my child?” (EPOP) At the same time, NCLB’s new requirements for increased transparency of schooling outcome data presented an opportunity for EPOP to define a set of recommendations for parental access in the school system.

Evolving education organizing strategies

Across the study groups, there are a variety of overarching strategies for intervening in, and working to improve, local schools and districts. In *Table 10: Education organizing strategies*, we show the range of strategies study groups have developed. These strategies do not represent a continuum of approaches; indeed, different strategies may reflect distinctly different beliefs about the role of community organizing in school improvement, and may result from the dramatically different contexts in which groups are operating. The range of school, district and state level strategies are discussed below. Subsequent papers will explicate how strategies and beliefs developed, and how these strategies and beliefs are shaped by the contexts in which groups work.

The groups’ education organizing strategies are influenced by the insights derived from their dialogues with other organizing groups, as well as by their networks’ national priorities. Organizing groups have increasingly been influenced by their access to local and national school reform efforts. Several foundations have begun to sponsor varieties of interchange between organizing groups and school reformers. For example, the Institute for Parent Leadership, convened by Research for Democracy, a project of EPOP and Temple University that is discussed later in this paper, brings together organizers and leaders from across the country for a five-day training session on education organizing strategies, to which prominent school reformers and education change theorists and practitioners are invited. After meeting Austin Interfaith at the August 2002 Temple University Parent Institute, MICAH initiated the Milwaukee Education Alliance, based on the IAF Alliance Schools model.

TABLE 9
Education organizing strategies

| School-level Improvement | District-level policy change | State-level policy change |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a parent or youth leadership group outside of schools to hold schools accountable. • Build a parent or youth leadership group inside schools to give parents voice. • Ally with local schools to support improvements. • Facilitate the development of a relational culture between parents, educators and community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify problem, and identify and advocate for particular solution or policy. • Build a district or citywide coalition to increase leverage to win new policy. • Monitor and negotiate policy implementation. • Create new program or school improvement strategy and bring it to scale. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in coalitions of allied organizations. • Use a statewide network of affiliated organizations. |

TABLE 10

Study groups' school-level organizing

| School-level strategy | Study groups using the strategy | Who is involved | How they are recruited | Primary target of the organizing | Educator role |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|
| Establish external accountability for improvement | • NWBCCC/SBU | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents • Residents • Youth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group meets members through outreach outside the school, distributing flyers, neighborhood door knocking, and through existing relationships. • Group may also work with allies inside the school. | • School principal or district administration, depending on the issue identified. | Teachers and principals may support the effort, but they are not members of the group. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPOP/YUC • PACT • CC/SCYEA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents • Youth • Principal must agree to provide access to the school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group meets members through outreach inside the school, flyers distributed by the school, PTA presentations, other. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District administration. • School principal is generally not a target. | Teachers and principals are recruited as allies and supporters, but not necessarily as members of the group. |
| Ally with school to support implementation of opportunities for improvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicago ACORN • NWBCCC/SBU | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents • Youth • Principal, if supportive of the effort | • Group meets members through outreach outside the school, neighborhood door knocking. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District administration. • School principal is generally not a target. | Teachers and principals are recruited as informers, not members of the group. |
| Create a relational culture to support improvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Austin Interfaith • OCO • MICAH | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and parents inside the school • Principal must commit upfront to work in collaboration with the group. | • Group conducts individual meetings with potential leaders of each constituency to build a school-based team. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District. • The school principal is not a target. | Teachers and principals are members of the group. |

School-level organizing

As shown in *Table 11: Study groups' school-level organizing*, the study groups organizing at the school level differ not only in how they initiate the work, but also in how they position themselves within the school. Most groups organizing at the school level work to increase school accountability to parents or youth because they believe improvement results from organized demands for change from the constituencies most deeply affected. The NWBCCC, for example, works to build a group of parents or youth who meet outside the school to formulate campaigns, using the same neighborhood-based methods that the group applies to housing or any other local issue.

We run our meetings the same way we do tenant meetings. We see what issues people are concerned with. So they say my son's teacher is not disciplining students in the right way, or the teacher is not really checking the homework or something, and we try to prioritize [these concerns] to see what we can do. We'll have a series of meetings where we identify issues, and people will do research on them, and then we'll try to bring more parents on board, and try to reach consensus on what we're [going to work on]... We try to get a different parent to chair each meeting. So it reinforces the democratic aspect of the organization, and different people get chances at leadership development. (NWBCCC)

EPOP and PACT begin school level organizing through relationships with parents “separately from the school. [We] meet parents [through] teachers we know, or by standing outside of the school, or through relationships [in] congregations.”(EPOP) In PACT, the organizer initially makes contact with parents through flyers distributed through the school. Both groups use the one-on-one organizing process developed through their institution-based organizing to identify and train parents as leaders who meet inside the school.

Youth work is developed through a combination of strategies, as shown in *Table 12: Youth organizing methodology*. SBU, an affiliate of the NWBCCC, uses both within school and neighborhood-based strategies to recruit youth into meetings at the SBU office, where schooling issues are defined and improvement campaigns developed. SCYEA (a youth program of the Community Coalition, and currently its most active education organizing component) and YUC (an EPOP member institution with its own 501(c)3 reach youth during the school day and recruit them into school-based chapters that plan and execute campaigns.

We're doing these campus-based campaigns where we're getting principals and union representatives at every school to sign pledges around three sets of issues. One of them is security. The other is books. And the third is teacher quality. The centerpiece of it is we want to develop along with schools, a student teacher evaluation where students evaluate their teachers on an annual basis and, essentially, give them a cumulative grade. We're working with UCLA School of Education, the union and the administrators now to come up with how that's going to work. (CC)

A major difference between the youth groups seems to be the degree of formality with which the organization establishes itself within the school. Within SBU and SCYEA, a great deal of student-to-student organizing seems to happen individually, and this can happen informally within a school. YUC defines the recognized school presence of an adult organizer as a major component of its theory of change. Youth organizing will be discussed more fully in a subsequent paper.

Most groups organizing at the school level work to increase school accountability to parents or youth because they believe improvement results from organized demands for change from the constituencies most deeply affected.

TABLE 11

Youth organizing methodology

| Study group | Youth organizing |
|--|---|
| Sistas and Brothas United (SBU) | Recruits youth into a central organizing committee. Youth meet at SBU office every day after school to plan and develop campaigns. Tutoring and academic counseling available. |
| South Central Youth Empowered through Action (SCYEA) | Recruits youth into school chapters that meet in the school or at the SCYEA office. Youth chapters meet weekly. Youth leaders meet twice a week at the SCYEA office to plan and develop campaigns. Tutoring and academic counseling available. |
| Youth United for Change (YUC) | Recruits youth into school chapters that meet in the school or at the YUC office. Youth chapters meet once a week to plan and develop campaigns. All youth meet once a month to plan district-level organizing strategies, evaluate organizing effectiveness and receive skills training. |

Some groups ally with schools to help bring about improvements, depending on the issue and the locus of the problem. Chicago ACORN and the NWBCCC, for example, regularly interview school principals to identify school needs, which are raised in meetings with district and other system officials. “If we win a change, such as a new teacher recruitment fair, then we run to the local school and encourage them to participate” (ACORN).

Although the school is an important site for recruitment and relationship-building, it is not the target of reform demands for most groups, because they believe that some form of school-level alliance is necessary to improve schools. All the groups have come to perceive principals and other school-level administrators as relatively powerless within the education hierarchy, but as potentially useful allies in the struggle for school improvement. Principals can facilitate access to information and to the physical plant of the school (necessary for groups to meet parents or teachers), and they can legitimate the organizing groups’ effort.

We used to think, well, figure out the issue, target, and go get ‘em! And that was pretty much the end of that relationship with that principal. In the closed systems that schools are, even after they opened up with local school councils, you don’t target principals... They are pretty angry and powerless in their own ways, so anyone who offers a political base to fight for their interests, they’re kind of down with... So we target the central board of education and use the tension inherent in the relationships with the principals to move them. (ACORN)

Rarely is the individual principal the real source of the problem. Most principals, as with most teachers, want the schools to succeed, want the schools to do well, want the same things that parents want, and so we’ve generally taken the attitude that local school folks are allies and that the district is the system that we’re trying to change. And we’ve even used that in our approach as local school problems and concerns come up, the group of parents just goes, sits, meets with the principal, and says, ‘These are our concerns’ We don’t

organize a confrontational action against the principal at the schools where we're [organizing]. Usually we talk to the principal and they recognize that this is valid and they follow through. Because they agreed to the project in the first place. (PACT)

All institutional membership groups initiate their organizing by developing a relationship with the principal. Indeed, except for EPOP, the institutionally based groups in our study will not organize in a school without principal support. Austin Interfaith, OCO, PACT and now MICAHA work to make the principal a key member of their school-based groups. They believe that the participation in—and the power of—the group will be greater if institutional leaders are invested in the effort. Austin Interfaith engages Alliance School principals in a principal's network that provides support, reinforces engagement in the organizing effort, and works to socialize new principals.

Three groups consciously recruit schools to become institutional members, because “if we're not getting new leaders for our organization, then we're weakening ourselves. And in the end it's dangerous for us. So we need to have a way for at least some subset of the schools to identify themselves as member organizations, and then for us to be able to develop parents from those schools as our leaders.” (OCO) In contrast, EPOP does not allow schools to become members, nor does it insist on principal support before entering a school, because it views parents as the primary school constituency it is accountable to. “Schools are part of the education system—the teaching force is largely white and middle class, different from parents. ...Parents invite us in [to the school, and then we] meet with the principal. We work inside until issues come up. We've been kicked out of every school we organized.” (EPOP)

Building a relational culture in schools

The majority of groups do not work to transform the internal culture of the school, although the development of parent and youth leadership can fundamentally transform relationships inside the school. Both Austin Interfaith and OCO, however, view the development of a relational culture inside schools as a necessary step to improving schools. An Austin Interfaith leader explains, “[Austin Interfaith] changes the culture of schools so that schools are able to more effectively relate to parents and their children. We are trying to change the culture within the schools [from one] that has forever been hierarchical and authoritarian into one that is collaborative and conversational and empowering. (AI)

We come in and ask questions to people that help them think about things in a different way. We encourage people to be relational, to intentionally sit down and listen to one another and be intentional in building relationships. ...It's really about changing schools from having a bureaucratic culture to having a relational culture. So instead of thinking bureaucratically—I'll call a meeting, I'll send home flyers, I'll do this or that—the principal thinks about who do I need to have a conversation with. (OCO)

We are trying to change the culture within the schools [from one] that has forever been hierarchical and authoritarian into one that is collaborative and conversational and empowering. (AI)

These groups structure their organizing to focus on developing relationships among the principal, staff and parents, rather than on campaigns to score victories (or wins) specific issues. The trust between constituencies that develops through this process forms the basis of working together to improve the school.

When you begin to have those conversations and the teachers feel safe about talking to parents because they both know what their objectives are, it builds accountability on the teachers' part. Knowing that the parents are there, being active, being proactive, advocating for their children, willing to work and listen, teachers then in turn become more open, principals become more open and willing. (AI).

Both Austin Interfaith and OCO organize teachers directly, and both have hired former teachers—and even school principals—as organizers. The teachers union, Education Austin, is an Austin Interfaith member organization, and union representatives are trained by Austin Interfaith to become leaders and to develop leadership in their colleagues.

As the education organizing evolves, relationships with district allies are helping study groups define new potential improvement strategies.

District-level organizing

All the groups organize to change district policy so that the district can implement the changes necessary to improve the technical core of instruction at the school level, as shown in *Table 13: How study groups approach district-level organizing*. Policy campaigns generally involve a cyclical process of defining issues, identifying solutions, recruiting allies and applying pressure to win policy changes from school system decision-makers through individual and coalition-building efforts.

Finding, cultivating and supporting allies inside the school system is crucial to each group's work.

We're working with our local superintendents because they share our vision and our analysis of the achievement gap. They were moving forward a lot of the policies that we supported. Within the context of that common vision, our strategy right now is to work through these relationships to win policy, rather than to create public pressure through the press, or embarrassment. (CC)

We believe in no permanent enemies, no permanent allies. Sometimes the district is an ally, and sometimes not. Sometimes people in the district are allies, and sometimes not. Even with principals, they are not generally targets, but they can be if they do something [we don't support.] (AI)

Moreover, as the education organizing evolves, relationships with district allies are helping study groups define new potential improvement strategies. These alliances also help groups maintain their access to schools, particularly in highly centralized systems where school administrators are fearful of building external alliances.

Very few groups would say they only work outside of schools. It's much more fluid than that. In the beginning, we tended to rely largely on outside strategies because it's important for parents to have an independent base. As we've gained recognition, we've begun to use our relationships with the district and the schools. We'll work with parent coordinators or sympathetic teachers to recruit people. If principals don't support us, we'll work with our district leadership—our superintendent will go back to the principal and say, 'Don't be afraid of them.' The strategy also depends on the issue we're working on. For example, what we do on teacher quality will be shaped by our conversations with our superintendent. As you get into instructional issues, the work becomes more dependent on buy-in from administrators. In some way, campaigns to fight budget cuts are the easiest campaigns because they don't involve buy-in. Administrators understand they can't be seen in bed with you, and expect you to be making demands. (NWBCCC)

Because education reform involves changes not only in policy, but also in the skills, attitudes and capacities of the educators who must ultimately implement any change, winning demands from the district leadership is not enough to transform schools. Groups have evolved different strategies for monitoring the implementation of changes in the technical instructional core, and negotiating improvements in the school's professional culture, based on the nature of their demands and the ultimate changes they seek. Austin Interfaith holds meetings with school board members, the superintendent and mayor to "talk about our needs, what has happened with the monies, how much money we still need, what is the need in the community." (AI). PACT has trained fifty congregational leaders to visit schools where Direct Instruction is being implemented to develop relationships with teachers, reading coaches and principals. Their goal is for congregations to provide more direct support to schools for the successful implementation of Direct Instruction. "The [PALS–PACT Academically

TABLE 12
How study groups approach district-level organizing

| Study group | District-level organizing strategy | | |
|---------------|---|---|--|
| | Identify and demand new policy, sometimes through new coalitions. District is a target | Monitor and negotiate policy implementation. District is ally and target | Create and bring new programs to scale. District is ally and target |
| AI | X | X | X |
| CHICAGO ACORN | X | X | X |
| CC/SCYEA | X | X | |
| EPOP/YUC | X | X | |
| MICAH | X | X | |
| NWBCCC/SBU | X | X | X |
| OCO | X | X | X |
| PACT | X | X | |

Linking with Schools] volunteers hear the stories inside of schools, take the stories to the PACT Education Committee, and then the committee can bring problems [with Direct Instruction implementation] to the school district. Principals often can't." (PACT)

Scaling up new strategies for improvement

Austin Interfaith, Chicago ACORN, and OCO have catalyzed the development of new district-wide education programs, and produced an alternative vision of high quality instruction and effective school organization. These efforts required an inside strategy of collaboration with district administrators, partnership with professional school reform organizations or universities, and an outside strategy of maintaining pressure on the district to scale up the group's vision and demand into a new, different kind of district program and practice.

Chicago ACORN documented the district's failure to recruit qualified teachers in low-income areas through a series of four reports. It then developed a local partnership in ACORN neighborhoods on Chicago's Westside to recruit and retain new teachers through a job fair, and to take teachers on neighborhood walks and door-knocking. ACORN cultivated relationships with district administrators, local colleges and universities, and worked with the Logan Square Neighborhood Association to develop a Grow Your Own teacher program into a system-wide campaign to help community residents, parents and paraprofessionals become teachers. ACORN then used its membership clout and political leverage to convince the school system, the state board of education and the state legislature to take the program to scale.

Working with the Bay Area Coalition of Equitable Schools (BayCES), OCO organized a powerful district-wide movement to demand the creation of small high schools in the overcrowded Oakland flats' schools, and then guided its parent groups to work with principals, teachers and organizers to build the cultures of these new schools on strong foundations of relational trust.

People see this as a movement that's trying to take over the district. That vision is deeply held by a lot of the principals and teachers and parent leaders. They operate at their schools, but people see this as something that's much larger, and that's what OCO has been able to tap into. Early on, once we saw the opportunity for this to work, we began evolving language that made this movement perspective explicit. We started talking that way as part of the public message. This is not about ten small schools as a policy; this is about a tipping point strategy that moves to change the district. ...It was probably as we were moving through the opening of the first set of small schools that we began to think about that, with the principals we got engaged and with BAYCES, we could get to a place where this whole district would look different. (OCO)

Because the context of school overcrowding in the Bronx diminishes the scope of instructional reform, the NWBCCC has focused on defining and scaling up new

ACORN cultivated relationships with district administrators, local colleges and universities, and worked with the Logan Square Neighborhood Association to develop a Grow Your Own teacher program into a system-wide campaign to help community residents, parents and paraprofessionals become teachers.

strategies for school facilities development. Over a five-year period, it has identified necessary improvements to existing facilities and potential sites for renovation and leasing, and forced the school system to make these changes. It has built partnerships with nontraditional allies such as the New York City Bar Association and Business Partnership, as well as with banks, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, and the Enterprise Foundation, to define new policy for facilities development and a joint agenda for facilities financing and development reform. It has developed both a vision of and broad political support for converting an abandoned Armory into a mixed-use facility, including schools, which would bring considerable economic, social and educational benefits to the local community.

Statewide organizing

Almost all the groups are involved in building state-level power to reach and influence state legislatures, governors and state boards of education. State contexts exert enormous influence, as evidenced by fiscal crises, increased standardized testing, and governance reforms that recentralize authority. Network groups are developing state-level power through a strategy of regional or statewide growth. Chicago ACORN, for example, opened an office in the state capital last year to increase its capacity to affect statewide policy change. Over the past five years, MICAH has participated in an effort to build statewide power to win increased school funding through the creation of a new statewide Gamaliel Foundation organization called WISDOM. WISDOM is made up of seven local organizations, several of which are in early stages of development.

Our statewide work developed out of a need to connect our local groups. A lot of groups had started, partly because as clergy were transferred, they promoted this work in other cities. We realized there needed to be an independent structure because there wasn't much coordination among all of the groups in Wisconsin. So in 1999, we initiated WISDOM. It was incorporated in 2000. The concept was to provide mutual support. There was no intention for local organizations to go away. In fact, it was intended to support the local organizations and provide a platform for expansion. And WISDOM has continued to expand. First Beloit. In the next few months, two more WISDOM organizations will be up and running in Waukesha and Green Bay. Then Fox Valley in the fall. There are three statewide issues that WISDOM organizations deal with in addition to their local focus: school funding, drug treatment alternatives to incarceration and civil rights of immigrants. (MICAH)

Groups that are not affiliated with national networks have developed, or helped to organize, statewide policy reform coalitions. NWBCCC, for example, plays an active leadership role in the Alliance for Quality Education (AQE), a statewide collaboration of grassroots education activists and school reform groups seeking to insure that the governor and the legislature implement a recent court decision that New York State must provide a sound basic education for New York City's public schoolchildren.

As organizing groups move from the periphery of schooling conversations to working more closely with the school reform establishment in their districts, they face increasing pressure to move beyond protesting schooling inadequacies to defining specific strategies for reform.

CC, and its youth component SCYEA, have participated in a variety of state-level campaigns to win facilities funding for South LA schools.

Moving into the school reform establishment

As organizing groups move from the periphery of schooling conversations to working more closely with the school reform establishment in their districts, or with local policymakers within their school bureaucracies, they face increasing pressure to move beyond protesting schooling inadequacies to defining specific strategies for reform. “We just can’t get away with what we maybe got away with 8 to 10 years ago. We can’t take a flyer at something and hope that we’re covering the issue and try to make a splash.” (MICAH)

One result of the pressure to define specific reforms is an increase in the use of data in education organizing. Research and data are used to educate members, identify schooling problems, legitimize campaign demands, and track schooling improvements.

One result of the pressure to define specific reforms is an increase in the use of data in education organizing. Research and data are used to educate members, identify schooling problems, legitimize campaign demands, and track schooling improvements. Chicago ACORN, for example, integrates school data into its membership training. Chicago ACORN has developed a school profile data presentation format “to make it easy for parents and leaders to be able to read things. A lot of data doesn’t do any good if you don’t have a way for them to understand it.”(ACORN). Over the past three years, ACORN has released four reports on the problems of teacher recruitment and retention. These reports have drawn significant attention because they have offered the first systematic look at teacher recruitment and retention issues in the city schools.

During the 1990s, ACORN worked with the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform to develop a parent training curriculum, and to train parent local school council members to become more confident, ask more sophisticated questions, and understand the language of education. When parents saw the differences between schools, they began to ask about what was going on during the day inside of the schools. Their questions led ACORN’s research staff to do statistical analyses of teacher quality variables in ACORN schools. They found higher rates of teacher turnover and vacancy in ACORN schools compared with Chicago public schools as a whole.

ACORN was the first in Chicago to examine the link between the subject area teachers are teaching and their state qualifications. The district didn’t know, and couldn’t figure out how to track teacher experience. ACORN’s No School Left Behind reports forced the district to meet with ACORN and increased ACORN’s legitimacy as an expert on teacher quality not only with district officials, but also with the press, and influential civic groups. “Data helped legitimize us, our report got us on the inside.” (ACORN)

The increased reliance on data to support school organizing has required both new organizational capacity and new alliances with educators, as shown in *Table 14: Policy, research and data support*. Four organizations have developed the internal capacity for data analysis and presentation. Chicago ACORN and the Community Coalition have

researchers on staff. EPOP entered into a partnership with Temple University’s Center for Public Policy to create Research for Democracy (RFD) as a vehicle to conduct action research in support of EPOP’s organizing campaigns.

EPOP’s Right to Know campaign developed from focus groups conducted by parents, teachers and other EPOP leaders in 2002 about the problems in the Philadelphia Public School District, and changes needed to improve student learning. Based on information gathered through these focus groups, EPOP and Research for Democracy [RFD] designed a telephone survey of Philadelphia public school parents and teachers. RFD helped EPOP leaders analyze survey results and develop recommendations for improving the communication and transparency of data and information within the Philadelphia schools. These recommendations formed the basis of EPOP’s negotiations with district officials during the following school year.

Other groups have developed relationships with external organizations to obtain data analysis support. To gain access to specific educational expertise, several of our study groups have also developed partnerships with educators or school reform organizations. For example, CC and the NWBCCC’s youth components are working with the Education Trust. Austin Interfaith includes educators and other experts in analyzing issues that are important to its leaders and their campaigns.

To gain access to specific educational expertise, several groups developed partnerships with educators or school reform organizations.

TABLE 13
Policy, research and data support

| Study group | Policy, research and data support |
|---------------|--|
| AI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interfaith Education Fund |
| Chicago ACORN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers on staff • Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform |
| OCO | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bay Area Coalition of Equitable Schools • Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform |
| EPOP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research for Democracy, a joint project with Temple University • Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform • Research for Action • Education Law Center |
| NWBCCC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NYU Institute for Education and Social Policy • Education Trust • Bank Street College • Fordham University |
| PACT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning to develop a relationship with the University of Miami • Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform |
| MICAH | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institute for Wisconsin’s Future |
| CC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers on staff • Education Trust • UCLA |

V. Assessing the impact of organizing

Our research proceeds from a conceptual framework, shown in *Figure 2: Conceptual framework flow chart*, and detailed in *Appendix 3: Conceptual framework*, based on IESP’s previous experiences of working with, and documenting, community groups organizing for school reform.²⁶ This framework is essentially a “best-case scenario” about how community organizing groups work to reach their school reform goals. It is a conceptual starting point for research, not a template. The framework assumes that the organizing process is not linear—indeed the actual experience of groups might be quite circular—and that community impacts are as important, and as necessary to achieve, as schooling impacts.

Our conceptual framework assumes that the organizing process is not linear—indeed the actual experience of groups might be quite circular—and that community impacts are as important, and as necessary to achieve, as schooling impacts.

In our view, organizing occurs through cyclical processes of individual meetings, group development, collective formulation of concerns and solutions, and collective action. Through multiple campaigns over time, groups work to create the necessary external pressure and internal support for improvements in the internal capacity of schools, which we have defined earlier in this paper as both the “technical core of instruction” and the “professional culture” within the school.²⁷ Thus our conceptual framework posits an *idealized* sequence in which organizing inputs such as available funding, the presence of trained organizers, membership recruitment and facilities fuels initial organizing activities. These activities generate initial community outcomes such as increases in the organizing group’s constituencies, and growing membership knowledge about schooling outcomes and school system operations. The initial organizing also creates responses within the school system, such as increased system responsiveness to community pressure, more flexible and transparent administrative procedures, and increased scrutiny of the system by local politics and the media.

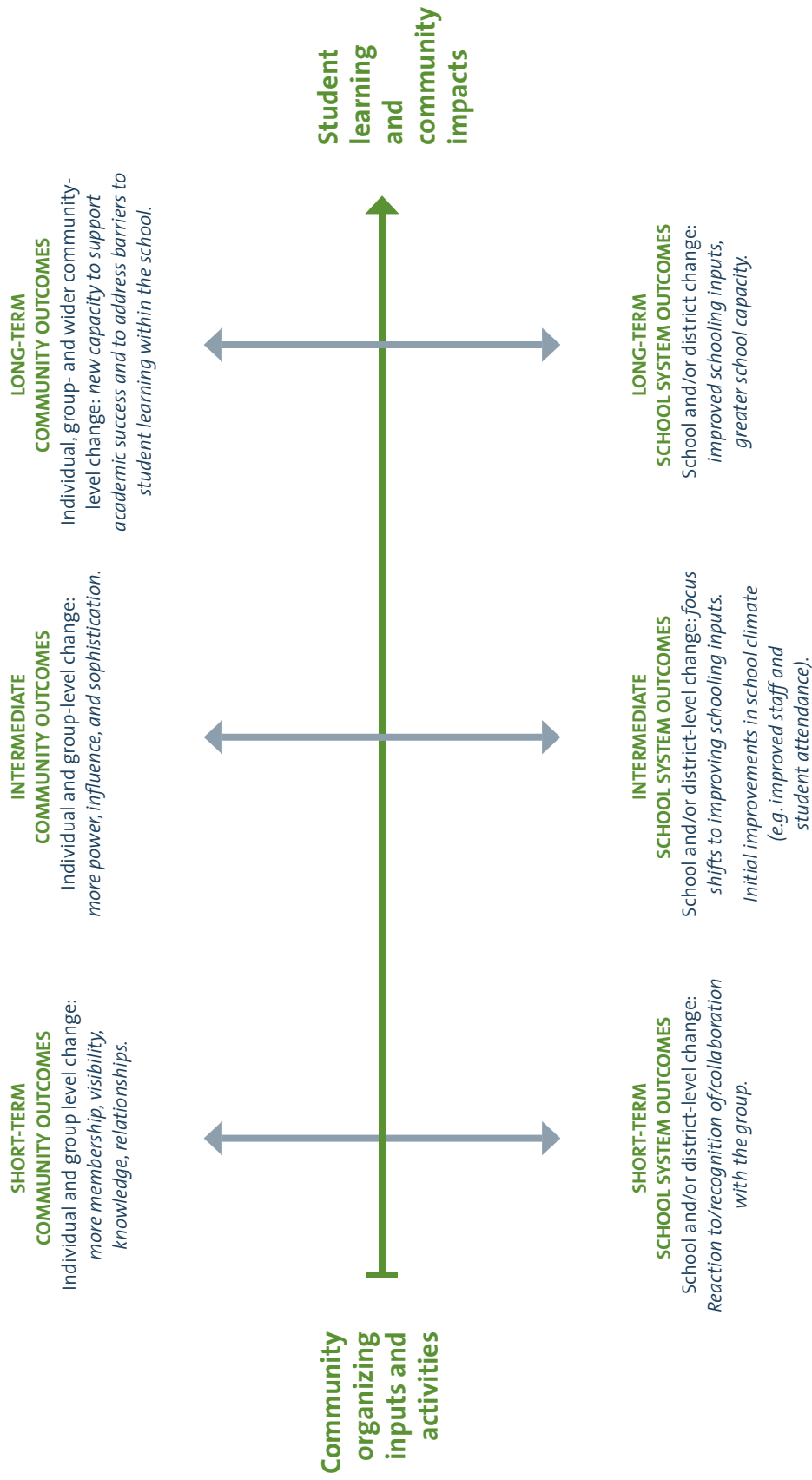
These initial results generate intermediate community outcomes—more leadership development, broader neighborhood mobilization, specific organizing campaigns, and the development of relationships with schooling decision-makers. Intermediate outcomes on the school system side include more decision-maker responsiveness, willingness to participate within the organization or to negotiate about specific reform demands, and dissemination of more data about school system performance to the community.

²⁶ Because this study is one of the first studies to attempt to link organizing process and outcomes, developing an overall conceptual framework to guide the research process was a critical first task.

²⁷ Richard Elmore, 2002.

FIGURE 2
Conceptual framework flowchart

This flow chart presents our conceptual framework in its most distilled form. See Appendix 3: Conceptual framework illustration, for a more detailed treatment.



Through a series of organizing campaigns, these intermediate results develop into long-term community outcomes such as increased parental capacity to advocate for children’s academic success and engage in school improvement efforts, as well as increased community capacity to generate and support effective education reform efforts. On the school system side, long-term outcomes include the development of more equitable resource allocation and student assignment policies, more effective leadership and instruction, and more accessible and responsive school and system cultures. Finally, our conceptual framework assumes that the cumulative increase in school and district capacity that results from these outcomes will yield improved educational results—more accountable schools in which most students meet high state and district standards, and increased civic engagement that supports school system capacity to sustain those high standards and high student achievement.

If the processes linking organizing to schooling change are complex, the research designs that attempt to assess the extent of groups’ organizing success in achieving schooling change must be equally complex.

If the processes linking organizing to schooling change are complex, the research designs that attempt to assess the extent of groups’ organizing success in achieving schooling change must be equally complex. Simple cause and effect models cannot capture the alternating cycles and feedback loops that characterize the organizing process—from initial activities to initial outcomes to intermediate activities and the resulting outcomes, to the penultimate activities and responses that result in higher student achievement. Moreover, because this continual spiral of organizing activities, responses and feedback loops occurs across time, research must proceed from a design that looks at change over time. As our recent study on the organizing efforts of Mothers on the Move (MOM) suggests, district and school capacity and outcome improvements can take years to achieve.²⁸

The research challenge

The question of how best to assess the educational impacts of community organizing is part of the larger problem—of how to assess comprehensive schooling change efforts—that has long bedeviled public education. Efforts to assess the impacts of specific interventions such as reading and math programs, or student grouping practices, often use quasi-experimental designs that control for factors, such as student demographics or teacher variables, that might affect the achievement outcomes of the targeted students. Some research efforts have attempted to use random assignment—the gold standard for scientific research—to assess the effectiveness of the reform intervention.²⁹ But because interventions and expectations for social change do not happen in isolation, it is very difficult to prove that a specific intervention led to change, either in the community at large or in complex institutions such as schools. This applies whether the change the organizing campaign seeks is a programmatic outcome, such as the imposition of a literacy curriculum, or is a more sweeping change such as the transformation of a school’s professional culture.

²⁸ Mediratta and Karp. 2003.

²⁹ See for example, the Tennessee STAR study of reduced class size, as well as the many studies assessing the results of cooperative learning efforts.

In their scope and time-scale, community organizing efforts to improve schools are comparable to whole-school reform efforts, nationally marketed models that integrate curricular and instructional interventions with efforts to transform school professional culture and parent/community relationships.³⁰ Recent studies designed to assess the impacts of whole-school reform efforts such as New American Schools, Success for All, the School Development Program, the Achievement Project, Direct Instruction and other interventions provide cautionary examples of the difficulties of attributing impact—that is, gains in student achievement—to a specific whole-school effort.³¹ A myriad of factors that impact student achievement—student demographics, community contexts, leadership and teacher quality, other curriculum programs, resource provision, as well as a host of other variables influencing implementation—must be controlled, a task which is impossible in the real world, and at best, inadequately approximated in most comparison group research designs.

Linking the education organizing described in this paper to statistical indicators of school improvement pose even greater challenges for research. Because community organizing, like whole school reform, is a complex effort that has no single lever—or magic bullet—to transform schooling performance, our study groups target changes in a wide variety of intermediary variables connected to student achievement. While some organizing activities, such as leadership development, are common across all our groups, strategies for intervening in schools may change dramatically as groups pursue their school improvement goals. Oakland Community Organizations, for example, moved from aggressively confronting school and district staff to resolve school overcrowding to working collaboratively with district personnel to create a new small schools policy and to recruit teachers and administrators for almost a dozen new small schools.

Though the processes of articulating demands for change and generating the political capital to win them are often external to schools and districts, the process of implementing those demands is almost always internal and educator-driven. Community-generated demands for improved instructional leadership or new curriculum, for example, can only be achieved by changes implemented by practitioners inside the school. The resulting increases in student achievement that constitute the central goals organizing groups strive for may often come about indirectly. Organizing groups can push for change, can monitor the implementation of change, and can even contribute their own organizational resources to support change. But they generally cannot carry out the necessary changes that lead to student academic improvement. Education organizing is thus inherently linked to a dynamic that ultimately depends on the perceptions and actions of education practitioners.

Because community organizing, like whole school reform, is a complex effort that has no single lever—or magic bullet—to transform schooling performance, our study groups target changes in a wide variety of intermediary variables connected to student achievement.

³⁰ The U.S. Congress, in 1997, passed the Obey-Porter legislation to create the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (CSRDP), which provides grants of \$50,000 or more to schools willing to adopt what the legislation called “research-based comprehensive reform models.” More than 2,000 schools have received CSRDP grants, and more than \$700 million has been expended on this whole-school reform strategy.

³¹ Herman, R., Carl, B., Lampron, S., Sussman, A., Berger, A. and Innes, F. *What we know about comprehensive school reform models. Report for the U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service* (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, 2000).

Our research design combines qualitative methods with a staged statistical analysis of changes in key internal capacity indicators within target schools and districts, and changes in student outcomes in those schools demonstrating sufficient gains in capacity.

A dynamic research design

Our research design combines qualitative methods with a staged statistical analysis of changes in key internal capacity indicators within target schools and districts, and changes in student outcomes in those schools demonstrating sufficient gains in capacity. We draw on both theory of change and grounded theory frameworks to specify the relationships between each group's actions, improvement trends in critical school and district capacities that make positive outcomes for students more likely to occur, and the resulting schooling outcomes. Through this analysis, our study aims to generate new theory about the relationship between community organizing for school reform and increased capacity in the technical core of instruction and the professional culture of schools.

During the 1990's, as the number and type of community change initiatives increased, researchers began developing alternative methodologies to explore the linkages between groups' actions and their reform goals. One of the most prominent methodologies is the theory of change framework. In this approach, researchers engage activists in articulating their theory—their working assumptions—about the group strategies and actions that will influence the institutions they want to change and make the changes they seek happen. Because each group's interventions are variable and their outcomes unpredictable, groups must theorize about how their strategies and actions will link logically to what they hope to accomplish. Research thus begins from each group's theory of change, examines how planned actions or strategies are actually implemented, and ultimately assesses whether the actions result in the reforms groups seek.

The theory of change framework enables researchers to infer linkages between a particular set of activities and resulting outcomes, even though many factors come into play. A wide variety of external factors—like the emphasis on standards or the growing interest and resources invested in small schools—may influence the goals, focus and results of our study groups' reform efforts. And, as good strategists, our study groups take advantage of new trends and use them to further their efforts. Yet by specifying each group's theory of change and resulting education strategies and campaigns, as well as the responses these activities elicit from decision-makers, we can make inferences about the relationships between school reform organizing and specific changes occurring in schools. For example, assume that Chicago ACORN has specified the need for improved instruction in schools serving ACORN neighborhoods, and has developed an organizing strategy to improve teacher quality through campaigns to create and scale up paraprofessional-to-teacher career ladders and training programs in Chicago schools. Assume that district officials and other participants attribute these new policies and programs to Chicago ACORN's efforts. Although a number of other factors undoubtedly influenced the system's decisions, we can still infer, and posit, a strong linkage between the teacher capacity improvements occurring in ACORN neighborhood schools and the strategy and activities the group carried out.

To analyze improvements in the core capacities of schools targeted by each study group, we will develop indicators that reflect each group's specific campaign goals, as well as a wide variety of intermediary changes in schools that can be assessed with available data. These intermediary variables can include, for example, measures of change in the school's professional culture, using indicators such as teacher attendance, teacher retention, teacher experience, teacher certification, leadership stability, facility utilization rates, student-teacher ratios, suspension rates or discipline referrals in a school. Our analysis will examine changes in these indicators over time, in the schools targeted by the group compared to the school district as a whole, and where possible and relevant, to a group of similar schools in the same district.³² Where there is sufficient evidence of gains in schooling capacity, as demonstrated by positive changes in intermediary indicators, we will define, and examine the change in, a broad set of outcome indicators of improvement in schools, compared to school systems as a whole. We believe these statistical analyses, when combined with the qualitative research methods outlined above, hold out the best hope for a research design that honors the complexity of community organizing efforts.

A final point. Our study began with the development of a set of preliminary propositions about how organizing occurs, as well as the levels and types of change it can stimulate. Our research has proceeded on the assumption that what we learn may contest—and most certainly will enrich—our initial thinking. Initial propositions provide useful guidance on methodology, but can blind the researcher to the ways in which the data may challenge preliminary conceptions. Given our extensive experience supporting organizing in New York City, our research team was particularly sensitive to this dilemma. We thus sought to increase the rigor of our analysis in two main ways: first, our research team consists of experienced qualitative and quantitative researchers, as well as a former teacher, a former school principal, and a community organizer, who together develop field strategies, analyze data and develop hypotheses. Second, our design includes an ongoing external review process involving an advisory group of researchers, educators, and organizers who play a vital role in critiquing our research questions, methods, and analyses.

By specifying each group's theory of change and resulting education strategies and campaigns, as well as the responses these activities elicit from decision-makers, we can make inferences about the relationships between school reform organizing and specific changes occurring in schools.

³² Assuming we are able to define indicators that reflect each group's campaign goals, any analysis we develop is limited by the availability of data. Our analyses are based on data collection and reporting efforts of the districts in which these groups work. While the adoption of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) will, hopefully, expand data availability, there is no guarantee that it will provide us with the type of data or level of aggregation needed for our analysis.

This initial paper develops and articulates a dynamic, mixed method research design to specify the relationships that link organizing efforts to changes in schooling outcomes.

VI. Conclusion

The growth of community organizing for education reform, particularly in low-performing schools and school districts, makes it crucial to understand how these strategies are conceptualized and implemented, and what outcomes they are achieving, at both the local and state level. As interest in community organizing for school reform grows, it is also important to develop research methods to demonstrate the impacts and outcomes of effective organizing. This initial paper offers a descriptive analysis of the education work of eight highly developed community organizing groups, and develops and articulates a dynamic, mixed method research design to specify the relationships that link organizing efforts to changes in schooling outcomes.

Subsequent research papers produced over the course of our study will examine the role of organizing in school reform, specify the organizational factors contributing to organizing effectiveness, and document the growth of high school youth organizing. In the final year of our study, we will report on our findings about the relationships between community organizing and the development of districts' and schools' capacity for improving achievement outcomes at the eight study sites. We hope the results of our research will inform education policy makers, practitioners, funders, as well as community groups, about the contribution of school reform organizing strategies to public education reform.

Appendix 1:

Research methodology

Our research uses a case study methodology, and draws on both theory of change and grounded theory research frameworks to illuminate the process of organizing, the participants involved in the process, and how the environment for improving student achievement is changed in each of the eight selected sites. Through interviews with each group's staff and members, observations of organizing events, archival research of site-generated materials, interviews with education policymakers, and an analysis of school- and district-level statistical data, our research will:

- Define and verify each group's theory of change;
- Identify specific education organizing strategies;
- Detail the resulting organizing activities; and
- Explore the impact of these activities on school and district capacity for improvement.

Since the interplay between strategy and context is key to winning local campaigns, the organizing activities that each group carries out are necessarily site specific. The groups in our study focus on different issues, work for change at different levels of the system, and use a wide variety of tactics. Our research will define a set of intermediate indicators that reflect the focus of each group's organizing, such as improved teacher quality or increases in college-preparatory courses. We will examine the extent of change across relevant indicators for each study group, and we will examine the change in a broad set of outcome indicators of improvement in schools and school systems as a whole.

Data collection

From January 2003 through January 2004, our researchers conducted three two to three-day visits to each site. Researchers conducted open-ended semi-structured interviews with staff and members of the group, observed meetings, training sessions and public actions, and reviewed documentation produced by the groups. We conducted 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, and political landscape). To make the links between group activity and changes in target schools and districts, we also began collecting relevant school- and district-level data as well as information about policy changes.

Finally, baseline statistical data on a variety of school, district and community variables were collected for each site. With assistance from the sites, we identified each site's target schools. We then used state department of education websites to collect school demographic and performance data. Using the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census database, we mapped the census tracts that are within or intersect a .5 to 1.5 mile radius of each school that study groups have targeted for improvement. For each school zone, we then collected data on a variety of neighborhood indicators, such as the percentage of school-age children in poverty, median household income, educational attainment, and percentage of homeowners.

Appendix 2:

Organizational characteristics of the study groups

- **Membership:** There are two types of memberships: direct and institutional. Three organizations recruit individuals (community residents, parents or youth) directly to become members of the group. One organization, the NWBCCC, has individual institutional members. Five of the eight are faith-based organizations whose institutional members are primarily comprised of congregations. Three of these organizations also have community-based organizations as members, one includes unions and one parent groups. Three of the organizations (Austin Interfaith, OCO and PACT) allow schools to become members of the organization. Three groups organize youth.
- **Personnel:** Most organizations are small, with less than 10 full- or part-time staff members. CC has the largest number of staff (approximately 20). Most staff are organizers; groups have few support staff. Three organizations, EPOP, MICAH and the NWBCCC do not have additional staff dedicated to development and fundraising, in addition to the executive director or head organizer.
- **Education organizing staff:** Most groups do not dedicate staff only to education organizing. Education organizers are responsible for working on other issues. PACT and the NWBCCC each have a dedicated, organization-wide education organizer.
- **Staff leadership:** Half the groups are led by an executive director, while the other half are led by a lead or head organizer. Three organizations are still led by their founders. Two directors/lead organizers have been with their organization for over 20 years (OCO and ACORN), while others have been with their organization for at least six years. One lead organizer was a member for almost a decade before joining the organization's staff.
- **Funding:** The annual budgets of the groups range from \$200,000 to \$2 million. All of the organizations raise some money through member dues or grants from private foundations. Dues are based on the size of the membership unit. Some of the organizations also receive considerable private donations, and one receives government contracts.
- **Board of directors:** The composition of the board of directors varies by whether the organization is comprised of institutional or individual members. In organizations with institutional memberships, the boards of directors are comprised of representatives from member organizations; clergy and lay people fill these positions. The size of the board differs by organization according to the number of institutional members. Individual membership organizations vary in their board composition. Board members in ACORN and the NWBCCC are members elected by their neighborhood-based committees. The NWBCCC board also includes clergy and two SBU members. The CC board consists of non-members who are invited to sit on the board, primarily for their fundraising abilities.
- **Role of boards:** Boards play an active role in their organizations; board participation is viewed as a mechanism for ensuring member control, and a forum for developing leadership. Boards are involved in developing and directing organizing campaigns, and in institutional membership groups, are primarily responsible for turnout at organization events. The Community Coalition's board is unique in its fundraising role. At the NWBCCC, local and central board membership and core leadership team members help to ensure that leaders develop the capacity and inclination to look both to local issues/engagement and central issues/affiliation—and that this dynamic remain vigorous and in balance.
- **Committee structure:** Most of the organizations have either a standing or an ad hoc committee structure responsible for developing and carrying out campaigns. The committees may be either issue- or neighborhood-

based committees, depending on the focus of the organization. Issue committees are not static; they change depending on the issues that the organization is currently working on. Education committees exist in four organizations, in addition to committees that focus on immigration, health care, and labor, among others. The Community Coalition, which recently undertook a strategic assessment, plans to develop and implement a committee structure over the next few months.

- **Organizing issue areas:** All of the groups are multi-issue organizations and most were in existence for years before becoming involved in education organizing. For example, the NWBCCC and OCO were founded in the 1970s and began education organizing in the 1990's. One organization—EPOP—began education organizing soon after it was founded.
- **Level of the school system:** Most education organizing is carried out at the school and district

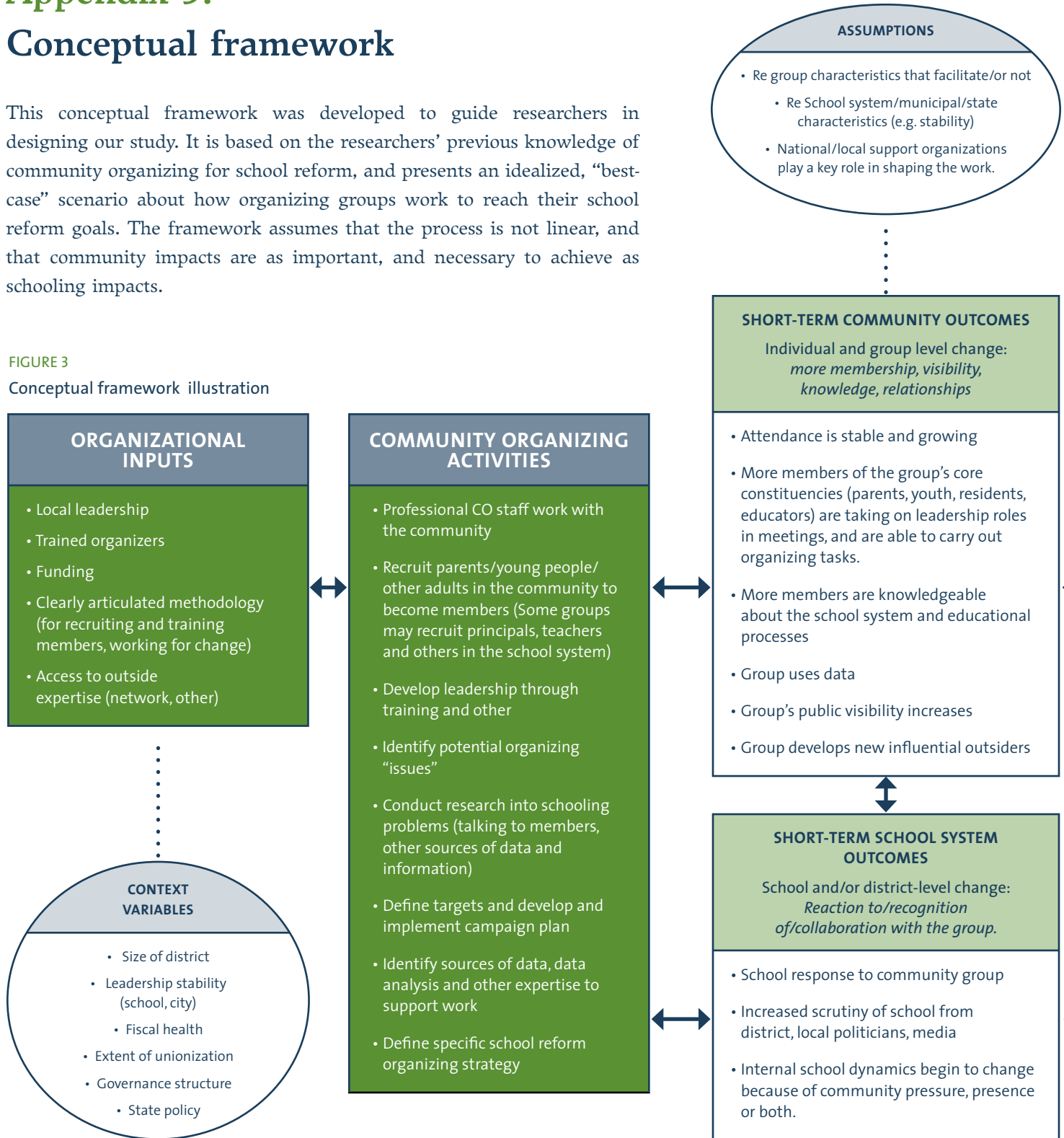
level, although all groups are focused on state level changes, particularly on school funding issues. Unlike the other institutional membership groups, EPOP and MICAH do not allow schools to become members.

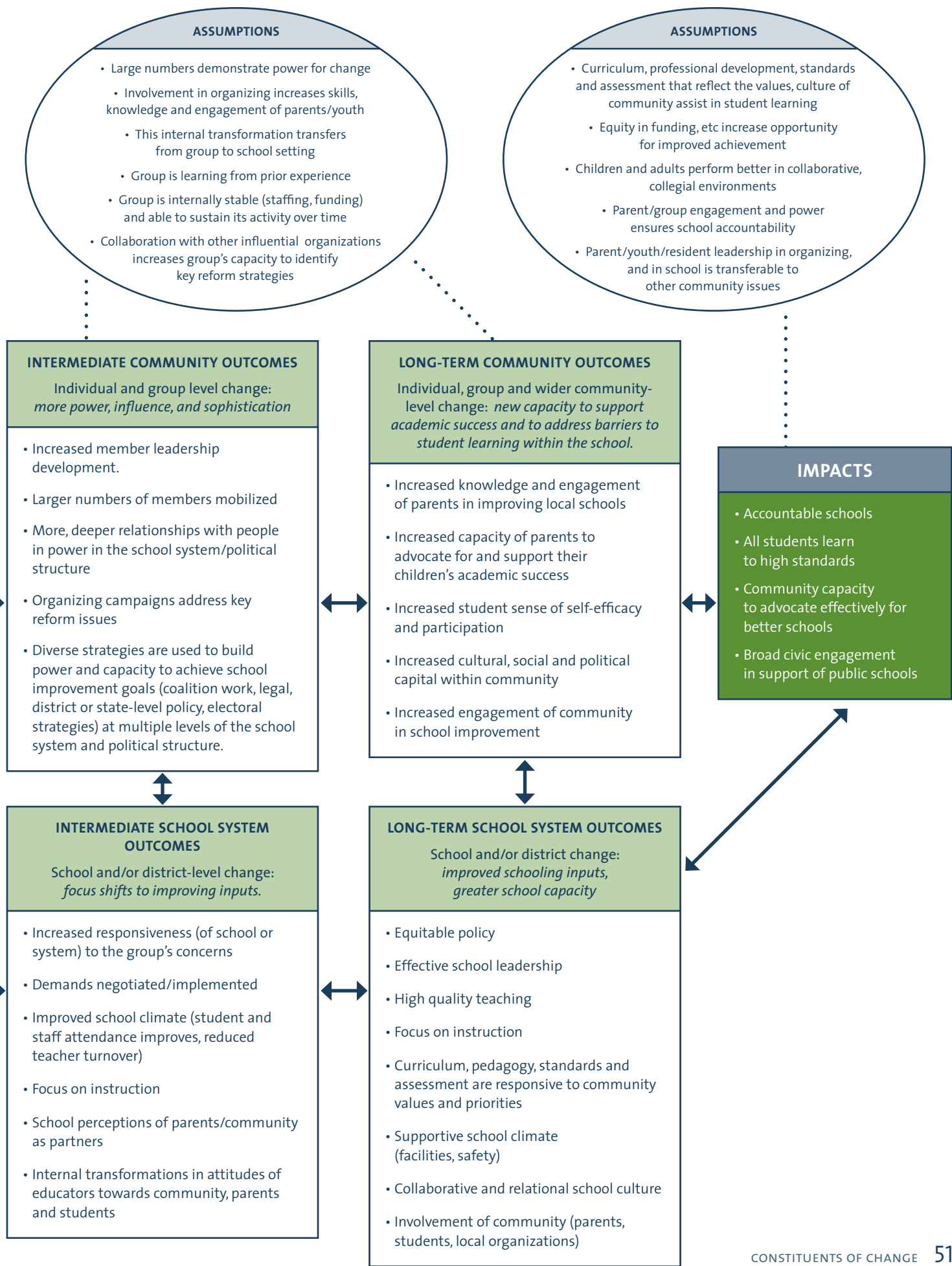
- **Youth organizing:** Three of the eight groups organize youth in addition to parents and congregational or other institutional members. The Community Coalition, EPOP and NWBCCC have created or supported youth organizing projects focused on high school youth. SBU and SCYEA are part of the organizational structure of the adult group. Though affiliated with EPOP, YUC is a separate 501(c)3 organization.
- **Use of data:** Four organizations have developed the internal capacity to analyze and present data to educate members, support their demands for reform, and track school improvement in their target schools. Four organizations have developed relationships with external organizations in order to obtain data analysis support.

Appendix 3: Conceptual framework

This conceptual framework was developed to guide researchers in designing our study. It is based on the researchers’ previous knowledge of community organizing for school reform, and presents an idealized, “best-case” scenario about how organizing groups work to reach their school reform goals. The framework assumes that the process is not linear, and that community impacts are as important, and necessary to achieve as schooling impacts.

FIGURE 3
Conceptual framework illustration





Appendix 4:

Statistical profiles

Because we are using publicly available school-level and district data, our analyses are limited both by the collection and publication of certain types of data and the level of aggregation for which data is reported. In most districts, data is available at both the district and school level. However, except for New York City, it cannot be disaggregated by school level. For example, in Los Angeles, we cannot compare the percent of free lunch eligible students in Community Coalition schools to high school students through the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Therefore, the Community Coalition schools are compared to LAUSD as a whole.

Test score data are reported for elementary and middle schools in Austin, Chicago, Miami-Dade, Oakland, and New York City. Analysis of test score data for schools in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Milwaukee were not conducted because of the small number of elementary and middle schools that the groups work with or because

the group works only at the district level and not with individual schools. Graduation and/or dropout rates at the high school level are reported for schools in Austin, Chicago, Los Angeles, Oakland, and New York City.

Because of differences in the tests used to assess students and the curriculums that are taught in each of the districts, the assessment results that are presented are not comparable between districts. For example, although students in Mott Study schools in Austin appear to be doing almost as well as students in the Austin Unified School District as a whole, we cannot say that they are doing better than students in any of the other cities.

Most of the analyses that are reported for the groups referred to as the “Mott Study Schools” represent the weighted average. The aggregate percent for the study schools was calculated by calculating the mean for all Mott Study schools by group and weighting by the total number of students at each school.

TABLE 14

Austin Independent School District, 2001-02

| | Total district | AIF schools |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| # of Students | 76,507 | 10,089 |
| # of Teachers | 5,388 ¹ | |
| # of Schools | 103 ¹ | 18 |
| Per pupil expenditures | \$7,319 | \$6,011 |
| % Special education | 12.0 | 13.5 |
| % LEP | 19.9 | 32.4 |
| % Black students | 15.0 | 23.9 |
| % Latino students | 49.5 | 62.6 |
| % Low income students | 50.1 | 72.9 |
| Average years of teaching experience | 11.0 | 9.5 |
| Dropout rate | 10.7 | 15.2 |
| Student attendance rate | 93.5 | 91.4 |
| Percent meeting standards—Reading | 86.6 | 81.0 |
| Percent meeting standards—Math | 87.7 | 86.0 |

Source: 2001-02 Academic Excellence Indicator System,
<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis/>

¹2002-03

Per pupil expenditures: Budgeted expenditures for groups of functions divided by the total number of students in the district or school. The number is not the amount spent per student, but a per-pupil average of the total budget.

% Special education: Percent of the student population served by programs for students with disabilities. Students are placed in special education by the Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee, which is made up of their parents or guardian, administrator, and other concerned parties.

% LEP: Percent of students who are identified as Limited English Proficient by the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee.

% Black students and % Latino students: Percentages of the total number of students.

% Low income: The percent of economically disadvantaged students is calculated as the sum of the students coded as eligible for free or reduced price lunch or eligible for other public assistance, divided by the total number of students.

Average years of teaching experience: Weighted averages are obtained by multiplying each teacher's FTE count by years of experience. These amounts are summed for all teachers and divided by the total teacher FTE count. Average years experience refers to the total number of (completed) years of professional experience for the individual.

Dropout rate: The annual dropout rate is the count of official dropouts summed across all grades (7-12) divided by the number of students summed across all grades (7-12).

Graduation rate: The percent of students graduating in the 2000-01 school year, as reported by districts in the fall of 2001. Includes 12th graders who graduated as well as graduates from other grades.

Test scores: In 2001-02, Texas administered the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) to students in Grades 3-8 and Grade 10. Success is measured in the percent of students passing. The data that is reported is for the Accountability Subset, which refers to the group of students whose performance on state-mandated tests would normally be used to determine a school and district's accountability rating. This includes only test takers who were enrolled in the district on the last Friday in the previous October and does not include all special education or limited English proficient students.

Student attendance rate: Calculated as follows:

Total number of days students were present in 2001-02

Total number of days students were in membership 2001-02

TABLE 15

Chicago Public Schools, 2001-02

| | Total district | ACORN schools |
|--|----------------|---------------|
| # of Students | 426,273 | 58,342 |
| # of Teachers | 23,258 | |
| # of Schools | 602 | 77 |
| Per pupil expenditures | \$5,200 | NA |
| % Special education | 4.1 | 4.2 |
| % LEP | 14.3 | 13.1 |
| % Black students | 50.8 | 68.4 |
| % Latino students | 36.1 | 30.7 |
| % Low income students | 85.3 | 93.6 |
| % of Teachers with emergency credentials | 8.2 | 11.7 |
| % of Classes not taught by highly qualified teachers | 11.6 | 15.1 |
| Dropout rate | 14.4 | 20.7 |
| Student attendance rate | 92.1 | 91.8 |
| Percent meeting standards—Reading | 42.3 | 32.3 |
| Percent meeting standards—Math | 46.9 | 35.5 |

Source: 2001-02 Illinois School Report Card, <http://www.statereportcards.cps.k12.il.us/>

Per pupil expenditure: Direct costs of teaching pupils or the interaction between teachers and pupils. Does not include operating costs of school district.

% Special education: Percent of students that have an Individualized Education Plan or Section 504 Plan. An IEP is a written plan for a child with a disability who is eligible to receive special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. A Section 504 Plan is developed to provide reasonable accommodations for a child who meets the definition of a qualified person with a disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

% LEP: Percent of Limited English Proficient students defined as those students eligible for transitional bilingual programs.

% Black students and % Latino students: The count of students belonging to each group divided by the total Fall enrollment multiplied by 100.

% Low income: Includes pupils, aged 3–17, inclusive, from families receiving public aid, living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, being supported in foster homes with public funds, or eligible to receive free or reduced price lunches. The percent of low-income students is the count of low-income students divided by the total Fall enrollment multiplied by 100.

% of Teachers with emergency credentials: The number of teachers teaching with emergency or provisional credentials divided by the total number of full-time equivalent teachers multiplied by 100.

% of Classes not taught by highly qualified teachers: The number of classes not taught by highly qualified teachers as defined by NCLB legislation, divided by the total number of classes multiplied by 100.

Dropout rate: The number of dropouts divided by the fall enrollment less post-graduates multiplied by 100. Dropouts include students in grades 9-12 whose names have been removed from the district-housed roster for any reason other than death, extended illness, graduation/completion of a program of studies, transfer to another public/private school, or expulsion.

Test scores: In the 2001-02 school year, elementary and middle schools took the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) in reading and math. Reporting of the test scores does not include most students with disabilities. Data represents the percentage of students at or above national norms in third through eighth grades.

Student attendance rate: The aggregate days of student attendance divided by the sum of the aggregate days of student attendance and aggregate days of student absence multiplied by 100.

TABLE 16

Los Angeles Unified School District, 2001-02

| | Total district | CC schools |
|-------------------------------|----------------|------------|
| # of Students | 735,058 | 31,850 |
| # of Teachers | 36,115 | |
| # of Schools | 663 | 11 |
| Per pupil expenditures | \$7,608 | |
| % Special education | 10.8 | 11.2 |
| % LEP | 41.1 | 26.7 |
| % Black students | 12.4 | 36.2 |
| % Latino students | 71.4 | 61.2 |
| % Low income students | 72.8 | 68.6 |
| % Teachers fully credentialed | 73.4 | 63.2 |
| High school graduation rate | 72.5 | 64.2 |

Source: California Department of Education's Dataquest, <http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us>

% LEP: Percent of English Learner students. EL students are those students for whom there is a report of a primary language other than English on the state-approved Home Language Survey and who, on the basis of the state approved oral language assessment procedures have been determined to lack the clearly defined English language skills to succeed in the school's regular instructional program.

% Black students and % Latino students: Percentages of the total number of students.

% Low income students: Counts of children enrolled in the Free or Reduced Price Meal Programs.

% Teachers fully credentialed: This is the percent of teachers who hold a full credential. It excludes teachers in their assignment based on an emergency credential, a waiver, or because they are in an intern program.

High school graduation rate: Defined as the number of graduates (year 4)/ number of graduates (year 4) + grade 9 dropouts (year 1) + grade 10 dropouts (year 2) + grade 11 dropouts (year 3) + grade 12 dropouts (year 4)

TABLE 17

Miami Dade County Public Schools, 2001-02

| | Total district | PACT schools |
|--|----------------|--------------|
| # of Students | 375,816 | 21,478 |
| # of Teachers ¹ | 19,486 | |
| # of Schools ¹ | 340 | 27 |
| Per pupil expenditures | \$8,594 | \$6,070 |
| % Special education ² | 10.0 | 2.6 |
| % LEP ² | 26.6 | 1.2 |
| % Black students | 30.0 | 48.7 |
| % Latino students | 57.2 | 43.5 |
| % Low income students | 59.3 | 86.3 |
| % of Teachers with advanced degree | 48.5 | 10.4 |
| % of Classes not taught by highly qualified teachers | 11.6 | 15.1 |
| Percent meeting standards—Reading | 42.1 | 36.1 |
| Percent meeting standards—Math | 41.1 | 37.4 |

Source: 2001-02 Florida School Indicators Report, <http://info.doe.state.fl.us/fsir/>

² Among elementary schools only.

% Special education: The percentage of students who are classified as having mild, moderate, and/or severe disabilities. Students in exceptional student education (ESE) programs are counted, except for students in programs for the gifted. However, a student who is classified with a primary exceptionality (disability) and who is also enrolled in a program for the gifted is counted. A student may belong to more than one program, but is counted only once. Percentages are calculated by dividing the total number of students with disabilities by the school's October membership.

% LEP: The percentage of the school's students who are LEP students served in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs. Percentages are calculated by dividing the total number of LEP/ESOL students by the school's total enrollment. For this indicator, total enrollment includes all students who were in attendance at any time during the school year.

% Black students and % Latino students: Percentages of the total number of students.

% Low income students: The percentage of students eligible for free and reduced price lunch. The percentage is arrived at by dividing the number of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, as determined in October, by the student membership in October. Data is compiled by school type, but is excluded for high schools.

% Teachers with advanced degree: The percentage of teachers with a master's degree, a doctorate, or a specialist's degree. Teachers are defined as professionals who are paid on the instructional salary schedule negotiated by each Florida school district. Data is compiled by school type.

Test scores: Students in the Miami-Dade School District took the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Tests (FCAT) in Math and Reading in Grades 3-8. Students scoring Level 3 and above are considered to have met the standards.

TABLE 18

Milwaukee Public Schools, 2001-02

| | Total district |
|---|----------------|
| # of Students | 97,762 |
| # of Teachers | 6,700 |
| # of Schools | 201 |
| Per pupil expenditures | \$9,650 |
| % Special education | 13.0 |
| % LEP | 8.5 |
| % Black students | 60.3 |
| % Latino students | 16.2 |
| % Low Income | 71.2 |
| Student attendance rate | 87.9 |
| Graduation rate | 60.1 |
| Percent meeting standards—Grade 3 reading | 50.4 |

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Reports & Statistics,
<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us>

% Special education: Percent of students who are eligible for special education services by reason of their disabilities. Such students meet the definition of “children with disabilities” under the Individual with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) and s.115.76(5)(a), Wis. Stats.

% LEP: Percent of students whose first language, or whose parents’ or guardians’ first language is not English and whose level of English proficiency requires specially designed instruction.

% Black: Percent of students defined as Black Not of Hispanic Origin under federally-defined category.

% Latino: Percent of students defined as Hispanic under federally-defined category.

% Low income: Percent of students in families who meet the income eligibility guidelines for subsidized lunch.

Graduation rate: The number of graduates divided by the number of graduates plus dropouts over four years.

Percent meeting standards: The Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WCKE) is the statewide standardized exam given each year to students in grades 4, 8, and 10. The exam measures student achievement in five subject areas: reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

TABLE 19

New York City Public Schools, 2001-02

| | Total district | NWBCCC schools |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| # of Students | 1,057,130 | 24,794 |
| # of Teachers | 49,169 | |
| # of Schools | 1162 | 18 |
| Per pupil expenditures | \$10,964 | \$9,383 |
| % Special education | 9.9 | 13.5 |
| % LEP | 13.2 | 22.9 |
| % Black students | 32.2 | 25.1 |
| % Latino students | 39.7 | 66.8 |
| % Low income students | 74.7 | 88.8 |
| % of Teachers fully credentialed— Elementary & middle schools | 85.3 | 78.4 |
| % of Teachers fully credentialed— High schools | 82.8 | 67.4 |
| % Teaching > 5 years— Elementary and middle schools | 53.4 | 49.8 |
| % Teaching > 5 years—High schools | 61.2 | 48.1 |
| Dropout rate—High school only | 20.2 | 16.2 |
| Student attendance rate— Elementary and middle schools | 92.6 | 90.9 |
| Student attendance rate— High schools | 87.7 | 79.3 |
| Percent meeting standards— Reading (High school only) | 36.93 | 23.6 |
| Percent meeting standards— Math (High school only) | 35.0 | 21.6 |

Source: 2001-02 School Report Cards, New York City Department of Education, Division of Assessment and Accountability

Per pupil expenditures: The state calculation of school expenditures per student for direct services only.

% Special education: Includes both full- and part-time participants. Percent of enrollment.

% LEP: The number of Limited English Proficient students (also known as English Language Learners) as defined by Section 154.2(a) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education divided by the total district enrollment in grades PreK-12.

% Black students: The number of enrolled Black (not Hispanic) students divided by the total district enrollment.

% Latino students: The number of enrolled Hispanic students divided by the total district enrollment.

% Low income students: The number of students in kindergarten through grade 6 participating in the free-and-reduced price lunch program divided by the enrollment in full-day kindergarten through grade 6.

Attendance rate: Percent of days students attended. Separate analyses for elementary/middle and high schools are reported.

Suspensions: Number of suspensions per 1,000 students, includes multiple occurrences for same student. Separate analyses for elementary/middle and high schools are reported.

% Teachers fully credentialed: The number of classroom teachers with permanent certification in their currently assigned class subjects divided by the total number of classroom teachers.

% Teaching > 5 years: The percent of teachers who have more than five years in education, including other public school districts, nonpublic schools, and college or university experience.

% Teachers with advanced degrees: The number of classroom teachers with a master's degree plus 30 hours or a doctorate divided by the total number of classroom teachers.

Graduation and dropout rate: Percent of students who either graduated, dropped out or were still enrolled in this school as of summer 2002, after 4 years. Graduates are students who received a diploma, including a HS equivalency diploma. Dropouts are students who left school before graduating and did not enroll in another school.

Test scores: Elementary and middle schools students took the citywide CTB-Reading and Math tests in Grades 3, 5, 6, and 7 and state English Language Arts and Math exams in Grades 4 and 8. The data reflects the percent of all students achieving at Performance Levels 3 and 4.

TABLE 20

Oakland Unified School District, 2001-02

| | Total district | OCO schools |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| # of Students | 53,545 | 12,105 |
| # of Teachers | 2,852 | |
| # of Schools | 100 | 19 |
| Per pupil expenditures | \$8,526 | |
| % Special education | 9.7 | 6.3 |
| % LEP | 34.7 | 59.5 |
| % Black students | 44.6 | 34.7 |
| % Latino students | 30.8 | 50.4 |
| % Low income students | 49.4 | 56.1 |
| % Teachers fully credentialled | 77.8 | 13.6 |
| High school graduation rate | 66.1 | 48.7 |
| Percent meeting standards— Reading | 28.0 | 17.2 |
| Percent meeting standards— Math | 36.0 | 25.2 |

Source: California Department of Education's Dataquest,
<http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us>.

% LEP: Percent of English Learner students. EL students are those students for whom there is a report of a primary language other than English on the state-approved Home Language Survey and who, on the basis of the state approved oral language assessment procedures have been determined to lack the clearly defined English language skills to succeed in the school's regular instructional program.

% Black students and % Latino students: Percentages of the total number of students.

% Low income students: Counts of children enrolled in the Free or Reduced Price Meal Programs.

% Teachers fully credentialled: This is the percent of teachers who hold a full credential. It excludes teachers in their assignment based on an emergency credential, a waiver, or because they are in an intern program.

Graduation rate: Defined as the number of graduates (year 4) / number of graduates (year 4) + grade 9 dropouts (year 1) + grade 10 dropouts (year 2) + grade 11 dropouts (year 3) + grade 12 dropouts (year 4).

Test scores: Elementary and middle school students in Oakland took the Stanford 9 Achievement Tests (SAT9) in grades 2-8 in Reading and Math. Schools are assessed at the percentage of students at or above the 50% national percentile rank

TABLE 21

Philadelphia Public Schools, 2001-02

| | Total district | EPOP schools |
|---|----------------|--------------|
| # of Students | 197,083 | |
| # of Teachers | 10,506 | |
| # of Schools | 263 | 7 |
| Per pupil expenditures ¹ | \$7,669 | |
| % Special education | 11.9 | |
| % LEP | 6.5 | |
| % Black students | | |
| % Latino students | | |
| % Low income students | 71.6 | 84.2 |
| Student attendance | 86.4 | |
| Teacher absenteeism | 6.1 | |
| Percent meeting standards— Reading Grade 5 Grade 8 Grade 11 | 21 24 29 | |
| Percent meeting standards— Math Grade 5 Grade 8 Grade 11 | 19 18 24 | |

Source: 2001-02 School Report Cards of the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment
<http://www.paprofiles.org/profiles/gotoschools.asp?DistNum=126515001>

¹2002-03

% Low income: The percentage of children of students receiving free or reduced price lunch.

Student attendance: School average daily attendance divided by average daily membership or enrollment.

Teacher absenteeism: The percentage of contractual days that permanent contractual teachers were absent from the classroom for personal reasons.

Appendix 5

TABLE 22
Neighborhood characteristics

| Study Location ¹ | Demographics ² | | | | | Socio-economic indicators | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|-----------------|------------|
| | White | Black | Asian | Other | Hispanic | Poverty | Children age 5-17 in poverty | Adults in the labor force | Adults age 25+ <HS diploma | Home owners | Born outside US | ESL |
| Austin Site <i>Remaining Austin tracts</i> | 55% 73% | 16% 7% | 3% 5% | 26% 15% | 40% 23% | 19% 11% | 23% 11% | 70% 72% | 27% 13% | 41% 56% | 20% 13% | 37% 28% |
| Bronx Site <i>Remaining New York City tracts</i> | 27% 46% | 33% 27% | 2% 10% | 38% 16% | 56% 22% | 38% 19% | 45% 23% | 49% 58% | 44% 28% | 12% 37% | 31% 35% | 63% 47% |
| Chicago Site <i>Remaining Chicago tracts</i> | 11% 47% | 73% 34% | 0% 5% | 16% 14% | 22% 22% | 33% 19% | 41% 23% | 50% 62% | 43% 28% | 37% 45% | 12% 19% | 26% 33% |
| Los Angeles Site <i>Remaining Los Angeles tracts</i> | 18% 50% | 41% 9% | 1% 10% | 40% 31% | 56% 44% | 35% 20% | 43% 25% | 51% 60% | 56% 34% | 37% 42% | 36% 40% | 49% 56% |
| Miami Site <i>Remaining Miami/Dade County tracts</i> | 51% 72% | 39% 19% | 1% 2% | 9% 7% | 46% 36% | 27% 14% | 34% 17% | 53% 61% | 43% 24% | 49% 66% | 45% 37% | 58% 49% |
| Milwaukee | 61% | 29% | 2% | 8% | 9% | 19% | 23% | 64% | 24% | 49% | 7% | 16% |
| Oakland Site <i>Remaining Oakland tracts</i> | 19% 49% | 41% 26% | 17% 14% | 23% 11% | 29% 11% | 25% 14% | 31% 16% | 55% 66% | 38% 13% | 36% 53% | 32% 18% | 42% 26% |
| Philadelphia Site <i>Remaining Philadelphia tracts</i> | 19% 63% | 54% 29% | 4% 4% | 23% 73% | 29% 4% | 36% 15% | 44% 18% | 49% 61% | 43% 22% | 58% 64% | 9% 8% | 37% 15% |

¹ Sites were defined as census tracts within or intersecting a .5-mile radius of each school identified by the Mott study group as the focus of its organizing; comparison is to the remaining census tracts in the city/Census place in which the site is located (with the exception of Miami - as the schools are located in different localities, the comparison is to the remaining Dade County tracts). Because MICAH works primarily at a district-level, data are provided for MPS as a whole.

² Demographics may not sum to 100% due to rounding errors; "Hispanic" is a separate category.

Appendix 6:

Study group profiles

Austin Interfaith

Austin Interfaith is an institutional membership organization affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation. A sponsoring committee of lay and religious leaders founded the organization in 1985. Austin Interfaith has grown to include twenty-six congregations (Baptist, Congregational, Jewish, Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Quaker), one seminary (Episcopal), two unions (electrical, teachers) and fifteen schools. The organization also works with two universities and several neighborhood associations.

Since 1991 Austin Interfaith has worked in schools with high percentages of low-income and English language learners as part of the Alliance Schools Network. Austin Interfaith provides these schools with parent training

and advice on organizing and how to work with and hold local public officials accountable. The Alliance Schools have had a number of successes, which are reflected in test scores, policy changes and parent participation rates.

Besides education, Austin Interfaith is active in several other issue areas. The organization offers a long-term adult job training and placement program called Capital I.D.E.A. (Investing in the Development and Education of Adults) as well as a summer youth employment program. They also hold local office-holders accountable for addressing living wages and affordable housing in Austin, and regularly conduct extensive voter outreach and registration activities.

| | |
|---|--|
| National network affiliation | Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) |
| Type of membership | Institutional: Congregations, Unions, Schools |
| Year founded | 1988 |
| Origins | Initiated by the Catholic Bishop in Austin, and a group of local African American ministers familiar with IAF's work in Houston. |
| Year began education organizing | 1990 |
| Impetus for education organizing | Became involved in education issues through its support of a local bond package. First school level campaign focused on creating health clinics in two schools. Other major campaigns include: state funding, expanding the Alliance Schools network, and specific school level improvements. |
| Major education organizing campaigns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliance Schools • Professional development for Alliance Schools administrators. • Teacher quality (assisting teaching assistants to become teachers, especially in shortage areas such as bilingual education). • School Funding |
| Level of organizing | School, Neighborhood, District and State-wide |

Chicago ACORN

Founded in 1983, Chicago ACORN is a multi-issue, multi-ethnic community organization that organizes residents in three Chicago neighborhoods. ACORN began education organizing in 1988 following passage of the Chicago School Reform Act, which created parent majority local school councils with significant hiring and budgetary authority. ACORN has won capital improvements in local schools, trained parent local school council members, and fought for the creation of new small schools. In order to increase the number of highly qualified teachers in

inner city neighborhoods, Chicago ACORN has initiated a “Grow Your Own” teacher training campaign that targets inner city paraprofessionals, teacher’s aides and community residents to become teachers.

Chicago ACORN works on a wide variety of other issues of concern to members. Current campaigns include a living wage campaign, immigrant driver license campaign, and an anti-predatory lending campaign.

| | |
|---|--|
| National network affiliation | Association of Communities Organized for Reform Now (ACORN) |
| Type of membership | Direct Membership: Low to moderate-income residents in three Chicago neighborhoods. |
| Year founded Origins | 1983 Founding organizer Madeline Talbott initiated the organization, as part of the National Network of ACORN organizations, to organize low and moderate-income families for economic justice. Talbott worked previously for ACORN organizations in Arkansas and Detroit. |
| Year began education organizing Impetus for education organizing | 1988 Began organizing following the passage of the 1988 Chicago School Governance Reform Act, which created new parent majority councils and leveraged private foundation funding for parent leadership training. Helped parents get elected on local school councils. Early campaigns focused on winning facilities improvements, opposing school closings and training parents. Other major campaigns include: supporting new small schools, creating new teacher support programs, classroom mentoring, citywide policy to Grow Your Own teachers. |
| Major education organizing campaigns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital improvements • Safety • New teacher support • Teacher quality (retention, recruitment and preparation through paraprofessional-to-teacher programs). |
| Level of organizing | School and district-level organizing; IL ACORN organizes at the state level IL ACORN organizes at the state level |

Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment

In 1990 several activists identified the need to create a coalition that could lead a progressive community response to the crack cocaine crisis in South Los Angeles. As a result the Community Coalition was founded to transform the social and economic conditions that foster addiction, crime, violence and poverty. The Coalition organizes neighborhoods, youth, and social service agencies in order to address drug and alcohol problems. The organization runs six separate organizing projects to address the needs of their community. The Community Coalition organizes in a community of approximately 600,000 predominately African American and Latino residents.

One of these projects, South Central Youth Empowered Thru Action (SCYEA), recruits and trains local high school students to organize their peers, articulate their concerns, develop strategies, and advocate solutions to the problems that affect South LA teens. In the past SCYEA has fought to ensure school construction funds are equitably distributed to improve school facility conditions and student safety. Currently SCYEA is focused on ensuring schools offer courses that satisfy the A-G requirements, which students must complete to apply to the University of California and the California State University System.

| | |
|---|--|
| National network affiliation | Not applicable |
| Type of membership | Direct membership: Black and Brown residents of South Central Los Angeles |
| Year founded Origins | 1990 Community Coalition formed in response to the crack epidemic that hit South LA in the late 1980's, and the resulting police harassment of youth. The organization was founded by Karen Bass, who had worked with addicts in the emergency room at LA County-USC Hospital, to address the conditions that supported crime, poverty and addiction in South LA. |
| Year began education organizing Impetus for education organizing | 1993 Initial education organizing focused on mobilizing local support for a statewide school facilities bond referendum. In 1997, began organizing high school youth into school-based campaigns to improve neighborhood high schools. Initial campaigns focused on facilities improvements, and college access tracking. In 2002, began organizing parents of high school youth. Major campaigns include: winning passage of a bond act to bring more facilities resources to South LA schools, expanding access to guidance counselors. |
| Major education organizing campaigns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local college access campaigns • School safety • College access (access to guidance counselors, college preparatory curricula, and books). • Teacher quality (developing student surveys of teacher effectiveness) |
| Level of organizing school and district-level organizing | School, District, State-wide |
| Youth organizing component | South Central Youth Empowered through Action |

Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project (EPOP)/Youth United for Change

Eastern Philadelphia Organizing Project was initiated in 1993 by clergy, adult educators, and parents, to develop local leaders and address issues of public importance in Eastern Philadelphia. Currently EPOP works in four high schools, one middle school and five elementary schools.

EPOP began education organizing in 1993 with the creation of Sheppard Parents Association (SPA) in an elementary school. In 1994, SPA organized and won full day kindergarten, which led to full day kindergarten across the city in 1994-1995. In 2001-2002, EPOP initiated the Pennsylvanians/Parents Organizing for Public Education, which focuses on system-wide issues including funding, the state takeover and privatization.

EPOP is affiliated with Youth United for Change (YUC), which began in 1993 and is focused on organizing youth within five Philadelphia high schools. YUC develops youth as leaders and supports their organizing to improve local public high schools.

EPOP and YUC partnerships extend regionally and nationally. They are members of the PICO network and are partnered with the Temple University Center for Public Policy in a project called Research for Democracy. Research for Democracy conducts research on public policy strategies designed to address the dramatic loss of population in Philadelphia by improving the quality of life and education in Philadelphia's neighborhoods.

| | |
|---|--|
| National network affiliation | Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO) |
| Type of membership | Institutional: Congregations, school parent groups and community based organizations. |
| Year founded Origins | 1993 Founding organizer Steve Honeyman began talking with local clergy and parents about the need to organize and give voice to the voiceless. Honeyman is a former investigative reporter, and formerly worked with NTIC (National Training and Information Center). |
| Year began education organizing Impetus for education organizing | 1988 Earlier involvement was primarily at the school level around safety issues. District level involvement occurred during the 2001 state takeover of the school district and proposal to privatize public schools. Other major campaigns include: small schools through Youth United for Change, distribution of qualified teachers, and filing a legal complaint against the school district for inequitable redistribution of Title I. |
| Major education organizing campaigns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Right To Know • Title I • Teacher quality (distribution of qualified teachers) |
| Level of organizing | School, neighborhood based (through congregations), and district-level organizing |
| Youth organizing component | Youth United for Change, an EPOP member organization |

Milwaukee Inner-city Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAHA)

Founded in 1988, Milwaukee Innercity Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAHA) is currently comprised of 43 member congregations from 14 different denominations. The majority of MICAHA congregations (and members) are from the central city of Milwaukee. About 50% of the membership is African-American, about 15% is Latino and the remainder is European-American. Founded in 1988, MICAHA has a long history of working for social change in areas such as education, drug and alcohol treatment, labor and workplace issues, jobs and economic development, immigration concerns and youth.

Since 1992, MICAHA has worked on a wide variety of issues related to quality education and student achievement. Those efforts have ranged from working to help individual families to demand appropriate services for their children to a major change in state law that lowered class size for the youngest Milwaukee Public School children. MICAHA is a founding member of WISDOM, a statewide organization of Gamaliel Foundation groups, focused on winning statewide school funding reform.

| | |
|---|--|
| National network affiliation | Gamaliel Foundation (GF) |
| Type of membership | Institutional: Congregations |
| Year founded Origins | 1988 Founding organizer Sheryl Spivey Perry, a GF organizer, led a two-year process of individual and group meetings with inner city Milwaukee clergy to form MICAHA, as a multiracial, interfaith organization committed to addressing injustice. MICAHA became the third organization in the GF network and its first affiliate outside of Chicago. |
| Year began education organizing Impetus for education organizing | 1992 Began organizing in response to congregational members' concerns. First campaign focused on improving district-level recruitment of minority teachers. |
| Major education organizing campaigns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAGE funding for early grade class size reduction • School finance equity, • Reducing student mobility • Improving student access to school nurses • Milwaukee Education Alliance. |
| Level of organizing | School and district-level organizing; WISDOM (GF) organizes at the state level. |
| Youth organizing component | MICAHA Youth Council, began 1998. Currently not working on education reform issues. |

Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC)

Founded in 1974, the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC), is a multi-issue, multi-racial membership organization that unites 9 neighborhood organizations, several congregations and a youth organization, Sistas and Brothas United, in a predominately low and moderate-income section of the Bronx. In its 30 years of work, the NWBCCCC has organized on a wide range of local issues, including housing, crime and safety, environmental hazards, and public education.

NWBCCC began education organizing in 1995 in response to parent frustration at extensive and ongoing

overcrowding in the school district. Following a successful facilities campaign that won several new school buildings in the fall of 1999, the Education Committee now focuses its work on improving teacher quality, in addition to school facility improvements and securing capital funds for new school construction.

SBU, with a membership of several hundred students, has won facilities improvements and additional resources for several Bronx High Schools. SBU is currently focused on improving the quality of teacher support and training in four large low-performing high schools.

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| National network affiliation | None |
| Type of membership | Individual |
| Year founded Origins | 1974 Arose to fight against the arson, disinvestment and planned shrinkage. Founding organizers included Roger Hays, trained by Shel Trapp (National Training and Assistance Center) and Pat Dillon, trained by Stan Holt (People Acting through Community Effort), both from an Alinsky tradition. Tenant and neighborhood organizing produced an early emphasis on housing rehabilitation and community reinvestment. Organization assisted in the creation of separate community development corporations (CDCs) in the late 1970s. Formerly associated with National People's Action. |
| Year began education organizing Impetus for education organizing | 1995 Began organizing in response to parent frustration at extensive and ongoing school district overcrowding. |
| Major education organizing campaigns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New school facilities to reduce overcrowding • School repairs • School construction reform • School funding • Improved teacher quality |
| Level of organizing | School and district-level organizing; statewide organizing through the Alliance for Quality Education |
| Youth organizing component | Sistas and Brothas United (SBU) began 1999. SBU has won facility and safety improvements at local high schools as well as improved guidance counseling. Currently, they are engaged in a teacher quality campaign at 4 large, low-performing high schools. |

Oakland Community Organizations

Founded in 1977, Oakland Community Organizations (OCO) is a federation of 40 congregations that represent 35,000 families in East, West and North Oakland. OCO uses a faith-based organizing model that seeks to unite people across religious, racial, ethnic and economic boundaries. OCO is a member of the Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO), a national network of sister organizations in 45 cities in 12 states working to empower economically disadvantaged communities.

Since the early 1990's, OCO has focused on public education as a means to make the greatest, most sustainable change in Oakland's poor and low-income neighborhoods. With their partner, the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BAYCES), they developed a district-wide policy for New Small Autonomous Schools. Through the PICO California Network, OCO has secured billions in state funds for after-school programs; school repair and construction; and parent/teacher home visits. In addition to education, OCO works on crime, health, housing, and economic development issues.

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| National network affiliation | Pacific Institute of Community Organization (PICO) |
| Type of membership | Institutional: congregations and affiliated community organizations, including schools |
| Year founded Origins | 1977 Founding organizers John Baumann S.J. and Jerry Helfrich S.J. created the organizing project, using a neighborhood-based direct membership approach. OCO was formally established in 1977, and later evolved into the first PICO project. PICO later helped OCO transition from direct membership organizing to institutionally based organizing. |
| Year began education organizing Impetus for education organizing | 1989 Began organizing to address school safety concerns raised in church-based local organizing committees. Early campaigns focused on school level issues, such as drug-free school zones, as well as district-wide policy to expand school-to-work and class size reduction programs. Other major campaigns include: opening charter schools and the creation of a district-wide small schools policy, and new small autonomous schools. |
| Major education organizing campaigns | <p>SCHOOL LEVEL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incubating new small schools <p>DISTRICT LEVEL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District support for small schools • School facilities <p>STATE LEVEL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building state support for small schools • School construction • Enrichment and after school programs • Teacher professional development |
| Level of organizing | School, District, City, State, National |

People Acting for Community Together (PACT)

Founded in 1988, People Acting for Community Together (PACT) is an interfaith coalition of religious congregations, public schools, and community groups, working together for social and economic justice in Miami-Dade County. PACT's current membership includes 34 institutions. PACT is a multi-issue organization, working on education, affordable housing, crime prevention, immigration reform, and transportation issues.

PACT's education organizing is focused on supporting the successful implementation of the Direct Instruction (DI) reading curriculum in Miami Dade schools. In 1996, PACT won its first DI victory. After a long struggle, the School Board voted unanimously to allow a five school DI pilot program. Since then, the number of schools using

DI has increased to 27, the majority of which have shown significant improvement in reading scores. Through PALS, (PACT Academically Linking with Schools), PACT leaders monitor and support DI's implementation.

In addition to DI, PACT's education organizing focuses on improving after-school programs, testing and promotion policies, and universal pre-K. Since 2001, PACT, through its Parent Organizing Project (POP), has organized in individual schools to win local school improvements. Five schools have become institutional members of PACT.

PACT is an affiliate of the Direct Action and Research Training Center (DART).

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| National network affiliation | Direct Action and Research Training Center (DART) |
| Type of membership | Institutional |
| Year founded Origins | 1988 Founding organizer Holly Holcombe worked with local institutional leaders to create PACT in order to build community power and overcome systemic injustices that affect low- to moderate-income communities in Miami. Monsignor Gerard LaCerra of the Archdiocese of Miami was a driving force in initiating the organization. |
| Year began education organizing Impetus for education organizing | 1995 Education was identified as an issue of great concern to PACT membership through intensive 1-1s and a subsequent issue assembly. PACT's initial campaign focused on improving reading instruction through Direct Instruction. |
| Major education organizing campaigns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective and expanded implementation of Direct Instruction • Improving after-school programs • Ensuring high quality universal pre-kindergarten • Improving testing and promotion policies |
| Level of organizing | School and district-level organizing; statewide organizing through The Federation of DART Organizations of Florida (FDOF) |

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Related Institute publications

The following related documents are available
on the Institute's website, www.nyu.edu/iesp

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